

Kingdom Down #6 - The Lion of the Tribe of Judah and the Lions' Den

- Alight, I'm fired up. Grab your Bible. Go to Daniel chapter six. We're halfway through the book. If you want a word from God, you need to open the word of God. That's what we're gonna do today. And just to let you know, you can give me a little love, a little feedback, a little clapping. I was out of town preaching this weekend. I'm a little tired. I'm 49. 49 is the new 99. So I could use, I could use a little love and support in the room today. But we're gonna deal with one of the most famous stories in the whole Bible, and probably the most famous story in the book of Daniel. And just to set the stage, the question I wanna pose to you is, how do you live when you don't get the life that you want? Okay, how many of you, this is not exactly the way you hoped life would be, amen? I still keep waiting for a growth spurt so I could be six feet tall. Like, there's just some disappointments, big and small. The storyline of Daniel is this. Is he in the nation that he wants to be in? No he's not.

- [Audience Member] No!

- Does he have the kind of family that he hoped for? No, the first thing they did was castrated him. Did he make it into the university that he wanted to go to? No, they sent him to the University of Babylon. Is he eating the diet that he wants to eat? No, he's a vegetarian. There's zero people that architected, this is their hopes for the future, amen? His job, he works for a series and succession of ungodly, horrible leaders in government, a government that's not even his nation, and he doesn't even like. His performance reviews include a lion's den. This is horrible. He doesn't get the life he wants, but he lives the life that God wants him to live. Daniel, at this point in the story, it may be shocking to you, he's a very old man, 80s maybe 90s. We're looking back from chapter one up until this point in chapter six. It has covered about roughly 70 years of his life. There is no indication at this point that he's gonna have that magic turn, and everything's gonna go awesome, and everything's he hoped for, happily ever after, but he's faithful. And faithfulness is the result of faith. You can only be faithful to God if you have faith in God. And Daniel six in the lion's den, it's one of the great stories of the Bible on that point. So first thing you're gonna learn about is the difference between prophets and politicians. The world has way too many politicians, needs more prophets. That's what I think. It pleased Darius. He's the new king. We'll talk about him. To set over the kingdom 120 satraps, these are leaders, to be throughout the whole kingdom, and over them, three high officials of whom Daniel was one, to whom these satraps should give an account, so that the king might suffer no loss. Then Daniel became distinguished. Did a great job but a bad job. Distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps because he had an excellent spirit in him. That was the Holy Spirit. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. He's gonna get a pay raise and a promotion. Then the high officials and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom. Here come the politicians. But they could find no ground for complaint or any fault because he was faithful. The theme of this whole book is God is faithful, and faith allows us to be faithful to our faithful God. And no error or fault was found in him. Next slide. Then these 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." Then these high officials and satraps came by agreement to the king and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever!" We all do, heaven or hell. "All the high officials of the kingdom, the prefects, the satraps, the counselors, and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an injunction, that whoever makes petition to any god or man for 30 days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into," here it is, "the den of lions. Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked." Therefore King Darius pulled out his pen, signed the document and injunction. Look at these characters. First there is King Darius. If you're a little confused, don't be. Earlier in the book, the nation was Babylon. Here Babylon has been toppled and overtaken by the Medo-Persian empire. So we've gone from the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar and his family to this new King Darius. What he's doing here, he's setting up a brand new government, new legal system, new political system. Previously, this place, which is modern day Iraq, was ruled by force, and now it will be ruled by law. Let me just say this. One of the great contributions of the Bible to human history is the concept of rule of law. Okay, if you just believe it were highly evolved animals, then we should operate like the animal kingdom. Might makes right, survival of the fittest, the fast eat the slow. Okay, that's how it should go. We're not animals. We're image bearers of God who gives us laws. And what laws are, they are timeless universal principles that govern all people's times and places giving everyone equality and dignity under the law. What I find so interesting is people who hate God and deny the Bible, still feel offended, and demand justice, and laws to protect them. We call that hypocrisy. Because only the God of the Bible really establishes rule of law. And God's laws do not change because morality is not subject to popular opinion but to God's declaration. So they're setting up laws. Well, if you're gonna set up a legal system where there is equality under the law. The best thing would be to get a guy who knew the Bible, was filled with the spirit of God, and knew the God who was the law giver. So Daniel gets a job in the new government. He's been serving multiple political leaders, multiple governmental agencies, multiple generations, and he is still chosen because he's incredibly helpful to King Darius. So to give it some equivalency, they set up 120 satraps. These would be kind of like our 94 district courts. In our governmental legal system, there are district courts where cases get tried so that justice can be brought and resources can be stewarded. And then there is an appeals court over that, and this would be like the supreme court, and we have nine justices. They had three. Daniel is one of the three. That's amazing. He's a slave, not even part of this nation, and was part of the political establishment for the prior administration and prior nation. All right, and he gets this opportunity for a promotion. It intimates here that he was gonna be the equivalent of the chief justice of the supreme court of the newly established Medo-Persian empire by this man, King Darius. What do you think Darius thinks about him? Thinks he's awesome. And it says he has chosen Daniel is because he has an excellent spirit within him. That's the Holy Spirit. That's the Holy Spirit. So Daniel is chosen for this high honor, and as I told you, he is in his 80s or 90s. How many of you are older saints? Older saints? Okay? By older I mean older than me. I'm a young guy. Everybody else, okay, older, okay? So, he's old. Here's the point. Just 'cause you're old doesn't mean you're done. One of the most foolish things that we do in our youth addicted stupid culture, right, is that we think that 14 and 16-year olds know all about relationship and love. We think that kids in college know anything.

