

# GOD'S REWARD FOR THE FAITHFUL

## + SESSION OUTLINE

1. Faithfulness to God is tested (Dan. 1:8).
2. Faithfulness to God is affirmed (Dan. 1:9-16).
3. Faithfulness to God is rewarded (Dan. 1:17-21).

Background Passage: Daniel 1

## + WHAT WILL MY GROUP LEARN?

Faithfulness to God is not easy, but it is rewarded.

## + HOW WILL MY GROUP SEE CHRIST?

When Daniel and his friends were tested, their unwavering faithfulness to God was rewarded. Jesus was likewise tested during His earthly ministry, but He remained faithful to the Father so that all who trust in Him might be rewarded with eternal life with Him.

## + HOW SHOULD MY GROUP RESPOND?

Because Jesus has provided our greatest reward (eternal life with Him), we serve Him out of love and gratitude, not for anything else we might receive but so that others too might find salvation in Him.

# GROUP TIME

NOTES

## INTRODUCTION

**SETTING:** In our last session, we saw the people of Judah at the very beginning of the Babylonian captivity. God had warned them time and time again that if they worshiped and served other gods, He would remove them from the land. And that's exactly what God did. In today's session, we still find ourselves at the beginning of the Babylonian captivity, but instead of hearing God speak through a prophet from outside Babylon, we will see God work through the lives of four young men in Babylon as they resolved to remain faithful to the Lord in a seemingly impossible situation.

**EXPLAIN:** Though Israel was captured and exiled because of their disobedience, there were still some who remained obedient to the Lord God even in the midst of their captivity.

**DISCUSS:** **Do you find it easier to be faithful to God during times of ease or times of trial? Why?** (wait for a group member to respond first; only share your response as a conclusion to the discussion)

**TRANSITION:** The opening story in the book of Daniel is a story of faithfulness. First and foremost, it is a story about God's faithfulness to His people. But we're also introduced to four faithful young men, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, who refused to allow their situation to turn them away from their God. Today, as we look at Daniel 1, let's see it through the lens of God's faithfulness to His people. True stories like this one should strengthen our resolve to trust God and remain faithful to Him no matter what situations we might encounter.

**OPTIONAL QUESTION:** **How might seeing God's faithfulness to His people strengthen your resolve to remain faithful to Him?** (helps us to trust that He'll be faithful to us; allows us to see the goodness of God in ways we might not otherwise see; gives us the ability to see His faithfulness in a tangible way)

# POINT 1

## FAITHFULNESS TO GOD IS TESTED (DAN. 1:8).

**8 But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank. Therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself.**

**READ:** Ask a volunteer to read aloud **Daniel 1:8** from his or her Bible.

**EXPLAIN:** Use the **VERSE 8A** commentary to highlight the following point (*the bold words fill in blanks in the Daily Discipleship Guide [DDG]*):

Daniel was determined to not **defile** himself, and because his **relationship** with God was firm, his faithfulness stood firm.

**DISCUSS: What opportunities from the world tempt believers today to defile themselves?** (watching movies or shows that defy God's standards; laughing at jokes that don't hold up God's image in all humans; subtle sins that may become bigger ones, such as white lies, cheating on taxes, etc.)

**EXPLAIN:** Use the **VERSE 8B** commentary to explain that we can't work for our own justification; this is the work of the Lord (*the bold words fill in blanks in the DDG*):

**ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #72: Justification and Works:** Justification is not the result of human **effort** or good works but through **faith** in the righteousness of Christ. Although good works do not lead to justification, justification leads to good works in the life of a believer (Eph. 2:10). Faith without works is **dead** (Jas. 2:17). While good works do not establish justification, they do verify a genuine faith and make our justification evident to others.

**DISCUSS: How should the reality that we can't work to justify ourselves before God change the way we see our work for God?** (we are freed to feel joy in our work for God; we can stop feeling like we have to do better or be good enough to come to God; we are relieved of the pressure to be perfect)

**TRANSITION:** When we are faced with seemingly impossible situations where our faithfulness to God is tested, we must resolve to remain faithful no matter what. God sees everything, and when we're faced with hardships, He's not absent from our situation. In fact, God is watching over us and He will, in some shape or form, affirm our faithfulness, just as He did for Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

### NOTES

### DIETARY LAWS OF GOD

In Leviticus 11, God laid out the rules for what the Israelites could eat or not eat. Israel was called to be a holy and separate people, so the dietary laws were to remind them that they were different from the nations as a people set apart by God and for God.

### VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Faithfulness is our business; fruitfulness is an issue that we must be content to leave with God. God's Word will not return to him completely void, we know, but we must be willing not to see the fruits of it ourselves, or at least not immediately. Visible success in the form of instant results is not guaranteed in Christian ministry, neither for you nor for me."<sup>1</sup>

—J. I. Packer (1926-2020)

## COMMENTARY

**VERSE 8A /** Daniel 1 is an incredible story about trusting in the faithfulness of God. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah all understood the situation that they were in. They understood they weren't in control, but they also understood that the king of Babylon wasn't in control. They believed God was orchestrating all of the events that were taking place for the good of His people.

If we go back to the beginning of this chapter, we see several things happening that prove God is in control of this entire situation. When the king of Babylon laid siege to Jerusalem, God gave the king of Judah, Jehoiakim, into his hands (vv. 1-2). Jehoiakim's defeat was complete and total. But Judah didn't just lose their king; they lost a host of their people to exile and much of what identified them as the people of God, including some of the vessels from the house of God. Eventually, Israel would lose complete control of the promise land through an even broader exile.

The king of Babylon ordered young men with promise from the royal family in Judah to be brought into his palace (vv. 3-4). These men would lose their ability to eat a diet based on the law of God and would be forced to eat food that was both unclean and potentially used as sacrifices to idols. And they would be taught and trained in all things Babylon for three years (v. 5).

This would have been an amazing opportunity for the young men of the royal family of Judah to have status, influence, and power in a foreign land. No other Israelite would get this opportunity. Most of Israel would spend these seventy years (Jer. 29:10) in captivity as just that, captives. Daniel and all of the other young men had an opportunity to thrive and excel. But in order for them to do so, they would have to continue in the sin that made them exiles in the first place, worshiping and serving foreign gods. And one of the things we have to keep in mind is that the king they would be potentially serving at the end of their three years of training was a narcissistic

hothead (Dan. 3:1-13). They seemingly had but two choices: align themselves with this new nation by abandoning their God or lose their lives.

Now, none of what happened to Judah meant that God had been defeated by the false gods of Babylon. It didn't even mean that God had abandoned His people. As we saw in the previous session, God was in complete control of this entire situation. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah all knew that. And they chose their battles well. They didn't fight against being taken captive, they didn't fight against the education, and they didn't fight against their name change, which was a pretty major deal because their new Babylonian names reflected the Babylonian gods. But of this one thing—of being defiled and unclean before their God, the God of Israel, with regard to food and drink—they chose to fight.

**VERSE 8B /** In the second part of verse 8, we see that Daniel's determination not to defile himself before God at no point turned into disrespect toward his human overseers. He didn't stand up at the table and shout for all to hear that he wouldn't eat the food. He didn't flip the tables and announce that everyone who was eating the food was unclean and should be ashamed. Instead, he asked for permission from the chief eunuch not to defile himself.

Thus, these four young men did not defile themselves and were respectful to their captors, not because they believed that their actions, in themselves, could justify them before God, but because they believed that only their being God's chosen people gave them the ability to stand before God. They didn't want to do anything to hurt that relationship with God. They didn't want to be unclean before Him. Their determination was a result of their relationship with God and God's promises to the nation, not them trying to work to get something from God. Their obedience though was a sure sign of their already existing faith.

# POINT 2

## FAITHFULNESS TO GOD IS AFFIRMED (DAN. 1:9-16).

NOTES

**9** And God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs, **10** and the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, “I fear my lord the king, who assigned your food and your drink; for why should he see that you were in worse condition than the youths who are of your own age? So you would endanger my head with the king.” **11** Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had assigned over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, **12** “Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. **13** Then let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king’s food be observed by you, and deal with your servants according to what you see.” **14** So he listened to them in this matter, and tested them for ten days. **15** At the end of ten days it was seen that they were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king’s food. **16** So the steward took away their food and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.

**READ:** Ask a volunteer to read aloud **Daniel 1:9-16** from his or her Bible.

**EXPLAIN:** Use the **VERSES 9-14** commentary to highlight the following point (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

Daniel and his friends acted with wisdom and **grace**, both to remain faithful to God and to **honor** God’s image-bearers, even in the midst of a **dangerous** and compromising situation.

