

Word notes Sunday 25/03/2012 Michael Meeks
Daniel 6 – Daniel in the Lion’s Den

Summary (read this bit out to remind cell members what was said on Sunday)

Key Text: Daniel 6

In a week when integrity in high places, in the form of cash for access, raises it’s head again, here’s Daniel, captured and living in exile, serving a king who does not hold the same beliefs yet doing so with such integrity and application that he does better than his native born peers. This gets right up the other satraps and administrators noses, it threatens to undermine the good thing they have going so they plot to bring him down. They can’t catch him out at anything to do with his work, only his religion so they trick the king into issuing an irrevocable decree that will catch him out. It won’t change the fact Daniel dos his work to the utmost of his ability or honesty but is a personal attack to get rid of him so they can continue to cheat the king (v2).

Daniel isn’t deterred from his commitment to God and goes right away to continue praying as he has always done and in full view. He couldn’t go one day without prayer let alone 30. Rom 13:3 tells us that “rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong” and Daniel relies on His God – the one who put the king in authority over Israel in the first place.

The king is in a bind – he has been tricked and tries all lengths to get round the decree but to no avail (v14), what value then men’s irreversible laws, who do they really restrict? As a result Daniel is sent to certain death (NB v24 for what kind of lions these were) and King Darius spends the night pacing the floor, we can only wonder at what kind of night Daniel had yet he emerged completely unharmed.

The fate of those who entrapped Daniel is not nice - the Bible does not gloss over the nasty things of life nor things God does not agree with, it’s not a fairy story where everyone lives happily ever after. Even so Jewish Law certainly metes out punishment for false witness appropriate to the accusation (Deut 19:18 & 19).

What about us, what is our attitude to living in a secular world? 1 Pet 2:12 urges us to “Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us”. And if we find ourselves in difficulties is God able to save us?

Application (this is the bit where cell members get to participate. Lead discussions around these points)

Daniel was working for a king who did not hold his beliefs; in a place of exile from being a young man to now 80 years old yet he worked wholeheartedly for him, honestly and to the utmost of his ability. Discuss how Daniel’s example informs our attitudes to our employers, bosses and colleagues.

If you think you’re doing OK how ready would you be to ask a few good people what they think (and will you)?

Is it ever OK to disobey the law? What cases are you aware of right now where Christians are being prosecuted for acting in accordance with their beliefs? Might this affect you in your work?

What might be the consequences of civil disobedience and which of these considerations might cause you to compromise a deep held belief? Has this ever happened to you or is the question hypothetical?

Witness (this is the bit where the cell talks and prays about how to share the Good News)

Religion and politics are jokingly the two subjects not to raise at parties yet they seem to be increasingly in the fore in society and the media. Which topics do you avoid talking about with friends or colleagues in case they don’t agree with you or you offend them? How can you talk about your beliefs in integrity and with sensitivity too?