

# Praying Like Daniel

by Jim Cymbala

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of gratitude and prayer in our lives, using the example of Daniel's consistent prayer life as a model for our own faithfulness.*

**Duration:** 21:37

**Scripture:** Genesis 18:17, Daniel 6:10, Philippians 4:6

**Topics:** "Praying"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of prayer and the proper attitude to have when approaching God. He highlights the story of Daniel, who faithfully prayed to God three times a day and gave thanks. The speaker encourages a balanced approach to prayer, combining both thanksgiving and requests for help. He also shares a personal anecdote about his childhood desire to become a skilled basketball player and the importance of learning from good models. The sermon concludes by mentioning the prophet Daniel as an example of someone highly esteemed by God.

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## Transcript

You know, when I was a kid, I wanted to be the best basketball player I could. When I was real little, my brother got me a book. I can still see myself reading it.

I was little. And it was a pretty advanced book on basketball, how to play, how to make a fake and crossover, and how to ball fake and get a guy up in the air so you could go around him. And that was good.

They actually had pictures. There was a picture of a guy being guarded by another guy, and you fake left, and you go right, and you protect the ball. And then, as you really get into the sport, you wanted to go and see advanced players, really good players.

You're just a kid growing up. Because there's something about watching someone play that you go, oh, look how he did that. And look at the way he followed through when he shot or whatever.

Because these models that we get, we can learn so much from. In every field of expertise. The Bible gives us some pictures of some great men and women who walked with God and were remarkably strong for the Lord.

And you look at them, and you say, how did they do what they did? One of the outstanding names in the Old Testament is the prophet called Daniel. And I remember my late friend, Pastor Bogstaff, one day saying to me, came to me with his Bible, in my office, and he said, Pastor Cimbala, did you ever see that verse in the Bible, in Daniel, where the angel comes to Daniel and says, Daniel, God wants you to know you're highly esteemed in heaven. What in the world is that? What kind of person, not highly esteemed by some people, by some church members, you're highly esteemed.

I don't know of any other place in the scriptures that talks about that. Abraham and Moses are called the friend of God and whatnot. But Daniel was so unique.

So before I read this little passage about him, you have to know that Daniel was one of these young men who, when Judah and Jerusalem were conquered by the Babylonians, and Israel went into a 70-year captivity, he was one of those young, upstart guys, maybe as young as 15 or 14, 16, but very precocious, very gifted. And they yanked him along with other guys by the name of Shadrach, Meshach, and I knew you knew that name. They were hauled off somewhere into the Babylonian Empire.

But Daniel stood out from the get-go. Just as a young guy, Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, he spotted Daniel and saw the promise that was in him and the gifting that he had. So the book of Daniel is a kind of rotational book because it goes forward, but then it goes back.

It's not perfectly sequential. And Daniel's life was a life of a Hebrew, a Jew, loyal to God, but living in a foreign culture. No believers around him except for a few.

So a pagan culture, worshiping false gods, and somehow Daniel is staying true to God. And not only that, God's promoting him to all kinds of positions of favor. While he's there in Babylon, the Babylonians get conquered by the Persians.

And Daniel's involved in that famous, infamous night when there's a handwriting on the wall. And it's the end of the Babylonians. And now the Persians take over the media Persian Empire.

And they spot the same thing in Daniel. This man is an unusual man. He's in touch with the gods.

They don't understand there's just one God. So the book of Daniel really covers a long period of time. And we're now gonna reach the story of Daniel in what kind of den.

And by now, unlike the paintings you've seen, he's not 20 or 30 or 40. He's 60 or 70 or 80 years old. And we're gonna learn about the secret of what made him such a powerful person.

Daniel, by the way, is one of the few people in scripture that you can't find a flaw that's recorded in the scripture for the most part. There are no flaws. David, there's flaws.

Abraham, Moses, it gives you the whole thing. But Daniel, not that he was perfect, but Daniel was just so exceptional. So let's read a little portion of this about some of the pressures he faced as he's in the Persian Empire now under King Darius.

It pleased Darius to appoint 100 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. So let's just stop. Over the nation, over the land of the Persian Empire, he wants 120 people to be watching and overseeing.

But who's gonna oversee the overseers? He picks three, and they're responsible for 40 each. And Daniel was one of them. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss.

Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to send him over the whole kingdom. In other words, I'm not keeping you where you are. Promotion is coming.

You're gonna go up, I'm gonna put you right next to me. Not such a good thing for his peers, though, because of the human thing called jealousy. At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs.

They wanna throw him under the bus. But they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent.

They wanted to bury this guy. They're jealous of him, but they looked for two things. He's taking money under the table.

He's doing some little shady deal. They can't find that. Or he's lazy.

He's negligent on his job. Wouldn't that be a wonderful testimony if people came and examined our lives and found no corruption, no money, no tricks, no lying, no IRS thing we're running. Also, we're not lazy.

God doesn't bless lazy people. Do I get an amen? You can scam the system that we have in America. There's a good system to help people who need help, but you can also scam that system.