**EXPLAIN:** Use the **VERSES 15-16** commentary to emphasize the following idea (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

Even though God was not obligated to do anything in this situation, God **affirmed** the faithfulness of these four young men for their **good** and His glory.

**DISCUSS:** Pass out copies of **PACK ITEM 5: NO MATTER THE COST**, and then ask: **What are some ways God affirms faithfulness even if He doesn’t provide for or rescue His people from trials?** (God may rescue His people by carrying them through the trial; God can use one’s faithful testimony in life or death to convict a sinner’s heart and bring them to faith; ultimately, a believer’s faithfulness is affirmed through the resurrection from the dead and glorification to come at Jesus’s second coming)

**TRANSITION:** God responded to Daniel and his three friend’s faithfulness by giving them a couple of things they wouldn’t have had otherwise. What’s incredible is that the reward they received in the next few verses is awesome, but they would have remained faithful to God even without that reward.



## COMMENTARY

**VERSES 9-14 /** In verse 9, we once again see that God is in control, even in the midst of this complicated situation. Daniel and his three friends had resolved not to eat the king's food or drink his wine because they didn't want to defile themselves. But they didn't demand that they get food that aligned with their law-based diet, nor did they go on a hunger strike. They quietly asked for permission not to defile themselves with the king's food and drink.

In verse 9, God gave them **“favor and compassion”** from the chief of the eunuchs. Both of these words contain the idea of a specific type of favor that God gave them in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs, one based on an ongoing relationship.<sup>2</sup> We aren't told here of any kind of relationship that Daniel and his friends may have had with the chief of the eunuchs, but as we can see from his reply in verse 10, the eunuch did respond the way a friend might, in this sort of situation. He initially responded with a no, but not because their request upset him; rather, he feared that his life could be in danger if they were not presentable to the king.

The king himself was giving these young men the food that they were supposed to eat. As we have already stated, this was a privilege only afforded to a few people. Refusing the king's food would be to dishonor the king and to put their lives in danger. In fact, even making this request to the chief of the eunuchs put their lives in danger, for had he gone to the king and reported their request to him, they certainly would have been brought before the king and judged. But God gave them favor with their steward and he looked upon Daniel and the other three young men with kindness and compassion. And even though he told them no, his no had nothing to do with his feelings towards their request; it had everything to do with his fear of the king.

We often, if not always, find ourselves in situations where we have to choose

between God and sin. Oftentimes we don't respond like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Though our loud proclamations of the truth may seem noble and are at times good and right, God always uses the humble responses of His people to accomplish His will. In this story, Daniel and his friends didn't try to strong-arm their way into obedience to the law. Instead, they trusted in the faithfulness of God. Their faithfulness to God's law in a civil manner was ultimately an act of trust in God's faithfulness to His people. For even after the chief of the eunuchs denied their request, they then turned to the guard that the chief of the eunuchs had placed over their food. Once again risking their lives, they asked the guard to test them for ten days. They asked if he would allow them to only eat vegetables and drink water for ten days and see if their appearance was better or worse than that of the other young men. By God's favor and grace, the guard agreed to do this.

**VERSES 15-16 /** In this section, we begin to see the reward that the Hebrews' faithfulness to God earned them: they **“were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king's food.”** But perhaps the greatest reward that they received was what we see in verse 16: the guard that was placed over their food continued to feed them only vegetables to eat and water to drink for the next three years. Here we see their faithfulness to God rewarded by them not having to defile themselves before God.

God affirmed the faithfulness of these young men by granting them kindness and compassion from seeming enemies and by making them healthier in appearance than all the other young men. We know it is possible that God could have chosen not to grant them favor or even not to make them healthier in appearance, but to Daniel and his friends, that didn't matter. Ultimately, what mattered to them was that they were found faithful to God.

# POINT 3

## FAITHFULNESS TO GOD IS REWARDED

(DAN. 1:17-21).

**17** As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. **18** At the end of the time, when the king had commanded that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. **19** And the king spoke with them, and among all of them none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Therefore they stood before the king. **20** And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom. **21** And Daniel was there until the first year of King Cyrus.

**READ:** Ask a volunteer to read aloud **Daniel 1:17-21** from his or her Bible.

**EXPLAIN:** Use the **VERSE 17** commentary to highlight the following point (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

The greatest **reward** that these four young men received from God was the opportunity to be His **instrument** to proclaim Him to the world.

