

## ET Phone Home

1. Warm-up: We live in a dangerous world. On Sunday, Jeff told the story of a young woman who survived after falling two miles when a plane broke apart. What's the scariest thing you've ever faced?
2. In our Bible story this week, Daniel found himself in grave danger. Ancient kings often saw themselves as divine. King Darius issued a decree mandating that, for thirty days, no one should pray to anyone but him, and any who disobeyed would be thrown into a den of lions. Read Daniel 6:1-10, as printed on p. 3.
  - a. Note that the King's decree did not require anyone to pray; it simply said that, if you pray, it must be to the King, So Daniel had options. He could have . . .
    - Prayed to the King for 30 days.
    - Temporarily stopped praying to anyone for 30 days.
    - Prayed in secret to the God of Israel during the 30-day period.
    - Continued praying to the God of Israel at his window facing Jerusalem.

Look inside yourself and be as honest as you can with yourself. If you were in Daniel's situation, which option do you think you would have chosen?

- b. Why do you think Daniel didn't choose the second or third option? Why was it important to him to continue praying at the window facing Jerusalem?
3. Prayer was apparently more important to Daniel than life itself. It was his #1 priority. But why? Why was Daniel willing to risk everything to keep praying? Jeff suggested four vital benefits of prayer. **Benefit 1: Prayer is how we decompress.**
  - a. Life is full of stress. If you were to chart your stress level for the past week, with 5 being major stress and 0 being no stress, what was your stress range this past week? What caused the most stress for you this past week?
  - b. Do you personally find prayer to be a good way to decompress? If so, explain what you do in prayer that relieves your stress? Why do you think doing that helps relieve your stress – what is happening in your soul and psyche?
4. **Benefit 2: Prayer is how we gain divine insight.**
  - a. Can you think of something you recently worked through in prayer with God? Tell us about it. What insight did you gain?
  - b. Do you find prayer a better way to gain insight than conversations with people? If so, why? What's different about prayer?

5. **Benefit 3: Prayer is how we release God’s power into our life and world.** Jeff gave an example of how prayer miraculously triggered an \$8 million contribution of a cancer drug to an organization that helps impoverished children. The moment Dave Philips ended a prayer with a doctor asking God to show them how to obtain the cancer drug, he got a call from a pharmaceutical company offering that very drug. Share an example of a time when you’ve seen prayer accomplish something amazing.
  
6. **Benefit 4: Prayer is how we cultivate life’s most important relationship.** Jeff reminded us of the famous movie scene where ET points his finger to the sky and says, “ET phone home.” That scene resonates deeply, Jeff said, because most of us have a deep inner sense that we too are aliens separated from our Source. We long to reconnect to that Source. Do you think that’s an accurate assessment? Do you feel it? Does prayer ease that feeling for you and help satisfy that urge to connect?
  
7. Prayer is vital, yet life circumstances are constantly conspiring to keep us from prayer. For Daniel, it was a tyrant named Darius who tried to disrupt his prayer life. For us, it’s a tyrant named Time that tries to convince us that we’ve got so much to do, we don’t have time to pray. At some point, we (like Daniel) have to stand up to the tyrant and say, “STOP! You are not the boss of me! I will pray no matter what!”
  - a. For you personally, what’s the biggest obstacle to prayer? What role does “I’m too busy” play in keeping you from a meaningful prayer life?
  - b. Daniel scheduled his prayer life. For him it was three times per day, morning, noon, and night. We can learn from his example. If something is important, we schedule it. There are 1460 minutes in a day. What is (or would be) the best time of day for you to schedule 15 minutes of quality time to talk to God?
  - c. Jeff also suggested that we be intentional about Interstitial Prayers. Interstitial Prayer is when we snatch a moment here and there during the day to acknowledge God or think about God or say something to God or consciously share a moment with God. Do you practice Interstitial Prayer? Why is it meaningful to you?
  - d. What does Interstitial Prayer accomplish that Scheduled Prayer cannot? What does Scheduled Prayer accomplish that Interstitial Prayer cannot?
  
8. Read now the rest of the story, Daniel 6:11-24, as printed on p. 3.
  - a. The lions had no power over Daniel; his prayers were too powerful. But those same lions shredded his enemies. I Peter 5:8 says that “the devil prowls around as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” In Luke 22:31, Jesus warns Simon Peter that, “Satan has desired to sift all of you like wheat. But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail.” Jeff said, “Life wants to rip you apart. The only thing powerful enough to keep you from being torn apart by the stress and danger

of life is prayer.” What do you make of all that? Do you believe in Satan? Does it feel like Satan targets you? Do you believe prayer is your greatest defense?

b. How goes your prayer life at present? Do you need to make any adjustments?

## **Daniel 6:1-10**

It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom one hundred and twenty satraps, stationed throughout the whole kingdom, <sup>2</sup>and over them three presidents, including Daniel; to these the satraps gave account, so that the king might suffer no loss. <sup>3</sup>Soon 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. <sup>4</sup>So 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. <sup>5</sup>The 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.’

<sup>6</sup> So the presidents and satraps conspired and came to the king and said to him, ‘O King Darius, live forever! <sup>7</sup>All the presidents of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counsellors 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. <sup>8</sup>Now, 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.’ <sup>9</sup>Therefore King Darius signed the document and interdict.

<sup>10</sup> Although Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he continued to go to his house, which had windows in its upper room open towards 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.

## **Daniel 6:11-24**

<sup>11</sup>The conspirators came and found Daniel praying and seeking mercy before his God. <sup>12</sup>Then 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.’ <sup>13</sup>Then 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.’

<sup>14</sup> When 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. <sup>15</sup>Then 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.’

<sup>16</sup> Then 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!’ <sup>17</sup>A 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. <sup>18</sup>Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no food was brought to him, and sleep fled from him.

<sup>19</sup> Then, at break of day, the king got up and hurried to the den of lions. <sup>20</sup>When 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?’ <sup>21</sup>Daniel then said to the king, ‘O king, live forever! <sup>22</sup>My 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.’ <sup>23</sup>Then 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. <sup>24</sup>The 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.

