

(This is written to give you good things to enjoy, because look again at what Paul told Timothy (1 Tim 6:17-18)! I think he was thinking of us at the time: **17 Instruct those who are rich in the present age not to be conceited and not to put their hope in the uncertainty of wealth, but in God, WHO RICHLY PROVIDES ALL THINGS TO ENJOY. 18 Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, and to be generous and ready to share...**) The following ice breaker is just a starter for your group. The message comes after the second bar. Please enjoy!)

CROWD BREAKER: Have you ever been put in a place of leadership that you didn't ask for? How did that go? What was the most surprising aspect for good or ill? —The scribe

Note: Be good to one another. Be sensitive and kind. Let God heal our hearts...and guide our discussions. **PLEASE PRE-READ THESE NOTES AND CHOOSE THE DIRECTION THAT IS APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR GROUP. The purpose is to unite, not divide; to fearlessly proclaim the freedom the gospel brings. Any part of these notes might be appropriate as a crowd breaker for your own group. The goal is to create memories from Sunday that will serve for a long time. BE COGNIZANT OF YOUR GROUP'S TIME AND BE SENSITIVE! Some groups would like to dwell on a single idea. Let the Spirit be your guide. Never feel obligated to complete this study. This study is also a great devotion, taken slowly through the week.**

Note: I have highlighted suggested discussion questions raised by Pastor Mark's message from this Sunday. Let's allow the Holy Spirit to guide all our discussions, using the highlights as trail blazes. **The purpose is to minister to one another.**

Have your friends turned on you? Are your co-workers talking behind your back?

Mark says, "The reality is we will be in conflict if we are doing the right thing." **How do you feel when you are doing what you know is right, and your co-workers turn on you? Why do you think it happens? How does the song "New Wine" (In the crushing...) relate to this question?**

1Now, it pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, **2**and over them three administrators, including Daniel, to whom these satraps were accountable so that the king would not suffer loss. **3**Soon, by his extraordinary spirit, Daniel distinguished himself among the administrators and satraps. So the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. **How is this not good news for Daniel? How did it turn out for Joseph with his brothers when his father Jacob gave him the coat of many colors?**

4Thus the administrators and satraps sought a charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom, but they could find no charge or corruption, because he was trustworthy, and no negligence or corruption was found in him. **5**Finally these men said, "We will never find any charge against this Daniel, unless we find something against him concerning the law of his God." **How determined are the other administrators to find fault in Daniel? If they**

cannot find any fault with him, what do they have against him? (Why is it remarkable that Daniel was placed above them in the first place? What is his race? Do we know what their race is? What got Daniel into his place of prominence? How important is his reputation?

6So the administrators and satraps went together to the king and said, "O King Darius, may you live forever! 7All the royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers, and governors have agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce a decree that for thirty days anyone who petitions any god or man except you, O king, will be thrown into the den of lions. **Who is NOT included in making this counsel? Look at this decree. What possible good could come from a decree like this?**

8Therefore, O king, establish the decree and sign the document so that it cannot be changed—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed." **Does this king have the absolute power that Nebuchadnezzar had? (Think of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Head of gold...now body of silver. What has changed?)**

9Therefore King Darius signed the written decree.

Daniel in the Lions' Den

10Now when Daniel learned that the document had been signed, he went into his house, where the windows of his 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.

What has changed with Daniel? 11Then these men went as a group and found Daniel petitioning and imploring his God. 12So they approached the king and asked about his royal decree: "Did you not sign a decree that for thirty days any man who petitions any god or man except you, O king, will be thrown into the den of lions?" **What kind of question is this? Who writes laws to entrap people?** Mark says, "The enemy's strategy is to use legal means to entrap and ensnare someone." **Can you think of an example in history where the law has been used to entrap people and to force action? How often does this happen?**

The king replied, "According to the law of the Medes and Persians the order stands, and it cannot be repealed."

13Then they told the king, "Daniel, one of the exiles from Judah, shows no regard for you, O king, or for the decree that you have signed. He still makes his petition three times a day."

14As soon as the king heard this, he was deeply distressed and set his mind on delivering Daniel, and he labored until sundown to rescue him. **What do you notice about the king's reaction? How does this help Daniel? Who is actually in control of Darius' kingdom? What is the solution?**

15Then the men approached the king together and said to him, "Remember, O king, that by the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or ordinance established by the king can be changed."

16So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the den of lions. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!"