Right, we have all these myths. Right? Just because you're young and full of energy doesn't mean you're wise and full of wisdom. Okay, all the old people said, amen. All the young people are like, what is he talking about? I don't understand. I feel offended. Where the safe song? Okay, that's the problem. Okay, there isn't one. What happens is, well, you turn 65, and what do we do? You're retired. You're retired. Go, just go play shuffleboard and pray that your retirement account outlasts you. All right, that's what you're hoping. Just because you retire from your vocation doesn't mean you retire from your devotion to God, okay? God's still teaching you, old people, God's still has lessons for you into your 80s and 90s. God still has trials, ministry opportunities, and needs that only you can fill. We honor the older saints here. We believe that a family is good when it not only has the grandkids but the grandmas and the grandpas. Part of the problem in this country is grandmas and grandpas are not welcome to help bring up what is to be the future. Here, they've got a brand new government. They've just birthed this new nation. Let's go get grandpa Daniel and see if he can't help us set this thing up rightly. Today, let's just look at this. For 70-ish plus minus years, Daniel has served a succession of ungodly kings, and he's always at or near the top. He's part of the council. This is the guy who would be well-known. What would we say about him today? He's a sellout. He's a cop-out. He served Babylon, Medo-Persian empire. He should disassociate. No, he stays in so that he can be a witness of his God. Okay? That's why he's there. If all the believers leave the places that are influential, then they know nothing about our God, and there's no hope for the future. Couple of things I wanna share. Number one, from the example of Daniel. If you are filled with the spirit of God and faithful to God, you can be helpful to any leader or organization. Let me just tell you this. Leaders are looking for people of character and consistency. That's why Daniel keeps getting chosen, because he has character, and he has consistency. Number two, being spirit filled is ultimately about bringing the character of Jesus Christ under pressure. He says here that he's chosen because he has an excellent spirit. Previously in chapter four, Nebuchadnezzar, the Pagan, godless king of Babylon said multiple times that Daniel has the spirit of God in him. Chapter five, Nebuchadnezzar's wife, she steps onto the stage and says, "Let's go get Daniel. He has the spirit of God in him." Here, this excellent spirit is the spirit of God. Daniel has the fruit of the spirit in his character. Love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control. Under pressure, his character is revealed. Under pressure, your character is revealed. And ultimately, his character is similar to the character of Jesus Christ. Because both were filled with the spirit of God. And ultimately, God gives us his spirits so that we can be worshipers of him, witnesses to him, bringing forth the character of Christ under pressure and duress. And lastly, character counts. This guy Daniel has been in politics for 70 years, and they do a big investigation, and what do they find? Nothing. We're in an election year. Okay? I don't know if you know this. Right, I don't know if you know this. We're in an election year, and if someone is running, there's lots of digging. So what they do is digging on Daniel, and they find nothing. Let me just say, it is possible to have good character in a bad world. Okay? I couldn't even imagine Daniel running for office today. I can't even imagine. All the news networks, "Well, we did a full investigation, and we got nothing. You've got nothing." He walks old ladies across the street. He tithes 20%. He says bless you, says ma'am, reads his Bible. We got nothing. We got nothing on this guy. His character is consistent. Nonetheless, the politicians rise up. And let me just tell you this, in every organization there are politicians and