**DISCUSS:** Why should we see God's using us with our gifts and talents as a **reward**? (we get to partner with God the Almighty in His redemptive work; we know that what He accomplishes is successful; we get to experience the joy of seeing others come into the kingdom and family of God through faith in Jesus)

**EXPLAIN:** Use the **VERSES 18-21** commentary to emphasize the following idea (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

Daniel and his friends all **obeyed** God to get more of God, not just His rewards. But God rewarded them as they understood that those rewards would be used for God's **glory**.

NOTES

### KING CYRUS

Cyrus was the founder of the Persian empire. He was a great conqueror and a benevolent ruler. He didn't believe in assimilation as a means of control but allowed each conquered nation, including the Jews, to hold onto their culture and traditions. As foretold by name (Isa. 44:28-45:1), Cyrus would be the one to allow the Jews to return to the promised land and rebuild the temple.

## COMMENTARY

**VERSE 17 /** In verse 17, we see repeated for the third time the words **“God gave.”** Throughout this entire narrative, God has been in control of the events surrounding His people, specifically Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Because of their faithfulness to God, the Lord gave these four young men knowledge, understanding, and wisdom, meaning that God gave them an extraordinary ability to learn, understand, and act accordingly. This would become a useful skill for them as they continued to grow in their power and influence in service to the king of Babylon.

All four of these young men were given those abilities, but Daniel was rewarded with an additional ability to understand visions and dreams. During Daniel’s time, this gift was significant, especially in Babylon. The Babylonians believed that their gods (who, of course, were false gods) communicated through dreams. Daniel 1:17, then, serves as the backdrop for the book as a whole and the work that God would do through Daniel as he later interpreted dreams and visions.<sup>3</sup> Daniel’s God-given ability to see and understand visions and dreams helped him be the conduit of God’s revelation of Himself to the Babylonians.

The reward for faithfulness to God, then, is far more than a position, status, or power. The primary reward for faithfulness to God is the ability to be an instrument that He uses to make Himself known in all the world. Ultimately, the reward we all long for is an eternity in the home we were made for in the presence of Jesus. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah all had that view in mind as they faced this seemingly impossible situation. They understood that their lives weren’t wrapped up in where they were, what they did, or in a position they held. Their lives were wrapped up in a relationship with the one true God that was tested, affirmed, and now rewarded.

**VERSES 18-21 /** When the time came for these young Hebrew men, exiles in training, to be brought before the king, Nebu-

chadnezzar found none like Daniel and his friends. A further reward that Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah all received for their faithfulness to God was the ability to serve and attend the king. Again, if we keep the reality of their situation in view, then we see that their service to the king had a purpose far greater than their filling a position in King Nebuchadnezzar’s palace. God had plans to use them to display His authority and power to the king and to everyone under his rule.

In their service to the king, these men were found to be ten times more capable than all of the magicians and mediums in his entire kingdom. This gave them a special place of importance with the king. He would eventually look to them concerning all matters of wisdom and understanding. And since their wisdom and understanding was given to them by God, their position would ultimately be used by God to advance His mission of making His name known throughout the world. More specifically for the nation of Israel, Daniel and his three friends would make the seventy years for Judah in Babylon a little easier and they would grow to be a strong nation once again.

When we look at a passage like this, we often think about Bible characters like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah as people with superhero-level faithfulness. Their faith was placed in the King of the universe, but their faith wasn’t other-worldly. They were just teenage boys caught in a situation where they could either choose to compromise and sin against God or they could be faithful to God, even though they faced tough odds. They chose God in their situation. They didn’t know what immediate harm would befall them, but they chose to trust in His faithfulness. They trusted not simply that God would make everything okay but that God’s promise to Israel to use them to bless all nations still stood. And they obeyed God to get more of God, not to get what God could give them.

# MY RESPONSE

Because Jesus has provided our greatest reward (eternal life with Him), we serve Him out of love and gratitude, not for anything else we might receive but so that others too might find salvation in Him.

## HEAD:

When we find ourselves in situations where we have to choose between God or compromising what we believe, no matter how impossible the situation may feel, the decision to remain faithful to God is always the better choice, not just because it's what we're supposed to do, but because being faithful to God is what we were made to do. Looking back at stories like the story of Daniel and his three friends reminds us of God's faithfulness to His people when His people remain faithful to Him. But even when we aren't faithful, like Judah in the situation they found themselves in during the Babylonian captivity, God's promise of salvation through Jesus remains unwavering.

