

Living Holy in a Godless World

The Life of Daniel

by Annette Gullick 12/1/2001

Lesson Two: Be Proactive

Bible Passage: Daniel 2: 1-23

Bible Truth: Daniel's trust in God resulted in action.

Lesson Objective: That students would choose to transform their faith in God into action.

Before You Begin:

- ◆ a chalkboard or large paper to write on
- ◆ pens
- ◆ copies of commitment contract

Opening:

Activity: Divide the students into groups of four. Explain the following scenario: There is a farmer who needs to carry across a river (point out where the river "is") a bag of grain, a fox, and a chicken. The problem is that the farmer can't leave the fox alone with the chicken or the chicken alone with the grain or they would eat them. Tell the groups to designate who will be the farmers, the foxes, the chickens, and the bags of grain. Each person must act out their part including if left alone, the foxes will "eat" the chickens and the chickens will "eat" the bags of grain. Give the students time to complete the exercise then ask:

- *What was your biggest frustration in this exercise?*
- *How did your group eventually solve the problem?*

[Note for leaders: Here is the solution. The farmer should carry the chicken to side B, leaving the fox alone with the grain. Then return to side A, bring the fox to side B but returning to side A with the chicken. Leave the chicken on side A, carry the grain to side B. Return for the chicken.]

Interactive Learning

Imagine that you are an advisor for the president of your country. One day he arrives at a meeting of his advisors and says, "I have been worrying a lot about trends in this new century and I want to know how those trends are going to affect the nation. Who can tell me?"

Someone asks, "Sir, which trends are you thinking of?"

The president gets up angrily, slams his hands on the table, and says, "You are supposed to be the most intelligent, most educated men in the whole country. You are supposed to tell me the trends. If you can't help me, you're all fired." Then he storms out of the office.

Break up into pairs and talk about what you would do in this situation.

When they have finished bring them back together and have each group explain tell what they would have done.

- *Which of these responses do you think is the best, and why?*
- *Did any of these responses consider what part your relationship with God could play in this situation? Which ones?*
- *How could this difficult situation bring glory to God?*

Someone said:

"There are three kinds of people in the world, those who make things happen, those who watch things happen and those who wonder what happened."

I don't know about you, but I don't want to come to the end of my life thinking that I just made a living. I want to have made a difference. Today we're going to look at a guy who made things happen and see what we can learn from him.

In our series, we're studying the life of Daniel looking for clues to help us live successful Christian lives in a pagan world. In chapter 2 of the book of Daniel we find him in a situation very much like the one we just mentioned, except that Daniel and the advisors weren't just going to lose their jobs. They were going to all lose their lives. Let's pray to ask God for wisdom as we look at how Daniel responded.

Pray or have someone lead in prayer.

Bible Application

Have them open their Bibles to Daniel chapter 2.

- *Daniel and his friends are in the king's court. How did they get to Babylon and get into this position? [If they don't remember the setting fill in whatever they are missing from the following information: Daniel has been carried away from his homeland, Israel, and serves as an advisor to King Nebuchadnezzar, ruler over the huge Babylonian empire.]*

At the time of this passage Daniel was probably still in his training program or just out of it, so he was a Junior advisor to the king. Have several students read verses 2:1-12 out loud, rotating readers every few verses (Hint: don't tell them ahead of time which verses they are going to read, so they are listening instead of looking ahead to see what they have to read.)

- *Why does the king want his advisors to tell him both the dream and the interpretation? (v. 9)*
- *In verse 11 who do the advisors say are the only ones who could know his dream?*

Have individual students read out loud verses 13-18.

In these few verses we find a model of putting our faith into action that we can apply to our own lives.

- ◆ *What is the first thing Daniel does when he hears the news? (v. 14,15. he asks questions to find out more details") Write on the poster board, overhead or blackboard: "Investigate the details."*
- ◆ *What is his next step in v. 16? (he goes in and talks to the king) Write: "Get involved."*
- ◆ *What Daniel does after he investigates the details and before he gets involved is the key to his success. What does he do? (v. 17-18 he not only prays about it, but also goes to his Christian friends and gets their help in praying about it too.) Write: "PRAY, and ask others to pray too."*

Read aloud 2:19-23 to find out what happened.

