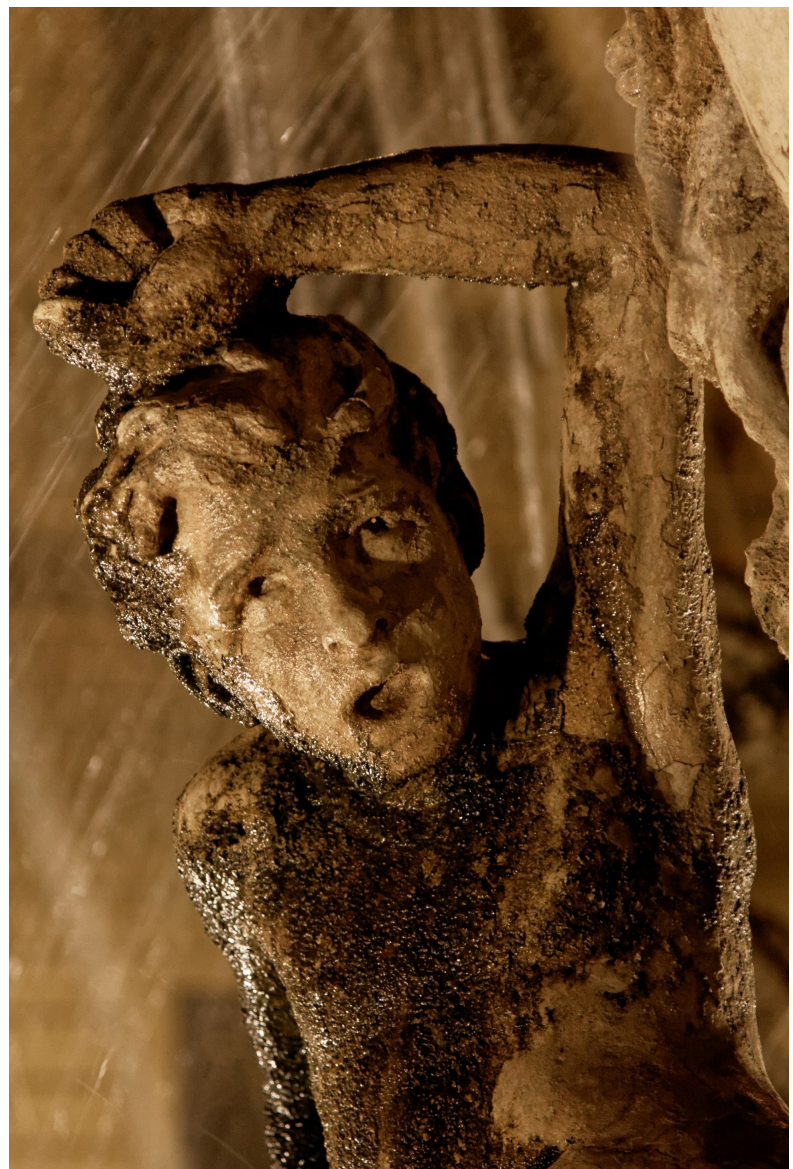


Daniel Three

THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING



WARMUP

Suffering comes in many different forms. Before you begin, select one or two images that you think best represent suffering. See the collage below or find an image at <http://www.vibrantfaith.org/visualfaith>.



- Describe your image or images and why you were drawn to them.
- As you reflect on what you selected, what emotions surface within you?
- How does this image connect with your life story and your own experience with suffering?

EXPLORE THE SCRIPTURES

Read **chapter three** regarding the golden image and the fiery furnace and make observations. Look for ways in which Daniel's friends approached the possibility of extreme suffering. Read multiple versions to expand your familiarity with the story.

Discuss: Daniel's World

1. What was the motive behind the accusation (vv. 8–12)? Was the king's anger based on the same motivation or something different (13–15)?
2. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (*Shad-rak, Mee-shak* and *Uh-behd-nih-goh*) exhibited great courage in the face of extreme suffering. What made them able to choose such courage? Where do you think they found the strength?
3. They acknowledged the uncertainty of deliverance. Why do you think they were not complaining to God about their situation?
4. What impact do you think their faith had on the king? On their accusers?
5. Daniel is not mentioned in this chapter. As you reflect on his absence, what stands out to you? Why might it be important for his three friends to undergo such a trial without him? Why might it have been important for Daniel to be absent?

Discuss: My World

6. As you think about your career, where have you been or where might you be challenged to compromise? What costs were involved or might be involved in you making kingdom-oriented career decisions?

7. As you think about future possibilities for suffering for doing what is right in your career, how do you feel? If you do face such a choice, how do you hope to respond?

8. When you experience suffering for doing something wrong, how do you respond toward others, God and yourself?

9. How might the experience and example of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego help you deal with the sufferings in your life and in the lives of others? What lessons do you learn from their example?

10. Reflect on the following:

For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake. (Philippians 1:29, ESV)

That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. (Philippians 3:10, ESV)

What do you think “share his sufferings” means? How do you experience the presence of God in the midst of suffering?

11. How do you respond to the sufferings of others in the workplace?

Convictions

12. Convictions often take time to form. Daniel's friends exhibited strong convictions regarding the nature of God and His trustworthiness, even in the face of suffering. List one or two of your convictions concerning God that you have embraced, acted on and are willing to suffer for. How might these convictions impact your choices within your vocation? What might shake these convictions? What might fortify them?

13. After you have reflected, do you notice any places where you have ongoing resistance toward or disappointment with God?

PAUSE TO PRAY

Take time to pray alone. Listen to God and tell Him your heart. Notice your openness or lack of openness to God and what He might be saying. Talk to Him about it. After, pray together as a group.

SUGGESTED MEMORY VERSE

*"If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."
(Daniel 3:17–18 ESV)*

GOING DEEPER (OPTIONAL)

Reflecting on the Past

Spend some time reflecting or journaling about your experiences with suffering and any questions you have about what happened and why. How might unresolved suffering impact the quality and meaning of your work?

Read, Reflect

Dear God: We Need to Talk about Suffering. This resource is a series of journal entries written along the pathway of processing pain and suffering. You can download it at www.ralphennis.com/spiritual-formation.html. Another excellent resource is Or read C.S. Lewis' classic book on the topic, *The Problem of Pain*.