

DANGEROUS PRAYERS

DATE: SUNDAY, 5TH OF JULY 2020 | SERIES: DANIEL - PART 4

DANIEL 6:7-10

The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or human being during the next thirty days, except to you, Your Majesty, shall be thrown into the lions' den. Now, Your Majesty, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed." So King Darius put the decree in writing.

Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.

NOTE TO LEADERS:

Please share these upcoming dates with your group:

- On Sunday, the 19th of July at 09:00, Angus Buchan will be sharing in our online service. It's a great opportunity to invite friends and family to watch online with you.
- On Tuesday, the 21st of July at 18:00 is our next prayer meeting.

Please also share family news (marriages and births) with us; as well as any testimonies - we'd love to share them with the church. Email us on hello@cityhill.co.za

START TALKING

1. What has been your biggest takeaway from the Daniel series?
2. What's the most dangerous thing you've ever done?

START THINKING

1. Read Daniel 6:7-10. Daniel was faced with an "impossible situation" - if he prayed to anyone but Darius, he would be thrown into a den of lions. How did Daniel respond? What do you learn from Daniel's approach? Think about: a) window open, b) 3 times per day, c) on his knees, d) gave thanks to God, e) just as he had done before.
2. In Daniel chapter 6, we read that Daniel was thrown into a den of lions for disobeying Darius' decree. If you were in the same situation as Daniel, would your prayer life get you in trouble the way his did? What are some practical ways you can make prayer a bigger part of your daily life?
3. When reading the Bible, we see constant references to prayer. It impacts important events and is interwoven with God's sovereign plan in history. There are around 650 prayers listed in the Bible (many of them with recorded answers). Does that impact your view on prayer?

START SHARING

1. How would you currently describe your prayer life? How would you like your prayer life to be different? Is there a way our group could support your growth in this area?
2. Ed spoke about the importance of prayer in our devotional lives.
 - a). What misconceptions about prayer have affected your ability to engage?

- b). What truths about prayer have encouraged you to pray?
 - c). In your previous experiences, what has shaped your understanding of prayer? Is there anyone that really helped you learn how to pray?
3. Share about a time someone prayed for you and you experienced God's power, or share about a time you prayed for someone else, and they experienced God's power.

START PRAYING

Among our usual prayer requests, let's pray for God's leading as we develop our devotional lives with things such as prayer, Bible reading, and LifeGroup community.

START DOING

On Sunday, Ed said that praying the prayers of the Bible means that we have to find them and memorise them so that we can pray through them. This week, aim to find a prayer in the Bible that resonates with you. Work on committing the prayer to memory and praying it daily through the week.

SUMMARY

OF SUNDAY'S MESSAGE

This Sunday, in the final part of our Daniel series, Ed Strong encouraged us in the area of our prayer life.

Much like a marriage relationship is more than just the official marriage certificate - it's about an experiential relationship between spouses - so is our relationship with God more than just a point in time when we said the salvation prayer. It's about an ongoing experience with God. So much of that experience comes from our devotional life, and in particular, our prayer life.

This week we're Daniel, chapter 6 - the chapter most of us know for the story of Daniel in the lion's den. Many of us know and love that story, and make it the focus of that chapter, but often we miss the reason why Daniel ended up in the lion's den.

The politicians and associates of Daniel - who were very jealous of his success - figured the only way to bring about his demise would be to attack his devotional life. So they issue a decree... The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or human being during the next thirty days, except to you, Your Majesty, shall be thrown into the lions' den. Now, Your Majesty, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed." So King Darius put the decree in writing.

Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. Daniel 6:7-19.

Why would Daniel, in the face of this law (and its consequences), open his windows and pray so everyone could see what he was doing? The temple for Daniel was more than just a place. It represented the presence and glory of God. When he prayed, facing the temple, he was not facing a place but was facing the person of God. For Daniel to open the windows had nothing to do with putting on a show or trying to break the law, but with his heart and soul focused on the saving power and presence of God.

