

Living Holy in a Godless World

The Life of Daniel

by Annette Gullick 12/1/2001

Lesson Five: Be Bold

Bible Passage: Daniel 4

Bible Truth: Daniel boldly spoke God's message and gave advice to the king.

Lesson Objective: That students will learn boldness in confronting the world with God's message.

Before You Begin:

- ◆ strips or small pieces of blank paper
- ◆ pencils
- ◆ four copies of handout "Creative Reading for Daniel 4"
- ◆ copies of "what would you do?" cut into strips
- ◆ blank sheets of paper
- ◆ a copy of key handout to give to each student

Opening:

Have all of the students sit with their chairs in a circle and ask them to tell about the scariest thing they have ever done. The leader should start by answering and then go around the circle having each student share with the rest of the class.

There are many different kinds of things that scare us, some, like the dark, aren't really dangerous while others, like snakes or spiders, could be dangerous. It takes a certain amount of wisdom to know if a situation or a thing is really dangerous and should be avoided, or just makes us feel scared. Our next activity may feel scary to you, but I promise you won't get hurt this morning.

Interactive Learning

Hand out a small piece of blank paper and a pencil to each student. Tell them to imagine the following scenario: The president has decided that he wants to be better in touch with the opinions of the people so he is inviting representatives from different segments of society to meet with him face to face to share what they think about him. You have been invited to represent your church. Write on your piece of paper your opinion of one thing he should do or stop doing. Give the students time to think and write down their answer. When everyone has finished say,

It is not that hard to think of things we would like to see changed or improved, but it is much harder to get involved. Now what we are going to do requires a bit more boldness. I challenge some of you to stand on your chair and read to the rest of the class what you have written. (If all the chairs are not sturdy enough to be stood on, have at least one strong chair, or a table, which everyone will take turns standing on. In this exercise be sensitive to anyone who might have trouble climbing up on the chair, for example if a girl has on a very short skirt. In that case they may stand on the floor. Also, if all your students feel comfortable reading out loud, you may ask them all to. But be sensitive that some students can't read or write well and some have an incredible fear of speaking out in a group.)

- *How did you feel when you heard you had to stand on your chair and announce to everyone what you had written?*
- *If given the opportunity in real life do you think you would be able to tell the president what you just said? Why or why not?*

Previously in our studies on the life of Daniel we have seen how as a young man he kept his life pure and stayed in close fellowship with God and with other believers, and how God blessed him with wisdom and important positions of responsibility. We have also seen that Daniel was proactive and confronted difficult situations head on, trusting that God could make a difference through him. Today we see Daniel in a situation where he does not need to be bold in order to save himself, but rather where he boldly speaks the truth from God in a difficult situation. But before we go on, how many of you did your bible reading worksheet this past week for Daniel 4: 1-26? (Have them raise their hands) Congratulations to those of you who did. I know you are going to get more out of today's lesson because you have come prepared.

Bible Application

Choose four people from those who did the worksheet to participate in the reading. (If four people didn't raise their hands then ask for volunteers) Give them each a copy of "Creative Reading for Daniel 4." Have them come to the

front of the class, assign each one a part, and have them read the story dramatically for the rest of the class. After they have sat down ask,

- *What do you think Daniel was thinking after he heard the dream?*
- *What two things did Daniel do in this story that required boldness? (he told the king the true interpretation of the dream; he gave advice to the king, telling him to stop sinning)*
- *Which of these do you think was harder for Daniel to do? Why?*

We see two important things about Daniel in this story. First, the fact that Daniel told the true interpretation of the dream, even when it criticized someone in power over him, shows that he was more concerned about what God said, than what others were going to think about him. Second, it is clear that Daniel cared about the king because he wished the dream wasn't about the king and because he risked the king's anger to give him advice on how to avoid this punishment.

Our fifth key to living a successful Christian life in a Pagan world is "Be Bold." We need to be willing to confront the world with God's message, even if it is scary, uncomfortable, or dangerous. There are two opposite problems we can have as we try to boldly confront the world with God's message. The first is to "wimp out" and stay quiet when we know we should say something. Daniel challenges us to tell the truth, even if that truth might not be what the people we're talking with want to hear.

The second problem is that as we become bold, and speak out, sometimes we do so in the wrong way, with an attitude that is judgmental, arrogant or offensive. We should try to follow Daniel's example that in his boldness he spoke prudently and humbly. He didn't gloat that the king was going to have to pay for his sin; instead he was troubled by the news. We need to be very careful about our attitudes because the Bible speaks strongly against people who proudly point out the "specs" of sin in other peoples lives, while ignoring the "logs" of sin in our own lives. Paul even says, "God's name is blasphemed among the gentiles because of you."(Romans 2:24) Finding the balance between truth and love is not easy; Paul's words to the Ephesians should be our guide and reminder, "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15).

Now let's spend a few minutes looking at what this boldness, "truth in love," might look like in our lives.

