

“BUT IF NOT” FAITH

October 6, 2024

WORSHIP

Endless Praise
Know His Love
How Great is Our God
Christ Be Magnified

WELCOME

What decisions did you make in your high school or college-age years that led to a good outcome for your older adulthood (e.g., in your career, relationships, etc.)?

Was there a decision you made back then that negatively impacted your life later on?

WORD

DANIEL 3:17-18

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What do George Washington, Joan of Arc, Alexander the Great, and Blaise Pascal have in common? They were young people who achieved great things! As we celebrate Youth Month in CCF, we will discover how the best investment we can make is to pour our best effort into young people's lives.

Three young men from the kingdom of Judah, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego displayed great faith in God. The king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, had built a statue to be worshipped by everybody and if you don't, you will be thrown into a furnace of burning fire (**Daniel 3:1-6**). The king tried to convince Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to worship the idol that he built (**vv.14-15 ff**). But when these three young people answered, they shared their conviction – it was clear that they would not worship idols. If they got into trouble for this conviction, they trusted their God to deliver them... **“BUT EVEN IF HE DOES NOT” (v.18)**, these young men still decided to stick with their allegiance to God.

Let us look at the example of these three young men and learn from the **“BUT IF NOT”** kind of faith they displayed.

1) AUTHENTIC

Daniel 1 establishes the context – Babylon conquered Jerusalem and destroyed the temple (*vv. 1-2*). Many of the people were taken as “prisoners of war”. However, King Nebuchadnezzar decided to select some young men with no defects, good-looking, intelligent, had understanding and discernment, to serve the kingdom of Babylon (*vv.3-4*). They were trained and taught the literature and culture of the Chaldeans – an enforced conforming to a culture these Jewish young people did not know anything about. They even changed their names (*vv.5-7*) – Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah received Babylonian names – Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; trying to change their entire identities and brainwash them into embracing Babylonian culture – but these young men did not give in!

Hebrew Names	Babylonian Names
Daniel God is my judge	Belteshazzar Bel Protect his life
Hananiah The Lord shows Grace	Shadrach Command of Aku (the moon god)
Mishael Who is like God?	Meshach Who is as Aku is?
Azariah The Lord is my help	Abed-nego Servant of Nego (god of wisdom)

Authentic faith is not commercial faith based on convenience; not something you bargain for. For example, Jacob's initial faith was shallow (**Genesis 28:20-22**). If God gives Jacob what he needs, he will make the LORD his God and give tithes to Him. Have you ever bargained and negotiated with God? To fully trust Him, we need to grow in the grace and knowledge of who God is (**2 Peter 3:18**). Faith only grows when it is connected not to circumstances, but to God. A better kind of faith was Job's, who lost everything and yet still chose to worship God (**Job 1:21-22**). He even said that though God slays Him, he will still hope (wait, trust) in Him (**Job 13:15**). That is authentic faith! Jesus displayed this faith

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as He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane – “... **yet not as I will, but as You will**” (**Matthew 26:39**). God loves you so much, He wants to make sure your faith is real. Counterfeit faith is not dependable; go for authentic faith.

2) CENTERED ON WHO GOD IS

We go back to the story of the three young men. Their response to King Nebuchadnezzar shows us that their faith was not based on what they wanted God to do but on who God is (**Daniel 3:17-18**). What does it mean to be centered on God? Faith always has an object. Your faith cannot be in a vacuum. It must be focused on who God is, not feelings, circumstances, people, or leaders. Is God good? We believe that He is. Is He all-powerful? Yes, we believe that He is. Does God know everything, and in effect, does He know what is best for you? Yes! If that’s our God, do we trust Him? But when testing and trials come, we lose our focus on Him. **Psalm 34:8-10** directs us to the goodness of God and how He can be trusted – that we will not lack, and that when we seek Him, we will not lack good things.

Hebrews 11 is a chapter that talks about faith. **V.6** tells us that “**without faith, it is impossible to please**” God. We must believe that God is and that He is a rewarder – that is God’s nature, He is good, and He knows what’s best for us. You will never lose when you are on His side. Hebrews 11 has examples of faithful people – Noah, Abraham, Moses, and many others – and their faith in God allowed them to obey, submit, and follow God’s leading. Real faith is anchored on who God is – His character, power, His goodness. **V.13** tells us they died without receiving the promises – and most of these characters went through trials and many were killed (**vv. 37-40**) – but God’s promise to the people of the Old Testament includes the coming of the Messiah. We have the privilege of having JESUS, and we see the completion of the promises of God! **Hebrews 12:1-2** tells us to get rid of any encumbrance and sin, and instead choose to fix our eyes on Jesus as He perfects our faith!

3) TRIUMPHANT FAITH

This kind of faith is always victorious – the three men believed deliverance would come from God, but **EVEN IF HE DOES NOT** save them, they still pledged their faith to Him. The foundation of a triumphant faith is knowing that God is on our side, and His purpose is always good (**Romans 8:28-32**)!

Nebuchadnezzar got so angry when the young men refused to worship his idol (**Daniel 3:22 onwards**) and sent them to be thrown into the fiery furnace (the heat level raised to 7 times hotter). In the furnace, a fourth Man stood in the fire with them. They came out unharmed, not even their hair and clothes were touched by the fire that killed those who threw them in the furnace! When you go through the fire of life, Jesus goes with you, and you are going to emerge in victory. Faith in Jesus is our victory (**1 John 5:4**). Jesus promised that He will be with His followers always, **EVEN TO THE END OF THE AGE** (**Matthew 28:20**).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)

1. What does a "But if not..." faith mean to you?

2. What do you need to do to develop this kind of "But if not..." faith?

3. Was there ever an instance in your life when you were centered on the problem and not centered on God? Describe your life during that time.

4. How can you apply the lessons you have learned in this message?

WORKS

PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

Pray for someone you know who is going through the “fiery furnace” in life right now. Pray that they see Jesus right there where they are, as you make yourself available to represent Him in their lives. Share the gospel of Christ with them so they will get to know God for who He is and put their trust in Him.

WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives

II. Country and the World

- Upright and moral governance of public servants; repentance and salvation for government leaders and citizens for a Christ-centered Philippines.
- War in Ukraine to end, loss of lives prevented; tension in the West Philippine Sea to be peacefully resolved.
- Continue to pray for the rest of Israeli hostages to be restored back to their families safely. Pray for Israel and the war with terrorists to end according to God’s purpose and for His glory.
- For the recent political and social upheaval in the US to result in spiritual awakening in the church and a great spiritual harvest.

III. Church

- That CCF Members would honor and love God and make disciples.
- Elders, pastors, deacons, and families (holy, humble, harmonious, happy, heart-working).
- Ministries and churches expansion worldwide.

IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center
- Prayer Mountain

V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper intimate relationship with God.
- Righteous living.
- Salvation of family and friends.

MEMORY VERSE

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