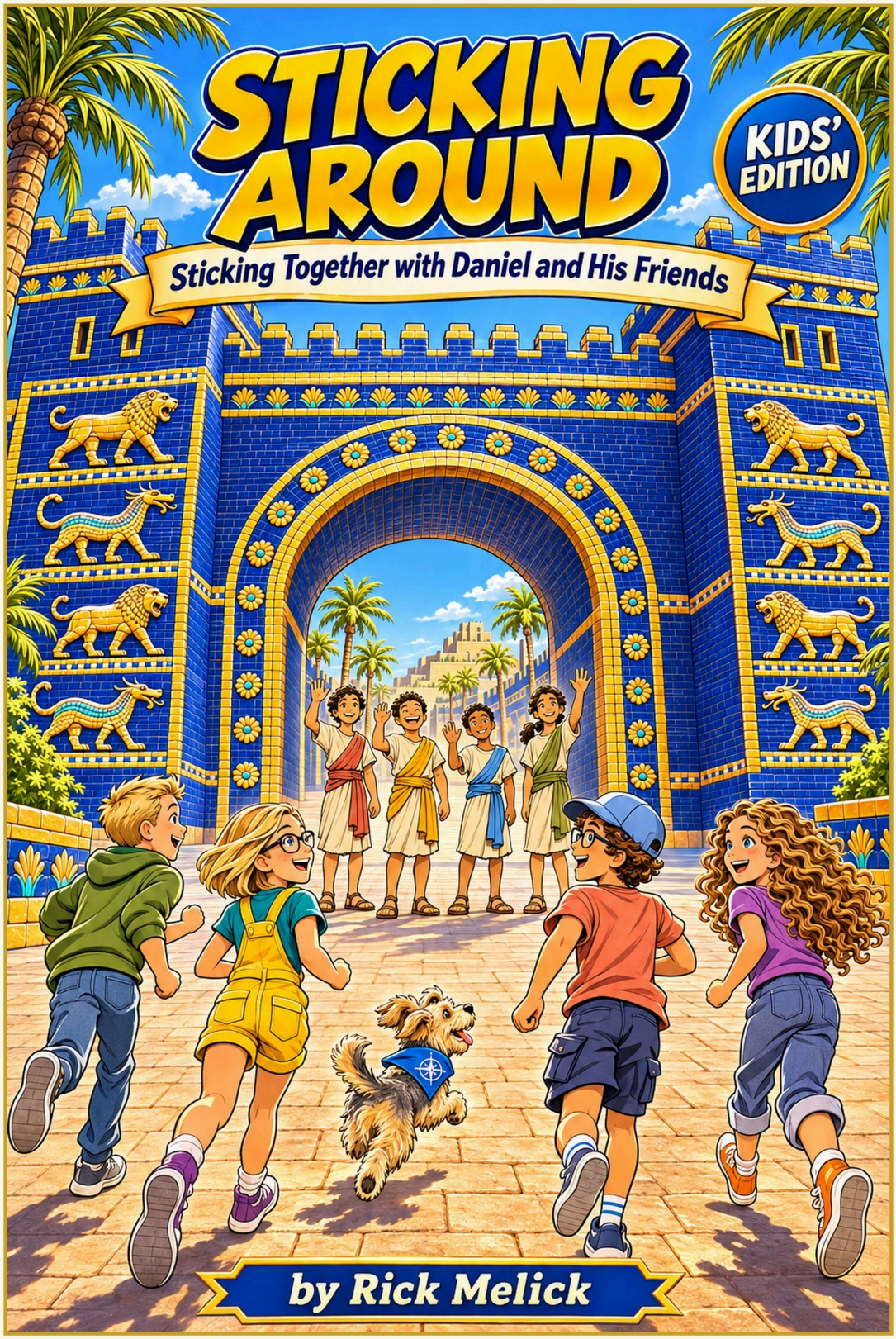
CHAPTER BOOK GRADES 3–5 · AGES 8–11



FOR GROWN-UPS

This book takes Pastor Rick's sermon series *Sticking Around* and retells it for kids in grades 3 to 5. It follows Daniel and his three friends from the day they were taken to Babylon at about age 13 to the night Daniel spent with the lions at about age 85. It's a story about faith that lasts a lifetime, and about friends who help each other stick with God.

Whether you're a parent, grandparent, foster parent, guardian or another adult who loves a child, thank you for reading with them. In this book, "grown-up" means you.

How to use it

- **Read one stop at a time.** Each chapter is broken into four short "stops." One stop takes about 5 minutes. A whole chapter takes about 20.
- **Read it together if you can.** Kids can read it on their own, but the best conversations happen when you read alongside them.
- **Use the Talk About It questions** in the car, at bedtime, on a walk, or anytime.
- **Pair it with the comic.** The *Sticking Around* comic book tells the same eight stories in pictures, one issue per chapter. Many kids like to read the comic first and this book second.
- **Be ready for real-life questions.** These chapters touch on moving, being left out, waiting for scary news, and hard times at home. If your child is going through something like that, go slowly and let them talk.

If your child wants to follow Jesus, or has questions about it, we would love to help. Talk with your pastor or one of your kids' leaders.

Written by Pastor Rick Melick from his sermon series Sticking Around*, for the kids of Capitol City Church. © 2026 Rick Melick.*

MEET YOUR TOUR GUIDE





Woof! I'm back!

My name is **Baxter**. I'm Pastor Rick and Joy's dog. I weigh 13 pounds, and I'm brave about almost everything. (Not hailstorms. Or the vacuum cleaner. We'll talk about that.)

My big sister is **Daisy**. She's a tall, curly poodle. She loves to play outside, but she does *not* love riding in the car.

This time I'm taking you on a trip back in time, about 2,600 years, to a giant city called **Babylon**. You're going to meet four boys about your age who got taken far from home. Their names are **Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.** You may have heard of them!

They faced hungry lions, a blazing furnace, and a king with a really bad temper. And they stuck with God their whole lives. How did they do it? They did it *together*.

Ready? Grab my bandana. Let's go!

MEET THE FOUR FRIENDS

Each friend wears a sash of his own color. Look for the colors in the pictures and in the comic!

Daniel (say it: DAN-yul) wears **coral red**. He's thoughtful and steady, and he's usually the one who speaks up.

Shadrach (say it: SHAD-rak) wears **gold**. He's the class clown, with the biggest grin in Babylon.

Meshach (say it: MEE-shak) wears **sky blue**. He's the smallest and the quietest. Watch him. He's braver than he looks.

Abednego (say it: uh-BED-nee-go) wears **green**. He's tall and a little nervous, and he's the most loyal friend you'll ever meet.

Those are the names Babylon gave them, and the names most people know. Back home, they were called Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. You'll find out why their names changed in Chapter 1.

In Chapter 1, the four boys each pull one thread from their sashes and twist them together into a little cord. Every chapter, that cord grows into a stronger rope. By the end of the book, you'll see why.

HOW THIS BOOK WORKS

This book is like a tour with **eight chapters**, one for each issue of the comic. Each chapter has four short **stops**. Here's what you'll find along the way:

 **Baxter's Bark:** fun facts and reminders from your tour guide.

Story markers: Pastor Rick's real-life stories start and end with ◆◆◆.

Whoa! boxes: amazing facts about Daniel's world.

Remember It! One big truth at the end of every chapter. They add up, so by the last chapter you'll know all eight!

Checkpoints: quick questions. Tap the answer you think is right to find out if you got it!

Memory verse, Words to Know, Talk About It, and Try This at the end of each chapter.

Whenever you see a **blue button**, tap it! It will take you to answers and back again.

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6 Stand Together

7 The Fourth Man in the Fire

8 Just As He Had Done Before

Answers

NEW PLACE, NEW NAMES

CHAPTER 1 · DANIEL 1:1–7 · AGE 13



The Big Question: What do you do when everything around you changes?

One afternoon, Pastor Rick and Joy got caught in a hailstorm. Ice balls bounced off the car like popcorn. They pulled over and waited until it passed.

When they got home, Baxter would not go outside. Not even to go potty.

◆ ◆ ◆

Baxter stuck his head out the dog door. He looked up at the sky. And he shook.

Pastor Rick figured it out. Baxter had been outside during the storm. He'd been hit by hail!

So Pastor Rick sat him down. "Bax, it happened. But hailstorms come and go."

Baxter looked right at him. And if Baxter could talk, this is what he would have said:

"The God you serve threw rocks at me. I'm pooping on the carpet. You deal with it."



Baxter, our 13-pound worrier, checking the sky.

Have you ever felt like that? Like something hard landed on you, and you just wanted to hide? The four boys in this book had *way* more reason to feel that way than Baxter did.



Baxter's Bark: Okay, okay. I'm feeling better about the hail now. Mostly. Let's go meet those boys!

Stop 1: Four Boys, Far From Home

About 600 years before Jesus was born, a king named **Nebuchadnezzar** (say it: neb-uh-kad-NEZ-er) ruled the most powerful country in the world. It was called **Babylon**.

King Nebuchadnezzar's army marched into Jerusalem, the city where God's people lived. He took treasures from God's temple. And he took people too.

He told his chief official to choose the smartest, healthiest young men from the best families. Four of them were named **Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah**. You probably know three of them by the names Babylon gave them: **Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego**.

How old were they? Probably about **13 or 14**. Just a little older than you!

They had to leave their homes. They had to leave their parents. They walked hundreds of miles to a country where people spoke a different language and worshiped fake gods. Most of them never saw home again.

Myth: Daniel was an old man with a long white beard.

Truth: Daniel *did* grow old. But when this story starts, he was a kid, about the age of a middle schooler!

Checkpoint! About how old were Daniel and his friends when they were taken to Babylon?

- **A. About 5**
- **B. About 13**
- **C. About 80**

Stop 2: Welcome to Babylon!

Imagine walking for weeks and weeks, and then seeing *this*.

Babylon was the biggest, fanciest city on earth. Its walls were so thick that chariots could race on top of them. Its giant front gate was covered in shiny blue bricks with golden lions and dragons.

Whoa!

Babylon had about **50 miles of walls** and **100 bronze gates**. That's like walking from one side of a big city to the other, and the whole way there's a wall!

The boys were taken to the king's palace. A nervous official named **Ashpenaz** told them the plan. They would go to the king's school for **three years**. They would learn Babylon's language and read Babylon's books. Then they would work for the king.

New city. New school. New language. New food. New everything.

Is something changing for you?

Maybe your family is moving. Maybe you're starting a new school, or your family looks different than it used to. Changes can feel scary, like a hailstorm. You can talk to God about it any time. And it helps to tell a grown-up you trust how you feel.