17A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that nothing concerning Daniel could be changed. **How faithful is the king to the new law? Why?**

18 Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting. No entertainment was brought before him, and sleep fled from him. **What do you think? Is the king breaking his own law?**

19 At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the den of lions. 20 When he reached the den, he cried out in a voice of anguish, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?" **Whom does Darius acknowledge? How is this a recurring theme in the book of Daniel?**

21 Then Daniel replied, "O king, may you live forever! 22 My God sent His angel and shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, for I was found innocent in His sight, and I have done no wrong against you, O king." **Look again at Isaiah 43:2-3, which sustained Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego** 2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you go through the rivers, they will not overwhelm you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched; the flames will not set you ablaze. 3 For I am the LORD your God, the Holy. **Does this verse apply here as well?**

23 The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den, and when Daniel was lifted out of the den, no wounds whatsoever were found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

24 At the command of the king, the men who had falsely accused Daniel were brought and thrown into the den of lions—they and their children and wives. And before they had reached the bottom of the den, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones. **Now who is in control? What reputations have been changed?**

Look how Darius Honors God:

25 Then King Darius wrote to the people of every nation and language throughout the land:

"May your prosperity abound. 26 I hereby decree that in every part of my kingdom, men are to tremble in fear before the God of Daniel:

For He is the living God,
and He endures forever;
His kingdom will never be destroyed,
and His dominion will never end.

27 He delivers and rescues;
He performs signs and wonders
in the heavens and on the earth,
for He has rescued Daniel
from the power of the lions."

28 So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian. **What does this remind you of? How many times has this happened with foreign kings in this book? What does it take for a nation to acknowledge God? How should we pray? Does this honor come without persecution?**

Look up Matthew 10:16 Behold, I am sending you out like sheep among wolves; therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. 17 But beware of men; for they will

hand you over to their councils and flog you in their synagogues. [18](#)On My account, you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. [19](#)But when they hand you over, do not worry about how to respond or what to say. In that hour you will be given what to say. [20](#)For it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

[21](#)Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rise against their parents and have them put to death. [22](#)You will be hated by everyone because of My name, but the one who endures to the end will be saved. **Think of Daniel. How much of what Jesus says here applied to his experience? Did Daniel know what to say at the right time? What does it mean to 'endure to the end'? Did Daniel endure? Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego?**

[23](#)When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next. Truly I tell you, you will not reach all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes. **Why not stick around? Can you think of places in Acts where Paul stayed around? When did he move on?**

[24](#)A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. [25](#)It is enough for a disciple to be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household! **How does this make you feel? Is this good news? What if Jesus had never forewarned us? What happens to your faith when you are attacked without reason?**

Fear God Alone

(Luke 12:4-7)

[26](#)So do not be afraid of them. For there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, and nothing hidden that will not be made known. [27](#)What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the housetops. [28](#)Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Instead, fear the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

[29](#)Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. [30](#)And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. [31](#)So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. **Why are these words so encouraging? Look at them closely. What do you see? What do you do when a co-worker stabs you in the back? Who is your enemy? Did Daniel have to do anything to his co-workers to get revenge?**

Look up Ephesians 6:10-20 [10](#)Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. [11](#)Put on the full armor of God, so that you can make your stand against the devil's schemes. [12](#)For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this world's darkness, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. **If we do not wrestle with flesh and blood, how does the conflict change? How does the face of the enemy we face change?**

[13](#)Therefore take up the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you will be able to stand your ground, and having done everything, to stand. [14](#)Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness

arrayed, ¹⁵and with your feet fitted with the readiness of the gospel of peace. **What news do your feet usually run with?**

¹⁶In addition in all circumstances, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. **Answer Pastor Mark's question: What are you thinking about? How often do you speak the word of God in your conversation?**

¹⁸Pray in the Spirit at all times, with every kind of prayer and petition. To this end, stay alert with all perseverance in your prayers for all the saints. **Look at the armor. How does this equip us? What will make us effective? How does praying in the spirit help?**

¹⁹Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will boldly make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it fearlessly, as I should. **Were the prayers Paul asked for prayed? How do we know? How fearless was Paul? To the end?**

Pastor Mark says, "As we grow in our relationship with the Lord, the persecution will only be greater." **Why would we want to continue? Do you want conflict? What do you desire?** He continues, "God who will build you up through the power of the Holy Spirit, will guide you, protect you, give you what to say in the right moment." **What increases as this happens in the furnace and the den?**

What defensive weapons do we have? What offensive weapons do we have? Answer Mark's question: What are you going to do differently this week than you did last week to face your trials, tests and temptations? What are you going to do to prepare for when a co-worker turns on you and says lies about you? How will you stay faithful?

Mark says, "The moment's now. We have to prepare."

How important is it to take time to pray for one another? Do it now.

What is your biggest takeaway from this message? What is your next step? —the scribe