

Hillside Fellowship Church  
May 16, 2021

Daniel in the Lion's Den  
Daniel 6:1-28

[Worship]

[applause]

Pastor Dave: And Father, I pray that even as we sing those songs that actually reflects truth in our hearts, that we would, our desire is to look more like your Son Jesus Christ. And I know that is a dangerous song to sing, a dangerous prayer to pray, because it often takes tests and trials and difficulties to reveal those areas in my life that don't look like your Son.

It's clear in your word that you call us to trust in you with all our hearts, not to lean on our own understanding, but to acknowledge you. And so, I pray that you'd help me grow in that. Because of those areas where I don't trust you, I cling to the world. And so, would you help us today as we look at the tools you use to transform us? Would you grow us in what it means to trust you so that we begin to let go of the things the we believe will satisfy us in this world?

I come. I'm empty. So I ask that you'd fill me with your Spirit to serve, encourage, equip and support your body, that we together, as we love you and love one another, that we might look more like you, so that you would be glorified in a world that is desperately needing, might see what it looks like when a group of people dwell together in unity and love. So would you do that through us and in us today? In Jesus' name. Amen.

Congregation: Amen!

Pastor Dave: Well, welcome. Before I get started, some housekeeping stuff just so we can all be and stay on the same page. We've got a new service starting Saturday, June 5 at 5pm. So it's

going to be an evening service. We're going to have a meal afterwards. A lot of fun, new opportunity to train up new teams. And so, if you could do me a huge favor, I know that nobody likes registration. That's not a surprise to me.

[Chuckling]

You don't need to email me and let me know you don't like it. I don't like it. So when you email me, I'll be like, yeah. I'm with you. But we do need to know how many people are coming so that we don't have to turn hundreds of people away. So if you could do me a huge favor. We're looking to do away with registration after June 5. And that's a point of celebration. Amen?

[Applause, whistles, whoops]

Congregation: Amen.

Pastor Dave: Okay. I thought you'd be more excited from the emails, but I'll take what I can get.

So what I do need from you, though, if you'll go on your Hillside app, there's a Saturday service time link there. Just click on it. It's literally a 10-second survey. Like, hey, I'm planning on coming. So that way, we can get back to equalizing the services and move forward together. So if you'll do that. Just a quick show of hands, though. How many people are thinking about coming to the Saturday night service? Just hold them up. No, keep holding them up. I see you guys putting them up and down. I'm actually -- okay. 84. That's awesome.

[Laughter]

So if we put that with the 76 from this morning and add 100, it's going to totally equalize it. No more registration. [Clapping.] It's going to be awesome. I love it! All right. That's the good news. Not only that, we're going to need to train up more teams. So if you're like, you know, I can't get connected at Hillside. Now you can. Like, I'm going to plug you in. Greeter, usher, seater, parker, children's. There's a lot

more room now. You can get plugged in. I'll help you. We can do it. Like Home Depot. We can do it together.

[Chuckling]

Right? Now for newcomers, first-timers, this is your first time here? Really glad that you're here. At Hillside, we believe Jesus changes everything. Past, present and future. He's actively working to change all things so that all eternity will be perfect. And we're really pumped about that. So we love watching Jesus work all around us. But if this is your first time here, my name's Dave. I'm a new creature in Christ. I'm a recovering addict and alcoholic. It's really great to meet you.

We have been walking through the book of Daniel looking at how do we live in a world that really has lost its bearings and gone crazy. It's like we woke up in Oz, up is down, right is left, left is right, right is wrong and we're like, how do I parent. Daniel made it through that and it's just a brilliant picture. So we're just going to look at Daniel 6 today. I know you saw it on the flannel graph growing up. Old Testament. Jim, you're so happy with me in the Old Testament. The covenant theologians are like, now we're in the Old Testament. Soak it -- get a soup spoon. A regular spoon is not big enough.

[Chuckling.]