Stop 3: New Names

Then Babylon did something sneaky. It gave the boys **new names**.

In Bible times, names had meanings. Each of the boys' names was about the one true God. Look:

Daniel means "God is my judge." His new name was **Belteshazzar** (say it: bel-tuh-SHAZ-er).

Hananiah means "God is kind." His new name was **Shadrach** (say it: SHAD-rak).

Mishael means "Who is like God?" His new name was **Meshach** (say it: MEE-shak).

Azariah means "God helps." His new name was **Abednego** (say it: uh-BED-nee-go).

The new names were all about Babylon's fake gods. But they're the names most people know today, so in this book we'll call the three friends **Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego**. Daniel kept going by Daniel.

Why would a king do that? Because he wanted the boys to forget who they belonged to. He wanted them to stop thinking of themselves as God's kids and start thinking of themselves as Babylon's kids.

But here's the thing. Babylon could change their names. It could change their clothes, their school and their food. It couldn't change *who they*

belonged to.



Baxter's Bark: Can you imagine if someone changed *my* name to "Mr. Fluffington"? I'd still be Baxter on the inside. (Please don't call me Mr. Fluffington.)

Checkpoint! Why did Babylon give the boys new names?

A. To make them forget who they belonged to

B. Because their names were too long

C. As a birthday present

Stop 4: Who's Really in Charge?

If you just read the first part of Daniel 1, it looks like King Nebuchadnezzar is in charge of everything. He wins the war. He takes the boys. He gives the orders.

But look closer. Three times in this chapter, the Bible tells us who is *really* in charge:

Verse 2: *The Lord* let the king win.

Verse 9: *God* made the official kind to Daniel.

Verse 17: *God* gave the boys wisdom.

> **God gave knowledge and understanding to these four young men. So they understood all kinds of writings and subjects. And Daniel could understand all kinds of visions and dreams. *(Daniel 1:17, NIrV)***

Even when things looked terrible, God was working behind the scenes. He hadn't stayed behind in Jerusalem. He was right there in Babylon with them.

And the four boys had something Babylon couldn't take away: everything their families had taught them about God. They had heard the stories. They had learned the Scriptures. They knew who God was.

So one night, the four friends made a little promise to each other. Each one pulled a thread from his sash: coral, gold, sky blue, and green. They twisted the four threads together into one little cord.

One thread snaps easily. Four threads twisted together? Not a chance.

New place. New names. Same God. And four friends who decided to stick together.

Checkpoint! Who was REALLY in charge in Daniel 1?

A. King Nebuchadnezzar

B. God

C. Ashpenaz

REMEMBER IT! TRUTH 1 OF 8

1 New place, new name, same God. NEW!

Say it out loud three times!

MEMORY VERSE

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Do not depend on your own understanding. In all your ways obey him. Then he will make your paths smooth and straight."

Proverbs 3:5–6 (NIrV)

Say it 3 times, then try it with only the first letters ▸

WORDS TO KNOW

- **Babylon:** A huge, powerful city and country far from Jerusalem.
- **Nebuchadnezzar:** The king of Babylon who took Daniel and his friends.
- **Captive:** Someone who is taken away and not allowed to go home.
- **Belong:** To be part of someone's family or team. The boys belonged to God.

TALK ABOUT IT

1. Have you ever been somewhere brand new? What was the hardest part?
2. Babylon tried to change who the boys belonged to. What helps you remember that you belong to God?
3. Who are the friends or family who help you stick close to God?

TRY THIS: NAME MATCH

Can you match each boy's real name to what it means?

1. Daniel
2. Hananiah (Shadrach)
3. Mishael (Meshach)
4. Azariah (Abednego)

A. God helps · **B.** God is my judge · **C.** Who is like God? · **D.** God is kind

Check your answers ▸

☰ Contents

THE LUNCH TABLE

CHAPTER 2 · DANIEL 1:8–16 · AGE 13



The Big Question: What do you do when everybody else is doing it?

Pastor Rick's son sent Joy a popcorn popper as a present. That was sweet. But there was one problem. They already had a popcorn popper!

So Pastor Rick took it back to the store.

◆ ◆ ◆

He walked up to the customer service counter with the box. The lady said, "Sorry, I can't take that here. You have to mail it back. But good news! There's a mailing store right inside this store, two doors down."

So Pastor Rick carried the popcorn popper two doors down.

“What will you do with it?” he asked.

“We’ll mail it back to the store,” the mailing lady said.

Pastor Rick looked around. “But…we *are* in the store.”



Pastor Rick and the popcorn popper that went nowhere.

Pastor Rick could have gotten really grumpy. Instead, he laughed. He was in a place with different rules, and he decided to go with it.

Daniel and his friends were in a place with different rules too. And they had a lot more to worry about than a popcorn popper.

Stop 1: The King’s Food

Every day, the boys in the king’s school got food from the king’s own table. Fancy meat. Rich desserts. Fine wine.

That sounds like a pretty great school lunch, right?

But Daniel had a problem with it. The king's food had been offered to Babylon's fake gods first. And in those days, eating at someone's table meant you were saying, "I'm one of you. I'm on your team."

Daniel didn't want to be on the fake gods' team. He belonged to the one true God.



Baxter's Bark: If someone offered *me* the king's food, I would eat it so fast. Bowl and all. That's why Daniel is the hero of this book and not me.

Stop 2: Daniel Decided

The Bible says Daniel **resolved** not to eat the king's food. *Resolved* means he made up his mind.

> **Daniel decided not to make himself "unclean" by eating the king's food and drinking his wine. So he asked the chief official for a favor. He wanted permission not to make himself "unclean" with the king's food and wine. *(Daniel 1:8, NIrV)***

Here's something cool. The word the Bible uses for "resolved" is like a picture of making a rope. You take lots of little strands and twist them together until they're strong.

Daniel took everything he'd been taught: the Bible stories, God's words, and what his family taught him about God. He twisted those strands together into one strong decision.

Whoa!

Pastor Rick says that when he was a young pastor, his boss's wife served chocolate cake. Pastor Rick dug right in. His boss didn't eat any. When Pastor Rick asked why, the older pastor said:

"Sometimes you have to tell yourself no in the little things, because the big things are coming."

Saying no to dessert might not seem like a big deal. But Daniel was practicing. Someday the big things *would* come. And he'd be ready.

Checkpoint! What does "resolved" mean?

A. Made up your mind

B. Got really tired

C. Solved a math problem

◆ Stop 3: He Asked Nicely

Now watch *how* Daniel did it. He didn't yell. He didn't throw his food on the floor. He didn't say, "You can't make me!"

He went to the official in charge and asked. Politely. Respectfully.

The official was nervous. "If you get skinny and sick, the king will be furious with me!"

So Daniel had an idea. He talked to the guard who watched over the four friends:

“Please test us for **ten days**. Give us only vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then compare us with the other boys who eat the king’s food. You decide what to do after that.”

The guard said okay.

Ten days of vegetables and water. Can you imagine? And then...

At the end of the ten days, Daniel and his friends looked **healthier and stronger** than all the other boys! So the guard let them keep eating vegetables.

Myth: Standing up for God means being loud and bossy.

Truth: Daniel stood up for God with good manners. He asked kindly, and God helped him.

Checkpoint! How did Daniel ask to skip the king’s food?

A. He yelled and stomped

B. He asked politely and suggested a test

C. He hid the food under the table

Stop 4: Step Out, Step In

Here’s something easy to miss. Lots of boys were taken from Jerusalem, not just these four. Most of them ate the king’s food. They went along with the crowd.

Daniel **stepped out of the crowd**. That’s hard. It can be lonely. The crowd might laugh at you. But the crowd is often wrong.

Daniel also **stepped in for his friends**. He didn't just ask for himself. He asked for Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego too.

A pastor friend of Pastor Rick's likes to joke about what the other three might have said. Shadrach: "I'm still praying about it." Meshach: "I'm not sure." Abednego: "I need to text my mom first."

And Daniel said, "No, guys. We're doing this. Together."

Have you ever been at a lunch table where everyone was making fun of someone? Or a game where everyone was cheating? It takes courage to be the one who says, "Not me."

It's even better when you bring your friends with you.

The four friends added more strands to their little cord that day. Every time you choose God, your rope gets a little stronger.

Checkpoint! Who did Daniel ask for besides himself?

A. Nobody

B. His three friends

C. The king's dog

REMEMBER IT! TRUTH 2 OF 8

1. New place, new name, same God.
2. **Step out of the crowd. Step in for your friends.** NEW!

Say all 2 out loud. Can you do it without looking?

MEMORY VERSE

"Walk with wise people and become wise. A companion of foolish people suffers harm."

Proverbs 13:20 (NIrV)

Say it 3 times, then try it with only the first letters ▸

WORDS TO KNOW

- **Resolved:** Made up your mind. In the Bible, it's like twisting strands into a strong rope.
- **Respect:** Treating people kindly and politely, even when you disagree.
- **Crowd:** A big group of people. The crowd isn't always right!

TALK ABOUT IT

1. When is it hard for you to say no when everyone else is saying yes?
2. Why do you think Daniel asked politely instead of arguing?
3. Who is a friend you could “step in” for this week?

TRY THIS: THE TEN-DAY CHALLENGE

Daniel tried something for ten days. You can too! Pick one little thing to say no to for ten days. Maybe it’s an extra treat, a video game before homework, or grumbling when it’s time for bed.

Ask a grown-up or a friend to do it with you. Then mark off each day:

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Need ideas? ▸

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LEGO HOLES

CHAPTER 3 · DANIEL 1:17–21 · AGE 16



The Big Question: How do I choose good friends?

Pastor Rick and Joy were driving home from Arkansas on a curvy country road. Tall bushes grew right up to the edge of the road.

