

MONTH OF FASTING JANUARY 2022

REFUGE CITY PENTECOSTAL CHURCH
(APOSTOLIC)

I WILL NOT
BOW

I WILL NOT
BEND

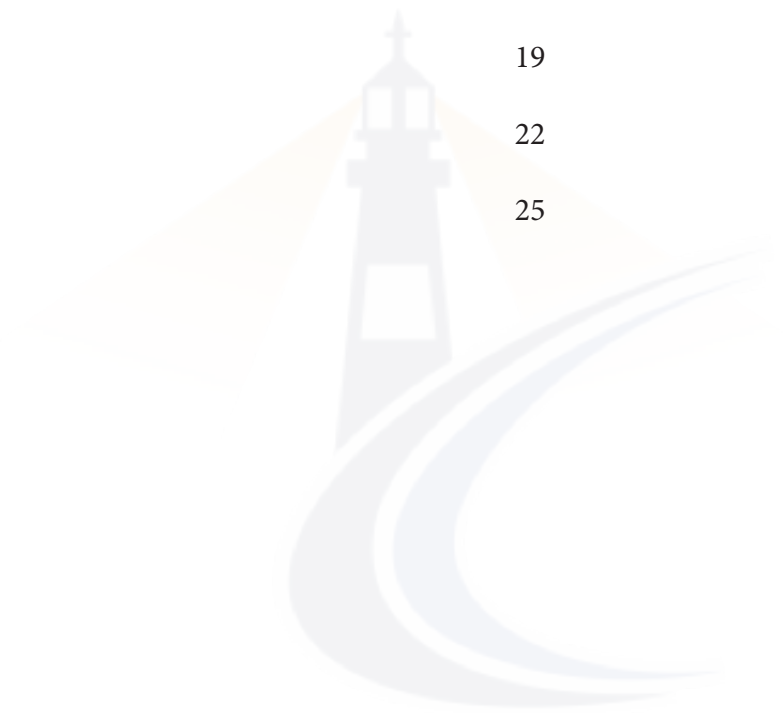
I WILL NOT
BREAK

DANIEL 3



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A stylized graphic of a lighthouse with two beams of light shining outwards, positioned behind the title. Below the lighthouse is a large, light blue, curved shape resembling a stylized 'C' or a wave.

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Nebuchadnezzar was a cruel and brutal King who would stop at nothing in order to get his way. He was known as the greatest king of the Chaldean Dynasty of Babylon; “the king unto all people, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth” (Daniel 4:1). The prophet Daniel, in describing Nebuchadnezzar said, “Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory, and wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all” (Daniel 2:37). Only God could prevent king Nebuchadnezzar from conquering and acquiring any nation that he set sights on. In 586 BC Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the temple of Jerusalem and took the Jewish people into captivity. In Jeremiah 6 the people were being warned of the disaster that was coming, but they did not listen. “Take warning, O Jerusalem or I will turn away from you and make your land desolate so no one can live in it.” (Jeremiah 6:8). The corruption of the Jews reached such a deplorable level that the Lord even began to reject their sacrifices, “your burnt offerings are not acceptable” (Jeremiah 6:20).

Nebuchadnezzar was Jerusalem’s worst nightmare, but he was also an instrument that God was using to bring chastisement to the kingdom of Judah. The book of Daniel begins with the disaster that finally ended the Jewish kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, conquered Jerusalem, deposed its king and took some of the royal and noble young men captive. He also plundered the temple of God and took its treasures to decorate the house of his own god. (Daniel 1:1-3). Nebuchadnezzar was not only sending a message to the people but he was also defying their God.

Among those who were taken captive were Daniel and his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. These four young men were chosen for a select program, based on youth, aptitude and appearance, to enter into training for leadership positions in the kingdom (Daniel 1:4-5). This presented both an opportunity and a challenge for these young men.