Watch this. Chapter 6, God says, Daniel writes -- I'm going to read through selected passages of 6 to give you kind of the overarching theme of the story. Daniel chapter 6. God says, Daniel writes verse 1. "It seemed good to Darius . . . "

We've got a new king now.

" . . . to appoint 120 satraps over the kingdom, that they would be in charge of the whole kingdom,

2 and over them three commissioners (of whom David was one), that these satraps might be accountable to them, and that the king might not suffer loss.

3 Then this Daniel began distinguishing himself among the commissioners and satraps because he possessed an extraordinary spirit, and the king planned to appoint him over the entire kingdom.

4 Then the commissioners and satraps began trying to find a ground of accusation against Daniel in regard to government affairs; but they could find no ground of accusation or evidence of corruption, inasmuch as he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption was to be found in him.

5 Then these men said, 'We will not find any ground of accusation against this Daniel unless we find it against him with regard to the law of his God.'

6 Then these commissioners and satraps came by agreement to the king and spoke to him as follows: 'King Darius, live forever!

7 All the commissioners of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the high officials and the governors have consulted together that the king should establish a statute and enforce an injunction that anyone who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, shall be cast into the lions' den.' "

Verse 9. "Therefore, King Darius signed the document, that is, the injunction."

Verse 10. "Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously."

Now watch this. Verse 16. Well, they tattletaled on him. They were bullies. And "Then the king gave orders, and Daniel was brought and cast into the lions' den. The king spoke and said to Daniel, 'Your God whom you constantly serve will Himself deliver you.' "

Verse 20. Well, the king came the next morning. "When he had

come near to the den to Daniel, he cried out with a troubled voice. The king spoke and said to Daniel, 'Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you constantly service, been able to deliver you from the lions?'

21 Then Daniel spoke to the king, 'O king, live forever!

22 My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths and they have not harmed me, inasmuch as I was found innocent before Him; and also toward you, O king, I have committed no crime.'

23 Then the king was very pleased and gave orders for Daniel to be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den and no injury whatever was found on him, because he had trusted his God."

Verse 25. "Then Darius the king wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language who were living in all the land: 'May your peace abound!

26 I make a decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel; For He is the living God and enduring forever, and his kingdom is one which will not be destroyed, and His dominion will be forever.

27 He delivers and rescues and performs signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, who has also delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.' "

So, there's kind of an overview of Daniel chapter 6. Let me give you a theological overview of the whole Bible so you can see. We're going to answer the question, why is Daniel 6 here. Why is Daniel 6 even in the Bible? Is it just here so we could do a flannel graph lesson to kids and say, if you trust God, he'll deliver you from your tribles as well and life will be easy? Or is there something else?

So if you read straight through the Bible, all 782,815 words, beginning with Genesis chapter 1 clear to Revelation chapter 22, the big idea about God that you would walk away with is this: God is perfect.

Psalm 18, verse 30. "As for God, his way is perfect." Everything he does is perfect. Theologically or doctrinally, we call it hagiology. He's holy. Now we tend to see that as a very religious thing. Oh, he's holy. It's actually a very relational thing. He relates perfectly. It's a very good thing.

You see, don't we all want it to be perfect on this earth? We do. That's why we complain so much and use the word "should."

[Chuckling.]

Well, we should never have registration. I know. In eternity we won't. As long as you're on the registration rolls of heaven.

[Laughter]

Right? The Lamb's Book of Life. Ends up God does registration, too.

[Laughter]

Anyway. See, now I'm getting snarky. Forgive me.

[Chuckling]

Forgive me, forgive me, those who ever email. He's perfect. It was good, though. Right?

[Laughter]

Right? There's a little zinger. I'm remove the barbs.

He's going to make all things perfect. And that's good, because we know, for all eternity, ahhh. Can you imagine every day? Oh, it's perfect. And everybody is saying, oh, it's perfect. Oh, it's perfect. That's what's waiting. And so, holiness, when we say God's holy, that's good. I get excited because it means everything's going to be perfect.