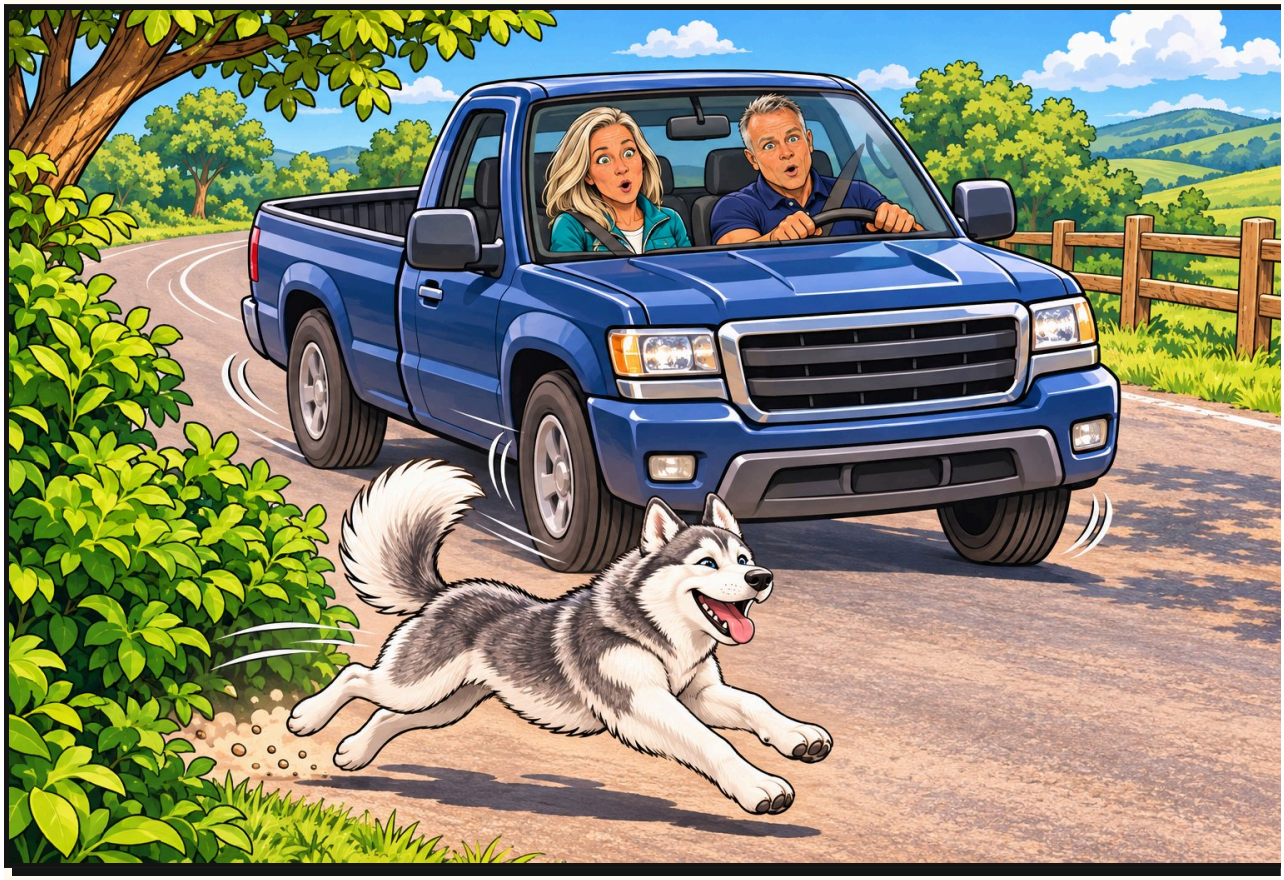
All of a sudden, a big fluffy husky came flying out of the bushes, right in front of the truck!

There was no time to think. Pastor Rick swerved one way. Then he swerved back. *Tap!* The husky's nose bumped the side of the truck.

Pastor Rick looked in the mirror. The husky was trotting down the road, happy as could be. He had no idea how close he'd come!

Joy said, "Sweetheart, your reflexes are really good."

(Pastor Rick says that doesn't happen very often when he's driving.)



A husky out of nowhere. Swerve!

Here's the thing about reflexes: you don't build them in the moment. You build them *before*. The same is true about following God. The time to get ready is before something jumps out in front of you.

Daniel and his friends had three years to get ready. Let's see how they used them.

Stop 1: Graduation Day

Three years went by. Daniel and his friends were about **16** now. School was over. It was time for the final exam, and the king himself was giving it!

King Nebuchadnezzar talked with every student. He asked them hard questions. And guess who did best?

Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Nobody else even came close.

> **He asked them for advice in matters that required wisdom and understanding. The king always found their answers to be the best. Other men in his kingdom claimed to get knowledge by using magic. But the answers of Daniel and his friends were ten times better than theirs.** ***(Daniel 1:20, NIrV)***

Whoa!

The Bible says the king found them **ten times better** than all the wise men in his whole kingdom. Not a little better. *Ten times* better!

Checkpoint! How much better than the king's wise men were the four friends?

- **A. A little better**
- **B. Ten times better**
- **C. About the same**

Stop 2: God Gave

How did four kids from far away beat all of Babylon's wise men?

The Bible tells us: **God gave** them knowledge and understanding. God helped them learn subjects they never wanted to study, taught by teachers who didn't care about God at all. And God gave Daniel a special gift: he could understand dreams.

Babylon's school taught some things that weren't true. The wise men studied the stars and used magic to try to tell the future. They even had a dream book. If you dreamed about a ghost carrying salt, the book said someone was going to die. (Weird, right?)

Daniel and his friends learned what Babylon taught. But they didn't believe everything they heard. They knew the difference between what was true and what wasn't, because they knew God's Word.

> **Stay far away**
>
> Some things today still pretend to tell the future: fortune-tellers, horoscopes, Ouija boards and spooky games that claim to talk to spirits. They aren't harmless fun. The best thing to do is stay all the way away from them. If something like that scares you or confuses you, talk to a grown-up you trust.

Stop 3: Friendship Legos

Joy has a great way of thinking about friends. She calls it **friendship Legos**.

Think about a Lego brick. It only has so many holes on top. You can only snap so many bricks onto it.

Friends are like that. You only have room for so many close friends. So who you snap onto matters!

Pastor Rick says we need two kinds of friends:

Friends who don't know Jesus yet. Love them. Be kind to them. Pray for them. Show them what Jesus is like. Don't be bossy or weird about it!

Friends who help you follow Jesus. They aren't perfect. But they want to love God too. If you don't have friends like that, make room for some!

Daniel had both. He lived and worked with lots of people in Babylon who didn't know God, and he was kind to them. But his closest friends, the ones snapped right onto his Lego, were Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

Checkpoint! What are "friendship Legos" about?

- **A. You can only have so many close friends**
- **B. Building houses**
- **C. Never having friends**

◆ Stop 4: Show Me Your Friends

Here's a saying Pastor Rick loves:

"Show me your friends, and I'll show you your future."

Your closest friends are like an arrow pointing to who you're becoming. If your friends are kind, you'll get kinder. If your friends are always in trouble, guess where you'll end up?

The four friends kept making good choices *together*. Every good choice made the next one a little easier. Choices turn into habits, and habits turn into who you are.

The last verse of Daniel 1 says Daniel stayed in Babylon for about **seventy years**. Seventy years! And he never let go of God. His friends didn't either.

The little cord they made in Chapter 1 kept getting longer. Every year of good choices added to it.



Baxter's Bark: My best friend is Daisy. She's a lot bigger than me, and she's very patient. When I'm scared of the vacuum, she sits next to me. Show me your friends, and I'll show you...a dog who's only a *little* scared of the vacuum.

Checkpoint! Finish the saying: "Show me your friends, and I'll show you..."

A. your house

B. your future

C. your lunch

REMEMBER IT! TRUTH 3 OF 8

1. New place, new name, same God.
2. Step out of the crowd. Step in for your friends.
3. **Show me your friends, and I'll show you your future.** NEW!

Say all 3 out loud. Can you do it without looking?

MEMORY VERSE

"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another."

Proverbs 27:17 (NIrV)

Say it 3 times, then try it with only the first letters ▸

WORDS TO KNOW

- **Wisdom:** Knowing what's true and making good choices. God gives it to people who ask.
- **Reflexes:** How fast you react. You build them *before* you need them.
- **Fortune-telling:** Pretending to know the future. God says to stay away from it.

TALK ABOUT IT

1. Who are the friends snapped onto your “Lego brick”?
2. What’s one way you can be a good friend to someone who doesn’t know Jesus yet?
3. Why do you think “Show me your friends, and I’ll show you your future” is true?

TRY THIS: DRAW YOUR LEGO

Draw a big Lego brick with eight holes on top. In each hole, write the name of someone close to you: friends, family, a teacher, a leader at church.

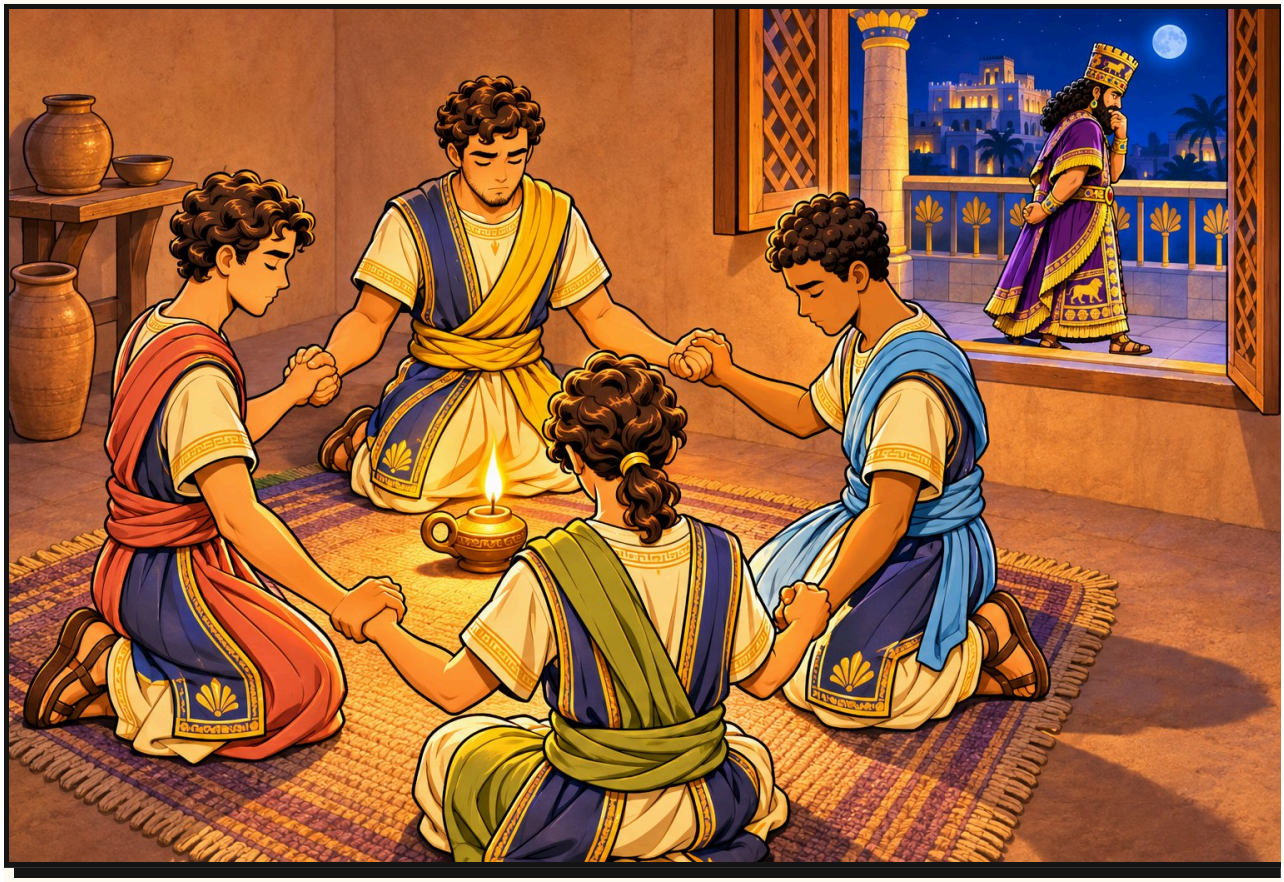
Put a star by the ones who help you follow Jesus. Then pick one name and pray for that person every day this week.

