# Daniel: Watch Your Worship

Today is a discussion Sunday, so after this introduction, we will split up into small groups of about 6 people at tables and discuss this passage. Remember, this is your opportunity to worship God with your mind and voice, but just don’t monopolize the conversation. There are no designated leaders, so someone just get the ball rolling with one of the questions provided. Or share from your heart if you feel God speaking to you through something you’ve heard this morning. It’s a little less structured service, but we pray that the Holy Spirit will keep order.

Well, last week, we read the beginning of the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and the fiery furnace. And this week, we read the end of the story. They are indeed cast into the furnace, but it is not the horrible end that everyone expected. **<Arrow>** And everyone is amazed at what happens next. King Nebuchadnezzar says,

*Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.*

And God shows up in the midst of the fire. We don’t know if the 4th person is the pre-incarnate Christ or an angel, but he is sent to meet these men in the fire. And I suppose this is mainly for Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. I mean surviving this furnace and coming out not even smelling like smoke is a big enough miracle in itself. The Heavenly presence I think is just to tell these guys what is happening and perhaps to tell them that their Father in Heaven is proud of them, to keep up their good work and to keep the faith.

We don’t know for sure what was said, but I suppose when Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were old and sharing memories, this was one that they came back to often. *Do you remember that conversation we had in the furnace? Yeah, I wouldn’t have missed that one for anything in the world*. And in fact, here we are some 2,500 years in the future in a much different time and culture and we are remembering that same event.

I keep thinking just how easy it would have been for them to bend their knee to that idol and this story would not have happened. And we wouldn’t be talking about it today. And I wonder how often I might have missed the furnace experience in my own life because I valued comfort over everything else including following God. How about you? If you had to choose between a very comfortable life or following God, which would it be? It might not be any dramatic type of event like this, but it can involve little decisions towards something that makes us feel uncomfortable, but can be something we feel God wants us to do. Maybe it’s getting involved in working with youth or teaching Sunday School or helping out refugees.

I have seen in my own life that pursuing God often means some level of discomfort and especially some dependence on God to show up and help me in doing the task He has given to me.

This week, I got an email from a guy who had started a Christian radio station in Stockholm HopeFM and now he and his wife live in the USA. Anyway, I had heard about his efforts here in 2008 and I sent an email to encourage him during that time. He sent me this letter this week thanking me for my first correspondence and he also said this.

*My wife Maria and I live in the Minnesota for the time being, where we have much needed rest after our intensive years in Sweden. The project was difficult, and long, and expensive, but we are very glad at all the doors and miracles that happened on our behalf. The Lord moved the project for us, and sent us many good friends to help.*

*I want to thank you for your small note of support, as we did not always get that many in the earlier days and I do wish I would have given more care to those that we received. Godspeed to you both on your life journey. :) Nathan Quist*

And I replied with this…

*Time sure seems to go quickly. I am very glad that my email was an encouragement to you and that you and Maria are doing well. I am sure that you have made the Father proud in that you followed through and endured to make the radio station possible. It doesn’t get any better than to know the Father’s will for your life and to do it. We feel that also here in our ministry. If you ever get to Gothenburg, please contact us. Blessings, Lance*

Did you notice the words he used: intensive, difficult, long, and expensive but he also mentioned open doors, miracles, and good friends. I think these things go together and I would encourage you to take risks in serving God, you will never regret it. And don’t worry, God rarely asks us to jump into a furnace. But, if it comes to that. You cannot lose if you choose God.

You know we all worship something even non-religious people worship because worship is simply putting your hope in something and pursuing it. And everyone does that. It might be education or a career or a family or a sports team or travel or whatever.

And like I said last week, these things aren’t necessarily bad or an idol that you worship, but they can be. I read this book this summer called Gods at War: defeating the idols that battle for your heart by Kyle Idleman. In his book, he had some very insightful questions to ask yourself that will help you find these things that we worship.

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**What disappoints you?** When we feeled overwhelmed by disappointment, it’s a good sign that something has become far more important to us than it should be. It shows that you have put intense hope in something other than God.

**What makes you really angry?** This is similar to the first, but even more intense. We usually have a ‘hot’ button – something that drives us crazy when it is said or when it happens. What are your hot buttons? Maybe you are so competitive that you can’t stand to lose a game, then perhaps being the best is your idol. Our temper reveals those deeper beliefs that drive us. And maybe it reveals the oldest idol of them all – the god of me.

**What do you complain the most about?** Think about what you typically complain about. If it’s your financial situation, then maybe money has become too important to you. If you constantly whine to your spouse about your sex life, perhaps sexual pleasure has become a god. If you often complain about how you don’t get any respect at your office, then maybe what other people think about you matters more than it should. Whining and complaining shows what has power over us. If we complain about everything, then it’s all about you and you are your

**Where do you make financial sacrifices?** The Bible says that where your treasure is there you heart will be also. If a complete stranger took a look at your bank statements and credit card bills, what would they say is most important to you?

**What worries you?** Fear of something happening or losing something can also reveal those things that we hold onto too tight. We think that we can’t survive without it and it keeps us up at night.

**Where or to what do you go when you are hurting?** When you have had a terrible day at the office, what do you do? Go to the refrigerator for that bowl of ice cream, get on the phone and vent with your best friend. Do you seek escape in novels or movies or video games or pornography? Where do you look for emotional rescue?

Now, you have to realize that this list just gives you a potential idol. It doesn’t mean that if you get angry it is wrong; Jesus got angry. And it doesn’t mean that your home is an idol if it the thing you spend the most money on. And so on; so don’t get worried over this list. Use it to test yourself and look a little deeper into your heart.

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Daniel 3:16-30

16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, “King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us[c] from Your Majesty’s hand. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”

19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual 20 and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. 21 So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. 22 The king’s command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, 23 and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.

24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, “Weren’t there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?”

They replied, “Certainly, Your Majesty.”

25 He said, “Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.”

26 Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, “Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!”

So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, 27 and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them.

28 Then Nebuchadnezzar said, “Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king’s command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. 29 Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way.”

30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

# Daniel: Watch Your Worship Questions

1. Do you think that ‘comfort’ or ‘furnace avoidance’ is a common idol for many Christians today? If yes, what can we do to change this?
2. Read Exodus 20:4-5. Why do you think God gave us this commandment? What does it reveal about God? about mankind?
3. Do you think that the questions on the back to help you discover what you worship are something we need to ask ourselves? Why or why not?
4. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego did not demand that God save them from the furnace (v.18). What are some things that Christians often demand of God today? Discuss God’s sovereignty (rule) in the world? Does that give you hope?

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* What makes you really angry?
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* Where do you make financial sacrifices?
* What worries you?
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