But you're going to see this little theological picture. Sin is imperfect.

As God is working to make everything perfect and holy, do you know that sin works to make everything imperfect? It resists change and demands that things stay the same. No amens. Has anybody done anything really stupid one day?

[Laughter]

Well, a lot of honest people here. Somewhat rhetorical, but we're all joining in now. But watch this. You do something stupid one day and then you turn around and do it the next day. Anybody? Can I get a what, what? That's addiction. I'm not going to drink tomorrow. And then I drink. The Bible explains it. It's called whoever sins is a slave to sin. We actually do the same thing over and over. Do you know this is actually a physical truth.

They spent 10s of millions of dollars in Germany at a cybernetic company to study humanity. What they would do is they would put people in a desert, in a forest, they would put people just in a plain but not given any object of reference points. Do you know what humans do when we try to walk in a straight line every time? We literally walk in circles. It's astounding! You're like, no, not me. Yeah, you, too. We all do it. Without external, objective reference points, guess what? We'll go round and round.

That's why they say if you're lost, sit down. It's actually better. You're not going to get more lost and do this loopdy loopdy loo. They call it loopy walking. We're all loopy. Scientifically, amen. So that's what sin does. So God's making everything perfect and because of sin, we resist change. We're like, no, I'm going to be loopy. Okay, let me know how that works out for ya, bro.

Jesus actually came. It's called the gospel. The Perfect One entered this imperfect world where we're all loopy and says, I'm the way. Follow me. I'm going to take you out of this cul-de-sac of crazy. I'm going to get you back on the path. That's what the gospel is. Now you can be mad about that, reject it. Let me know how your loopdy loos go, man. I get sick to my stomach. But if you like walking in circles, who am I to tell you not to?

[Chuckling]

I'm going to follow Jesus. Now watch this. When you wake up in Oz, and all of us are there; democrats, republicans, we're all there. And you're like, I don't get what's going on anymore. I mean, they're literally telling me things that I know can't be true are true. We're looking at this tool chest that we have. Remember, God's in control of who's in control. So you can rest. He's really got it. We've been loopy for as long as we've been on this earth and have had sin. So this isn't new. God's in control.

He's given us community. Community isn't a luxury. It's a necessity. He's given us compassion for the lost. Lost people aren't the problem. They're the point. These are some of our tools. Right? Clarity. Where you're at right now is not an accident. It is an assignment. You may not understand the assignment, but it's an assignment.

Now, in that, there are times you don't have the tools. You face a trial that's just too big. You've got to wait for the subcontractor. You don't have the tools to do it. You gotta rely on friends. I want you to see this. Today in Daniel 6, God's got a tool chest, too. He's got a really big tool chest. And he knows how to use it really well.

Now you might not like his tools. They may be too blunt, too sharp, too pokey. God's got a tool chest that he's using to transform us and make us look more like Jesus. I'm going to show you through the story of Daniel. It's very easy. He tests us, he tries us, he allows trouble in our life to transform us. That's one. He asks us to trust him in those trials, because he's going to use that trial to transform us. So without trust, there is no relationship.

Then he's going to use that trial and trust for a profound testimony. So that we're not just using our words to say follow Jesus. We're using our words and our walks and say, follow me as I follow Jesus. So watch. I've got 15 minutes. Let's walk through this. We'll start out verses 1 through 7, but all we need is verse 9. Verse 9, these guys, they're bullies. Anybody ever had a bully in their life? Yeah. Some of you have never had a bully. Really? That's amazing.

I was bullied by a 9-year-old last week.

[Laughter]

True story. And you don't win that. Like, you take out a 9-year-old, you never look like the good guy. Amen?

[Laughter]

So I took an anti-bullying class with my kids. They're here. Sat through an hour because bullies are a bummer, amen? You can't get away from them, though. They come in little bitty sizes. Little kids will bully you. Right? They know you can't hit back. I mean, it's messed up. Clear to old people. Watch this.