Need ideas? ▸

☰ Contents

TIE THE KNOT

CHAPTER 4 · DANIEL 2:1–23 · AGE 17



The Big Question: What do you do when you're scared and you have to wait?

One night, Pastor Rick had the strangest dream.

◆ ◆ ◆

In his dream, Joy had been a **secret agent** for their whole marriage. She worked for the British government! And she wouldn't tell him any of her secrets, because she had "sworn an oath."

Pastor Rick said, "You can't possibly take an oath to the British seriously!" (Joy is from Arkansas.)

He woke up grumpy. It turns out they had just finished watching a spy show on TV.

Pastor Rick never told Joy about the dream. He was afraid she'd give him a funny look...and he'd start to wonder.



Joy, secret agent. Or is she?

Pastor Rick's dream was silly. But in this chapter, a king has a dream that's not silly at all. And it puts Daniel and his friends in big danger.

Stop 1: The King's Bad Dream

King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that scared him so much he couldn't sleep. So he called in all his wise men.

"Tell me what my dream means," he said.

"Sure!" they said. "Just tell us what you dreamed, and we'll explain it."

But the king had a hunch his wise men were faking. So he changed the rules.

“No. First **you** tell **me** what I dreamed. Then tell me what it means. If you can’t, you’re in big trouble.”

The wise men panicked. “Nobody on earth can do that! Only the gods could, and they don’t live with people!”

The king was so angry that he ordered every wise man in Babylon to be put to death. And Daniel and his friends were on the list.



Baxter’s Bark: I once had a dream that I caught a squirrel. I woke up chewing my blanket. Nobody threatened me about it, though. This king needed a nap.

Checkpoint! What did the king want his wise men to do?

A. Tell him what he dreamed AND what it meant

B. Make him a sandwich

C. Sing him to sleep

Stop 2: Wisdom and Good Manners

The commander of the king’s guard, a big soldier named **Arioch**, came looking for the wise men.

If you were Daniel, what would you do? Run? Hide? Yell?

Daniel did none of those. The Bible says he spoke to Arioch with **wisdom and tact**. *Tact* means saying true things in a kind, careful way.

Daniel asked, “Why did the king make such a harsh rule?” Arioch explained. Then Daniel did something brave. He went to the king and asked for **time**. “Give me a little time, and I’ll tell you what your dream means.”

Now Daniel had to wait. And waiting is hard, especially when you’re scared.

But here’s something true about waiting:

While you are waiting, God is working.

Waiting for something hard?

Maybe your family is waiting for news about a job, a doctor visit, or something else that feels scary. Waiting can make your tummy hurt. You can tell God exactly how you feel. And it helps to talk to a grown-up you trust. You don’t have to carry it alone.

Checkpoint! What’s something true about waiting?

A. God forgets about us

B. While you are waiting, God is working

C. Waiting is always fun

Stop 3: Tie a Knot

The very first thing Daniel did was go home and tell his friends.

Remember the rope? *Resolved* is like twisting strands into a rope. Pastor Rick says the Bible word for *friends* makes him picture something else:

tying a knot.

Daniel had a rope. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego each had a rope. When friends who love God decide to walk together, it's like tying their ropes into a knot. A knot makes everything stronger.

What does a good friendship knot look like?

You go at your friend's pace. You don't race ahead and leave them behind.

You lend your strength. When your friend is weak, you help.

You let them help you. When *you're* weak, you let your friend be strong for you. (That's sometimes the hardest part!)

You stay half a step ahead. Not way ahead. Just enough to say, "Come on, this way!"

And if you don't have a friend like that yet? Pastor Rick says: **Pray for one. Find one. Be one.**

🔶 Stop 4: Pray, Then Say Thanks

Daniel asked his friends to pray with him. They begged God to show them the king's dream.

That night, God answered! He showed Daniel the dream and what it meant.

Now, if you were Daniel, wouldn't you run straight to the king? Daniel didn't. First, he stopped and **thanked God**.

> **May God be praised for ever and ever! He is wise and powerful. He changes times and seasons. He removes some kings from power. He causes other kings to rule. The wisdom of those who are wise comes from him. He gives knowledge to those who have**

> **understanding. He explains deep and hidden things. He knows what happens in the darkest places. And where he is, everything is light.** ***(Daniel 2:20–22, NIrV)***

Daniel thanked God. God is in charge of everything. God knows everything. And God showed Daniel what he needed to know, right when he needed it.

Whoa!

Pastor Rick sets alarms on his phone to remind him to pray: at 9:00, 12:00, 3:00 and 6:00. Each alarm is for different people. When the 6:00 alarm went off at dinner with friends once, he said, "Sorry, that's my reminder to pray. Which way is Jerusalem?" (You'll understand that joke in Chapter 8!)

The four friends tied their ropes together that night. It was the first knot. It wouldn't be the last.

Checkpoint! What did Daniel do first after God showed him the dream?

- **A. Ran to the king**
- **B. Thanked God**
- **C. Went to sleep**

REMEMBER IT! TRUTH 4 OF 8

1. New place, new name, same God.
2. Step out of the crowd. Step in for your friends.
3. Show me your friends, and I'll show you your future.
4. **Pray for one, find one, be one.** NEW!

Say all 4 out loud. Can you do it without looking?

MEMORY VERSE

"One person could be overpowered. But two people can stand up for themselves. And a rope made out of three cords isn't easily broken."

Ecclesiastes 4:12 (NIrV)

Say it 3 times, then try it with only the first letters ▸

WORDS TO KNOW

- **Tact:** Saying true things in a kind, careful way.
- **Wise men:** The king's advisers. They studied stars and dreams, but they didn't know God.
- **Knot:** What happens when friends who love God decide to stick together.

TALK ABOUT IT

1. What's something you've had to wait for? How did it feel?
2. Why do you think Daniel told his friends before he did anything else?
3. Who is a friend you could pray with?

TRY THIS: PRAYER ALARMS

Ask a grown-up to help you set two prayer reminders this week. Use a phone, a watch or a sticky note on the fridge. Decide who each one is for.

☐ Reminder 1: I'll pray for _____

☐ Reminder 2: I'll pray for _____

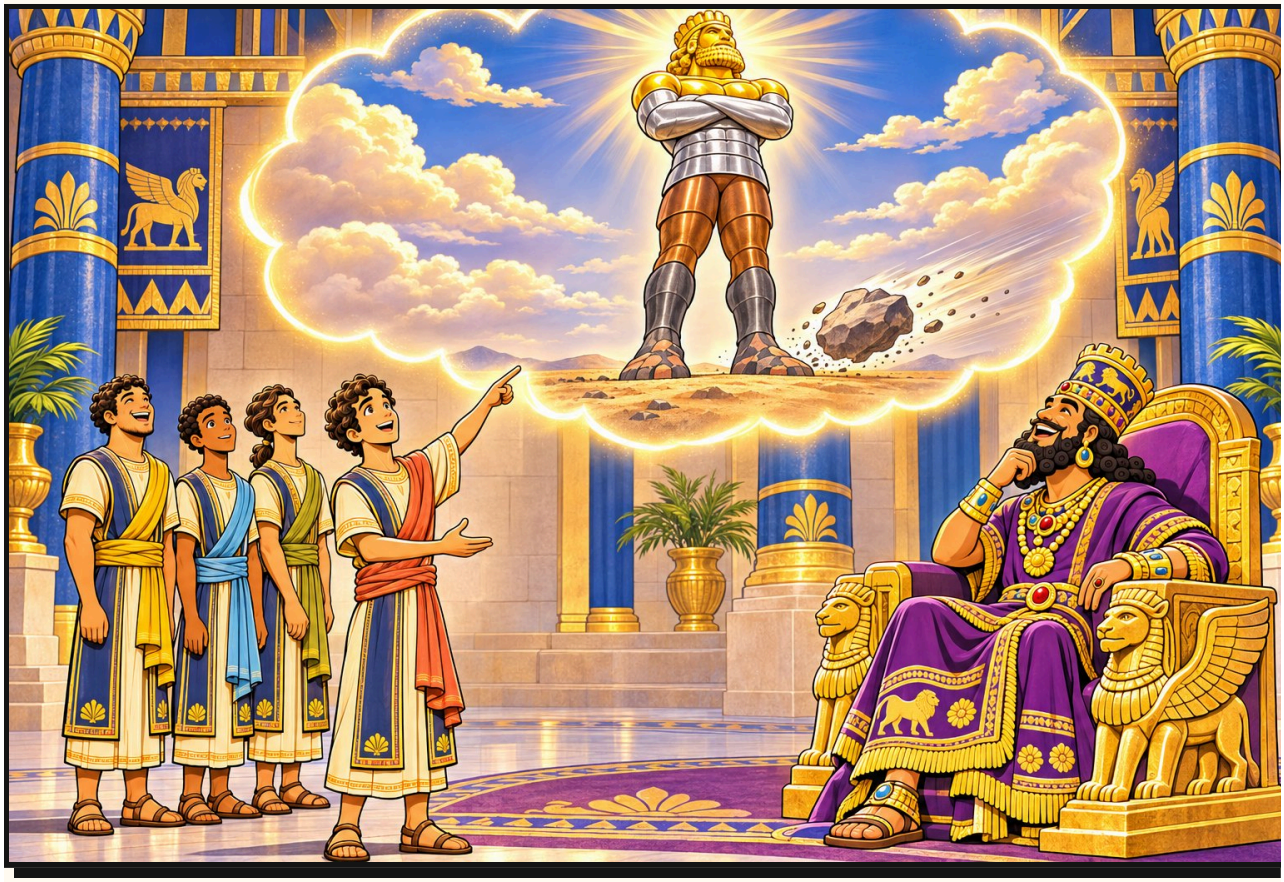
On Saturday, look back. What did God do?

