



Face the Issue:

This week in our look at the Tales of David we examined David's devotion. Remember that David is described as being a man "after God's own heart". That means that his devotion is the kind of devotion that God desires for us all to have.

David's devotion was most on display in his confrontation with Goliath. Probably every person witnessing this event believed in their heart that David was about to die. David probably had this thought as well.

When human beings experience the moment when they think they're going to die, it's almost instinctive that they want to send a message; they want someone to know their story. Prisoners of the Nazis in the Warsaw ghetto, after seeing people shot or starved to death, used their last strength to write notes and store them in crevices in the wall. They hoped somebody besides the Nazis would read the notes and know their story.

David shared his story in his speech before killing Goliath. He spoke of his devotion to God even in the face of death.

If you knew you were going to die, who would you write to? What would you say?

What do you think people would say was the main message of your life if you died today?

Into the Word:

If you have been a Christ follower for a long time, you are probably familiar with the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

These three young men had risen to positions of importance in the world's most powerful nation. Their hearts were full of hopes and dreams and their futures were bright. Then they put their devotion to God before anything else and refused to follow a command to fall down and worship an idol and they lost it all.

All they had to do was bend a knee to worship the golden image, and their nightmare would be over. They would live and be restored to positions of power, honor, and status. They were headed toward unimaginable pain and death, and one word would mean life for them. But they would not say that word; they would not bend that knee. Life or death? They chose death.

Read Daniel 3: 19-30

Here's the point of the story. They hoped to be delivered *from* the furnace, but God decided to deliver them *in* the furnace. Jesus said to them what he says to people still—*I'll meet you in the furnace*—because he's a furnace kind of guy. The place where full devotion can lead you, that looks scary and dangerous and painful and maybe even like the end, turns out to be where Jesus is, and, amazingly enough, is the safest place of all. It turns out to be the adventure of a lifetime. Jesus said, and still says: *I'll meet you in the furnace. Follow me. It's going to look dark, it's going to look dangerous, it's going to scare you, but you keep following me.*

What would these men have missed if they'd worried about saving their lives instead of worshiping God?

How might the fact that they made this stand together have affected their courage?

What advantages do we have that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not have? (What do we know that they did not know?)

Read Philippians 1:21. What did Paul mean when he said "to live is Christ"? What would it mean for you to say that?

Apply The Word

Imagine that God has a calendar. Of course, He doesn't, because He never has to remember to go someplace, because He's already there. But for the sake of this study, imagine that on the date Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had their deal with Nebuchadnezzar, God had written down on His calendar, "Meet Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the furnace." Where on his calendar does God have your name written down to "Meet you in the furnace." Will you make it? Are you devoted enough to God to risk the danger? God calls us to a dangerous life.

We are being called to a deeper measure of devotion. So pray a dangerous prayer: "God, give me an opportunity to show my devotion to You. I don't ask primarily for comfort or riches or ease or security." If you are not sure that your devotion level is where you want it to be, talk to Him about that, be honest about it. Ask for the presence of the fourth man in the furnace.