Verse 9. "Therefore King Darius signed the document, that is, the injunction, . . ." Saying nobody could pray to any other God. Now, here's why. They were jealous of Daniel. They saw Daniel's success and they were jealous of him. Now let me walk you through this. Some of us have been raised to believe if you do everything right, everyone will like you. Right?

If you do everything right, everyone will like you. And that's just not true. If you do anything right, a lot of people will dislike you, because we live in a world of self-namers since Genesis. Genesis chapter 11. "Let us make a name for ourselves. We'll build this tower really high." That explains America. I'm going to build the biggest company and I'll step on you to do it. I'm going to build the biggest bank account and I'll step on you to do it. I want to be in charge, so I'll step on Daniel to do it. Doesn't matter if I have to kill Daniel. I'm going to make a name for myself.

Let me describe Daniel to you. Daniel has been in captivity. He's made it through two kingdoms, seven kings, he's suffered a lot. He's now probably about 77 to 80 years old. He's a grandpa. This is Grandpa Daniel. He is probably just thinking about retirement.

[Chuckling]

How do I get into a rocking chair? Right? How do I rest? How do I relax? I'm 77. I was kidnapped, I'm in multiple kingdoms and now it comes. The problems, the bullies, the bullying comes. Here's what I want you to know. In America, we tend to set up a lot of false finish lines. You know what I mean by false finish lines? In kindergarten, you believe, man, when I get out of kindergarten, life's going to be a breeze. Amen?

I mean, this [saying sounds of a, e, i, o, u.] Ah, ee, I, oh, you. I mean, that's hard. And I've got to write. It's pencil grip. You know? Can't wait for grade school. Then you get into grade school. Man, I can't wait for junior high. Grade school's hard. When I get into junior high, it's going to be easy.

Then we get into junior high. It's like, man, I need some freedom. I need some recess; some real recess. Right? Then you get into high school. You're like, man, I don't like high school. They treat me like a kid. I need college. Then you get into college and it's like, man, I'm poor.

[Laughter]

If I have to eat Top Ramen because it's \$0.22 again --  
Man, I just can't wait to get married. Somebody cook me dinner.  
Amen?

[Laughter]

Haha. When I get married, life will be -- we set up these false finish lines. Then we get married and we're like (blurb blurb) . . .

[Laughter]

Ear pressure, man. What I need is some kids. Ha ha ha.

[Laughter]

And then you've got like 12 years of just blurriness. You're like, what?

What I need is a new job; a better job. That'll make life better. Then you got bosses and they're bullies and then you're right back to kindergarten. You learned everything you needed to know in kindergarten. Life's hard. So what we do is end up, we put this far out goal. Man, when I'm retired, then it'll be good. Amen?

Member: Amen!

Pastor Dave: But go to CVS to the diaper aisle.

[Laughter]

Nah, I'm not kidding you. Because they got baby diapers on this side, but guess what they got on the other side?

[Laughter]

That's what's coming for me and if you're honest, if you're intellectually honest, retirement isn't all it's cracked up to be, apparently. Now, we don't talk about this in public. Nobody's ever told me, but I know what's coming. You begin and end in diapers. Life is filled with difficulty every single step. But we, as Americans, tend to believe there are certain things in this life that are electives. I can audit life and never have to take a test.

Anybody ever audited a class in college? It's awesome. I wish I could audit life. You can go. You look like a student. You can dress up and look all hip and cool. Sit in class. But guess what? When the teacher says, "Take out your number 2 pencil and get ready for the test," I don't have to take the test. I'm auditing. This is just an elective. Most of us think that we can audit life and choose electives in life that don't demand suffering.

Here's the truth. Jesus was very up front with us on this. "In this life you will have trouble." That's one. "It's through many tribulations that we must enter the kingdom of God." "Don't be surprised if the fiery ordeal among you as though some strange thing were happening." Jesus suffered for us, leaving us an example that we would follow in his footsteps. You will be hated by all. You're going to have

hardships, difficulties. This world is filled with tests. Even when you get older. Amen?