Need ideas? ▸

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DON'T FORGET YOUR FRIENDS

CHAPTER 5 · DANIEL 2:24–49 · AGE 17



The Big Question: What do you do when something great happens to you?

On the way home from a trip, Pastor Rick and Joy stopped at a Dutch bakery. Pastor Rick wanted to buy a pastry called a **Dutch letter** for a family at church. Their new baby's name started with F.

◆ ◆ ◆

"I'd like a Dutch letter F, please," Pastor Rick said.

Joy leaned over. "Honey, they only make S's."

Pastor Rick couldn't believe it. "Then why do they call them Dutch *letters*? Just call them Dutch S's!"

They bought five of them anyway. And Pastor Rick says he won't tell anyone who ate what.



Dutch letters: every one of them an S.

Here's a question: when you get something good, do you share it? Do you remember the people who helped you get there? That's what this chapter is about.

Stop 1: There Is a God in Heaven

God had shown Daniel the king's dream. So Daniel went to Arioch. "Don't hurt the wise men! Take me to the king. I'll explain his dream."

Arioch rushed Daniel to the king. And Arioch said, "Look! I found someone who can do it!" (Arioch wanted a little credit too.)

The king asked Daniel, "Can *you* tell me my dream and what it means?"

Daniel could have said, “Yep! I’m the smartest guy in Babylon!” But he didn’t. He said something like this:

“No wise man can do this. **But there is a God in heaven who explains mysteries.** He showed you the future. And he didn’t show me because I’m smarter than anyone else. He showed me so you would know.”

> **But there is a God in heaven who can explain mysteries. King Nebuchadnezzar, he has shown you what is going to happen.** ***(Daniel 2:28, NIrV)***

Daniel gave God the credit. Every bit of it.

Checkpoint! Who did Daniel give the credit to?

- **A. Himself**
- **B. God**
- **C. Arioch**

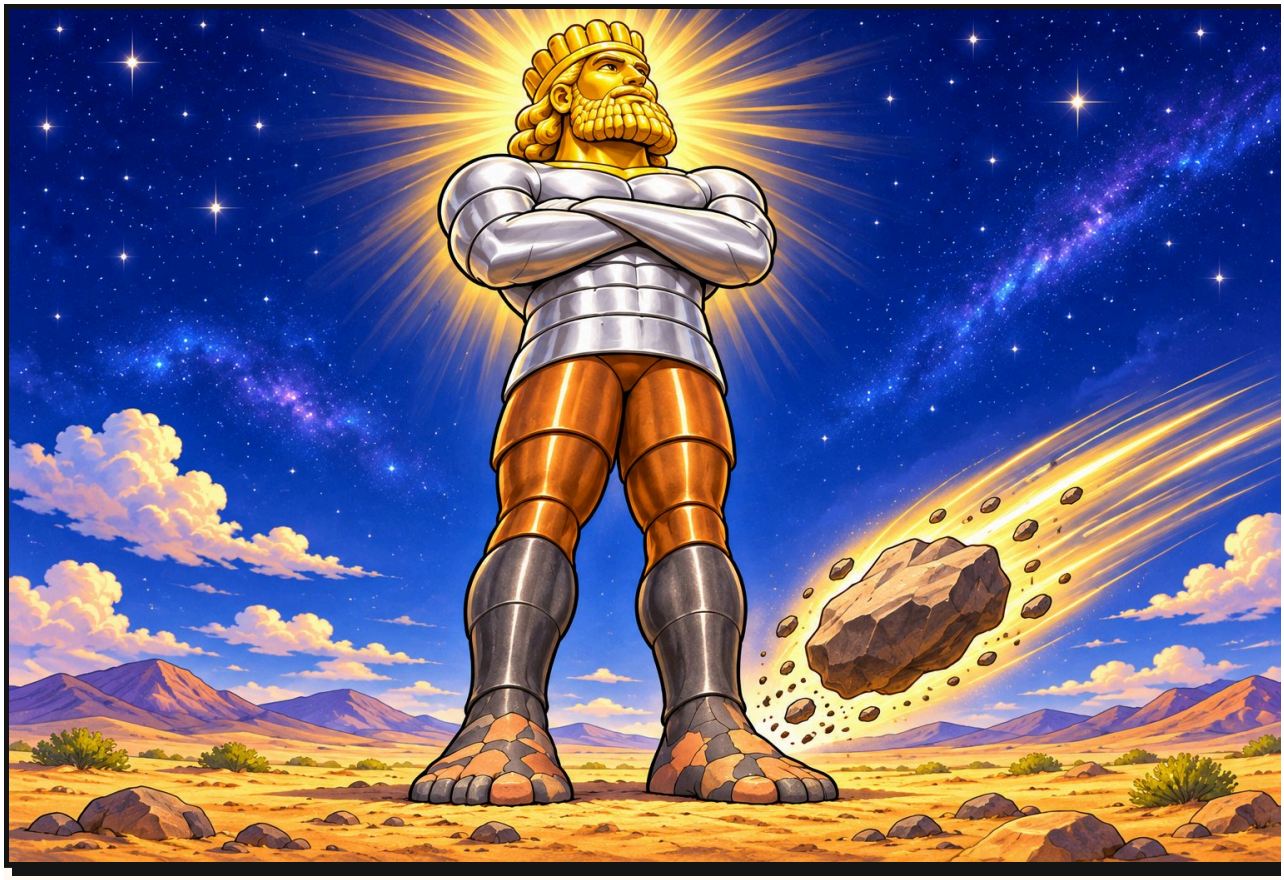
Stop 2: The Giant Statue

Then Daniel told the king his dream.

“You saw a giant statue. Its head was made of **gold**. Its chest and arms were **silver**. Its belly was **bronze**. Its legs were **iron**. And its feet were part iron and part **clay**.”

The king’s eyes got big. That was it! That was his dream!

“Then,” Daniel said, “a **rock** came flying. Nobody threw it. It smashed the statue’s feet. The whole statue crumbled into dust, and the wind blew it away. But the rock grew into a mountain so big it filled the whole earth.”



The king's dream: a giant statue and a rock nobody threw.

🔶 Stop 3: What It Meant

"King Nebuchadnezzar," Daniel said, "**you are that head of gold.**"

The statue was a picture of kingdoms. Babylon was the gold. Other kingdoms would come after Babylon, and each one would fall.

But the rock was different. The rock was **God's kingdom**. And God's kingdom will never end.

> **In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom. It will never be destroyed. And no other nation will ever take it over. It will crush all those other kingdoms. It will bring them to an end. But it will last forever.** ***(Daniel 2:44, NIrV)***

Whoa!

Pastor Rick says history has seen about 27 great empires. Every single one of them has something in common: they're gone. But God's kingdom, the kingdom of Jesus, is still growing all over the world!

Here's the funny part. The king seems to have heard only one thing: *"I'm the gold! I'm the gold!"* (We'll find out in the next chapter that he really liked gold.)



Baxter's Bark: If someone told me I was the head of gold, I'd want a statue too. Of me. Holding a treat. Okay, maybe that's why God's kingdom is in charge and not mine.

Checkpoint! In the dream, what smashed the giant statue?

A. A rock nobody threw

B. A big hammer

C. An earthquake

Stop 4: Daniel Remembered His Friends

The king was so happy that he bowed down to Daniel. He said, "Your God is the God of gods!" He gave Daniel lots of presents. And he made Daniel the ruler over the whole area of Babylon, and the boss of all the wise men!

Daniel was only about 17. That's a huge promotion!

Now, what would *you* do if you suddenly got a fancy new job in the palace? Daniel did something that's easy to miss.

He asked the king to give important jobs to **Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego**.

He didn't forget his friends. They had prayed with him when things were scary. Now that things were good, he brought them along.

That's what real friends do. In hard times, they stick together. In good times, they share.

Think about the last time you won a game, got a good grade or got picked for something special. Who helped you get there? A grown-up who takes care of you? A teacher? A friend? Don't forget to say thanks, to God and to them.

That day, the four friends' rope got a shiny new gold thread: the honor they shared.

Checkpoint! When Daniel got a big new job, what did he do for his friends?

A. Forgot about them

B. Asked the king to give them important jobs too

C. Bragged to them

REMEMBER IT! TRUTH 5 OF 8

1. New place, new name, same God.
2. Step out of the crowd. Step in for your friends.
3. Show me your friends, and I'll show you your future.
4. Pray for one, find one, be one.
5. **Give God the credit. Bring your friends along.** NEW!

Say all 5 out loud. Can you do it without looking?

MEMORY VERSE

"None of you should look out just for your own good. Each of you should also look out for the good of others."

Philippians 2:4 (NIrV)

Say it 3 times, then try it with only the first letters ▸

WORDS TO KNOW

- **Mystery:** Something hidden that only God can fully explain.
- **Kingdom:** A place where a king rules. God's kingdom lasts forever.
- **Credit:** Saying who deserves thanks for something good.

TALK ABOUT IT

1. Why do you think Daniel gave God the credit instead of himself?
2. Who has helped you with something you were proud of?
3. What's a way you can "bring your friends along" when something good happens to you?

TRY THIS: THANK-YOU NOTES

Think of something good that happened to you lately. Then write two short thank-you notes:

1. One to **God**, thanking him for it.
2. One to a **person** who helped you.

Give the second one to that person this week. Watch them smile!

Need ideas? ▸

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STAND TOGETHER

CHAPTER 6 · DANIEL 3:1–18 · AGE 30S



The Big Question: What do you do when everyone else is bowing?



Baxter's Bark: Okay, I have to tell you a secret. There's one thing I'm even more scared of than hail.

The vacuum cleaner.

When it comes out of the closet, my ears go flat. When it turns on, I hide under the bed. Daisy is four times bigger than me. She just sits there, calm, while the loud machine roars right past her.

I'm working on it.



Baxter vs. the vacuum. The vacuum is winning.

Standing up to a vacuum is hard when you're 13 pounds. In this chapter, three men stand up to something a *lot* scarier, with a whole crowd watching.

🔶 Stop 1: Fifteen Years Later

Lots of time passed. About **fifteen years**! Daniel's friends weren't teenagers anymore. They were grown men in their **30s**, with beards and important jobs working for the king.

But they were still friends. And they still loved God.

For fifteen years, they had kept making little good choices, one day at a time. They didn't know it yet, but all those little choices were getting them ready for one really big one.

Where was Daniel? The Bible doesn't say. He was probably away, doing a job for the king. That meant Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego would have to face this one without him.

Checkpoint! About how much time passed before the gold statue story?