there are prophets. And the politicians don't like the prophets because the prophets will say and do what is right. So the politicians say and do what is wrong in an effort to take down the prophet. They have jealousy, pride, control, selfish ambition, and as a result they form an unholy alliance and a shadow government. Every organization has unholy alliances, let's take them down, and a shadow government. In politics, there's a shadow government. In churches, ministries, businesses, there are shadow governments. Here we see a shadow government. Daniel the prophet is very overt. He just prays, worships, preaches publicly. This shadow government, these politicians, they operate covertly. They're off to the side. They're not obvious. They're more deceptive. You need to know that this governance war began in heaven. The first governance war was Satan trying to form a shadow government, trying to recruit divine beings we now know as demons, to go public and to overthrow the kingdom of God. Satan does the same thing in Genesis three with our first parents. He tries to topple the governments of human family and dominion. You need to know that every time God calls you to build something, Satan is going to send someone to break it. That's what's happening here. God is trying to allow Daniel to build this nation, and these politicians are coming to break Daniel before he can build. And so what do they do? They start a full surveillance campaign. Here's what you know about critics. They never play by their own rules. Here's what they don't say. Let's do a background investigation on everybody. No, just, just one guy. This is not law and equality, right. This is covert manipulation toward destruction, toward destruction. And ultimately, I just want you to see some leadership examples in this. People who don't have the authority to lead will seek to become the leaders through establishing policies. I call it managing from the middle. Okay? Some years ago, I'll give you some examples. And I'm just gonna make 'em up as I go, 'cause I'm really tired, and this sermon, this sermon is kinda getting made up as we go. I'll be honest with you. So, some years ago, there was a single mom came up to me and she had a need. So I went and I said, "Hey, the single mom's got a need. We're gonna help her." And I was told, "You can't do that." I was like, "Why?" They said, "We have a policy." I don't care about your policy. Do you have a verse? If you have a verse, then I care. I care about verses not policies, right? All policies need to be in pencil. Verses are in pen. Sometimes the policies need to change. But what these people had done, they had created a rule that bound all of us that we didn't know about or agreed to, and that meant that they were de facto the leader controlling the culture and making the decisions. How many of you know that HR is the Greek word for demon? How many of you know that? Okay? Right? Some of you are in HR, you're like, "This is the wrong church. I went to the wrong church. I feel very offended. Where do I fill out a form and give it to HR?" We don't have that. Okay, I'm just telling you. We need policies and procedures, but ultimately they cannot bind the leader. Daniel's gonna be the leader. And they realize he's going to get the helm of the ship. So what do they do? They go back to the rudder with policies and procedures so that they ultimately control covertly. Okay? Does this still happen? Oh yeah. Does it ever happen in church? Yeah. Yeah, it happens everywhere. And they are ultimately liars because they come to the king and they say, we talked to everybody. Everybody agrees 100%, unanimous vote. We're all in. You get to be God for a month. Did they really get everyone's buy-in? Did they get Daniel's, their boss? I guarantee you this, Daniel wasn't like, "Let's murder me." All in favor? Here's the point, a good leader makes a bad decision with the wrong information. Leadership lesson. A good leader makes a bad decision with the wrong

information. The leader here is King Darius. He's a decent leader. He's definitely better than the guys that came before him, but ultimately he gets bad information. Sometimes as a leader, you think, I'm a good leader, or we've got a good leadership team. Misinformation leads to the wrong decision. How many of you, let's just, let's take it down to a micro leadership environment. How many of you are parents? How many of you, your kids have told you something, but they didn't totally tell you all that was needing to be told? And they wanted you to rush to a decision, or a conclusion, or an edict. I still remember when my kids were little, one of the boys came running in, and just so you know, usually the first kid to show up is the criminal knock the victim. Usually it's the criminal not the victim that shows up first. A little parenting lesson. One of my kids runs in, he's like, "Oh, my brother stole my truck. I was playing with a big truck and he took it." Misinformation, okay? Wants me to rush to a conclusion. So I go in. "Did you steal the truck?" "Yeah, I took his truck. Why? He was hitting me over the head with it." Oh, that's a variable. That's a variable. That's assault. That's a crime. This is self-defense. Okay, and I won't tell you which kid it was. But ultimately, misinformation can lead to the wrong conclusion. They bring him misinformation. This isn't true. That's why as leaders, sometimes we need to literally go get our own information. We need to go find out the facts for ourselves and not just trust the information that is given to us. And here's their thought. Okay, we've got a new empire, a new nation, all kinds of people. They've been plundered and overtaken. We need some unity. So for a month, pull everybody together. Let's start a new religion for the king. How many of you, you'd be like, that is a pretty good idea? I don't need to be God forever, but like a month seems about right, okay? Let's just rewrite all the songs on the radio about me. Okay? Let's just, let's have people accept me in their heart. That's sounds good. All right so, what their establishing is, King, you get to be God for a month, get to be God for a month. And then at the end, if people still want to worship you they can, but they don't have to. You're a very flexible guy. How many of you, honestly, if you could be God for a month, you're like, well, I'd be okay with that if that's what the people need. I'm here to serve them, right? I mean it's. So King Darius kinda gets suckered into this. They bring his pride into play. He signs it, and the law of the Medes and the Persians, 'cause they're trying to establish a nation of laws, once a law sign and written, it's irreversible. It's like the word of God. Okay, you just need to know this. The only thing that we see as the law of the Medes and the Persian is the word of God. Once God writes it, you can't edit it, alter it, or change it, okay? And they're thinking in biblical terms, but they don't know the God of the Bible. So rather than following his laws, they're making their own laws, and they're trying to treat their laws like the word of God. Let me just tell you this. Your rules, your laws, your preferences are not the word of God. That they can and should be changed. Now the word of God is perfect, endures forever, needs no alteration. The problem here though, they're treating their laws like the Bible. They don't see the difference. And once something is enacted into law, you can't change it. Well, we're imperfect, our laws are imperfect, our God is perfect, and his laws are perfect. So the story then continues, and Daniel is under great duress. And he has to respond with either faith in his God or fear in his circumstances, same is always true of you and I. When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. That's where Jesus is going to come. That's where his faith is pointed. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had, here's the key, done previously. This was his habit. Then