In fact, they get more difficult. Because everything in life is harder. Older people tell me, it's even hard to pick up your glasses if you drop them. Everything gets more difficult. So this life is filled with tests, but please know this. It's part of the core curriculum of Christianity. Where you are is not an accident. It is an assignment. He wants to use your trial, your difficulty and your test right now to transform you. It is his best tool to transform us. He either brings or allows that difficulty into our life to expose where we're lacking the image of Christ in our life.

So, know this. Write this down under the first point. His test is for our best. It is his sharpest tool. If you are suffering, going through trial, difficulty and pain right now, it is -- and he longs to use it for good to make you look more like Jesus. He's just that good. Even Daniel, at 77, I'm sure Daniel's like, come on! Seriously? A lions' den? I'm at the end of my race. I just want the rocking chair and I'm going to get the roaring lions.

Watch what comes next. Verse 10 astounds me. Here's Daniel's response. Verse 10. Verse 9, King Darius signed the injunction. Watch verse 10 and realize this. Without trust, there is no relationship. Trust is the currency of relationship. So it happens. The document is signed. Daniel knows it's sure death. Here's what he does.

Verse 10. "Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open . . . "

He didn't have to. There is nothing in the scriptures that said, when you pray and give thanks to your God, open your windows. Nothing. But he was like, well, here we go. I wonder what God's going to do. [Sigh.] Might as well just let them see me doing it. They're weirdos. Bullies are weirdos and they're going to spy on me anyway. Right?

So he opens the windows. " . . . and he continued kneeling on his

knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously."

You see, what Daniel just did was just walk in profound trust. And I know trust isn't easy. How many of you have been wounded in relationship before? I assume it's all of us. If you've been alive at all, if you've had any siblings or any family or any friends, at some point, you've been wounded unless you're a total Uni-bomber, isolated out in the Montana wilderness. And it is hard to trust people. Where does that trust come from? Daniel is almost 80.

I can tell you where it comes from. It comes from a thousand little decisions to trust him with little things on the way. We think building friends is trust shown in huge overt ways. But actually studies show that trust is built a thousand little interactions every day. Can I trust this person? And so Daniel had learned trust over the years. So when it came up to a big trial, he said, all right, God. I've trusted you all of these years through the little things. I'll trust you with the big thing.

He goes up and totally lays his life down. You see, the test that you're going through right now, the difficulty, the trial is absolutely necessary. You need to know it's necessary. Here's why trials are necessary. Trials expose real faith from fake faith. I'm going to say it again, because it's so needed. In the Bible belt, we tend to think, hey, I know the intellectual facts of Christianity. Therefore, I'm a Christian. It has led many of us to a very phony, fake, knockoff faith where we say -- are you a Christian? Yes. I know and can regurgitate the facts of Christianity. But that doesn't show you where the trust of your heart is.

What the test will do is expose phony faith from real faith. Real faith holds up. It may fall, but it gets back up. It holds up and bears up under trial. Phony faith falls apart. Anybody ever had anything, a knockoff, a fake brand? A couple. Walter's here. Walter, raise your hand. Walter and I used to go down to Mexico all the time. We would go down to buy fake stuff. Walter and I would go down and I would buy a pair of Oakleys. They're actually Erkleys, if you looked at them close.

[Chuckling]

But if you didn't look -- we would get Raybans, but you look close and it's Roybans. [Chuckling.] Man, we would get in some trouble. One time, I don't know. He's waving me off. Somebody had weed in the car at some point and the dog was going nuts. I was so mad at you guys. It wasn't mine.

[Laughter]

It really wasn't. But numerous trips, we'd go down there, and it was like six bucks and I would rock the Erkleys, which was awesome. But honestly, on the way back, driving back, even under no pressure at all, one of the lenses would just [mimicking a lens popping out.]

