

I have this recurring dream where I am sitting in the backseat of a van that is travelling down the road and I look up and realize no one is in the drivers seat. I spend the rest of the dream anxiously fighting to get over the seats to get to the steering wheel.

- Control is a lifeline for me. But these dreams reflect a reluctant recognition that so often we are not in control.

For a person in love with clarity and control, the story of Daniel and his three friends Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego is invaluable when our sense of clarity and control is inevitably revealed as illusion.

Tell the story of Daniel and his friends.

- Describe the emotions...loss, lost, unfamiliarity, how did we get here?
- separated from family, friends, everything you have known...taken, future radically changed.
- Not just in exile, but in defeat. Deported, oppressed and loss of independence.

How do we thrive when we're living in exile:

- when circumstances change
- when we're experiencing loss
- when relationships are broken, divorce
- when we've lost a job
- when we're aging
- when we're feeling lost and we don't have clarity or don't know what to do
- corporately as the body of Christ when we are no longer the authority in our culture?

The story of Daniel and his friends remind us that we can be people of confidence and influence even when we are in difficult circumstances and not in control.

**3 King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, sixty cubits high and six cubits wide,[a] and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. 2 He then summoned the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials to come to the dedication of the image he had set up. 3 So the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials assembled for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and they stood before it.**

**4 Then the herald loudly proclaimed, “Nations and peoples of every language, this is what you are commanded to do: 5 As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. 6 Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.”**

**7 Therefore, as soon as they heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp and all kinds of music, all the nations and peoples of every language fell down and worshiped the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.**

**8 At this time some astrologers[b] came forward and denounced the Jews. 9 They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “May the king live forever! 10 Your Majesty has issued a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music must fall down and worship the image of gold,11 and that whoever does not fall down and worship will be thrown into a blazing furnace. 12 But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up.”**

**13 Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, 14 and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? 15 Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?”**

**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.

Application is for individuals and for the church.

I'm not minimizing the pain or suggesting grief isn't appropriate.

- Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are far from home.
- Separated from family, and friends.
- Their future has been radically altered.
- AND the pain they must be experiencing is very real.

Will take some time to re-orient to the reality of exile. God is gracious with you, be gracious with yourself.

### **Remember who you are.**

Daniel and his friends are living in a new reality. The circumstances around them have changed dramatically. They are even given new names! But, they remember who they are and where they have come from.

- They know they were created in the image of God and are greatly loved by Him.
- They know they are children of the promises made to Abraham.
- This allows them to live with a confident humility and a quiet strength.

Sometimes quiet confidence and confident humility is more powerful than loud decrees and rage.

- They don't judge the Babylonians for being Babylonians.
- This especially rings true in times of exile. And, was modeled brilliantly by Jesus.

We can't only look to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. There is also Nebuchadnezzar:

- who remains on the throne (at least in his mind),
- issuing bombastic decrees
- These are the actions of a person who lacks self-confidence
- He even uses the idol to demand people bow to his authority and then does the same thing with the God of Shadrach Meshach and Abednego.

As the body of Christ, we make a grave mistake when we make our faith in Jesus about *our* authority and not His.

## Remember who God is.

The three men's confidence is enabled by their faith and trust in God.

- they remember they have a God of promise that delivered them out of Egypt, and into the promised land.

The three young men's response can be summed up: "God reigns." Not our circumstances, not those who hurt or oppress us, not even ourselves.

What do your circumstances say about your God vs what does your God say about your circumstances.

Because Daniel and his friends don't focus wasted energy on changing circumstances they can't change, they can focus energy on finding a way to respond faithfully to the new opportunities afforded by exile, and we are called to do the same.

We shouldn't become so focused on the exile that we miss opportunities God is placing in front of us.

And, we have something Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego didn't have. A savior in Jesus.

- Who CHOSE to take on the ultimate exile so we no longer have to.
- A savior that defeated death.
- And, if Jesus defeated and reigns over death then he certainly reigns over whatever our current circumstances might be, he reigns over our hurt, our disillusionment and our .

Too often, I trust God as my last resort instead of my first choice. I forget his faithfulness in the past.

"As long as our eyes are on the problem, and the solution lies in our faith in Jesus, the X's are going to pile up on the calendars of our fight, marking the days little to nothing has changed. Everything changes the moment our hope shifts from us to Jesus."

As we share communion together, this is a chance to shift our focus from us to him

In the name of the Father, who created you in His image.  
The Son, who loved you enough to give His life for you.  
And the Holy Spirit, who empowers you to live confidently.