these men came by agreement, found Daniel. How did they find Daniel? They're following him around. Found Daniel making petition and plea before his God. Then they came near and said before the king, concerning the injunction, "O king! Did you not sign an injunction," Here come the politicians. "That anyone who makes petition to any God or man within 30 days except to you, O King, shall be cast into the den of lions?" The king answered and said, "The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked." Then Daniel answered and said before the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, he pays no attention to you King, or the injunction you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day." Breakfast lunch and dinner this guy prays. A lot of nerve. Then the king, when he heard these words, was much distressed, set his mind to deliver Daniel. He labored till the sun went down. He is freaking out. He likes Daniel. Daniel's helpful to him, to rescue him. Sometimes you have a god-sized problem, and only God can save you. Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, "Know O king, that it is the law of the Medes and the Persians." Right, says right here, article four section two, "that no injunction or ordinance that the king establishes can be changed." Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The king declared to Daniel, this is his hope from the heart, "May your God whom you serve continually." Daniel has character continually because he prays to God continually. "May your God whom you serve continually deliver you." A stone was brought and laid over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel. Then the king went to his palace, spent the night fasting, couldn't even eat, no diversions, cancel my schedule, no diversions were brought to him, and sleep fled from him. He was up all night. That law gets put into place. The exclusive goal is to bind the freedom of believers to worship God freely. Some things never change. Darius cannot undo what he has done, but he regrets what he has done. Daniel has a few options. Let's just look at the options. I've got a few written down. Let's just do this. What were Daniel's, I got nothing else to do. What were Daniel's options? Just speak freely. He could run. That's it, I'm out. I've been here 70 years, I'm done. He could obey. He could be like, you know what, for 30 days I'll backslide. I'll just, I'll just worship the king, this new religion, and then when 30 days are over, I'm sure that the God who loves me will take me back. I could just backslide for 30 days. What else could he do? He could deny. He could protest, throw a fit, get a PR firm, get a hashtag, turn himself into a mortar, get some t-shirts made, have a parade. What else could he do? He could compromise. Be like, okay for 30 days, wear reversible jersey. I'll pray to God at home in the closet, publicly I'll be like, yay! Yay, King Darius! He could be a hypocrite. He could be a compromised hypocrite. What else could he do? He could kill himself. Well, they're going to put me in the lion's den. I could save 'em a trip. Or, he could do what he always does. I've been praying every day, my whole life. I'm praying today. We're going to kill you. That's fine. I know where I'm going. You can't scare me. I don't live in a Scooby-Doo episode. I have faith. All right? And how many of you have seen this in the kid's storybook Bible, that Daniel looks like what age of a person? He looks like a young guy. He's not. He didn't skateboard to the Lion's den. He's in a walker. He's like, I'll get there. He's going to, right? He's hauling an oxygen tank. He's done. He's near the end. He's an old guy. A couple of things here. Sometimes you get in trouble for doing the right thing. Now, let me just say this. I've gotten in trouble a few times. It wasn't always for the right thing. I'll just say that. But sometimes you get in

trouble for doing the right thing. Right? You were honest, and it got you in trouble. You came clean with your faith at the public university, and lo and behold, they didn't like the position in your paper. All right? your boss told you to do something, but it would have violated your conscience, so you said no, so they said, you're fired. The Bible's not just about what happened but about what always happens. So we pull back. Here, Daniel loves worship, serves God, and blesses others. Politicians want to create laws to restrict him from living according to his biblical convictions. Does this still happen? Oh yeah. Yeah. How many of you have got a kid in university? As soon as you set foot at a state university, you can basically take most of your constitutional rights, set them on fire. Not freedom of speech, safe zones. That's hate speech. Right, I think you're going to hell. You hate me. No I don't. If I didn't love you, I wouldn't tell you you're going to hell. Actually telling you that God has a problem with you, is the most loving thing I can do. It's not cuz I hate you. It's because I love you. Freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of assembly. And what happens is, people try and enact laws to capture the next generation and to brainwash them into conforming to the spirit of the age rather than being conformed to the spirit of God. Give you an example, any of your parents with kids in school, little guys? Any of you? Any of you a little freaked out about where some of the curriculum is going? Okay? I'll give you an example. Some years ago some friends of ours out of state had a junior high-ish middle school teenage daughter, and it was spirit week at school. So the kids get dressed up. Right? So like one day, Monday's like '80s day. So you get dressed up like the '80s, or as I call it, getting dressed. Okay, so, it's the '80s. One of the days was transgender day. Uh-oh. Get dressed up in different clothes, and maybe try a different bathroom, or a different locker room. How many of you dads, you're like, uh, no, no.? Let me just say, if this doesn't bother you, you're a horrible father. That's what I'm saying. Okay? 'Cause like if your daughter's in the bathroom or the locker room, and guys come in there like, "I'm just trying out options today," that's not an option. I'm her dad. I love her. I'll do prison ministry from the inside before this becomes a thing. Okay? So the parents, the parents call the school. They're like, "Yeah, 80's day, good. This other day, we're not super comfortable with that. Neither is our daughter. She has a test that day, needs to be in school. We don't want it to hurt her grades. Are there any options?" School counselor said, and I quote, "You could raise her to be a bigot." Okay. So, we're leading from the middle. The point is, should the state or the parent have the right to raise the child? See, the answer now is the state. I would say, I never seen a state make a baby. I don't think that's who God picked to love and raise that kid. Like when did the state overtake the parents rights? If the parents know and love the Lord, and the state wants to undo that, why did they have authority? Because somebody got into the position of policy. Guys, this is where faith, freedom, and family are incredibly important. This is where we need people like Daniel to be in governmental positions to represent our God with integrity and with character, but to hopefully fight for the right of others to worship God freely. Okay, what Daniel is doing here is very, very important. It's very, very significant. And the same spirit still exist today. Well the three reactions to Daniel being thrown in the lion's den. King Darius, does he have faith or fear? Fear. He can't sleep, can't eat, up all night, grabbing the attorneys. Okay, let's go through this. Is there any loophole? Fear. The politicians, did they have faith or fear? They have faith in who? Themselves. They're like, we got this all buttoned up. We got good lawyers. We got everything buttoned up. We got the contracts signed. We got the PR plan in place. We got the surveillance