- *We see in these verses that God revealed the dream and its interpretation to Daniel in answer to prayer. How does Daniel respond? (v. 19 He gives credit and praise to God) Write: "Give the glory to God"*

This is not a foolproof series of steps to resolving any problem we face. Rather, they are important elements to help us be proactive in our lives, to help us put in to action the faith that we have in an all-powerful God. Just think what would have happened if Daniel had just said, "well I guess it's God's will that we all die." We see in the story of Daniel's life that God used very dangerous, even life threatening, situations to put Daniel into positions of influence and to show to the king and the whole Babylonian empire that the God of Israel is the one true God.

It is very important for us to see that, although the Bible is very clear that God is in control of the events of human history (this is a main message of the book of Daniel), life is not fatalistic. We can make a difference! The fact that a discouraging or tragic situation arises does not mean that God plans for things to stay that way. He often allows events so that His people can pray and see them change. Now let's reflect on how God wants us to make a difference in the world around us.

Commitment

- ◆ *In light of what we just said about God using His people to make changes in the world and glorify Himself, do you think that Christians should be involved working to solve problems they see around them and in the world?*
- ◆ *Do you think that in general people do or don't get involved in problems in their world?*

ILLUSTRATION:

At the beginning of the lesson we mentioned that there are three kinds of people in the world. Do you remember what they are? (Those who make things happen, those who watch things happen, and those who wonder what happened.) Let me tell you the story of a kid in today's world who encountered a tough situation and determined to make a difference.

When Jon Wagner-Holtz was nine years old, his mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. He and his family were devastated. After her surgery she had to take regular chemotherapy, which made her weak and sick at the stomach all the time. It made Jon really angry that his mom, being such a nice person, would get such an illness. She could tell he was hurting and sent him to a counselor, but it didn't help because he didn't like the idea of opening up to someone who had never gone through what he was going through. So he spent a lot of time alone in his room playing Legos.

His mom enjoyed going to a support group made up of other people fighting cancer. Then Jon got an idea: since many of these cancer patients had children who were hurting just like he was, why couldn't he start a support group for the children? So he did it.

He told a foundation about his dream and they gave him a little money to set up a twenty-four-hour hot line into his room. Kids started calling, opening up about their anger, sadness and fear. Around 100 kids called him and eight or nine of them called regularly. One weekend he invited the regular callers to his house to brainstorm about ways to start a support group. The kids interviewed some Psychologists and found one who could help oversee a support group. They didn't want him to run the show just to be there so that hurting kids could listen to each other, tell about their problems and give ideas for how they were coping. Thirty-two kids came to the first meeting and they continued to meet. Kids were helped. They felt they were no longer alone. By helping others, Jon felt better himself. They called their new organization "Kids Connected."

*They sent flyers to doctors to let as many kids as possible know about the meetings. Other chapters formed. More charities offered money. Six years later they've got eighteen chapters in twelve states, helping nearly 10,000 kids. They offer a summer camp, send Teddy Bears to kids in newly diagnosed families, started a grief workshop for those whose parents died. During his high school years he went to school in the morning and checked in to work for "Kids Konnected" at 12:30 PM. (Copyright Dec., 2001. Written by Steve Miller for the illustration database at www.reach-out.org. Source: *Teens With the Courage to Give*, by Jackie Waldman, Conari Press, Berkeley, California, pp. 2-7.)*

Famous athletic coach Vince Lombardi used to say, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going." I think that could be said of Jon. Could it be said of us? How can we make a difference in our world? I'll ask you a few questions to get you started.

- ◆ *What do you think are the biggest problems in your neighborhood or school?*
- ◆ *In order to be able to help you have to understand the situation. Who are some people you can talk with to investigate the details?*
- ◆ *Who are some people you can ask to pray with you about this situation?*
- ◆ *How can you personally get involved in dealing with these problems?*

What are some other areas of your lives where God might want you to be proactive? (Write the answers on the board/overhead/posterboard)

Pass out the commitment contracts and give the students time to fill them out.

Closing

Have the students turn their chairs to face their partners from the interactive learning section. Ask them to share with that person what they wrote on their contract. Then have them pray for each other that God would help them put their faith into action in the area they have chosen.

Taking the Initiative
I _____ hereby commit to be proactive.

One situation that concerns me is:

One way I can find out the details of this situation is by:

Some people I can ask to help me pray about this are:

Lord, I know that you care about my life and the lives of those around me so I ask you to help me make a difference. I promise to give you the glory and the honor
In Jesus Name, Amen.

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