Commitment

(Before class make enough copies of "what would you do?" found at the bottom of this page to give one situation to every two or three people. Then cut the sheets along the dotted lines into strips. Also make sure that you have read the situations and their corresponding Bible verses so you can help any students who are having trouble and can guide the discussion afterwards.)

Break the students into groups of three, making sure there is at least one Bible in each group. Give each group a strip of paper with one of the situations from "What would you do?" (below) and a blank sheet of paper and a pencil for them to write notes on. Ask them to come up with a response as a group based on the scripture passages on their sheet or any other passages they might think of. After the groups have come up with responses, have them share those with the rest of the group. Then say,

- *Did your group find the scripture passages helpful to know what God thinks about that particular situation?*
- *Do you think that if you faced that situation in real life you would be able to bring God's point of view into the conversation? Why or why not?*
- *Thinking about your personality, which is harder for you, telling people about what God says, or doing it in a loving way? (You might mention that sometimes we are not able to accurately tell what effect we are having on the people we're talking with, so it's helpful to ask someone else's opinion about what they perceive our attitude to be.)*

Closing

When an ambassador goes to visit a new city, frequently the mayor of that city presents the ambassador with a symbolic "key to the city." Today I am giving each one of you a key to help you remember that you are an ambassador for God in this world. The job of any ambassador is to represent his country and explain its policies and views in another country. Your job is just that, to be God's representative in this world. And He has given us specific orders about the one message he most wants us to communicate. I hope that you will tape this key somewhere where you'll see it frequently, like on your mirror, to be reminded of the important message God wants the world to hear through you.

In closing, read together out loud 2 Cor. 5: 17-21.

What would you do?

Leaving church late one night you happen to see a leader in the church passionately kissing a lady who you are certain is not his wife. What do you do?

Mt 18: 15-17; 1 Cor. 5: 9-11

One of your close friends has been dating her boyfriend for several months. She is a Christian but he isn't and has started pressuring her to have sex with him. What do you say to her?

1 Cor. 6: 13b-20

During a math exam you happen to see a friend from church cheating on the test. What do you do?

Prov. 10:9, 11:3

A cousin of yours is a politician. At a family dinner you hear him boasting about receiving “gifts” from people. You know that this is illegal. How do you react?

Exodus 23: 8; Proverbs 13:11

As you are talking with your friends after school one mentions that he just saw a TV show about reincarnation that made a lot of sense. Another friend says he/she believes that when you die there is nothing, no heaven or afterlife, just nothing. What do you say?

Jn. 11: 21-26, Rev. 213-8

Creative Reading

Daniel Chapter 4

NARRATOR: When Nebuchadnezzar had been king of the empire of Babylon for many years he had a second dream that puzzled and upset him very much. None of his counselors, magicians, astrologers, fortunetellers, or wizards could interpret it for him. So he called in Daniel because he knew from past experience that no mystery was too great for him to solve because he had the spirit of the Holy God in him.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR: Daniel, I was peacefully enjoying my power and my wealth when I had this very disturbing dream. I saw a tall tree growing in the middle of a field. It grew and grew until it was so tall that everyone could see it. This tree provided shade for the wild animals, a home for the birds and its fruit fed the whole world. Then, as I lay dreaming about this tree, I saw one of God's angels come down from heaven and I heard him speak.

ANGEL: Chop down the tree and cut off its branches. Shake off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Scare away the animals and the birds. But leave the stump and the roots in the ground. Let the dew of heaven drench him and let him eat grass with the animals. For seven years let him have the mind and heart of a beast and not a man. The purpose of this decree is for the entire world to see that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world and gives them to whoever He wants.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR: That was my dream. Now Daniel, what does it mean?

NARRATOR: Daniel understood what the dream meant but it stunned and disturbed him. He hesitated to explain it to the king. Finally the king spoke.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR: Don't be afraid to tell me what the dream means.

DANIEL: O king, I wish this were talking about your enemies. But that tree so big that it provides shade for animals, homes for birds, and food for the whole world represents you. You have grown and become strong and your kingdom spreads to the ends of the earth. But the rest of the dream is what God, the Most High, has decided will happen to you. People will chase you from your palace, you will live outside like an animal and eat grass like a cow for seven years until you learn that God the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world. The fact that the stump and roots of the tree are left in the ground mean that after you learn this lesson you will be allowed to come back and rule Babylon again. O king, please listen to me. Please stop sinning and do what you know is right. You are so rich, why not be kind to the poor? If you do maybe God will not do this to you.

NARRATOR: But the king didn't listen to Daniel's advice. A year later he was walking in his palace proudly admiring the great city of Babylon.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR: Just look at all this. By my own power and for my own glory I have built this incredible city.

ANGEL: King Nebuchadnezzar, this message is for you: Your kingdom has been taken away from you.

NARRATOR: And that very moment the punishment the king had been warned about by Daniel and the dream came to pass. King Nebuchadnezzar lived like an animal, eating grass like a cow and sleeping outside for seven years. After that he acknowledged God as the greatest king of all. Then God restored his mind and his kingdom.