underway. We've got all the evidence. We have everything. We're all buttoned up. We have faith in us in our plan. Daniel has faith in God. You're either going to have fear, faith in yourself, or faith in your God. Those are your only options, friend. Daniel has faith in his God. Does this mean that his God has to deliver him? No, he doesn't know that. Daniel doesn't say, my God does lion dens. I'm not worried about this. Daniel knows, either God's going to deliver me through it, or he's going to deliver me by it. He's gonna get me through the lion's den, or I'm gonna die and stand before God for judgment. End here, well done, good and faithful servant. So either way, I'm gonna make it to the other side, and God is going to be there waiting for me. Ultimately, he is mentioned twice in Ezekiel chapter 14, who is a contemporary, along with Job and Noah as men of tremendous faith. Right, faith is tested under crisis. Faith is tested under impossible circumstances where you have a god-sized problem. Couple of things I wanna talk about prayer here. Daniel is sustained by prayer, okay? Your car needs gas. Your lungs need air. Your soul needs prayer. Number one, your faith must be public and is not just private. Daniel would of had no trouble if his faith was totally private. Jesus lives in my heart, not in my life. Jesus is in my house, but he's not in my job. Is there still pressure to have a private but not public faith? It is, because in our world, sometimes we get a little opposition. Sometimes people just think you're weird. Amen? How many of you, before you were Christian, felt that Christians were weird? Let's be honest, I did. Literally early as a new Christian, I was like Lord, okay, I like my sins being forgiven. Please don't make me Ned Flanders. Like I just. Let me just say this. Christians are weird. And so is everybody else. We're just weird different. We just are. But how many of you, even just carrying a Bible around makes you feel a little uncomfortable, a little weird, it's public? I felt it this morning. I get up early, and I go to a coffee shop to prepare my sermon, or go over the notes, and always walking with this big old Bible. And everybody's looking at me, and they're like, "What the heck? That's a big book, weird guy." The nice thing is, if you want a little privacy, just carry one of these around. Nobody's going to talk to you. I have proven this on flights. I get on flights before and people want to talk to me. And I just say, "Hey, can you put this on my . Earbuds go in. I get a whole flight of silence. But Daniel here realizes these people don't know my God, and they need to know that I know God so if they wanna know about God they'll ask me. I'll give you an example. Some years ago I was a young pastor doing a hospital visit. Somebody was in the emergency room. And so I was going to do a hospital visit, and I felt like God spoke to me and said, "Bring your big Bible." Now I have little Bibles too. Same content, big and little Bible. And I'm like, "Lord, no. I wanna bring the little Bible that goes in my pocket so I don't look like a weirdo at the hospital." Okay and I'm a Bible teacher, but I felt a little weird about bringing a dead cow and some murdered trees. I mean, it seems like a lot. And so, hang in there. So I grabbed my big Bible, but in defiance I also grabbed my little Bible. I was like, I'll bring them both. So I'm in the truck, I'm in a truck, I'm in a truck and the Holy Spirit shows up because he likes trucks. And he showed up in the truck. And I kid you not, I'm in the truck and God spoke to me and said, "Bring the big Bible into the hospital." And I had the big Bible and the little Bible on my dash. I was like, "Lord, I'm bringing the little Bible. You should just be glad I'm bringing a Bible. Like you should be glad." He's like, "Bring the big Bible." I said, "I'm not bringing." I literally sat on my truck and argued with God. I kid you not, I was like, "Okay fine." I grab the big Bible. I walk in. Everybody looks at me like I'm weird, which we all know I'm not. Obviously I'm not. I go up to the counter. I say, "Hey, I'm here to see so and so. I'm a

pastor." That gets you cuts in line to go see 'em. Just so you know. And so, I turn around. They said, "Okay, wait over there, and we'll go get them." I turn around. A woman from Africa is waiting in the emergency room. I kid you not. She looks at me. She gets very emotional. She starts crying. She's like, are you the man of God? I was like, apparently not. Like I just. She came up to me, and she said, "I just prayed that God would send me a man of God." I was like, "Oh." So while I am arguing, she's praying to a God she doesn't know. I wasn't convicted. I should of been praying. I sat down. She said, "I need to talk to you right now." She said, "I'm here to get a pregnancy test. I've committed adultery on my husband. I think I'm pregnant with another man's baby. And if I'm pregnant, I'm going to about the baby today." She said, "But I feel bad about doing that, and I didn't know what to do. And so I prayed to God. And I said, God, please send me a man of God." And she said, "When I saw the big Bible I knew that God answered my prayer." So I told her. I said, "Jesus loves you. He'll forgive you. I don't know how it's gonna work out with your husband. Don't punish the child." I literally believed that the life of an unborn baby was spared just because I carried the big Bible. Okay? Sometimes we don't want our faith to be public because they'll think we're weird, but we need our faith to be public because that's our witness. Okay? I'm willing to be considered weird by some people so that I can witness to other people. That's Daniel. He goes home to pray like he always does. His house is high up, and he opens the windows, and he kneels. You know what this, everybody could see this guy. He's not hiding. He's not in a closet. If everybody else is gonna be proud of their lifestyle, don't be ashamed of yours. Okay? That's the story and the moral of Daniel.

