**UNCERTAIN: CERTAIN FAITH IN UNCERTAIN TIMES**

**Hope Misplaced**

**Daniel 1:1-6; 2:24; 6:1-28**

**Daily Time With Truth**

As you read these daily scriptures, ask yourself these three questions:

1. What is God saying to me?
2. What do I want to say to God in response?
3. How will I live out this truth?

**Day 1:** Psalm 42:11 NIV

Why, my soul, are you downcast?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God.

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**Day 2:** Isaiah 40:31 NIV

But those who hope in the Lord
will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.

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**Day 3: Romans 15:13 NIV**

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

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**Day 4:** Psalm 130:5

I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits,
and in his word I put my hope.

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**Day 5:** Job 11:18-19

You will be secure, because there is hope; you will look about you and take your rest in safety. You will lie down, with no one to make you afraid, and many will court your favor.

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**Discussion Questions**

1. In what ways do you see the young people of our day and age going through a similar kind of reprogramming as Daniel and his friends did, and for what purpose?

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1. What temptations are the most enticing to you at times, and what are some ways you can train your appetites to avoid succumbing to them?

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1. Daniel kept his integrity even to old age and even if it cost him his life. How was he able to keep his faith, and how can we follow his example?

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1. Daniel’s situation looked bleak and yet he did not despair but maintained hope. What was his hope based on, and how did he face a bleak outlook with his hope intact?

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1. Daniel was devoted to prayer and had developed a pattern that he did not waver from. Describe how your approach to prayer is similar, and how it is different from Daniel’s. In what ways would you like to grow in your approach to prayer?

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1. Have you ever faced a situation that seemed almost impossible unless God intervened? It may have been an ominous diagnosis, a financial disaster or something else? How did you get through it and to what extent did you hold on to hope? Tell us about it.

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1. Read Daniel 6:25-27. What was the outcome of Daniel’s deliverance from the lion’s den, and how did Daniel’s hope in God have widespread results?

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1. What are you currently walking through that is challenging your faith? Share with one another what you have found to be the most helpful to keep you progressing through the fire with hope in the future. Then commit to pray for one another until you are on the other side of the trial.

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**Digging Deeper:**

In Babylon selected Israelites were given specialized education. Those chosen were most likely to be natural leaders (from the royal family and nobility), and had already demonstrated intellectual prowess. They were to be re-educated intellectually and treated royally. Several aims were in view, e.g. religious re-programming (language, literature, and diet all carried religious as well as cultural meanings) and a ‘brain-drain’ which would simultaneously weaken the prospect of a capable future leadership among the Israelites and potentially strengthen Babylonian society when the process was completed. The education in view doubtless involved astrology, divination and other ‘arts.’

The reprogramming was inaugurated by the giving of new names, each of which was religiously significant as the suffixes of the Hebrew names indicate – Dani-el means ‘God is my judge’; Hanan-iah,’Yah has been gracious’; Mish-el, ‘Who is what God is?’ and Azar-iah,’Yah has helped’. While the forms in which their Babylonian names appear may be deliberate corruptions (a signal to the reader of the untruth involved in them), the names of pagan gods (e.g. Bel, Nahu, and possibly Aku) are enshrined in them. A change of identity (no longer God’s children) and of destiny (Babylon, not Jerusalem) was in view, which would be reinforced by constant use.) *(New Bible Commentary)*

1. Why do you think the reprogramming was unsuccessful in the cases of Daniel and his three friends?

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2. How did Daniel keep his hope, faith and identity in God (for more than 65 years) under ongoing pressure to be assimilated into the Babylonian culture and religion?

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