But God doesn't like and doesn't bless people who don't wanna work and be honest. And they couldn't find corruption in him, nor was he lazy. Finally, these men said, we'll never find any basis for charges against this man, Daniel, unless it has something to do with the law of his God.

They knew this guy is devoted to God, his God. So these administrators and satraps went as a group to the king and said, may King Darius live forever. Whenever someone greets you and say, may you live forever, you know something's coming on top of that.

Am I right? The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisors and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any God or human being during the next 30 days, except to you, your majesty, shall be thrown into the lion's den. Imagine how that fed that king's ego. For 30 days, nobody should pray to any God, any God or any other human being, except for you, because Darius, you're the man.

And people should be praying to you. You're not getting the honor that's due your name. And of course, poor Darius, he bit at the bait.

Now your majesty, issue the decree and put it into writing so that it cannot be altered in accordance with the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be repealed. So King Darius put the decree in writing. Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows open toward Jerusalem.

Three times a day, he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help. I want you to know this before we go to the next verse.

Three times a day, he was on his knees and he prayed, giving thanks to God. Now when they walk in on him, gonna run undercover operation on him, they find him asking God for help. So they went to the king and spoke to him about his royal decree.

Did you not publish a decree that during the next 30 days, anyone who prays to any God or human being, except to you, your majesty, would be thrown into the lion's den? The king answered, the decree stands in accordance with the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be repealed. Oh, how happy they were hearing that. And then you know the rest of the story.

Daniel is hauled as an older man and put in the lion's den. And then God delivers him. And King Darius, he knows Daniel's special.

And he knows he was played. He sees it and he can't sleep that night. He's bothered the whole night.

And he runs early in the morning. Oh, Daniel, servant of the living God, are you still down there? Praise God. And Daniel yells out, yeah, I made friends with all these lions.

God is faithful. Can we put our hands together and say amen to that? He delivered Daniel. So I just want you to notice two things that tell us part of the secret of this unusual man named Daniel.

All these years that he was in the Babylonian empire and he was in the Persian empire then, the ones that conquered the Babylonians, he had this habit. Three times a day, he would go to a window facing Jerusalem. That's not important, not mentioned as a requirement anywhere else in scripture.

He did that to remember the land where he had been taken out of as a young, young, young man. And he gave thanks to God. Three times a day, every day, without fail, he knelt down.

You could stand or sit. Prayer is a matter of the heart, not body position. And he gave thanks to God.

And he knew the edict had been issued. He knew what it said. He knew what this could cost him.

And when he balanced and measured it all out, he said, nothing will make me stop thanking God. I will pray, but notice the quality of the prayer. There's all kinds of prayer.

There's intercession, there's thanksgiving, there's worship, there's all different petitions. Nothing will make me stop thanking God, nothing. And he knew what was at stake.

He didn't know why the king had issued this edict. Maybe he had insight that it was a setup by people jealous of him. They couldn't get him on anything else except his devotion to God.

Wouldn't that be a great testimony for all of us? Can't find one thing wrong with them, but they're just crazy for Jesus. They're just in love with Jesus. They won't let Jesus go, won't stop thanking Jesus.

Now, mind you, the quality of his prayer, three times a day, he thanked God. Some of us haven't thanked God three times today. And we had Christ dying for us.

Daniel couldn't thank God for the cross. He couldn't thank God for the blood of Christ that was shed. He couldn't thank God for Calvary.

He couldn't thank God that Jesus rose from the dead. He couldn't thank God that the New Testament, the new covenant had been given him. He couldn't thank God for any of that, hadn't happened yet, but he was

still thanking God three times a day.

He was in a pickle. An edict had been issued which would threaten his very life, and he still was thanking God. Under pressure, he thanked God.

When the times were good, he thanked God. Without all the New Testament blessings that we have, he was thanking God. And it just reminded me as I've been meditating on this, oh God, help us to thank you more, and to praise you more, and to have more gratitude in our heart.

Notice this, he just didn't have it in his heart. He expressed it three times a day. Facing Jerusalem, he thanked God.

He was away from home. He was in captivity. He had 1,000 things he could have complained about.

He had all kinds of circumstances that were negative. What a rebuke to a lot of us who walk around sour and negative. We're always counting our problems, never counting our blessings, but now we know the secret of why Daniel was so strong, because every day he gave God glory.

He gave God thanks. He gave God praise. He thanked God for anything he could thank God for, like the song my friend wrote.

In everything, give him thanks. In the good times, praise his name. In the bad times, do the same.

In everything, give God thanks. I've caught myself at times feeling like often my spirit down, kind of gray, negative. I'll just check myself, like the Bible says, you know, check yourself, examine yourself.

We like to examine other people. Sometimes it's just better to examine yourself. I try to find out, like, God, what's wrong here? And so many times it's come to me, when was the last time you gave me praise? When was the last time you gave me thanks? I know you tell me your problems, and I appreciate that, that, you know, God knows Jim Simba's gonna come to God with his problems, but when did you give me thanks? You know what kills faith? An unthankful spirit.

Because when you thank God for anything, you're focusing on the goodness of God, on the track record of God, and it's not only right to give thanks to God, it builds faith for the future. Because if God did it in the past, how many know he's gonna do it again? Can we say amen to that? But that's what a thankful heart does. And I have been guilty of many failings in my life.

