

Dream Weaver

1. Warm-up: If you could ask only one question of a Magic 8 Ball, and you knew the answer would be accurate, what would you ask?

2. Daniel 2 tells of a time King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream about a statue with a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, abdomen and thighs of bronze, and lower legs and feet of iron mixed with clay. In the dream, a huge bolder struck the feet of the statue and it crumbled. The dream distressed the king and left him desperate to know what it meant. That's where we pick up the story. Read Daniel 2:1-19.
 - a. The king refused to tell his dream to his wise men. Instead he demanded that they tell him what he dreamed, so he could have confidence they also had the power to interpret it. When the wise men told the king he was asking the impossible, he flew into rage and decreed that they all be executed. Have you ever had to deal with someone like that – maybe a boss, teacher, parent, or other person – who demanded the impossible and was easily enraged? How did that make you feel?

 - b. Daniel and all of Babylon's wise men found themselves in an impossible situation. It's a common human experience. Life often grabs us by the collar and puts us in a place we don't want to be, as forces greater than us sweep us into dark and difficult places from which there seems no escape. We feel trapped and powerless, like Admiral McRaven felt during Hell Week in Navy Seal training when and his peers had to stand shoulder deep in wet, freezing mud for an entire night. What experience in your life does the mud pit remind you of?

3. When King Nebuchadnezzar issued his execution decree, all the wise men of Babylon gave up, fell into despair, and accepted their doom. But not Daniel; he was different. Daniel had hope because he believed, "There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. God reveals deep and hidden things; God knows what is in the darkness." Daniel 2:22, 28. This is the first thing we learned from Daniel 2 about how we should respond in times of distress: **Never give up hope!**
 - a. Jeff told a parable about the devil's yard sale. The most expensive tool in the devil's yard sale was Discouragement. The Devil said, "When I can't bring down my victims with any of my other tools, I use discouragement because so few people realize it belongs to me. It's my favorite tool." Why is discouragement such a deadly weapon against us?

 - b. James Kennedy said, "What really matters is what happens in us, not to us." What do you think he means? Do you agree with him? Why or why not?

 - c. What's something you're discouraged about in your life right now? Describe what it would look like to reset your inner compass. Describe the negative thoughts and feelings you're experiencing right now and what kinds of thoughts and feelings you need to cultivate instead.

4. When Daniel heard about the king's decree, he swung into action. "[Daniel sent a message to the king,] requesting that the king give him time and he would tell the king the interpretation. Then Daniel went [back] to his home and informed his companions, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his companions with the rest of the wise men of Babylon might not perish. Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision in the night." Daniel 2:16.
 - a. Jeff asked us to notice how Daniel prayed in this situation. He didn't ask God to miraculously get him out of the situation by changing the king's mind or showing Daniel a way to escape Babylon. Instead Daniel ask God to miraculously show him the way through the situation. So instead of telling God what to do (get me out of this!), Daniel asked God for the wisdom and insight he needed to get through it. This is the second great lesson from Daniel 2 – **In times of distress, instead of telling God what to do, ask God what to do!** Pick a random circumstance in your life. Then give us an example of a prayer telling God what to do in that circumstance, and an example of a prayer asking God what to do.
 - b. Jeff challenged us to spend at least half our prayer time asking questions of God, rather than giving God instructions. This is called Dialogue Prayer. See the outline of how to do Dialogue Prayers on p. 3. How do you feel about this way of praying? What do you like about it? What do you dislike? Do you feel you would benefit from more of this type of prayer? Why or why not?
 - c. When we listen to God in prayer, how can we be confident that what we're hearing is, in fact, from God?
 - d. Can you think of a time when you were facing great uncertainty and desperate for answers and pleaded with God to for wisdom and insight? Do you feel God responded? If so, what did you sense God saying to you?

5. Doing what Daniel did – believing that God will give wisdom when we ask – requires a lot of faith. It requires faith that God knows better than we do and that God cares enough about us to speak into our lives. This was the third lesson from Daniel 2 – **In times of distress, believe that God will speak to you. Believe you matter to God!**
 - a. Hebrews 12:6 says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God, for those who come to God must believe that God is and is the rewarder of those who seek God." What do you think that verse means? Why is it impossible to please God if we don't believe God rewards those who seek? What's the connection there?
 - b. Stories of times when God clearly intervenes in our life to give us signs and messages are powerful reminders that we are not alone and that God is just a prayer away. Jeff shared a Brent Walsh story about how God guided his Mom on a dark night when they desperately needed gas. Have you ever experienced something like that – a time when God's hand was written all over a situation?

Daniel 2:1-19

In the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed such dreams that his spirit was troubled and his sleep left him. ²So the king commanded that the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans be summoned to tell the king his dreams. When they came in and stood before the king, ³he said to them, 'I have had such a dream that my spirit is troubled by the desire to understand it.' ⁴The Chaldeans said to the king (in Aramaic), 'O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will reveal the interpretation.' ⁵The king answered the Chaldeans, 'This is a public decree: if you do not tell me both the dream and its interpretation, you shall be torn limb from limb, and your houses shall be laid in ruins. ⁶But if you do tell me the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. Therefore tell me the dream and its interpretation.' ⁷They answered a second time, 'Let the king first tell his servants the dream, then we can give its interpretation.' ⁸The king answered, 'I know with certainty that you are trying to gain time, because you see I have firmly decreed: ⁹if you do not tell me the dream, there is but one verdict for you. You have agreed to speak lying and misleading words to me until things take a turn. Therefore, tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can give me its interpretation.' ¹⁰The Chaldeans answered the king, 'There is no one on earth who can reveal what the king demands! In fact no king, however great and powerful, has ever asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or Chaldean. ¹¹The thing that the king is asking is too difficult, and no one can reveal it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with mortals.'

¹² Because of this the king flew into a violent rage and commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be destroyed. ¹³The decree was issued, and the wise men were about to be executed; and they looked for Daniel and his companions, to execute them. ¹⁴Then Daniel responded with prudence and discretion to Arioch, the king's chief executioner, who had gone out to execute the wise men of Babylon; ¹⁵he asked Arioch, the royal official, 'Why is the decree of the king so urgent?' Arioch then explained the matter to Daniel. ¹⁶So Daniel went in and requested that the king give him time and he would tell the king the interpretation.

¹⁷ Then Daniel went to his home and informed his companions, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, ¹⁸and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his companions with the rest of the wise men of Babylon might not perish. ¹⁹Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night, and Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

Dialogue Prayer

Write or speak aloud
Describe the situation to God
Ask questions of God
Listen and sense God's response
Write down what you hear or speak it aloud
Ponder it; do you sense this is from God?
Keep your antenna up as you proceed; keep listening