

Sermon Series: Game Changer
To be used with: Session Two: Pray Fervently
Sermon Title Possibilities: The Importance of Prayer
God Answers Prayer
Scripture: Daniel 2:13-21, 26-28a

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study of *Game Changer: How to Impact Your World* these sermon outlines will use the same Scripture passages as the small group study, so the pastor can reinforce the study from the pulpit.

Introduction: When I was twelve years old I traveled to Mobile, Alabama, to play in a baseball tournament. I was riding in the backseat with my older brother and his friend. My Daddy and my twin brother were in the car ahead. Daddy was leading us to the hotel. As we got into the city we became separated and my older brother did not know the hotel name, so he pulled over on the side of the street, waiting for our Daddy to turn around to come back for us. Daddy did not come back. It had been a long day of travel so my older brother and his friend went to sleep as we waited. I could not sleep. We were in a new town with strange people walking beside the car on the sidewalk. This was a time of racial tension in the south. Honestly, I feared for my life. So I prayed.

Daniel had a similar experience. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream. He called in his sorcerers, enchanters, magicians, and astrologers. He commanded them to tell him the dream and the interpretation. They could not. So Nebuchadnezzar ordered all his wise men put to death, including Daniel and his friends. Isn't it interesting that Nebuchadnezzar would order the deaths of people he had invested in?

When Daniel heard about the death sentence (which included him and his three friends plus all the other young men from Jerusalem), he personally asked the king for more time in order to interpret the dream. Then, he and his three friends prayed.

From Daniel's example we learn some practical prayer principles for when our lives are threatened or we are faced with a crisis.

1. Maintain the practice of prayer.

Daniel was a man of prayer. Later in his book we read, "When Daniel learned that the document had been signed, he went into his house. The windows in its upper room opened toward Jerusalem, and three times a day he got down on his knees, prayed, and gave thanks to his God, just as he had done before" (Dan. 6:10 HCSB). Daniel made it a habit to pray. He was in consistent contact with God. Prayer was not a final resort for Daniel. It was a first priority. He didn't just talk about talking to God. He prayed daily and regularly.

Martin Luther, the leader of the Protestant Reformation, practiced prayer. On one occasion he said, "I have so much to do today, I'll need to spend another hour on my

knees.” My typical response to an over committed schedule of daily activities is to say, “I have so much to do today; I’ll skip my time with God.”

Prayer often becomes a mechanical duty, rather than a source of power in releasing and multiplying God’s wisdom. For prayer to be a source of power, a habitual and consistent pattern of prayer needs practiced.

Amazingly, Daniel remained calm and acted “with tact and discretion” (v. 14) when the news of his impending death came. He even asked to see the King who ordered his death, asking for more time in interpreting the King’s dream. How could he be so calm? How could he be so bold? The answer: He prayed. Through prayer his focus was on God.

The same is true for us. No circumstance, crisis, or threat can overwhelm us when we maintain the practice of prayer. We know that God is in control. He is calling the shots. His plan will prevail.

2. Enlist others to pray with and for you.

Not only did Daniel pray, but he enlisted his friends to pray as well. “Then Daniel went to his house and told his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah about the matter,¹⁸ urging them to ask the God of heaven for mercy concerning this mystery, so Daniel and his friends would not be killed with the rest of Babylon’s wise men” (Dan. 2:17-18 HCSB). Daniel understood the value of corporate prayer. He understood the importance of having other people storm the throne of God, asking for help, guidance, and protection.

One of the wisest things we can do when we are threatened is to engage the assistance of others who know how to talk to God. The body of Christ depends upon cooperation. When Daniel’s friends began to pray, God provided the interpretation to Daniel of Nebuchadnezzar’s vision.

Corporate prayer knits believers together in a unique bond of fellowship found nowhere else in life and encourages the burdened. When a group of believers pray together, the result is unity, humility, thanksgiving, confession of sin, intercession, and discovery of God’s will. Corporate prayer edifies and unifies us as we share our common faith. Corporate prayer unleashes God’s power.

John R. Mott said, “If added power attends the united prayer of two or three, what mighty triumphs there will be when hundreds of thousands of consistent members of the Church are with one accord day by day making intercession for the extension of Christ’s Kingdom.”

Five young college students were spending a Sunday in London, so they went to hear the famed C. H. Spurgeon preach. While waiting for the doors to open, the students were greeted by a man who asked, “Gentlemen, let me show you around. Would you like to see the heating plant of this church?” They were not particularly interested, for it was a hot day in July. But they didn’t want to offend the stranger, so they consented. The young men were taken down a stairway, a door was quietly opened, and their

guide whispered, “This is our heating plant.” Surprised, the students saw 700 people bowed in prayer, seeking a blessing on the service that was soon to begin in the auditorium above. Softly closing the door, the gentleman then introduced himself. It was none other than Charles Spurgeon.

3. Be sensitive to God’s answers.

When Daniel and his friends prayed, God answered. God revealed to Daniel the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar’s vision.

God answered Daniel because Daniel asked. All too often we might assume that God wouldn’t answer our prayer so we leave the request unspoken. Or we simply don’t want to ask for help. We want to face the challenges on our own. James 4:2 reminds us: “You do not have because you do not ask (HCSB).” Daniel asked and God answered.

We often treat answered prayer like a rarity. But answered prayer should be the daily occurrence for people of faith. God has promised that when we ask he will answer. Sometimes it is not the answer we want; but, it’s the answer we need.

4. Thank God for answered prayer.

Daniel was quick to extend gratitude and acknowledge where the answers came from. Thankfulness acknowledges the source of answered prayer. Thankfulness reminds us who is in charge and who controls our world. Daniel was quick to acknowledge that God was the power orchestrating life’s great drama. God has power over times and seasons. God controls the kings. And, God gave wisdom to Daniel to interpret a king’s dreams. For all of that Daniel acknowledged the Source and Provider of it all.

When we are faced with a crisis situation, we need help. We need to ask God for help. We need to let God have his way. We need to give God the credit. We need to follow wherever God leads.

As I prayed in the car on the street in Mobile, Alabama, God answered. After hitting the seat belts together to wake up my brother and his friend, my older brother decided that he should call home. My brother did and spoke with my mother who told him where the hotel was. In a short time, we were reunited with my Daddy.

God heard. He answered. He was praised.

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