[Laughter]

And so I'd be rocking the one-eyed Erkleys. Because that's what phony, knockoff products do. They look almost exactly alike, but when they're put under any pressure, they fall apart. A test, a stress test, a trial is the greatest thing that God can give to us. Because it shows us what's really going on inside. We oftentimes think we're awesome Christians. It's like, no, I memorized the Bible. I'm an awesome Christian.

Are you watching pastors fall left and right? What's going on is we've got a whole bunch of pastors and churches that have clept out or tried to get around stresses, around trials, around difficulty and we get into positions of leadership and when we're under stress, we just crumble. The test is the greatest thing that God has given us to show us what we truly trust.

See, many of us think teachers are jerks. What do you think when I say, "Take out a number 2 pencil?" Right? Most of our blood pressures just went up.

[Chuckling]

Because it's like, oh, here comes the test. Teachers hate me. No, they don't. That is a good gift to show us what we need to know more, where we need to grow so that we can show our God to a greater extent. So remember this. Trust is a must. Trust is the currency of relationship. You can say you trust Jesus all day long. What do you do under stress and trial? What do you run to? Because that will show you what you really trust so that you can repent and say, Jesus, would you meet me here?

Daniel showed it. He says, man, I'm 77. My life's over anyway. Lord, I'm yours. Opens the windows and begins to pray. Now watch what happens. Last minute. 28. I'll read it for you. Look at verse 16. The king actually loved Daniel.

16 "The king gave orders, and Daniel was brought in and cast into the lions' den. The king spoke and said to him . . . "

Very tenderly. The king was speaking to him.

" . . . Daniel, 'Your God whom you constantly serve will Himself deliver you.' "

So this is the king now. The king's hope is in God. Because the king couldn't do anything to change it. He was powerless. So now he's looking to God. Watch this. So the king couldn't sleep all night. He was sick to his stomach. He knew he'd been bamboozled by the bullies.

Verse 19. "The king arose at dawn, at the break of day. He ran in haste to the lions' den. 20 When he came near the den, he cried out with a troubled voice. The king spoke and said to Daniel, 'Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you constantly serve, been able to deliver you from the lions?' "

Then he waited and he listened.

Verse 21. "Then Daniel spoke to the king. 'O king, live forever!

22 My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths and they have

not harmed me, inasmuch as I was found innocent before Him; and also toward you, O king, I have committed no crime.'

23 Then the king was very pleased and gave orders for Daniel to be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den and no injury whatever was found on him, because he had trusted in his God."

He faced the test. The test exposed what he really trusted. And watch what's about to happen. Because of the test and because of the trust, his testimony was profound. You see, in the west, many of us want our testimony to be just words. Well, I'll tell you about Jesus and my words will make my testimony clear. And we wonder why the church isn't having more impact. Well, I'm online telling people about Jesus, but they won't listen.

Well, without contact, it's really hard to have impact. You know that. Well, I'm emailing everybody telling them read this, do this. I'm using my words. Well, without contact, it's really hard to have impact. Well, I tell my family and I tell people follow Jesus. I'm using my words. You understand, we're living in a postmodern time. We don't even agree on truth. There is no foundation from which words will be received and applied and said, oh, that is objectively true. I should follow that.

We don't live in that day. Now, we may think that this is good, but it's not. People who use words and don't walk it out are actually detrimental. My wife's here. Brooke's back there. We went out to dinner with my parents, and my mom shared a story with me that I had never heard before. She was sharing a story with me that she ran into one of my grade school teachers. And the grade school teacher said, "How's your special needs child?"

[Laughter]

Whoa, whoa, whoa. Ouch! Ouch. And my mom was confused and said, "What do you mean?" "Well, your child with a learning disability, David. How is he?" And my mom was shocked. It's like, I didn't know you were learning disabled, David.

[Chuckling]

She was laughing when she was telling it. It actually made a lot of sense, because the teachers treated me like I was stupid. But I know which teacher it was. You see, she would come into class and she would talk and talk and talk and talk. And then she would talk more and talk and talk and talk and talk and talk. It was like she had a bad marriage and was using her 20,000 words a day on her students.