God knows I failed him more than all of you put together, and I mean that seriously. God and I understand what I'm talking about. I failed him so many times.

But the thing I have failed him most on, that I'm most guilty of, is being unthankful. By the grace of God, I want to give him more thanks. Because he is worthy to be thanked.

And the funny thing is, when I see other people, human beings, being ungrateful to their parents or grandparents, it gets me upset. How about you? You just see people who just in the gimme, gimme, gimme, gimme, gimme, that entitlement mentality, everybody owes me something, nobody says thank you, and when you see that, it just makes you want to just mush it up, right? And then I find out I'm guilty of that. We're guilty of that.

You know, some of you, you know what you owe God? You owe God about five minutes of just thanksgiving. No, I'm dead serious. You owe God about five minutes of just thanksgiving.

Don't say a word, don't ask him for anything. There's a time for everything under the sun. But there is a time to just give God thanks.

No wonder Daniel was so strong. Three times a day, even under the threat, oh my goodness, under the threat of death, he's still thanking God. Some of us have no threat and we still won't thank God.

To give God thanks. Those of you who have a lot to thank God for and you're a little bit convicted by the preacher's words, get up out of your seat and come up here. We're going to praise God.

We're going to give him thanks for five minutes. Come on, just come out of your seat. Pastor, God's been so good to me, I want to give him thanks, I want to give him praise.

I tend toward problems and not thanksgiving. I want to give him thanksgiving. I want to give him praise.

I know you got problems. I'm talking about his goodness towards you. Daniel, three times a day, faced Jerusalem.

And he gave thanks to God, even though they would kill him if they were to catch him doing it. Come on, let's lift our hands up. Let's start to praise God out loud.

We praise you. We thank you. We bless you.

We're not asking you for a thing. We're going to give you thanks. We're going to give you praise.

We're going to give you honor. We're going to give you glory. You are awesome, God.

You are awesome, I thank you. Forgive us for our lack of gratitude. But we give you praise today.

Everybody in the building, stand up, lift your hands and give God praise. We give you praise. We give you thanks.

We give you thanks. Gracias, Senor. We give you thanks, God.

We praise you. We give you praise. We give you honor.

We give you glory. Make us more of a thankful people, God. We give you thanks, Lord.

Gracias, Senor. Gracias. Gracias.

Tell him thank you, everybody. Tell him thank you, thank you. Thank you, thank you.

So let me finish this. Then do you notice the little change in the story? Daniel went home three times a day, open window. What did he do? He gave thanks to God.

Now the guys sneak up on him and they come in and they say they found him praying and asking God for help. There you go. That's the substance of prayer.

Thanking and praising. Help me, God. Help me, God.

Not just all praise and thanksgiving, then you won't ask God. You have not because you ask not. Not just asking, asking, asking, but then you can get negative and depressed about your own requests.

But mingle it with thanksgiving. Remember this verse, Philippians 4.6. Don't worry about a single thing. Be anxious for nothing.

But in everything, by prayer and supplication, with, see, even when you're asking God for things, you gotta mingle in thanksgiving or you get kinda heavy. One time I was in the Middle West and a person came up and asked me to pray for them. I said, how can I help you? They said, I want you to pray for me because my knee is bad and all of that.

I said, I'm gonna pray. No, also my right shoulder is really bothering me. I said, okay, good.

But also, pastor, my mother-in-law is aggravating me beyond what you could believe. I said, okay, God knows everything. Nobody will tell you at my job there's a boss that's tormenting me.

He made so many requests that I was getting depressed and couldn't pray. Instead of saying, I have needs, but I know I have a God who's gonna help me. I'm gonna praise him while I'm asking him.

Notice how simple. What was Daniel doing? Three times a day, giving thanks. But now, when they walked in on him, he was saying, help me, God.

Help me. Why help me? Well, we need help every day. How many have found you need God's help every day? But look what Daniel was facing.

The edict has come. They say if you pray to any other God but Darius, you're gonna die, be thrown in the lion's den. I'm not gonna stop praising you.

So I'm in a pickle. What am I supposed to do? God, I'm in a jam. Help me.

Help me. Help me, God. Just show me what to do.

Help me, God. Give me help. There's not one of us here that doesn't need help from God in something.

Don't make prayer complicated. It's thanking and praising him, and then it's bringing to him, oh, God, I need you. In my finances, I need you big time.

In this situation, I'm in, in my family with one of my children or whatever, or whatever misunderstanding with someone you really care about. God, help me. Help me.

Help me, God. Show me what to do. Unemployed, I need a job.

Help me, God. Help me. I'm gonna give you praise while I'm praying, but God, help me.

So now, you're gonna be able to stay as long as you want, but I want every brother to turn to another brother. Share with them one thing you need God to help you with. Come on, every lady, find a lady.

Just whisper in her ear, I want God to help me with such and such. Then let her tell you what she needs, and then start praying for each other out loud. Out loud, won't you share your need? Let's ask God out loud.

Come on, go to God. Everyone has something they need.

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