



theme: Doubt #3 – Even if We Burn – Daniel 3
materials: Bibles, internet access

welcome

What is the most daring / dangerous thing you have ever done? Why did you do it? What made you think you could do it without getting hurt or killed? Was there any point that you doubted your chances for survival? If you have access to the internet at your cell, you might want to check out:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nO_3ZxtVi0s

Warning: It is not for the squeamish. Cell leaders should view it first. It is Cris Angel setting himself on fire for about a minute.

He survives and is fine, but if you think it might be inappropriate for your cell, don't show it.

If you do watch it, ask the group why someone would do this. What is he trusting in to survive?

interact

Is there anything you are anxious about? Are there any difficult times you are facing right now? Share those things with your cell. Then have everyone turn to James 1:2-8, and have one person read it out. Now pray together, bringing your anxieties and trials before God, not in doubt that he is hearing, but with full belief that he hears and wants to give good gifts to his children.

read

Read Daniel 3:1-18 together.

Have you ever encountered a situation where you have faced intense pressure to do something you knew was wrong, and that you didn't want to do? What did you do? What were the consequences?

What do you think you might have done if you were in the situation faced by Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego?

Can you think of similar circumstances that could be happening to believers in our world today?

Read verses 16-18 again. They believed God *could* save them from the furnace, but weren't sure if God *would* save them.

Why do you think they said this to the King?

Were they lacking faith that God would save them?

Does God always save his people from getting hurt? If not, should we be doubting God's ability or willingness to help his followers?

Why would the three men choose to follow a God who might not save them, even though they were sure he could? Why would they die for this God?

Now read the rest of the story in verses 19-30.

So we have a happy ending. But if the three men had actually been burned to death, would it have shown God as a failure?

Many good believers in God have not been saved from the fiery furnace, or the sword, or the firing squad.

Christians are being martyred even today, probably right now. Does this make God a failure? Why or why not?

Do you believe that God is trustworthy? Why or why not?

Do you believe that God is good, and worth following, even dying for? Why, or why not?



think

Do some research as a cell on persecuted Christians around the world, and try and find a public way of displaying this information. Maybe present a project at school, or set up a booth on a street corner, or design some t-shirts with the names of martyrs on it. Prepare to be persecuted for doing this. (See the useful resources section for a start on getting info on the persecuted church.)

live & pray

Bring your doubts to God honestly in prayer this week. How far do you think you could honestly go in the service of God? Is there anything that you would not do for God, anywhere you would not go? Why? What might God be asking of you? Spend some time this week praying this through on your own and with at least one other cell member.

Also, ask yourself the question: "What would my friends / family really think if I lived fully for God? How would they react? Am I afraid of and influenced by what they might think?"

useful resources

Book: *The Samurai*, by Shusaku Endo
Website: www.persecution.org/
Book: *Tortured for Christ*, by Richard Wurmbrand

leader's guide

There are many circumstances in today's world where believers are facing the same choice as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Many thousands of Christians daily undergo trials of recanting their faith in Christ or being imprisoned, tortured, or killed. We need to be in daily prayer for them.

The three men were displaying a deep faith, deeper than a mere belief that God could save them. They were saying that following God for them was more than just about what he could give them. They were not in it just for the divine protection.

They believed and followed because God is God, and because following him is good and right. So they would believe and obey regardless of whether or not he saved them. And they wanted it to be clear that Nebuchadnezzar was not the real powerful one in this situation. Yes, he was a powerful king, but he held nothing on God. This was proved by God's saving of the three men from the furnace, but it was proved first, and more powerfully, by their refusal to submit to the King's demands, even in the face of death.

This shows that God would not have been considered a failure even had he not saved them from the fire. His sovereignty was already proved by their faith and obedience.

Persecution and even death should not be unexpected for the followers of Christ. Jesus himself underwent it, and he said that people would hate his followers because of his name. This is the word in which we live. Sometimes God intervenes miraculously to save people, but this is his sovereign will, and we can't know when he will act. The daily miracles happen when God's followers continue to press on in the face of terrible opposition and even doubts.