Number two, second principle on prayer. When others look down on you, look up to God. They're looking down on Daniel. Daniel goes up and looks up to God. number three, your character is only as strong as your prayer life. The reason that he has character for 70 years is 'cause he has a regular prayer life for 70 years. Prayer is how you march into battle and march through your battle. That's what is going to do. The only remedy, number five, for panic is prayer. How many of you would be freaking out? He doesn't panic. He prays. Prayer is the only thing that gets us through something that should cause us panic. Number six, when there's nothing you can do, there's always one thing you can do. You could pray. It's free. God's office is never closed. Never get a business signal when you call. All right? When there's nothing you can do, there's one thing you can always do. You can pray. God even knows your thoughts, and he knows what you're thinking. So you don't even need to have verbalization. All you need to have is just a recognition of who God is, and you can talk to him. And number seven, prayer is not as much about God changing the future as it is God preparing you for your future. Most of the time we pray and we're like, God, I see where it's going. Fix it! Change it now! I don't like it! And the people I like, prayer didn't work! I'm disappointed with God! God failed me! No, no, he was preparing you for the future. God doesn't sit in heaven and go, "What should we do? Please tell me?" God is not in heaven going, "What's gonna happen? Please give me an update." God knows what's gonna happen. God knows what needs to be done. God knows you're gonna go through it. So you're like, "Good change it!" He's like, "No, no, no, wrong prayer." God change me. Okay, that's the right one. God prepares you to go through, and he doesn't want you to simply declare to him the future that you determine you deserve. Okay? Prayer prepares you. God doesn't need, here's the point, God doesn't need prayer. You do. God doesn't need prayer. You do. So can I offend you? I will either way. I just say that, so it feels more inclusive. So would

your current prayer life get you in trouble if you were Daniel? Would your current prayer life get you in trouble if you were Daniel? If not, you need to work on your prayer life. You need to work on your prayer life. So what's gonna happen? Then at daybreak the King arose early in the morning, went in haste. He's running. He's worried. He loves Daniel. As he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish. The king declared to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God whom you serve continually." He has continuous character because of continuous prayer and continuous devotion to God. Hard times expose who we really are. He really is a godly man. "Has the God whom you serve continually been able to deliver you from the Lions?" He's running. Then Daniel said to the king. This had to be awesome. Yep, all good. Hope you brought coffee. Then Daniel said to the king, "O King, live forever!" We all do, heaven or hell. "My God sent his angel, shut the lion's mouths, and they have not harmed me because I was found blameless before him, and also before you, O king. I have done no harm." I want good for you. My God loves you too. Then the king was exceedingly glad, and commanded that 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. Faith not fear leads to deliverance not destruction. And the king commanded, and those men who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and cast into the den of lions. And they didn't put this in the children's Bible. You read your dear little one at bedtime, "Oh, they delivered Daniel. And then their wives and children were thrown in and eaten." How many of you are like, "I'm not telling my kid that. They'll be up all night." And before they reach the bottom of the den, the lions were overpowered and broke them and all their bones into pieces. Some people say the lions weren't hungry. Yes, they were. This big pit holds hungry lions. Daniel gets thrown in, delivered. And then those who don't know God get destroyed. The moral of the story is, you only get delivered if you know God. If you don't know God, you get destroyed. This is the precursor and a foreshadowing of the eternal state, heaven and hell. So if you are here, you say how do I get delivered instead of destroyed? You need Daniel's God. Not only did Daniel go to Babylon to make God known, Jesus came from heaven to Earth to make God seen and known. Jesus Christ is Daniel's God. Jesus Christ is Daniel's deliverer. Jesus Christ is the only one who can save him. That ultimate you will die, they would throw your body in a pit, we call it a grave, and you will experience eternal deliverance or eternal destruction. It all comes down to whether or not you worship, believe in, belong to Daniel's God, the Lord Jesus Christ. So I love ya. I want you to make the most important decision you will ever make, and that is who your God is. Daniel is faithful to God, and Jesus comes to show that God is faithful to us. So when we place our faith in a faithful God, we are secure, guaranteed eternal deliverance instead of destruction. If you don't know Jesus, you need to give your life to Jesus right now. If you don't believe in Jesus, you need to start believing in Jesus right now. That ultimately, Daniel was delivered because he belonged to Jesus. And the only way you will be delivered and not destroyed is if you also belong to Jesus Christ. Now that being said, he says that God sent his angel to deliver me. Just in generally, who's this angel? Angel literally means messenger. It's one who brings a message on behalf of God. Sometimes in the Old Testament, an angel of the Lord refers to any divine being that God sends on mission. The angel of the Lord in the Old Testament usually is Jesus coming off his throne in heaven and entering into human history, and he's worshiped, and recognized, and acknowledged as God. Here it says, his angel. Maybe it's an angel. Maybe it's