Just as in a marriage, it's highly unusual to go a day without speaking to our spouse; as temples of the Holy Spirit, we have the Spirit of God within us - why would we go a day without turning our attention, our hearts and souls, to Him?

The subject of prayer is so vast, but two of the most common questions are: "How do I pray?" and "What do I pray?"

Ed suggested starting a journey of praying the prayers of the Bible and building a vocabulary of Bible prayers. This would involve

- Finding them
- Memorising them
- Praying through them

Four examples of Bible prayers:

1. Prayer for Clarity

In 2 Kings, we read about Elisha and his servant who are in a town called Dothan. During the night, the Arameans surrounded the city with their army. The servant awakes and sees that they are surrounded by the Aramean army (he sees a hopeless situation with his natural eyes). He tells Elisha that the enemy has surrounded them, and Elisha prays this simple prayer: *And Elisha prayed, "Open his eyes, Lord, so that he may see."* 2 Kings 6:17. The Lord then opens the servant's spiritual eyes, and he sees the Lord's army - the hills filled with horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

We all know people who have 20/20 vision with their natural eyesight but don't see the things God is doing. They don't see the presence of God that overrides and supersedes all other things. This would be a simple prayer to pray for those people: "Lord open their eyes."

2. Prayer for Discerning Love

In Philippians 1:9-10 Paul prays: *And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ.* This is similar to his prayer in 1 Thessalonians 3:12: *May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.* While these two prayers sound similar, they are very different. In the Thessalonians prayer, Paul is praying that our love - the quantity/extent of our love - would increase and grow. But in Philippians, he's praying that discernment (wisdom) and exercising of that love would grow. You can love wrong with the right intention. You can have a generous heart but useless hands. When we love unwisely with our hands, we can undo all that is in our hearts to bless and to care.

This is a relevant prayer to pray both for ourselves and the church. That not only the quantity of love within our hearts would grow, but that along with that love, how we exercise that love finds the wisdom and ways of God. For example, you could out of generosity give a beggar on the street R50, but perhaps the wise and generous thing to do would be to buy R50 of food and give it to the beggar.

3. Prayer for truth

All of us have those we pray for who are immature in their faith, whose knowledge of scripture and theology is weak, so we pray for truth to get a hold of them. Sometimes we pray for those trapped in sin, and their conviction is weak. We also all know people who just need a word from God. This is a good prayer to pray for them: *And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy.* Colossians 1:9-11

This is a prayer for the truth that comes from the Spirit of God, to fill

someone with the knowledge of God. The literal translation of "full" in this context is to be crammed full - the same language used to describe a fisherman's net when it's bulging full with fish.

Paul's prayer for when it comes to knowing God is that we would be crammed full of the knowledge of God. For five reasons:

1. That we would lead a life worthy of the Lord
2. ...fully pleasing to Him
3. ...bearing fruit in every good work
4. Growing in our knowledge of Him
5. ... and strengthened with His power

The gauge for our devotional life shouldn't be how much pleasure we derive from knowing Him. We exist for the pleasure of God, so our prayer should be that we would be filled by the spirit of God that we may know Him more deeply.

4. Prayer for leaders

When you run out of things to pray for your leaders (or those that you lead), what dangerous prayers will you pray for them (or yourself)? You can pray the prayers of the Bible. Pray what the word of God says about leaders: *Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.* Hebrews 13:20-21.

Pray that God may equip them with everything they need for doing His will - whatever gifting, skills, authority, manpower or resources etc. that they need. And that He would work in them His grace, love, patience, sustainability, strength and all that is pleasing to Him.

Going back to our marriage analogy, marriage is the continued growing together and understanding of each other through years of marriage - not the marriage certificate. In the same way, we can't rely on the moment of salvation, our last mission trip, or last time we went to church as the basis for our relationship with God. For most of us, the challenge lies in knowing God. Daniel was neither ashamed nor neglected to pray but set his face towards God and prayed three times a day. It requires conviction and commitment on our part to commune and pray like Daniel did.