A. One week

B. About fifteen years

C. A hundred years

Stop 2: The Giant Gold Statue

Remember the king's dream about a statue with a head of gold? Well, King Nebuchadnezzar decided to build a statue of his own.

But his statue wasn't just a gold head. The **whole thing** was gold!

Whoa!

The statue was **90 feet tall**. That's taller than an 8-story building! It stood on a wide, flat place called the plain of Dura (DOO-ruh). People could see it shining for miles.

The king called every important person in Babylon to come see it. Then a man with a big, loud voice made an announcement:

"When you hear the horn, the flute, the zither, the lyre, the harp, the pipe, and all kinds of music...everyone must **bow down** and worship the gold statue! Anyone who doesn't bow will be thrown into a **blazing furnace**!"



Baxter's Bark: A zither? A lyre? I don't even know what those are. But I know a furnace is hot. Very, very hot.

Stop 3: Everybody Bowed Except Three

The music started. And everyone fell on their faces in front of the statue.

Thousands and thousands of people bowed down.

Except three.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego stood tall. They knew God's rule: *Don't worship anything except me.* And they weren't going to break it, even with everybody watching.

Some jealous men ran to tattle. "King! Those three Jews won't bow to your statue!"

The king was furious. He called the three friends in. But he liked them, so he gave them one more chance:

"When the music plays again, bow down, and everything will be fine. If you don't, into the furnace you go. And then what god will be able to save you from me?"

Somebody might have whispered, "Just bow. You can tell God you're sorry later. He'll forgive you!"

But the three friends had seen God come through before. Ten days of vegetables. A king's impossible dream. They knew they could trust him now too.

Checkpoint! When the music played, who didn't bow?

A. Everybody

B. The king

C. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego

Stop 4: Even If He Doesn't

Here's what the three friends said to the most powerful king in the world:

> **We might be thrown into the blazing furnace. But the God we serve is able to bring us out of it alive. He will save us from your power. But we want you to know this, Your Majesty. Even if we knew that our God wouldn't save us, we still wouldn't serve your gods. We wouldn't worship the gold statue you set up.** ***(Daniel 3:17–18, NIrV)***

Look closely. Their faith had three parts:

Can God save us? Yes! He can.

Will he? Maybe. They didn't know for sure.

Even if he doesn't, we'll still trust him.

That's a big kind of faith. It means you trust God *no matter what happens*, not just when you get your way.

Meshach was the quiet one when they were kids. And here he was, standing up in front of the whole kingdom.

The king was so mad his face changed. He shouted, "Heat the furnace **seven times hotter** than usual!"

To be continued...

When prayers aren't answered the way you want

Sometimes we pray for something, and it doesn't happen. That can make us sad or confused. "Even if he doesn't" faith means we keep trusting God anyway, because he loves us and his plan is good. It's okay to tell God you're sad. And it's okay to ask a grown-up you trust about it.

Checkpoint! What does "even if he doesn't" faith mean?

- **A. Trusting God no matter what happens**
- **B. Only trusting God when you get your way**
- **C. Giving up on God**

REMEMBER IT! TRUTH 6 OF 8

1. New place, new name, same God.
2. Step out of the crowd. Step in for your friends.
3. Show me your friends, and I'll show you your future.
4. Pray for one, find one, be one.
5. Give God the credit. Bring your friends along.
6. **God can. He may. Even if he doesn't, I'll trust him.** NEW!

Say all 6 out loud. Can you do it without looking?

MEMORY VERSE

"Even if we knew that our God wouldn't save us, we still wouldn't serve your gods."

Daniel 3:18 (NIrV)

Say it 3 times, then try it with only the first letters ▸

WORDS TO KNOW

- **Worship:** Showing that someone or something is most important to you. Only God deserves our worship.
- **Idol:** Anything people treat as more important than God.
- **Furnace:** A giant oven with a super-hot fire inside.

TALK ABOUT IT

1. Why do you think the three friends wouldn't bow, even when everyone else did?
2. Can you think of a time it was hard to do the right thing with everyone watching?
3. What does "even if he doesn't" faith mean to you?

TRY THIS: MY "EVEN IF" PRAYER

Fill in the blanks, then pray it every morning this week:

God, I know you can _____.

Even if you don't, I will still _____.

Need ideas? ▸

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THE FOURTH MAN IN THE FIRE

CHAPTER 7 · DANIEL 3:19–30 · AGE 30S



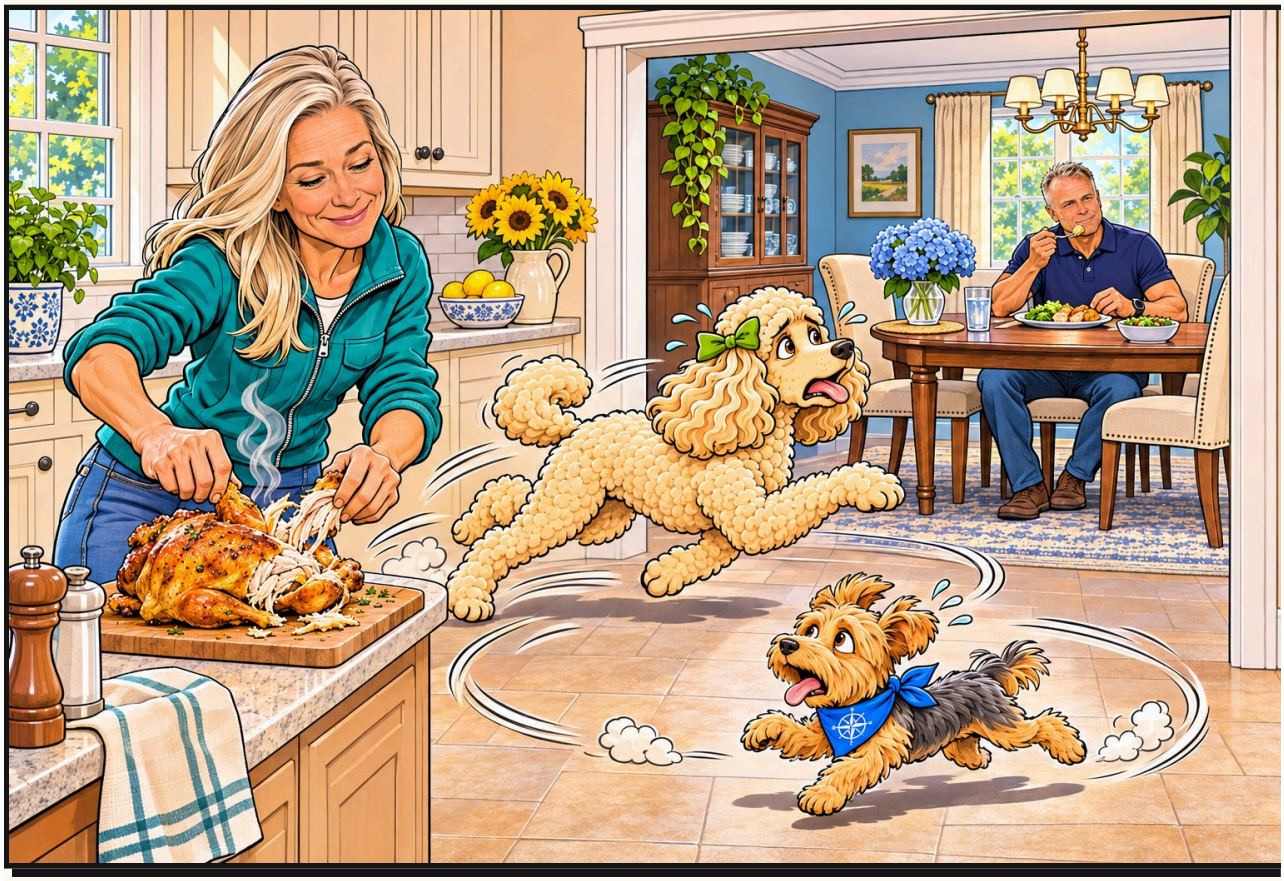
The Big Question: Where is God when life gets really hard?

At Pastor Rick and Joy's house, rotisserie chicken night is the best night of the week. Just ask the dogs.

One night, Joy was pulling the chicken apart in the kitchen. Pastor Rick was eating in the other room. And Baxter and Daisy couldn't decide where the snacks were going to come from.

They sat and stared at Joy. Then they heard Pastor Rick chewing, so they ran and stared at him. Then they ran back to Joy. Then back to Pastor Rick. Back and forth, back and forth!

They were so busy running around that they missed the snacks. All they had to do was **pick a spot and stay there**.



Baxter and Daisy, running back and forth on chicken night.

People can be like that too. One day we follow God. The next day we follow the crowd. Back and forth. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had picked their spot a long time ago. And they were staying there, even at the door of a furnace.

Stop 1: Into the Fire

Remember where we left off? The king was furious. He shouted, “Heat the furnace seven times hotter!”

Then he told his strongest soldiers to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego with ropes.

The furnace was so hot that the soldiers could barely get close to it. Flames roared out of the opening. And the three friends, tied up tight, fell into the fire.



Baxter's Bark: I can't look. Somebody tell me when it's over. Wait, no. Tell me now. What happened?!

Checkpoint! How much hotter did the king make the furnace?

A. Two times hotter

B. Seven times hotter

C. A tiny bit hotter

Stop 2: Four Men in the Fire

King Nebuchadnezzar was watching. Suddenly he jumped to his feet.

"Wait! Didn't we throw **three** men into the fire?"

"Yes, Your Majesty," his advisers said.

"Then why do I see **four**? Look! They're not tied up anymore. They're walking around in the fire! And they're not hurt! And the fourth one looks like a son of the gods!"

> **The king said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire. They aren't tied up. And the fire hasn't even harmed them. The fourth man looks like a son of the gods."** ***(Daniel 3:25, NIrV)***

Who was the fourth man? The Bible doesn't say his name. But many Christians believe it was **Jesus himself**, hundreds of years before he was born in Bethlehem.

Think about that. God didn't keep his friends *out* of the fire. He got *in* the fire with them.

> ***Whoa!***
>
> The king counted wrong in his own furnace. Pastor Rick likes to ask, "How many people do you have to throw in a furnace before you lose count?"

🔶 Stop 3: Not Even the Smell of Smoke

The king ran as close to the furnace as he dared. "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out!"

And out they walked.

All the important people crowded around to look. Their hair wasn't burned. Their clothes weren't scorched. They didn't even **smell like smoke**!