**What reasons do you have for remaining faithful to God even when your circumstances are difficult or dangerous?**

## HEART:

God, through His Son, Jesus, has given us the ability to live in His presence. Yet our world still vies for our attention and provides ample opportunities for us to "defile" ourselves and make us unclean and disobedient before God. Sometimes Satan tempts us, sometimes it's the world, sometimes it's our flesh. But praise God that if we do succumb to the temptation and sin, God will forgive us of our sin if we confess it to Him.

**What sins or temptations do you need to confess to God today that He might forgive you and give you strength to overcome?**

## HANDS:

Every single day, we face opportunities where we can either choose to be faithful to God or not. Most of those choices won't have life or death consequences like the choice that Daniel and his friends had to make. However, it's us choosing to be faithful even in the little things that will help us to remain faithful in the big things. One of our primary responsibilities that we as believers in Christ have on earth is to remain faithful to God's gospel mission. God's desire is that none should perish. So when the choice is be faithful to God or avoid a potentially awkward conversation, faithfulness to God is always the right decision.

**Who do you know that needs you to be faithful in sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with them?**

NOTES

### VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Of no profit to me will be the ends of the world and the kingdoms of this age; it is 'better for me to die' to Jesus Christ than to rule the ends of the earth. I seek him who died on our behalf; I want him who arose for our sake."<sup>4</sup>

—Ignatius of Antioch  
(c. 35-107)

## **POINT 1: FAITHFULNESS TO GOD IS TESTED (DAN. 1:8).**

### **+ COMMENTARY**

“Seventy years, seventy years, and you know something? When I see Ezra chapter 1 and all the people going back to Jerusalem, you know who’s behind that? Daniel. When I see the wise men coming from the east, I have to see lurking in the shadows, Daniel. God gave him influence, influence that led, I believe, to the decree of Cyrus to send the people back to their land. Influence that led to the rebuilding of the wall with Nehemiah. Influence that led to the reestablishing of the nation Israel. Influence that led the wise men to come to crown the King who was born in Bethlehem. He is behind the scenes of the history of the Messiah, as well as the Messiah’s people. He has an unlimited influence, for he it is who brings homage to the King who is the King of kings and Lord of lords, who reigns forever.”<sup>5</sup>

### **+ OPTIONAL TEACHING ACTIVITY**

Be mindful of your group’s dynamics and circumstances before you commit to this activity. Have your group stand together and do the human knot. Explain that the point of this activity is for your group to go from being one giant knot to being completely untangled without letting go of each other’s hands. Begin with everyone standing in a circle and have everyone begin by joining their left hand with someone else’s left hand that’s across from them. And then have them join their right hand with someone different. Now have your group try to untangle the knot without letting go of the hands they are holding by maneuvering around one another until they end up in a circle.

Once untangled, ask them what they thought was most difficult. Many of your group members will either say that it was maneuvering around each other or not letting go of the hands they were holding. Because of its difficulty, people may find it hard to be faithful to complete the task without breaking the rules. Some people might not want to complete the task at all. The groups that typically complete this activity are the ones that work together and have a strong resolve to finish without compromising. It’s so much easier to be faithful when we are surrounded by others who are faithful. That’s what Daniel and his friends had, and they refused to bend in the face of pressure.

# EXTRA

## POINT 2: FAITHFULNESS TO GOD IS AFFIRMED (DAN. 1:9-16).

### + COMMENTARY

“Daniel exhibits a wisdom far beyond his years, a wisdom that could have only come from God. It appears there are only two options. Option 1: They defile themselves. Option 2: Their new friend Ashpenaz loses his head. Daniel, however, proposes a third way, one in which everybody wins. He drops down the chain of command to the steward or “guard” (NIV) that Ashpenaz had assigned over them and proposes the following solution:

Please test your servants for ten days . . .

The number ten may be either literal or symbolic, but the main point is that Daniel asks for a test—one that essentially puts his God to the test. He believes and trusts God to honor their convictions and commitments to obeying his Word.”<sup>6</sup>

### + ILLUSTRATION

“In Christianity Today, writer Philip Yancey recalls his first visit to Yellowstone National Park’s Old Faithful like this:

I remember my first visit to Old Faithful in Yellowstone National Park . . .

My wife and I passed the countdown in the dining room of Old Faithful Inn overlooking the geyser. When the digital clock reached one minute, we, along with every other diner, left our seats and rushed to the windows to see the big, wet event.

