

Small Group Questions: But If Not

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Read

Daniel 3:1–29; Exodus 15:6; Zephaniah 3:17; Luke 22:42; Revelation 21:3–4; Joshua 1:9; Matthew 28:20; and Isaiah 43:2

Reflect

In the book of Daniel, Jerusalem is in ruins, the Jewish people have been brought as slaves to Babylon, and King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon is making everyone fall down and worship his golden image or else they will be thrown in the fire. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refuse to bow, and declare that God will deliver them—but if not, still they refuse to worship idols. Why did they add that last, “but if not” when they truly believed God would rescue them? Why doesn’t God always do what we want him to? Is he still good when he doesn’t do what we want or expect?

Pastor Jack Hoey III gives us three things to remember in “but if not” moments:

1. God can deliver me from any difficulty.
 - a. Do you believe God can do anything?
 - b. When have you believed that God could do anything, but been disappointed that he chose not to do what you hoped?
 - c. How hard is it to say, not my will, but yours?
 - d. What are you most afraid to relinquish to God, and why?
2. God’s deliverance rarely looks like what I expect.
 - a. Can you think of an example in the Bible where God did exactly what was expected? How do you think Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego felt as they were pushed into the furnace?
 - b. What is something God delivered you from? How was it different from what you’d expected?
 - c. Hindsight is very different from being in the moment, when we don’t know the outcome. How does this teach us where to place our reliance?
 - d. What is God’s greatest victory and how did it come about differently from what everyone expected?
 - e. How has God used your pain to accomplish something in you and in others?
 - f. What if you don’t get to understand or learn the reason for your pain in this life?
3. God has promised to be with me.
 - a. A fourth man, who looks divine, appears in the fire. Who is he and what does his presence mean?
 - b. God does not promise us a painless life without trials, but what *does* he promise?
 - c. When have you refused to allow God to do something in your life in order to avoid pain?
 - i. Is God saying something to you that you don’t want to hear?
 - ii. Are you facing a “but if not” moment right now?
 - iii. How does God make it easier to embrace these moments and make room for him to work in his own way?

Respond: Where is God leading you? How can your small group support you?