> **The royal rulers, high officials, governors and advisers crowded around them. They saw that the fire hadn't harmed their bodies. Not one hair on their heads was burned. Their robes weren't burned either. And they didn't even smell like smoke.** ***(Daniel 3:27, NIrV)***

Have you ever sat by a campfire? Your clothes smell like smoke for days! But not these three. Not even a sniff.

Do you know the only thing the fire burned? **The ropes that tied them up.**

The king was amazed. “Praise the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego!” he said. “He sent his angel and saved them. No other god can save like this!” Then he gave the three friends even more important jobs.

Myth: If I follow God, nothing bad will ever happen to me.

Truth: Sometimes people who love God still go through hard times, like a fire. But God never leaves them alone in it.

Checkpoint! What was the only thing the fire burned?

A. Their hair

B. Their clothes

C. The ropes that tied them up

Stop 4: Pick a Spot and Stay

Some people have a bumper sticker on their car that says, “God is my co-pilot.” It sounds nice. But Pastor Rick says there’s only **one** driver’s seat. God should be the pilot, not the co-pilot!

The three friends had decided who was in charge of their lives a long time ago. They weren’t running back and forth like dogs on chicken night. They picked their spot and stayed there.

And here’s something else to notice. They went into the fire **together**. Nobody had to face it alone.

Going through a fire?

Maybe something really hard is happening in your life or your family right now. You are not alone in it. God is right there with you. And he often sends friends and grown-ups to be with you too. Tell a grown-up you trust what's going on.

You can be that kind of friend. When someone you know is going through something hard, you don't have to fix it. You don't even have to know what to say. You can just *be there*. Sit with them. Pick a spot and stay.

Checkpoint! What can you do when a friend is going through something hard?

A. Stay away

B. Be there with them

C. Tell everybody

REMEMBER IT! TRUTH 7 OF 8

1. New place, new name, same God.
2. Step out of the crowd. Step in for your friends.
3. Show me your friends, and I'll show you your future.
4. Pray for one, find one, be one.
5. Give God the credit. Bring your friends along.
6. God can. He may. Even if he doesn't, I'll trust him.
7. **In the fire, I'm not alone.** NEW!

Say all 7 out loud. Can you do it without looking?

MEMORY VERSE

"You will walk through fire. But you will not be burned. The flames will not harm you."

Isaiah 43:2 (NIrV)

Say it 3 times, then try it with only the first letters ▸

WORDS TO KNOW

- **Rescue:** To save someone from danger.
- **Scorched:** Burned a little on the outside.
- **Faithful:** Sticking with God and with people, no matter what.

TALK ABOUT IT

1. Why do you think God got in the fire with his friends instead of keeping them out of it?
2. The only thing that burned was the ropes that tied them up. What do you think that means?
3. Who is someone you could “be there” for this week?

TRY THIS: BE A FOURTH FRIEND

Think of someone who is having a hard time. Pick one way to be with them this week:

☐ Sit with them at lunch or recess

☐ Send them a kind note

☐ Pray for them by name every day

☐ Ask, “How are you doing?” and really listen

Need ideas? ▸

☰ Contents

JUST AS HE HAD DONE BEFORE

CHAPTER 8 · DANIEL 4–6 · AGE 85



The Big Question: How do little choices turn into a faith that lasts your whole life?

Joy got new contact lenses in the mail. There were two boxes, one for each eye. But neither box said which eye it was for!

So Joy called her eye doctor's office while Pastor Rick listened on speakerphone in the car.

Joy read the first box. The lady said, "That one's for your right eye."

Two eyes. Two boxes. One is right, so the other one must be...

But then Pastor Rick watched Joy pick up the *second* box to read it too. He started praying under his breath: *"God, help me. God, help me."* He knew it would be really hard to keep his mouth shut!

At the very last second, Joy and the lady both figured it out and started giggling.



Two boxes, two eyes, and one husband trying very hard to be quiet.

Some "God, help me" prayers are small, like that one. Some are really big. Either way, it's always the right prayer. By the end of his life, Daniel had prayed it thousands of times.

Stop 1: The King Who Ate Grass

Years went by. King Nebuchadnezzar had another dream, about a giant tree that got chopped down. Daniel told him what it meant: "Your

Majesty, you are that tree. If you stay proud, God is going to humble you."

A year later, the king was walking on the roof of his palace. He looked out over the city and bragged, "Look at this great Babylon that **I** built, by **my** power, for **my** glory!"

Right then, a voice came from heaven. And the king lost his mind. For seven years, he lived outside like an animal. He ate grass like a cow. His hair grew long like feathers, and his fingernails grew like bird claws!



Baxter's Bark: Seven years of salad?! No chicken? No treats? That's the scariest thing in this whole book.

Then one day, the king **looked up to heaven**. His mind came back. And he praised God: "Everything God does is right. And he can humble people who are proud."

Sometimes hard times are what finally make us look up to God.

Checkpoint! What made King Nebuchadnezzar lose his mind?

A. He was too proud

B. He ate too much candy

C. He stayed up too late

Stop 2: The Writing on the Wall

Many years later, a new king named **Belshazzar** threw a huge party. He had the gold and silver cups brought in, the ones taken from God's

temple back in Chapter 1. And he and his guests drank from them while they praised their fake gods.

Suddenly, a **hand** appeared. Just a hand! It wrote words on the palace wall.

The king turned pale. His knees knocked together. Nobody could read the writing.

Then someone remembered Daniel. By now he was an old man. Daniel read the wall: “God has numbered the days of your kingdom. You’ve been weighed on a scale, and you don’t measure up.”

That very night, Babylon fell. Just like the king’s dream of the statue said, the head of gold was gone. A new kingdom took over, and a new king named **Darius** was in charge.

Checkpoint! What happened the night the hand wrote on the wall?

A. Babylon fell

B. Nothing at all

C. The king threw another party

Stop 3: The Old Fly

Pastor Rick says there always seem to be two flies in his house. Baxter spots them, and Pastor Rick chases them with a bug zapper.

The **young flies** buzz around like crazy and never land. But the **old flies** are different. They land right in front of you. They sit very still. They wait until you’re just about to get them...and then they hop away. *Missed me!*

By now Daniel was an **old fly**. He was about **85** years old! He had worked for king after king, kingdom after kingdom. He wasn't nervous anymore. He was steady.

King Darius liked Daniel so much that he planned to put him in charge of the whole kingdom. That made the other leaders jealous. They searched and searched for something bad about Daniel. But they found nothing! He was honest. He worked hard. He didn't cheat.

So they came up with a trick. They told King Darius, "Make a new law! For 30 days, nobody can pray to anyone except you. Anyone who does gets thrown to the **lions**!"

The king liked the sound of that. He signed it. And in that kingdom, once a law was signed, it could never be changed.

🔶 Stop 4: Just As He Had Done Before

When Daniel heard about the new law, what did he do?

He went home, upstairs to his room. He opened the window that faced Jerusalem, his old home. He got down on his knees. And he prayed and thanked God, three times a day, **just as he had done before**.

> **Daniel found out that the king had signed the order. In spite of that, he did just as he had always done before. He went home to his upstairs room. Its windows opened toward Jerusalem. He went to his room three times a day to pray. He got down on his knees and gave thanks to his God.** ***(Daniel 6:10, NIrV)***

Daniel didn't stop praying. He didn't hide. He just kept doing what he'd done since he was a kid.

The jealous leaders caught him. King Darius was so upset. He worked all day to save Daniel, but he couldn't change the law. So Daniel was thrown

into the lions' den, and a big stone was rolled over the opening. The king said, "May your God, whom you serve all the time, rescue you!"

That night, the king couldn't eat. He couldn't sleep. At the very first light of morning, he ran to the den. "Daniel! Has your God been able to save you?"

And from the den came a calm old voice:

> **My God sent his angel. And his angel shut the mouths of the lions. They haven't hurt me at all. That's because I haven't done anything wrong in God's sight. I've never done anything wrong to you either, Your Majesty.** ***(Daniel 6:22, NIrV)***

Pastor Rick says he wants to ask God someday how the angel did it. Did the angel just say, "Bad kitty"?

The king was overjoyed! Daniel didn't have a single scratch. King Darius sent a message to the whole world: "Everyone must respect the God of Daniel. He is the living God!"

> **I order people in every part of my kingdom to respect and honor Daniel's God. He is the living God. He will live forever. His kingdom will not be destroyed. His rule will never end.** ***(Daniel 6:26, NIrV)***

Whoa! Daniel's Whole Life

- **Age 13:** Taken to Babylon. New names. Same God. Four friends twist the first threads.
- **Age 13:** Ten days of vegetables. Daniel steps out of the crowd and in for his friends.
- **Age 16:** Ten times better than the king's wise men. *God gave.*
- **Age 17:** The king's bad dream. Four friends pray and tie a knot.
- **Age 30s:** Three friends won't bow. A fourth man walks in the fire.
- **Later:** A proud king eats grass. A hand writes on the wall.
- **Age 85:** Three times a day, on his knees, just as he had done before. The lions' mouths are shut.

How did a 13-year-old boy turn into an 85-year-old man who wasn't afraid of lions? **One little choice at a time.** Little things become big things.

Checkpoint! What did Daniel do when the new law said not to pray?

A. Stopped praying

B. Prayed just as he had done before

C. Prayed only in secret

The End of Our Trip (But Not the End of the Story!)

You made it! You followed Daniel and his friends for about seventy years. Here are the eight truths from our whole trip, one from every chapter:

REMEMBER IT! ALL 8 TRUTHS

1. **New place, new name, same God.**
2. **Step out of the crowd. Step in for your friends.**
3. **Show me your friends, and I'll show you your future.**
4. **Pray for one, find one, be one.**
5. **Give God the credit. Bring your friends along.**
6. **God can. He may. Even if he doesn't, I'll trust him.**
7. **In the fire, I'm not alone.**
8. **Little things become big things.** NEW!

Say all eight out loud. You did it!

The four friends' little cord turned into a long, strong rope. And it all started with four kids and four threads.

Now it's your turn. Pastor Rick likes to ask three questions:

Who does it start with? Me.

Where does it start? Right here.

When does it start? Right now.

If you haven't chosen to follow Jesus yet, you can do it today. Talk to God, and tell him you want to follow him. Then tell a grown-up who loves Jesus. They'll want to celebrate with you!



Baxter's Bark: Thanks for sticking around with me! You know what? Daisy finally rode in the car without shaking. Little things become big things!

Now go find a friend, grab some string, and start your own rope.

MEMORY VERSE

"A friend loves at all times. They are there to help when trouble comes."

Proverbs 17:17 (NIrV)

Say it 3 times, then try it with only the first letters ▸

WORDS TO KNOW

- **Pride:** Thinking you're the most important one, instead of God.
- **Humble:** Knowing that God is in charge and you need him.
- **Den:** A pit or cave where wild animals live.
- **Faithful:** Sticking with God for your whole life, one choice at a time.