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah were more than likely in their teens (around 15-16 years old) when they were captured. They came from Jewish heritage and were raised under strict Jewish rules and customs. The mezuzah was a fixture that was placed on the doorpost of most Jewish homes. Psalm 121:8 was written on it for protection. As young children growing up in Judah, they would have seen their parents touch it as they leave and enter the home. When Israelite children got to school age they would have been required to start memorizing the Word of God and progress to higher levels of study as they grew older. As they moved into teenage years and became more knowledgeable in the scriptures they would take the lead in the private and congregational prayers of the family and the domestic rites, whether of the weekly Sabbath or of festive seasons. These rituals would be unforgettably impressed upon their minds as they continued to grow into adulthood. Although the Israelites often strayed in their practices, their religious convictions and traditions were not just something that they occasionally observed, it was a way of life that was woven into the very fabric of their existence.

The Jewish people had many celebrations throughout the year. To name a few, there was the Chanukah, characterized by the illumination of each house, Purim the feast of Esther, which involved good cheer and boisterous merriment, and the Passover when the house had to be cleansed and carefully purged of

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all heaven. As children participated in these and other religious symbolic celebrations, the impression of their relationship to their God would deepen in their minds day by day.

Parents, elders, and religious leaders would constantly reinforce the deep history of their people. There was a deep oral and written tradition which allowed them to remind themselves and teach their children of all the miracles, signs and wonders that they had personally seen, those that dated back to the ancient patriarchs Abraham and Moses, and all that the Israelites had witnessed from the hand of God throughout their generations.

Not only were the experiences of the Jews rehearsed and re-rehearsed, but also their cultural and religious laws, statutes and commandments. By virtue of all of their collective experiences and the knowledge they obtained through studying the scriptures throughout their upbringing, the Jewish person, by the time they reached the age of Daniel and his friends, was saturated to the core with the tenets of Judaism and the laws of their God. The book of Proverbs is full of instructions about raising children; one of the most popular being, “Train up the child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6). The Jews took advice like this very seriously.

This rigorous ‘training of the child’ may very well explain why Daniel and the three Hebrew boys were in a strange land but still remembered their Jewish upbringing and the scriptures that they had heard all their lives. Scriptures like, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy might” (Deuteronomy 6:4-6) were deeply engrained in their spirits. Even though Nebuchadnezzar went as far as changing their very names with the hopes of changing their minds and getting them to conform to his way of life and to his gods, they stayed firm in their convictions. They knew who they were and the God that they served. They were so steadfast that even in the face of the most adverse situation, they were unshakeable. History tells us that Nebuchadnezzar’s wickedness and seemingly limitless power and authority struck such fear into the hearts of grown men and trained warriors that their knees would tremble at the sound of his wrath. It was this fearsome king that was commanding the three Hebrew boys to bow down before his idol, or face a horrific death. Even when they saw the king’s face contort with rage, they were able to stand their ground and choose not to bow or to give in, even though it meant they would lose their lives.

It would have been ideal if all of the Jewish people had this resolve. This kind of faithful adherence to God’s laws would have prevented them from being in this position of destruction and exile in the first place. If only they had taken heed to the warnings that God had continuously given to them. If only they had kept themselves from worshipping other gods and intermarrying with heathen nations they would not have had to endure the devastation of being subjected to the Babylonians. While in exile they found themselves trapped in an environment that was spiritually and physically hostile, intimidating and limiting.

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As we look at the ungodly leadership and environment that ruled and surrounded Daniel and the three Hebrew boys, it is not hard to identify many similarities between their realities and the ones we currently face as Christians in this evil society and dark world. Just about every aspect of our spiritual lives is being constantly challenged and attacked by leaders, laws, politics, media, philosophies, institutions, and mainstream society. Daniel and the three Hebrew boys found a way to stand against every contrary current, but Israel at large bowed repeatedly to surrounding pressures and their own internal weaknesses. The question is, how can we obey the voice of God when other voices are so loud, threatening, and influential? After failing so many times, how can we make the choice to be better and do better next time?