Jesus. I don't know. One commentator says that interestingly, he said, maybe the lions were ruled by the lion of the tribe of Judah. Then maybe the lion of the tribe of Judah showed up in the lion's den, sat with Daniel, the Lord Jesus Christ. And the lion's thought, we're not messing with that lion. There's an old preacher, one of my favorites, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, he preached in London. And he said, the reason that maybe the lion's didn't eat Daniel is he was all backbone and gristle. He's beef jerky. That's what he is. He's not, he's tough. I thought that was good. Let me ask you this question. Does God still deliver? Yes, he does. Does God still destroy? Yes, he does. This is where when we tell the story, we only tell the deliverance part, not the destruction part. These men and their families were thrown into the pit and devoured by the lions. In that culture, the day that you were sentenced was the day that the sentence was enacted to have justice. And if you committed a particularly heinous crime, your wife and kids would be punished with you. All of this was to discourage evil doing. If what you do is going to result in consequences immediately for you and your family, it discourages evil behavior. We could look at them and say, that's very brutal. I'm not sure that our culture is any better. Let me speak briefly to the men. Are these women and children seemingly guilty of anything? Don't seem to be. They didn't even enter the story. They weren't part of this as far we know. Men, you and I make decisions that punish our wives and children. Men do this all the time. Make spiritual decisions, make moral decisions, make sexual decisions, make financial decisions, make business decisions. Men make decisions, and the punishment comes upon the wives and the children in addition to the man. I have a heart for men. I love men. I think one of the greatest things we can do for women and children is to have men filled with the spirit of God so they live in obedience, and they're a blessing to women and children. Okay? You men need to see this. Statistically, if a man converts, so do his wife and kids. If a man reads his Bible, prays, worships God, tithes, serves, partakes in communion, so does his family. And the inverse is true. If you don't walk with God, your family doesn't walk with God. If you don't love God, your family doesn't love God. They follow you, friend, oftentimes, even statistically, into deliverance or destruction, okay? But does our God still deliver? Yes. How many of you, God has delivered you literally from a pit where it felt like you were surrounded by lions? Like literally, you got thrown in a hole you couldn't get out of. You're like, "I don't know how to get out of this." And then you feel surrounded by things beyond your control, and everything seems to be determined to devour you. How many of you have been there, and God delivered you? And you're like, "He did it." How many of you right now literally this pit, lion situation, is what you're in. And you're wondering, can God get me out? Here's what I'll tell you. God can get you out. I can't give you a promise. I can't make God do something because he's free. But from the story of Daniel, he gets delivered from a pit. There's another guy named Joseph who gets delivered from a pit. There's another guy named Jesus who gets delivered from a pit. So God seems to be capable of this repeatedly. Okay? And I'll testify. I was thinking about it today driving in. There was a season where literally our family was thrown in a pit and surrounded with lions. Shadow government, lies, betrayal, all kinds of corruption, and horror. Worst season of our whole life, and God delivered us. God delivered us. We got out. We're okay. We're like, hey, we're lion free. In the middle of that, I just feel inclined to share it with you. It's just something that just came to mind. I still remember, I was in the middle of it. Literally it's like I feel like I'm living in the lion's den. That everything around, everyone around is seeking to devour and destroy. And I remember sitting in

the living room by myself praying to God, and I was fearful. I'll be honest. I was freaked out. I was worried. My daughter came up to me. She was 10 or 11 at the time, something like that. She could see I was distressed. I was sitting in my chair. She came up and she said, "Daddy, I know what's going to happen." I said, "What's that." She said, "Well, Daniel and Joseph," and she started going through people thrown in the pit. She said, "There's other people that were in the pit, and God got them out and blessed them." And she said, "He's gonna get us out of the pit, and he's going to bless us, okay?" I took that as a prophetic word from my little girl cause she's in the pit with me. That somehow she's petting lions, and I'm freaking out. But God can and does still deliver. Okay? He can and does still deliver. And the key is, will you respond with courage or compromise? Okay? Concludes with this. Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, languages that dwell in the Earth. He sends out a national decree. Peace be multiplied to you. I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring forever, his kingdom shall never be destroyed, his dominion shall be to the end. He delivers. The non-Christians are learning about Jesus here. He delivers and rescues, he works signs and wonders in heaven and on Earth, he who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions. So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian. This is the beginning of the return of God's people 700 miles back to their homeland in Israel so that Jesus could in fact come. Does Daniel show courage or compromise? Courage. Courage is infectious. So is fear. If you are afraid, everybody gets afraid. If you are courageous, other people get courageous. To encourage someone literally means to pour courage into them. You're like, I'm full of courage. Do you need some? Yes, I do. Let me pour some in you. All it takes is one person to have the courage to say and do what is right in the sight of God with a humble heart and a loving disposition, and all of a sudden other people start to borrow their faith until they receive courage. Daniel has courage. To live in this world, to live in this world, you my friend are going to need courage, but courage is infectious. Your family, your friends, your brothers and sisters in Christ, they can borrow that courage until they grow their own. King Darius then follows. He had fear. Now he has courage. He has enough. We don't know if he converted. Jesus can sort that all out in the end, but ultimately he has the courage to tell everyone the first decree I sent out was to worship me as God. I've edited that. My next decree is, please don't worship me. Worship Daniel's God. Worship Daniel's God. Daniel demonstrates courage and faith. Let me ask you a question. In his lifetime, does he see massive revival? No. He doesn't get his Billy Graham stadium altar call moment. I love Dr. Billy Graham. Daniel doesn't get the same results. He doesn't get to go on tour and preach, and have many devote themselves to the love of God. He has a few converts along the way. The moral of the story is, your courage is not to be successful. Your courage is to be faithful. Okay? You may not get the results you want, but you're becoming the person that God wants. Okay? So do what is right and leave the results up to God. That's the example of Daniel. What if Daniel would have compromised? They wouldn't have seen his courage, and he would not have given God an opportunity to deliver him. Too many of us are trying to save ourselves. Not just from Satan's sin, death, hell, the wrath of God, but pain, inconvenience, unemployment, conflict. We have all kinds of things we're trying to save ourselves from. And he does what is right, and he lets God be the one to be the one to determine his future and his faith. That being said, everybody's watching. And so, his test is part of his testimony. Your test is part of your