[Laughter]

Expecting us just to pick up these words. All of these words. Do you know that some people aren't put together to learn through words? You can tell me about a mouse trap all day long and then give me a test on it. I'll fail it. If I don't get my hand on that mouse trap and spin it around and smash my finger and cuss and learn about it, I won't understand the mouse trap. And so, you look at people and say, they're dumb, they're stupid. Clearly they need to be in remedial classes. Or, you missed kindergarten where you knocked your head.

You see, what I learned in kindergarten was we would do this thing regularly. Show and . . . ?

Congregation: Tell.

Pastor Dave: See, you took kindergarten, too. Well done.

[Chuckling]

How come we just didn't call it "tell"? Tomorrow, we're going to do tell. You're going to tell people. How come we didn't do that? Or show? Why do we do show and tell? We put a conjunction there. Clearly it matters! You want to know why? Because that's how we're put together to learn. We need to get our hands on it. We need to see it, feel it, smell it, hear about it. You see, this is why God, in Acts 1:8, he didn't say, "And you, as you speak and tell everybody, shall be my witnesses with your words."

No. He said, "You shall be my witnesses." When you're tested and you trust in Jesus, you'll have a testimony to say, "My name's Dave. Super duper broken. Super surprised I'm alive and even more surprised I'm a pastor, but I met Jesus and he changed everything. He sobered me up, he's cleaned me up, he's teaching me how to love and he's amazing."

You see, that is show and tell. That's what he's called us to. He didn't say, "Daniel, just tell Darius, tell Cyrus and tell people about how good I am." Daniel was minding his own business. He had some bullies bust him up. Ends up in the lions' den. Gets out and look what happens. Darius, "I make a new decree. That in all the dominion of my kingdom, men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel."

That's the testimony. You see, many of us are trying to audit Christianity. We want to get around the trials, around the tests, around the tribulations, around the difficulties. The test is what transforms us. It's God's greatest tool. Is it hard? Absolutely! Absolutely. I know a lot of you are suffering deeply. I do. And I don't take that lightly. And yet, I know my God so well. Job 23, "I know when he tests me, I'll come out refined like gold." He's going to do a work in me through this difficulty and this trial.

I know that the story doesn't end with utter dissemination, but delight in Jesus Christ. You see, I just wrote this down underneath this passage. Friends, you gotta let them see you sweat. We typically, never let them see you sweat. And that was parenting in the 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s. Never let 'em see you sweat. Don't let your kids see you suffer and struggle. Don't let your kids see you work through difficulty in your marriage. But the truth is, you gotta let them see you sweat. You've gotta share the trials and difficulties and troubles with them so they might know, our God is faithful. And he uses those trials to transform us.

I'm six minutes over. I still have to land the plane on this. I still haven't answered the question, why is Daniel 6 here? Why is Daniel 6 here? Is it just here so we can tell our kids over on the flannel graph in the childrens' building, hey, if you trust God, he'll deliver you

from the lions' den and life will be easy? Because if that's the reason Daniel 6 is here, Jesus missed the memo. Amen? Like ends up, he ended up in a fierce lions' den and he was disseminated. Why is Daniel 6 here?

Why are any of the miracles in the Bible here? Honestly. Let me walk you through this. You see, none of the miracles in the Bible are here to show naked, raw displays of power. You know that? We call them miracles, because to us, in a fallen world, they look supernatural. To God, they are normals. Whenever he shows us a miracle, he's just showing us what's normal in his kingdom to come. You don't believe me? When he raises the dead, it wasn't just to say, whew! Aren't I awesome?

[Chuckling]

He raised the dead to say, "I am the resurrection and the life." In the kingdom coming, there will be no death. Why did he feed 5000? Just to show off? That there were no Lunchables and he multiplied them and everybody got to eat? Be like, yeah. I'm awesome. Nabisco should hire me. No, he's like, in the kingdom to come, there will be no hunger. There will be no thirst. This is normative.