Questions:

1. Describe King Nebuchadnezzar's character?
2. Describe the Daniel's Character?
3. Why did the Jewish people fall into the hands of Babylon and became captives?
4. What opportunities were given to the three Hebrew boys in Babylon?
5. What challenges/adversities did the three Hebrew boys face in Babylon?
6. How did they handle the opportunities and the adversities?
7. Why do you think they were able to withstand the King ?
8. What do you think the idol in Daniel 3 looked like?
9. What does modern day idols look like?
10. Do you think that you are bowing down to idols now in this time that we are currently living in?

“One can choose to go back toward safety or forward toward growth”

Most would agree that these are true words which pull our minds forward towards being better. When faced with the practical realities, sacrifices, and requirements for self-improvement, however, we'll often find ourselves backing into that safe and comfortable place we've always known. So many of us, in theory, are facing forward, and earnestly wanting to move forward, but in our practices we're walking backwards. This truth is a source of great frustration for most of humanity, but especially those of us that are trying to walk with God. Even Paul, one of the greatest of the Apostles, was agonizingly acquainted with this dilemma. In an effort to express how torn he was, in the seventh chapter of Romans he says that he has the will to do what is right, but just can't find how to perform it.

It is a well-known fact, confirmed in the scriptures, that one of the best ways to improve yourself is by examining your life and comparing it to something or someone better with the hope of emulating the good. Psalm 119:9 is one of the most misquoted scriptures in the Bible, but when properly read and understood, emphasizes this point. It asks, “Wherewithal (or how) can a young man cleanse his way?” and the answer that follows is, “...by taking heed thereto according to thy word”. Most people misquote that scripture as, “by taking heed to the word of God”. There is an important difference, however,

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between taking heed to the word and taking heed to your life according to the Word. It is evident that most of us mentally agree with the truth of the Word, and we express this by nodding and agreeing and saying, “Amen” when we hear or read a good word. The sad reality, though, is that our agreement rarely translates into actions. Our daily lives, especially in challenging times, do not reflect the Word that we claim to believe and agree with. We’re hearing and reading, and even studying the Word, so we’re taking heed to the Word to a certain extent, but we’re not taking heed to how we actually live to see how it lines up with the Word we say we believe. Our greatest challenge in our quest to do and be better is to really “examine yourselves” as the scriptures advise in 2 Corinthians 13:5, to see, “whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves”. The amplified version says it this way, “test and evaluate yourselves to see whether you are in the faith and living your lives as committed believers”.

Once we have examined our daily lives and seen areas of opportunity for growth, it is very useful to learn ‘best practices’. Best practices can be described as methods, processes, techniques, and habits that have proven effective and will therefore improve performance and results.

Over the past year we have been through many trials and difficulties which tested our faith in God. Some of us might have withstood the test and are still standing strong while others might have given in to the temptation to bow, bend and have gotten even to the point of breaking.

It doesn’t matter where you are right now, what is important is that there is always an opportunity to get yourself back on the right track. 1 John 1:9 tells us that “ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” As we start the month of prayer and fasting let us commit ourselves to this great opportunity where we can be restored and healed. Matthew 17:21 tells us that “However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.” There are some mindsets, habits, and demonic forces that have infiltrated our very souls but if we would engage in the spiritual exercise of prayer and fasting the Word of God assures us that we will be delivered and set free.

Brethren let’s do this together the bible tells us that “ five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundreds of you shall put ten thousand to flight” (Leviticus 26:8) We have the power of synergism let’s use it and watch God work.

WHERE ARE YOU?

For the three Hebrew boys (Jewish exiles), a command to worship an idol breaks the clear command of God.

Exodus 20:3-5 (NIV)

1. You shall have no other gods before me.
2. You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.
3. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God.

What is an idol?

According to the Oxford Dictionary an idol is an image or representation of a god used as an object of worship.