testimony. It's how those who know you and are watching you are gonna learn about the character of your God through your relationship with him and his provision for you. That's the story of Daniel. Let me say this. Darius, in this amazing instance, has an opportunity to tell the world who Daniel's God is. This is why we pray for leaders. This is why we seek to have believers be University professors, and lawyers, and we want to be in places of influence not so that we can control, but that we can communicate who our God is so that others will trust that he is in control. So Darius here, he tells us some things about God. Number one, he says that the god of Daniel, the Lord Jesus Christ is global, all peoples, nations, languages, and all the Earth. He says that Jesus Christ, Daniel's God, is personal, the living God. that Daniel's God the Lord Jesus Christ is eternal, enduring forever. That Daniel's God, the Lord Jesus Christ is King, and his kingdom shall never be destroyed. He says that Daniel's God, the Lord Jesus Christ is good, he delivers, and he rescues. He says that Daniel's God, the Lord Jesus Christ is both transcendent over his history and imminent, actively intimately involved in it. Says, he works signs and wonders in heaven and on Earth. Daniel's God, the Lord Jesus Christ, is declared savior. Quote, he saved Daniel. And that Jesus Christ, Daniel's God is generous. Daniel prospered. Now let me say this. You may or may not prosper in this life, but Daniel went from a pit to a palace. Daniel went from a pit to a palace. If your God and Savior is Jesus Christ, life on this Earth is your pit. And one day they will dig another pit, they will throw your body in it, and Jesus will take you to his palace. So ultimately the journey of Daniel is the journey for all of the children of God. Let me speak some truth Over you, put some courage in you. Jesus is Daniel's God, and Jesus is the greater Daniel. Daniel and Jesus both had jealous political leaders drum up false charges to arrest and kill them. Daniel and Jesus had a senior political leader declare them innocent and faultless. Daniel and Jesus had a senior political leader try and spare their death sentence. Daniel and Jesus were both thrown into a pit and left for dead. Daniel and Jesus both had their pit covered with a large stone. Daniel and Jesus had the stone covering their pit protected with a government seal. Daniel and Jesus both had loving friends run to their tomb early in the morning. Daniel and Jesus both raised up from the pit and assumed a position at second and command over an entire kingdom. And Daniel eventually died, but Jesus defeated death, and one day Daniel will get out of his tomb to be with Jesus who got out of his tomb to be together in the palace forever. Here's what I want you to know, Jesus Christ saves. Jesus Christ stops the mouths of lions. Jesus Christ is bigger than political parties. Jesus Christ is bigger than erroneous political laws. Jesus Christ can conquer death. Jesus Christ can raise the dead. Jesus Christ is a king with a kingdom. He is coming again to establish his kingdom, and he will call all of his children from their pit, and he will place them in his palace. That's our Jesus. Amen? Let me pray, and we're going to worship. Worship is how we respond to the actions and the declarations of our God. Lord Jesus, we confess, you are God. We confess you are king. We confess that you are savior. We confess that you are deliverer. We confess that you are forgiver. Lord Jesus, you were so faithful to Daniel. Lord Jesus, you're so faithful to us. Let us like Daniel be filled with the spirit. Let us like Daniel, have courage in the midst of adversity. Let us like Daniel sit in our pit very peacefully. Lord Jesus, we thank you that you are our God. We thank you that when we have a god-sized problem, we have our God who is more than big enough for that problem. And Lord God, we thank you that right now Daniel is having a great day. He's hanging out with Jesus. He don't regret being faithful. He don't regret taking time

to pray. He don't regret sharing his testimony. Lord God, prepare us for the day when we meet Daniel and see Jesus. In his name we pray. Amen.