Let me say it to you this way. In my life, Dave Tooker, I really only have two problems. Isn't that good news? Really only two. And two is manageable. Amen? Here's the problem. My two problems are this. My past and my future. So they're pretty big.

[Chuckling.]

Right? They involve everything but right now, right now, right now. See, in my past, I sinned a lot. I was a rebel, a blasphemer. I was an incredibly, incredibly broken individual. And because of my past sin, every day now I have guilt, shame, condemnation and fear. I've got an accuser that says, you're horrible. You're awful. Look at what you've done. If they knew, they'd fire you.

And then my future, because I don't know how it plays out, my mind tends to fill in the blanks with the worst possible scenario. So today is

filled with not only blame, shame, guilt, condemnation. It's also filled with anxiety, panic, stress and worry. So my two problems, although there're only two, they're pretty big. It makes every day messed up. Amen? We're all there if we could admit it.

Here's why Daniel 6 is here. One, he shows us a miracle of the kingdom to come. When I look out at the future, Isaiah 11 says this. Do you know that there's going to be a day when the little calf and the lion will play together? They'll frolick and a little boy will lead both of them. That's Isaiah 11. There's a day coming where the infant will play with the cobra. And mommy's not afraid because creation is as it should be.

So one, Daniel looks into the future and says, there's a beautiful day when we'll be able to lay with the lion, hang out with the lion, play catch with the lion. Go fetch, lion. The lion will go get it. Won't that be fun? He says, the kingdom will be realigned. But there's also a day, he says in Daniel 6 -- there's an element of Daniel 6 that looks back to the past for us. Did you read verse 17? Can you pull up verse 17 and I'll land the plane with this.

Watch this. Watch this! Astounding. 17 "A stone was brought and laid over the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signet rings of his nobles, so that nothing would be changed in regard to Daniel." Sound familiar? In my Bible, there's actually a study note that takes me from Daniel chapter 6, verse 17, to Matthew chapter 27, verse 60 where Jesus was laid in a den, a tomb, and a stone was rolled over. And then verse 66 of Matthew 27 where the king sealed it with his signet ring.

You see, Daniel looks forward and says, the future is going to be beautiful. And Daniel looks back and says, it's going to be beautiful and there's proof. God's furnished proof. Because there is one greater than Daniel that entered the ultimate lions' den. He faced the roaring lion that seeks to devour. And he was laid in the tomb and the stone was rolled over, and when Jesus faced the ultimate lion, do you know what he did to it? He wasn't devoured. He devoured the lion called death. And because he has devoured the greatest lion of all time, death, Satan, hell, the grave. Because Jesus has devoured the

greatest lion and he rose again to show us the true lion from the tribe of Judah. Guess who can face their little lions' dens today? You and I.

See, it's here to give us a picture of the kingdom coming. To give us a picture of the king who conquered death so that you and I might trust him with our tests today. His test is for our best because trust is a must. Until then, let them see you sweat. They need to see you in the lions' den. They need to see your trust in your Savior so that your kids, a lost and dying world, might say, there is a God who reigns. There is an almighty God who actually takes all the bad, all the broken, all the hateful things in this world, and he actually uses them for our good and for his glory.

Let's pray and let's sing to him. Father God, thank you so much for the time you've given us to look at your servant Daniel and your Son, the greater Daniel, who conquered death, conquered the greatest lions' den ever. Jesus, thank you for laying your life down to furnish proof to us that your resurrection is true and real. And I pray that you would help us face the lions' dens that we face today. Would you open our eyes to the fact that you test us because you love us? You try us to show us where we need to grow, to strengthen us. Would you teach me what it means to trust you in that so that that testimony might resound to people who need to know, there is a God who is real and who has loved us perfectly in and through your Son Jesus Christ? It's for your glory I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Ending songs]