

Year 1: *Session 8* – No Fear

Class 24: Daniel 6 – *Daniel and the Lions' Den*

CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

- Provide brief background on Israel and Babylon
- Highlight the parallels between this story and the crucifixion/resurrection story
- Discuss how Daniel's choice to keep paying attention to God is a hard one and is similar to many of the other stories that we read – and how those stories help us think about why we would want to make similar hard choices about paying attention to God as well.

Materials needed:

1. Video clip from Brady Bunch movie (can be seen on rfour.org)
2. Electronics that show the video clip
3. Find and use an online game of "Deal or No Deal." The one I used was located here (and might still be):
<http://www.bigmoneyarcade.com/?action=playgame&gameid=550>

THE LESSON

OPENING PRAYER

OPENING QUESTION

- For the opening question for today's class, I [the teacher] will ask the question, and then to give you some time to think of an answer, I will answer first.
- Once I answer the question, we'll go around the circle.
- When it's your turn, start with your name and then answer the question to the best of your ability.
- *Here's this week's question:* If you could be in charge of any one thing right now, what would you choose to be in charge of and why?

TRANSITION TO Activity

- For quite a stretch of the year, now, we've been looking at how there is this comparison in the Bible stories between living God's way versus living a biological fight or flight way – we've been talking about that comparison pretty much since we started reading Jesus stories.
- But that comparison actually happens in Old Testament stories as well.
- But it's a little bit different in the OT. In the Old Testament, what was often being compared was living God's way vs. living like the neighbors or enemies of Israel who had stronger / better armies and national treasures (in other

words, there was God's way and then there was the way everyone else was living – which sometimes looked bigger, better and stronger).

- Last class, we looked at the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who chose to NOT worship a golden statue of King Nebuchadnezzar.
- It was a hard decision that led to them being thrown into a very hot fire, but in the end, it worked out for them.
- In today's story, we will see a very similar situation take place with King Darius and Daniel.
- But before we read the story – let's watch a short video clip of Jan Brady, who is very jealous of her sister, Marcia.
- Note: The scene is meant to copy another scene from a horror movie, so it might seem a little spooky at first, but you'll see pretty quickly that it's just being silly.

Watch Video Clip

ASK

- Although the movie clip was a dream sequence, let's pretend that it was real for a moment.
- At the very beginning, there's a voice that says, "But Jan, you don't have any friends. You're just jealous, Jan." Any guesses whose voice that is? (it's Marcia's, her older sister)
- So what does Jan do to get back at Marcia? (cuts Marcia's hair)
- And what is she going to do with it? (sell it)
- After Jan cuts Marcia's hair, how does Marcia's hair look? (nice)
- So did Jan's "plan" work? (nope – just the opposite happened actually)

TELL

- We have another long story, today.
- And it's going to read a lot like the Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego story.
- Daniel is now an old man in this story, but just like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, he was taken prisoner from Israel and were made to live in exile in Babylon after Babylon had defeated Judah (the southern kingdom of Israel) in battle and destroyed Jerusalem.
- Because Daniel was smart (and helped interpret dreams of King Nebuchadnezzar), he was put in a position of decision-making to help make the Babylonian empire stronger.
- But what we'll see in the story is that people are jealous of Daniel and will go to great lengths to get rid of him.
- Let's see what happens

READ Daniel 6:1-28

It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom one hundred twenty satraps, stationed throughout the whole kingdom, and over them three presidents, including Daniel; to these the satraps gave account, so that the king might suffer no loss. ³Soon Daniel distinguished himself above all the other presidents and satraps because an excellent spirit was in him, and the king planned to appoint him over the whole kingdom. ⁴So the presidents and the satraps tried to find grounds for

complaint against Daniel in connection with the kingdom. But they could find no grounds for complaint or any corruption, because he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption could be found in him. ⁵The men said, "We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God."

6So the presidents and satraps conspired and came to the king and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever!
7All the presidents of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an interdict, that whoever prays to anyone, divine or human, for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into a den of lions. 8Now, O king, establish the interdict and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked." 9Therefore King Darius signed the document and interdict. 10Although Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he continued to go to his house, which had windows in its upper room open toward Jerusalem, and to get down on his knees three times a day to pray to his God and praise him, just as he had done previously.

11The conspirators came and found Daniel praying and seeking mercy before his God. 12Then they approached the king and said concerning the interdict, "O king! Did you not sign an interdict, that anyone who prays to anyone, divine or human, within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be thrown into a den of lions?" The king answered, "The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked." 13Then they responded to the king, "Daniel, one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the interdict you have signed, but he is saying his prayers three times a day." 14When the king heard the charge, he was very much distressed. He was determined to save Daniel, and until the sun went down he made every effort to rescue him. 15Then the conspirators came to the king and said to him, "Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no interdict or ordinance that the king establishes can be changed." 16Then the king gave the command, and Daniel was brought and thrown into the den of lions. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you faithfully serve, deliver you!" 17A stone was brought

and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, so that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel.

18Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no food was brought to him, and sleep fled from him. 19Then, at break of day, the king got up and hurried to the den of lions. 20When he came near the den where Daniel was, he cried out anxiously to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God whom you faithfully serve been able to deliver you from the lions?" 21Daniel then said to the king, "O king, live forever! 22My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths so that they would not hurt me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no wrong." 23Then the king was exceedingly glad and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. 24The king gave a command, and those who had accused Daniel were brought and thrown into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives. Before they reached the bottom of the den the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces.

25Then King Darius wrote to all peoples and nations of every language throughout the whole world: "May you have abundant prosperity! 26I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people should tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: For he is the living God, enduring forever. His kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion has no end. 27He delivers and rescues, he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth; for he has saved Daniel from the power of the lions." 28So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian

ASK

- Verse 2 – What is Daniel's job/position? (to oversee the satraps – aka governors)
- Verse 3 – Was Daniel any good at his job? (yep, he was even going to get promoted)

- Verse 4 – So did Daniel’s co-workers congratulate him? (nope – they tried to figure out how to bring him down – Just like Jan Brady did to Marcia)
- Verse 4 still – Could they find anything to use to bring Daniel down with? (nope)
- Verse 6 – So what plan do they come up with? (Talked King Darius into making a decree that no one could be prayed to other than King Darius for 30 days)
- Verse 10 – Does Daniel follow the rule? (No)
- Verse 14 – Once King Darius learns about what’s happening, how does he feel about this turn of events? (is not happy about it, tries to save Daniel but can’t)
- Verse 22 – Is Daniel alright in the morning? (Yes he is)
- Verse 23 – For what reason does the story say Daniel made it through the night? (Because he trusted in his God)
- Verse 24 – What does King Darius do with Daniel’s accusers? (Puts them into the lions’ den)
- Verse 24 – Do they have the same experience that Daniel did? (Nope – just the opposite. Got all ate up. So just like Jan, their plan that was hatched in jealousy, backfired)
- Verse 25 – 28: What type of decree does King Darius pass after Daniel survives the lions’ den (a decree telling the people to worship the God of Daniel)

TELL

- Maybe not as weird as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, but still a pretty weird story, don’t you think?
- So a few things to keep in mind here
- Just like Nebuchadnezzar, King Darius is the king of the most powerful kingdom in the world at that time (The Medes and Persians [that King Darius rules over] had defeated the Babylonian Empire)
- So King Darius was the most powerful person in the world, and yet again, we see someone (Daniel) decide that God is more important than the most important person in the world.
- And what we see in the story, then, is that Daniel makes the right choice. In fact, we see that even Darius can’t save/rescue Daniel (verses 14-16) – even though he’s the most powerful person in the world.
- So this story, just like the Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego story, was told and written as a reminder that God’s way was better, even when it seems like it isn’t.
- Which is, just like we talked about in the last lesson, very similar to the crucifixion and resurrection story:
 - Israel is not free / it is not its own country in this story, just like in the crucifixion story
 - Daniel chooses to listen to God rather than the authorities, just like Jesus
 - He is punished with a death sentence because of it, just like Jesus
 - And it is at that point in the story where the characters have *got* to be thinking, “God just can’t be worth all this trouble.”
 - But then, when the story should’ve ended with death, it instead ends with greater/better/more life for the character who chose to pay attention to God
- The choice that Jesus, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, Paul and Silas, and Peter and John all make – to choose God instead of doing whatever it takes to stay alive -- is NOT AN EASY choice.
- The choice they make is one where they have to trust that God’s way is the better way even when it looks like it isn’t the better way.
- This is not an easy thing to do, to choose what seems like the lesser choice.
- Which is why the Bible stories are such an important gift – even though they seem strange, what they consistently remind us is that living God’s way, choosing to pay attention to God is not easy, but overall, it is the better way.
- What the Bible stories help us remember is that seeking God helps us to get to the end of the story in a better way than we would’ve arrived on our own.

TRANSITION TO and EXPLAIN ACTIVITY

- So to help us think about how decisions can be really really really tough, ESPECIALLY when we can't know what the result of our decision could possibly be, let's play a few games of "Deal or no deal."
- We'll have two or three teams.
- Each team will play a game and try to get the largest score
- The way it works is that you keep eliminating suitcases – the problem is, you don't know what number is in each suitcase until AFTER you select it.
- After each round a deal is offered to you that takes into consideration of what numbers are still left on the board.
- You can either take the deal or go to the next round.
- The game doesn't take very much skill – the main question is "when do you take the deal – if ever?"

DO ACTIVITY of "Deal or no Deal" <http://www.bigmoneyarcade.com/?action=playgame&gameid=550>

TELL

- "Deal or no deal" would be a lot easier if you could see what numbers you were choosing, don't you think?
- But like most choices, we don't really know what's going to happen until after we make the choice.
- And again, this is why the Bible stories are such a gift – they can't tell us what exactly is going to happen, but what they do is remind us to keep choosing God's way, even when the numbers don't seem to be in our favor, because God's way is the better way.

CLOSING PRAYER