**How Important Is Your Faith?**

**Daniel 3:1-18**

**Introduction**

A study conducted by the Barna Research Group revealed that education, career selection, friends, and travel were most important to young people. Please note the absence of any reference to God. How important is your faith? The mounting pressure of a godless society underscores how vital it is for believers to be prepared to take a stand. The story we will consider this morning has been told and retold in children’s departments, youth rallies, and church services all over the world. It is not just a story to be told. It is a message to be embraced.

1. **Nebuchadnezzar wanted everyone to worship the image to prove their loyalty to his kingdom. (v. 1-3)**
   1. The image was constructed about 6 miles outside of Babylon in the plain of Dura. In this location, it could be seen for miles. It stood 90 feet tall (about 8 stories high) and was nine feet wide. This was not uncommon for that day. The Great Sphinx in Egypt is 240 feet long and measures 66 feet tall. The Colossus of Rhodes stood 108 feet tall.
   2. Nebuchadnezzar made it gold from head to foot. The text does not tell us what the statue represented. Daniel’s dream revealed Nebuchadnezzar to be the head of gold. It may have represented Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom. If it does, he did not view himself as just a head of gold but thought he could extend his reign beyond the bounds set by the dream! It most likely represents, Marduk, one of Babylon’s gods.
   3. The size and appearance would have been huge to those present. It was impressive! Imagine standing at the base of such a statue. It was “HUGE”!
   4. The image was more than a symbol of worship. It was a symbol of unity. It brought all the leaders of his vast kingdom together to demonstrate their loyalty. They are listed according to rank and would prove their loyalty by bowing.
   5. Daniel was not in the crowd. His loyalty to the king was not in question, although the king knew His religious convictions. Daniel’s three friends were leaders in the province and were thus present in the group (Daniel 2:49).
2. **The leaders were instructed to bow when the music began. (v. 4-7)**
   1. Musicians played to induce the people to worship. (v. 4-5) Music is still used to call people to worship in the various religions of the world.
   2. To further motivate the people to worship, smoke ascended from the fiery furnace. (v. 6) The furnace was used to melt the metals used in constructing the idol. It stood as a visual aid for the herald’s message. It had already proven an effective means of execution. (Jeremiah 29:22)
   3. The state-appointed preacher preached a short message and had great results. (v. 7) The leaders complied without a moment’s hesitation.
3. **Everyone demonstrated their loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar, except for three young men who refused to bow in worship. (v. 8-15)**
   1. The Chaldeans reported their insubordination to the king. (v. 8-12) These men were most likely jealous. They felt outsiders had taken their positions! They “accused” the three. This word conveys the idea that they “chewed them out.” Like ravenous, ferocious beasts they sought to tear them apart. Their words reveal their anti-Semitic sentiments and their opinion that the king had made a poor selection of leaders.
   2. The three young men could have found reasons to bow.
4. Their people had been defeated and temple destroyed.
5. As leaders in society, they had responsibility to their new government. They were trained at the expense of Babylon and were expected to be loyal to the king.
6. Everyone else was bowing…even others from their own people! Social pressure is strong.
   1. They could have bowed physically and yet covertly worshipped the true God in their heart. However, this would have been an act of disobedience to God. Therefore, they stood.
   2. Their stand could not be hidden. They stood out. They lived their faith out in a public way.
   3. Nebuchadnezzar confronted the young men. (v. 13-15) He could not believe that they would defy his authority! He extended another opportunity to comply. He considered himself to be more powerful than any god.
   4. The answer given by the young men demonstrates how they viewed their faith in God.
7. **Central Idea: The Jewish young men refused to bow before the idol because their faith in God was more important than the approval of their society. (v. 16-18).**
   1. They remained true to their faith despite the pressure to conform.
   2. They were determined to remain true to their faith regardless of the outcome. They didn’t serve God for the benefits. They didn’t bargain with God.
   3. Ultimately, they knew God would deliver them one way or another.
8. **Application: You can refuse to conform to the pressures of society if your faith in God is more important to you than the approval of man.** 
   1. How would you do under the same circumstances? How are you doing in lesser circumstances?
   2. What is “HUGE” to you? What stands as your priority? What is most noticeable about your life? Is it your faith and devotion to the true and living God?
   3. Your true devotion to God is revealed by who or what you allow to replace Him. Many who claim to be living for God are compromising. Some give up their relationship with God for things of lesser importance.
9. For more money
10. For a relationship
11. For a look at a website
12. For a movie that everyone is talking about
13. For acceptance into a certain group
    1. King Nebuchadnezzar wanted the people of the land to go along with his “god delusion.” Social pressure, combined with the threat of physical harm, led most to cave into the pressure. There is great pressure on believers today. The furnace is heating up!
14. There are forces at work to dismantle the core values that have built the United States.
15. A secular, godless society is erecting its own version of American history.
16. There is a constant refrain promoting immorality under the banner of diversity.
17. Conservatives and Christians are denied job opportunities and promotions.
18. Liberals emphasize tolerance until someone disagrees with their position.
19. Evolution is propagated as fact rather than theory while those holding to the Bible’s account of creation are ridiculed.
20. Numerous children’s books have been produced and distributed to schools and daycares promoting transgenderism and the homosexual agenda. Teachers who speak out against them could be fired.
21. Capitalism is presented as the source of economic problems while socialism is promoted as the solution.
22. Police officers are vilified while arsonists torch cities.
23. Those who stand to protect the life of the unborn are presented as insensitive to the rights of women. No regard is given to the right to life of the baby in the womb.
    1. How important is your faith in God? Are you willing to be fired for your faith?
24. You need to make up your mind ahead of time.
25. Will you serve God despite the pressure to bow?
26. Will you continue to serve God if He doesn’t deliver you from the flames of adversity?
    1. The text demonstrates that there is a need for equipping every generation to have real faith in the real God. Equip your kids to see their faith as more important than society’s approval.

**Conclusion**

Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah refused to bow before the idol built by Nebuchadnezzar because their faith in God was more important than the approval of their society. Will you refuse to conform to the pressures of society? Which is of greater importance to you: loyalty to God or the approval of man?