For Christians idol worship is anything you elevate above God or give to God's rightful place in your life. Modern day idols are less tangible and more thoughts, habits, and attitudes.

An idol is anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, and anything that you seek to give you what only God can give. Ezekiel 14:3 says "Son of man, these leaders have set up idols in their hearts. They have embraced things that will make them fall into sin. Why should I listen to their requests?"

QUESTIONS:

- What idols are you worshipping?
- What are you bowing down to?
- What are you bending towards?
- What is breaking you?

WEEK 1 ACTIVITY

SELF-EVALUATION

2 Corinthians 13:5 (ESV) - “Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—Unless indeed you fail to meet the test!”

1 John 1:9 - “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Colossians 3:5 - “Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.”

Note: The areas that you are weak in would most likely be the areas in which where you are bowing, bending and breaking to compensate for the weakness.

SELF

1 Corinthians 10:24 - “Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbour.”

Matthew 16:24 - “Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and be following Me.””

- Is everything about you? (Always protecting you or putting you first)
- Do you feel like you have to look out for yourself or no one else will?
- Do you want to do things your own way?
- Do you want to always be in control of everything in your life?
- Do you struggle with jealousy? (why am I the only one without...)
- When your expectation of others are not met, do you feel unloved and unwanted?

PRIDE

But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.” (James 4:6)

- When we refuse humbly rest in God’s care this leads to fear
- You feel like you are entitled. You deserve to be treated better, you deserve to have more
- We are ungrateful when we do not get what we want. We whine and complain
- Seeking man’s approval more than God
- We feel like we are capable, independent, self-reliant and unstoppable
- You think you are better and holier than others and you find fault everywhere
- You are unwilling to follow principles and submit to godly authority (husbands, pastors)

WEEK 1 ACTIVITY

SECURITY

“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” (1 Peter 5:8)

- Are you hypersensitive to criticism?
- Do you lead with your sexuality?
- Are you are a disagreement machine?
- Are you an unrelenting people pleaser?
- Do you feel like you are better than others?
- Do you have difficulty maintaining eye contact?
- Do you find a quiet spot to sit when in a crowd?
- Are you an avoider?
- Do you pretend to agree?
- Are you defensive?
- Are you clingy to keep relationships?
- Do you lie to suppress negative thoughts?

APPROVAL

“Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.” (Galatians 1:10)

- Do you agree with someone when you really don't?
- Are you afraid to say “no”?
- Do you readily change your point of view in the face of disapproval?
- Do you take disagreement personally?
- Do you find yourself in gossip to be a part of the group?

RELATIONSHIP

“So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.” (Galatians 5:16)

- Do you obsess over your children or spouse?
- Do you feel empty when your children, spouse or friend abandons you?
- You depend on advice from others rather than from the Word?
- Is your worth is tied to someone you love and their thoughts about you. They have a powerful influence on how you see yourself or how you feel. (They can make you or break you)?
- Is there someone that you feel like you cannot live without them?

WEEK 1 ACTIVITY

SUCCESS

“To this John replied, “A person can receive only what is given them from heaven.”” (John 3:27)

- When first meeting someone do you ask “what do you do”?
- When you are asked do you list all of your accomplishments?
- Is your schedule always full?
- Are you driven by fear (what if's)?
- Is your work/status a chance to prove yourself?

WEALTH

“When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which he hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day:” (Deuteronomy 8:10-11)

- Do you find yourself talking about your wealth?
- Does having lots of money give you confidence?
- Are you dishonest for monetary gain?
- Are you the first to help financially or do you drag your feet?
- Do you give to make yourself look good?
- Are you always worried of losing money?
- Do you wish you could have some of your rich friends money?