I noticed that immediately, as if on signal, a crew of busboys and waiters descended on the tables to refill water glasses and clear away dirty dishes. When the geyser went off, we tourists oohed and aahed and clicked our cameras; a few spontaneously applauded. But, glancing back over my shoulder, I saw that not a single waiter or busboy—not even those who had finished their chores—looked out the huge windows. Old Faithful, grown entirely too familiar, had lost its power to impress them.”<sup>7</sup>

Many people take for granted the faithfulness of God in their everyday lives. God is faithful in so many small things that it’s easy for His faithfulness to feel like white noise, something we tune out. But we should never look at the faithfulness of God as something to be tuned out. It would have been easy for Daniel and his friends to tune out God in captivity, but they remained faithful, even as they faced this seemingly impossible situation.

## POINT 3: FAITHFULNESS TO GOD IS REWARDED (DAN. 1:17-21).

### + COMMENTARY

“For the third time in the chapter, we read that God gave something to someone. In 1:2, he gave Jehoiakim and Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar. In 1:9, God gave the chief official sympathy toward Daniel and his friends. Now (v. 17) we read that God gave the four Judeans ‘knowledge and understanding.’ Of course, Nebuchadnezzar and those involved in their education would take credit for their brilliance, but Daniel and the others would know to whom the credit was

due. This section anticipates the next chapter, where the plot revolves around God's granting wisdom to Daniel through revelation (cf. 2:22). After all, they had grown physically robust not because of their Babylonian diet but because of the grace of God, that is, in spite of their diet of vegetables. The effect of the theme of 'God's giving' throughout the chapter is to press home who is really in control of the events of Daniel's life."<sup>8</sup>

## + ILLUSTRATION

"In his book *Talking to My Father*, Ray Stedman writes:

An old missionary couple had been working in Africa for years, and they were returning to New York City to retire. They had no pension; their health was broken; they were defeated, discouraged, and afraid. They discovered they were booked on the same ship as President Teddy Roosevelt, who was returning from one of his big-game hunting expeditions. No one paid attention to them. They watched the fanfare that accompanied the President's entourage, with passengers trying to catch a glimpse of the great man.

As the ship moved across the ocean, the old missionary said to his wife, "Something is wrong. Why should we have given our lives in faithful service for God in Africa all these many years and have no one care a thing about us? Here this man comes back from a hunting trip and everybody makes much over him, but nobody gives two hoots about us." "Dear, you shouldn't feel that way," his wife said. "I can't help it; it doesn't seem right."

When the ship docked in New York, a band was waiting to greet the President. The mayor and other dignitaries were there. The papers were full of the President's arrival, but no one noticed this missionary couple. They slipped off the ship and found a cheap flat on the East side, hoping the next day to see what they could do to make a living in the city. That night the man's spirit broke. He said to his wife, "I can't take this; God is not treating us fairly." His wife replied, "Why don't you go in the bedroom and tell that to the Lord?" A short time later he came out from the bedroom, but now his face was completely different. His wife asked, "Dear, what happened?" "The Lord settled it with me," he said. "I told him how bitter I was that the President should receive this tremendous homecoming, when no one met us as we returned home. And when I finished, it seemed as though the Lord put his hand on my shoulder and simply said, 'But you're not home yet!'"<sup>9</sup>

Yes, there are rewards for faithfulness, but not necessarily down here.

### References

1. J. I. Packer, *God's Plans for You* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 45.
2. Willem VanGemeren, ed., "Favor," in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 204.
3. John MacArthur, "The Consequences of an Uncompromising Life, Part 2," November 4, 1979, <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/27-05/the-consequences-of-an-uncompromising-life-part-2>.
4. William R. Schoedel, *Saint Ignatius Bishop of Antioch*, and Helmut Koester, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch, Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985), 181.
5. John MacArthur, "The Consequences of an Uncompromising Life, Part 2," November 4, 1979, <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/27-05/the-consequences-of-an-uncompromising-life-part-2>.
6. Daniel L. Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Daniel, Christ-Centered Exposition* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017) [Logos].
7. Craig Brian Larson, "Faithfulness of God," in *750 Engaging Illustrations for Preachers, Teachers & Writers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 161-62.
8. Tremper Longman III, *Daniel, The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 54-55.
9. Craig Brian Larson, "Rewards," in *750 Engaging Illustrations: For Preachers, Teachers & Writers*, 461-62.