TALK ABOUT IT

1. Why do you think Daniel kept praying “just as he had done before,” even when it was dangerous?
2. What little thing could you do every day that would grow your faith?
3. Who is a friend you want to “stick around” with as you grow up?

TRY THIS: MAKE A FOUR-STRAND BRACELET

Get four pieces of string or embroidery floss: **coral, gold, sky blue and green**. Tie them together at the top. Then braid or twist them together and tie a knot at the bottom.

Make one for a friend too. Every time you see your bracelets, pray for each other.

Need help? ▸



Thanks for sticking around!

☰ Contents

ANSWERS

Not quite!

Older than that! They were about 13 or 14, like middle schoolers.

◂ Try again

You got it!

They were about 13 or 14, just a little older than you!

Next stop ▸

Not quite!

Daniel got old later, but when this story starts, he was about 13.

◂ Try again

You got it!

Their real names were all about God. Babylon wanted them to forget that they belonged to him.

Next stop ▸

Not quite!

Not quite! Their real names were all about God, and Babylon wanted them to forget who they belonged to.

◂ Try again

Not quite!

Ha! No. Babylon wanted them to forget that they belonged to God.

◂ Try again

Not quite!

It looked that way! But three times, the Bible says God was the one really in charge.

◂ Try again

You got it!

The king looked like the boss, but the Bible says God was working behind the scenes the whole time.

Next stop ▸

Not quite!

Ashpenaz was nervous and in charge of the school, but God was in charge of everything.

◂ Try again

Memory Verse Challenge · Proverbs 3:5–6

T i t L w a y h. D n d o y o u. l a y w o h. T h w m y p s a s.

Can you say the whole verse using just these letters? Try it!

◂ Back to Chapter 1

Try This · Answers

1. Daniel: **B** (God is my judge) · 2. Hananiah (Shadrach): **D** (God is kind) · 3. Mishael (Meshach): **C** (Who is like God?) · 4. Azariah (Abednego): **A** (God helps)

◂ Back to Chapter 1

You got it!

Daniel made up his mind. The Bible word is like twisting strands into a strong rope.

Next stop ▸

Not quite!

Not tired! Resolved means Daniel made up his mind, like twisting strands into a rope.

◂ Try again

Not quite!

Good guess, but it means Daniel made up his mind, like twisting strands into a rope.

◂ Try again

Not quite!

Nope! Daniel was respectful. He asked politely and offered a ten-day test.

◂ Try again

You got it!

Daniel asked with respect and offered a ten-day test. God gave him favor.

Next stop ▸

Not quite!

Ha! He didn’t sneak. He asked politely and offered a ten-day test.

◂ Try again

Not quite!

He didn’t just ask for himself. He stepped in for his three friends too.

◂ Try again

You got it!

Daniel stepped out of the crowd and stepped in for Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

Next stop ▸

Not quite!

Baxter wishes! Daniel stepped in for his three friends.

◂ Try again

Memory Verse Challenge · Proverbs 13:20

W w w p a b w. A c o f p s h.

Can you say the whole verse using just these letters? Try it!

◂ Back to Chapter 2

Try This · Answers

Ideas: no sweets after school, no screens until homework is done, no grumbling at bedtime, no soda, no complaining about chores. Pick one thing, and ask someone to do it with you!

◂ Back to Chapter 2

Not quite!

Way more than a little! The king found them ten times better.

◂ Try again

You got it!

Ten times better! God gave them wisdom.

Next stop ▸

Not quite!

Not the same at all! They were ten times better, because God gave them wisdom.

◂ Try again

You got it!

A Lego brick only has so many holes. So who you snap onto matters!

Next stop ▸

Not quite!

Not houses! It’s about how you only have room for so many close friends.

◂ Try again

Not quite!

Friends are great! It’s about choosing your closest friends carefully.

◂ Try again

Not quite!

Not your house! Show me your friends, and I'll show you your future.

◂ Try again

You got it!

Your closest friends point to who you're becoming.

Next stop ▸

Not quite!

Ha! Show me your friends, and I'll show you your future.

◂ Try again

Memory Verse Challenge · Proverbs 27:17

A i s i, s o p s a.

Can you say the whole verse using just these letters? Try it!

◂ Back to Chapter 3

Try This · Answers

Your Lego can include friends, brothers and sisters, cousins, the grown-ups who take care of you, grandparents, teachers, coaches, and leaders at church. A star means that person helps you follow Jesus. Try to have at least one star!

◂ Back to Chapter 3

You got it!

That’s an impossible job for people. Only God could do it!

Next stop ▸

Not quite!

Ha! He wanted them to tell him his dream and what it meant.

◂ Try again

Not quite!

Nope! He wanted them to tell him his dream and what it meant.

◂ Try again

Not quite!

God never forgets us! While you are waiting, God is working.

◂ Try again

You got it!

Even when it feels like nothing is happening, God is working.

Next stop ▸

Not quite!

Waiting can be hard! But while you are waiting, God is working.

◂ Try again

Not quite!

He went to the king later. First, he stopped and thanked God.

◂ Try again

You got it!

Before he did anything else, Daniel stopped and thanked God.

Next stop ▸

Not quite!

Nope! First, he stopped and thanked God.

◂ Try again

Memory Verse Challenge · Ecclesiastes 4:12

O p c b o. B t p c s u f t. A a r m o o t c i e b.

Can you say the whole verse using just these letters? Try it!

◂ Back to Chapter 4

Try This · Answers

Ideas: a friend who is sick, someone in your family, your teacher, a new kid at school, a missionary, your pastor, or someone who is waiting for good news.

◂ Back to Chapter 4

Not quite!

Daniel didn’t take the credit. He gave it all to God.

◂ Try again

You got it!

Daniel said, “There is a God in heaven who explains mysteries.”

Next stop ▸

Not quite!

Arioch wanted a little credit! But Daniel gave it all to God.

◂ Try again

You got it!

The rock was God’s kingdom, and it filled the whole earth!

Next stop ▸

Not quite!

No hammer! A rock nobody threw smashed it. The rock was God’s kingdom.

◂ Try again

Not quite!

Not an earthquake. A rock nobody threw smashed it. The rock was God's kingdom.

◂ Try again

Not quite!

Daniel didn’t forget them! He asked the king to give them important jobs too.

◂ Try again

You got it!

Daniel brought his friends along. That's what real friends do!

Next stop ▸

Not quite!

No bragging! Daniel asked the king to give his friends important jobs too.

◂ Try again

Memory Verse Challenge · Philippians 2:4

N o y s l o j f y o g. E o y s a l o f t g o o.

Can you say the whole verse using just these letters? Try it!

◂ Back to Chapter 5

Try This · Answers

Ideas: thank God for a good grade, a win, a fun trip, or a new friend. Thank a person like a grown-up who takes care of you, a coach, a teacher, a brother or sister, or a friend who helped you practice.

◂ Back to Chapter 5

Not quite!

Much longer! About fifteen years passed, and the friends were in their 30s.

◂ Try again

You got it!

About fifteen years! The friends were grown men in their 30s, still making little good choices.

Next stop ▸

Not quite!

Not that long! About fifteen years passed, and the friends were in their 30s.

◂ Try again

Not quite!

Almost everybody bowed. Only three friends stood tall.

◂ Try again

Not quite!

The king wanted everyone to bow! Only three friends stood tall.

◂ Try again

You got it!

Thousands bowed. Three friends stood tall.

Next stop ▸

You got it!

God can. He may. And even if he doesn't, we'll still trust him.

Next stop ▸

Not quite!

That’s the opposite! “Even if he doesn’t” means trusting God no matter what.

◂ Try again

Not quite!

Never! “Even if he doesn’t” means trusting God no matter what.

◂ Try again

Memory Verse Challenge · Daniel 3:18

E i w k t o G w s u, w s w s y g.

Can you say the whole verse using just these letters? Try it!

◂ Back to Chapter 6

Try This · Answers

Example: *God, I know you can help my grandma feel better. Even if you don't do it the way I want, I will still trust you and love you.*

◂ Back to Chapter 6

Not quite!

Much hotter than that! Seven times hotter.

◂ Try again

You got it!

Seven times hotter! So hot the soldiers could barely get close.

Next stop ▸

Not quite!

Way more than a tiny bit! Seven times hotter.

◂ Try again

Not quite!

Not one hair was burned! Only the ropes burned.

◂ Try again

Not quite!

Their clothes weren’t even scorched. Only the ropes burned.

◂ Try again

You got it!

Not even the smell of smoke! Only the ropes burned.

Next stop ▸

Not quite!

Your friend needs you! You can just be there with them.

◂ Try again

You got it!

You don’t have to fix it. You can just be there. Pick a spot and stay.

Next stop ▸

Not quite!

That might embarrass them. Instead, you can just be there with them, and tell a grown-up you trust if you're worried.

◂ Try again

Memory Verse Challenge · Isaiah 43:2

Y w w t f. B y w n b b. T f w n h y.

Can you say the whole verse using just these letters? Try it!

◂ Back to Chapter 7

Try This · Answers

Even small things matter. Sitting with someone at lunch, asking “How are you doing?”, or praying for them by name can help a lot. If a friend tells you something that worries you, tell a grown-up you trust.

◂ Back to Chapter 7

You got it!

He bragged that he did it all himself. Then God humbled him until he looked up.

Next stop ▸

Not quite!

Ha! He was too proud. He thought he did everything by himself.

◂ Try again

Not quite!

Nope! He was too proud. He thought he did everything by himself.

◂ Try again

You got it!

That very night, Babylon fell, just like the statue dream said.

Next stop ▸

Not quite!

Something big happened! That very night, Babylon fell.

◂ Try again

Not quite!

No more parties! That very night, Babylon fell.

◂ Try again

Not quite!

He kept praying! Just as he had done before.

◂ Try again

You got it!

Three times a day, on his knees, by his open window, just as he had done before.

Next stop ▸

Not quite!

He didn’t hide. He prayed by his open window, just as he had done before.

◂ Try again

Memory Verse Challenge · Proverbs 17:17

A f l a a t. T a t t h w t c.

Can you say the whole verse using just these letters? Try it!

◂ Back to Chapter 8

Try This · Answers

1. Cut four pieces of string, each about as long as your arm. · 2. Tie a knot at the top. · 3. Tape the knot to a table. · 4. Braid or twist the strings together. · 5. Tie a knot at the bottom, and tie it around your wrist (ask a grown-up to help).

◂ Back to Chapter 8

KEEP EXPLORING!

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