HEALTH

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.” (Colossians 3:23-24)

- Are you always trying the latest fads and diets?
- Do you place your health routines before your time with God?
- Do you mind how costly it can be?
- Do you have a desire to look better than your peers?
-

FOOD

“If you find honey, eat just enough too much of it, and you will vomit.” (Proverbs 25:16)

- Continuous over eating
- You become indifferent to the harmful effects the food is having on your body

WEEK 1 ACTIVITY

- Spend money unwisely on food
- You use food to comfort yourself when you are sad, in misery and of discomfort.
- Replace the goodness of God with the goodness of food.

INTELLECT

“For it is written: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.””
(1 Corinthians 1:19)

- Do you like to be perceived as being smart?
- Do you spend endless time building up your academic skills?
- Are you proud when someone praises your knowledge?

COMFORT

“I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. 28 Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.” (2 Corinthians 11:27-28)

- Would you give up a beach vacation to go on a mission
- Do you spend more time talking to your church friends rather than a visitor
- You prefer an extra hour of sleep rather than going to Sunday school
- You just want to have an easy life now and in the future?
- You have a tendency to avoid conflict or difficulties in life?
- When you are stressed you turn to movies, sex, alcohol etc.?

SEXUALITY

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God;” (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5)

- You place sex as the center of your relationship
- You are obsessed with sex
- You have multiple partners
- Addicted to pornography
- You forget about marriage

WEEK 1 ACTIVITY

MINISTRY

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves”
(Philippians 2:3)

- Do you serve with getting something in return?
- Do you ask for feedback or criticism about your performance with the intention of getting praise and recognition?
- Do you think more or less of yourself because you serve or don't serve?
- Do you serve with the mind of getting a position?
- You feel like you operate in your gifting better than others?

Identify the idols in your life

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

WEEKLY GOALS

WEEK OF: _____

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
EARLY MORNING					
MORNING					
LUNCH					
AFTERNOON					
EVENING					

WEEK 2 ACTIVITY

SELF-EVALUATION

Exodus 23:24 - “You must not bow down to their gods or serve them or follow their practices. Instead, you are to **demolish** them and **smash** their sacred stones **to pieces.**”

2 Kings 18:4 - “He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan.”

Isaiah 30:22 - “And you will defile your graven images overlaid with silver, and your molten images plated with gold. You will scatter them as an impure thing, and say to them, “**Be gone!**”

It’s time to start breaking down your idols.

ACTION PLAN

Pick one idol to start breaking down

- _____

Goal(s) for this week:

- _____

I will make three key moves to accomplish my goal

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Specific prayer focus for this week with scripture references

WEEKLY GOALS

WEEK OF: _____

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
EARLY MORNING					
MORNING					
LUNCH					
AFTERNOON					
EVENING					

WEEK 3 ACTIVITY

SELF-EVALUATION

Philippians 3:14 - “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

Review and Reassess

- Did you make your three moves?
- Did you succeed in making the moves?
- Did you face challenges with making your moves?
- What got in your way of accomplishing your goals?

ACTION PLAN

Goal(s) for this week

•

I will make three key moves to accomplish my goal

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Specific prayer focus for this week with scripture references

WEEKLY GOALS

WEEK OF: _____

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
EARLY MORNING					
MORNING					
LUNCH					
AFTERNOON					
EVENING					

WEEK 4 ACTIVITY

SELF-EVALUATION

Philippians 3:13-14 - “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

Review and Reassess.

- Did you make your three moves?
- Did you succeed in making the moves?
- Did you face challenges with making your moves?
- What got in your way of accomplishing your goals?

Are you ready to make the declaration?

I (NAME HERE) will not bow before the idol of _____

I (NAME HERE) will not bend to the idol of _____

I (NAME HERE) will not break because of this idol of _____

OR

ACTION PLAN

Goal(s) for this week

•

I will make three key moves to accomplish my goal

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Specific prayer focus for this week with scripture references

WEEKLY GOALS

WEEK OF: _____

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
EARLY MORNING					
MORNING					
LUNCH					
AFTERNOON					
EVENING					

Goal Tracker

DATE	GOAL	COMPLETION DATE





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