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Prayer Lessons from Daniel and His Three Friends

By Melody Mason

Daniel and his friends lived in Jerusalem, undoubtedly peacefully, when suddenly their world forever changed.

The year was 605 B.C. and the forces of the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar had invaded the southern kingdom of Judah, overcoming King Jehoiakim. Daniel and his friends were taken captive together with other strong and talented young people from Jerusalem.

From all appearances, the world had ended for them. Like many other captives, they probably asked God: “Why has this happened? What will become of our future?”

Things looked bleak indeed. Rather than being cast into prison or assigned to some forced labor camp, however, Daniel and his friends found themselves placed among the favored of Nebuchadnezzar, with the king’s royal meat and dainties to eat, and his own wine to drink.

The king expected the Hebrew captives to embrace these privileges. All did — all, that is, except for Daniel and his three friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

The Bible tells us: “But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself” (Daniel 1:8).

At Daniel’s insistence, Melzar, the eunuch in charge of those selected for the king’s service, agreed to give Daniel and his three friends a 10-day test, even though it might cost him his life. The test was designed to see what would happen if the four young men ate only vegetables and drank only water. You can imagine that Daniel and his friends prayed earnestly during those 10 days. And God heard their cries.

The Bible tells us, “And at the end of 10 days their features appeared better and fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king’s delicacies” (Daniel 1:15).

Not only were they noticeably healthier than the others, but the Bible goes on to say that as they continued to honor God, they increased in wisdom and knowledge, and when finally brought before the king for testing, were found to be 10 times wiser than all the king’s worldly astrologers and wise men (see Daniel 1:17-20).

Would you and I be faithful like Daniel and his friends if put to such a test today?

The sad reality is that we have already been taken captive. We live in a world that has been under “Babylonian” siege — that of Satan — for more than 60 centuries. As a result, we are dealing with the ravages of war on all sides, even in the church: failed marriages, broken homes, lost children, declining health, spiritual compromise and apathy, heartbreak, and much more. Our case is not hopeless, for we serve a mighty God who is even now able to take what the enemy meant for evil and turn it to good for His glory (Genesis 50:20).

Imagine if we, like Daniel and his friends, stood up and said: “I don’t want to accept the status quo of life under this wicked kingdom anymore. I want to prove God. I want to test His Word. I want to be faithful so that He can use me for His glory.”

Over the past few years, I’ve made it a habit to start every January with a 10- or 21- day fast and prayer challenge to help grow my walk with God. (The 10-day challenge is based on Daniel 1, and the 21-day challenge is based on Daniel 10.) For me, the fast may be a natural juice fast, or following a simple “Daniel fast” of fruits and vegetables.

Another important part of this 10- or 21-day challenge is putting away all distractions, whether that means closing the door on my social media accounts, or by turning off all forms of electronic entertainment. I don’t want my spiritual senses to be dulled by any of the king’s distractions or delicacies.

Most importantly, I dedicate extra time to Bible study and prayer. While many prayer burdens lie on my heart, the biggest reason I commit to the prayer challenge at the beginning of each year is for my own walk with God. It’s like a reset button that helps me refocus and make sure that I’m really in tune and in-line with God’s purposes for my life.

I’ve seen God work in miraculous ways as I’ve taken specific time for prayer and fasting each year, sometimes alone and sometimes with friends or with my church, depending on where I am. Not only has God taken me deeper in my walk with Him and given me more spiritual clarity and strength, but I’ve also seen Him answer seemingly impossible prayers in my life and in the lives of others. Loved ones have returned to church, marriages have been healed, ministry doors have opened, and I have experienced spiritual growth and revival that I didn’t know was possible.

On January 10, the Seventh-day Adventist world church begins Ten Days of Prayer, which runs through January 20. If your church is involved, I encourage you to take part whole-heartedly and watch how God blesses abundantly as you come together in seeking Him.

If your church is not involved, don’t despair! You can still take part in the blessing, even if alone or with just a couple friends or family members. Of course, you can take the 10-day or the 21-day challenge whenever you choose. The most important thing is that you don’t miss the blessing.

The Bible tells us, “Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it” (Psalm 81:10). If you are spiritually hungry, take the challenge. I guarantee your life will never be the same.

Melody Mason is coordinator of United in Prayer for the world church.

World Church Prayer Requests for Dec. 31, 2017 – Jan. 7, 2018

- **PRAYER REQUEST:** Please pray for local young people both in and out of the church, that God will draw their hearts to Him in a special way this coming year. Pray for wisdom to reach out to them. The enemy is working hard to capture the hearts of our children. We need to fight for them on our knees. Pray for these young people by name.
- **PRAYER REQUEST:** Please pray for the struggling marriages within your church. Pray for God to mend the wounds and bring healing and unity. Pray that the enemy will not be successful in breaking apart the homes in your local church.
- **PRAYER REQUEST:** Pray for church members who live alone, whether as divorcees, widows/widowers, singles or because of some other circumstance. Pray that God would take away the loneliness and pain that so often knocks at the door and fill hearts with His joy.
- **PRAYER REQUEST:** Pray especially for the leaders of your church—your pastor (including his family), your local elders, deacons, deaconesses, etc. Pray that God would give them a renewed vision and passion for service as they start this new year. Pray that God would bring a fresh personal revival to their life and ministry.
- **PRAYER REQUEST:** Let's pray that we would be faithful like Daniel and that God would take each of us deeper in our walk with Him during this coming year. Pray that we would not settle for a "superficial dwarfed Christianity," but that we would truly press towards the heights of God's ideal and calling in our lives. Time is short! Let's pray that He would enable us to give Him our all, for His glory!
- **PRAYER REQUEST:** Last but not least, please continue to pray for the Holy Spirit to be poured out in a powerful way in the Quarterly Day of Prayer and Fasting (January 6th) and on the upcoming Ten Days of Prayer, which will run January 10-20, 2018. Pray that many new churches would become involved, and that thousands of lives will be changed for eternity as church families come together seeking a closer walk with God. To be a part of this life-changing 10 days, visit: tendaysofprayer.org