



Daily Devotionals: The God of the Fire | June 20, 2021

This summer, we're studying the book of Daniel together! During this six-week series, we'll learn how God uses the difficult and high-pressure situations of life to refine us and shape us into the people he wants us to be. Together, we'll see that no matter the challenges we face or the fires we walk through, God is with us!

Be sure to prayerfully consider each day's Scripture, questions, and reflections. If you're a part of a life group, let these devotions stir your thinking and be the foundation for your group conversation.

As you come to each day's reflection, find time with God away from TV, your phone, or any other distractions. Find a quiet space – somewhere where you can quiet your soul and attend to your thoughts and feelings. You might want to get a journal to use throughout this series for sermon notes and as a landing place for your various ruminations.

Our prayer is that over the course of this series, these Bible verses and reflections will help you love God, love people, and make disciples!



Day 1—Listen

Check out our new podcast released each Monday to recap each message of the Daniel series. This podcast is intended to flesh out the sermon and the text of Daniel in a new and fresh way. It'll have a bit of teaching, a reading of Scripture, and it'll end with some reflection questions. You can find it by visiting thecreek.org/sermons and selecting this week's sermon.



Day 2—Imaginative Prayer

One of the ways that Jesus followers have been engaging with the Scriptures is through a practice called Imaginative Prayer. In this discipline, readers of the text actually imagine themselves in its story, encountering what is being written through their senses and creativity. Here's how to engage with this week's text in this way:

- **Read Daniel 3:1-30.**

- Visualize what's happening in the story. Take some time to imagine what the scene was like. Listen to the words spoken in the text again as if you were one of the first hearers of them.

- Now begin to imagine the scene as if you were right in the middle of it.
 - Who are you in the story?
 - What do you see?
 - What do you hear?
 - What do you smell?
 - What's your position?
 - Who else is there with you?
 - What are you feeling?
 - What's the mood of the crowd?
 - What is your response to all you experience?
 - What questions do you have?
 - What fears do you have?

- Prayerfully allow God to bring the story to life for you. The people we read about in Scripture were real people who walked the earth and had feelings and thoughts much like ours.



- **Read Daniel 3:1-30** once more, imagining yourself in the text. What are you noticing from your responses?
- As you listen again, notice how God is inviting you to respond. What are His invitations from this story for you today?



Day 3

- In **Daniel 3**, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (aka Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah) were gathered and compelled to bow to an idol of Nebuchadnezzar's making. Their faith was tested. It might have been one thing to say no to eating the king's food (**Daniel 1**), but it was a whole other kind of pressure to say no to the king's image. Where do you sense the world vying for your worship like what Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego experience in **Daniel 3:8-15**?
- John Calvin once poignantly wrote, "The human heart is a factory of idols. Every one of us is, from his mother's womb, an expert in inventing idols." This takes the onus off our culture and puts the idolatry we face on us. And, really, Calvin's words are just another interpretation of **James 1:14-15** that says, "Each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death." How have you seen your own heart be a factory of idols?
- Theologian Ronald Rolheiser wrote once, "Western culture today is so powerful and alluring that it often swallows us whole. Its beauty, power, and promise generally takes away our breath and our perspective. The lure of present salvation - money, sex, creativity, the good life - has for the most part entertained, amused, distracted, and numbed us into a state where we no longer have a perspective beyond that of our culture and its short-range soteriology." Do you agree or disagree with his assessment? Where do you see its truth at work in your own life?
- Take a few moments to read through Jesus' temptation in the desert from **Matthew 4:1-11**. What can you learn from Jesus about standing firm in the midst of temptation and pressure to worship false gods?



Day 4

- You have to read between the lines to see it, but in **Daniel 3** it is evident that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had solidified their spiritual convictions before they were tested. **Re-read Daniel 3:16-18**. Do you think it's important to consider your values and convictions prior to temptation? Why?
- When was a time when not thinking through your convictions landed you in some hot water? When was a time when your spiritual convictions were tested, and because you had thought them through, you were able to withstand the pressure of giving in?
- What are some personal convictions God is inviting you to think through so that you're prepared when challenges to your faith come? For example, consider your convictions and what God's word says about dating, marriage, your use of language, money, how you relate to people at work, or what you should do with status and prestige.



Day 5

- It's clear that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were able to withstand the fire of Nebuchadnezzar because God was in the fire with them. **Re-read Daniel 2:19-28.** God doesn't always promise us that bad times won't come upon us, but he does promise to be with us in the valleys (**Deuteronomy 31:6**). How does it feel to know that God not only knows the ins and outs of your every situation (he's all-knowing), but that he is also willing to walk with you through the hardship?
- The promises of God being ever-present with His people is a theme we can trace all throughout the Scriptures. Read the following passages and then choose one to pray back to God: **Exodus 3:6, 12; Isaiah 43:2; Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 8:37-39; Hebrews 13:5; 1 Peter 4:12-14.**
- How does the presence of Christ affect the way you face temptations to worship and chase after other gods?
- Once finished, write a prayer to God expressing any reflections, praises, or struggles from today's or this week's reflections.