

Daniel Takes a Stand

(Daniel 1)

Introduction

Have your friends that ever tempted you to be naughty? (Play around and not listen to coaches or teachers?) Have you ever been in a situation where you knew something was wrong to do, but you felt like your friends wouldn't like you if you didn't go along with them? (Watch a show or play a video game your parents told you not to?)

God wants you to make right choices in life. Our lesson this morning is about how God helped four boys who lived many years ago live their lives in the ways of the Lord.

Opening Prayer

Father, we love You and want to please You in everything that we do in life. Please teach us this morning how important it is for us to make good choices in our lives. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

The LORD says: '...those who honor Me, I will honor.' (1 Samuel 2:30)

Lesson

In Israel, there once were four boys who were probably about 14 years old. Their names were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. They lived many years after King David ruled Israel; 500 years before Jesus.

Because the Israelites did not remain faithful to God, God allowed them to be captured by the Babylonians.

Sometimes, God allows trials into our lives to catch our attention and hopefully turn us back to following His ways.

The armies of Babylon attacked the children of Israel where the boys lived and destroyed Jerusalem and took many of the people captive,

including these four boys. They were forced to march all the way to Babylon, 900 miles away where they were put into slavery.

Upon arriving in Babylon, King Nebuchadnezzar gave orders to his chief official to choose the best young men from the captives.

Daniel 1:4

"Select only strong, healthy, and good-looking young men," he said. "Make sure they are well versed in every branch of learning, are gifted with knowledge and good judgment, and are suited to serve in the royal palace. Train these young men in the language and literature of Babylon."

Nebuchadnezzar knew he needed clever men to help him rule the Israelite people. They were to be taught the language and knowledge of Babylon. They would be given a three-year course studying philosophy, literature, and astronomy. At the end of their course, they would be ready to enter the King's service as advisors.

Among those chosen were Daniel and his three friends. Now, these boys may have been excited to be chosen; that meant they would not be treated like slaves like all the rest of the people taken to Babylon from Israel. But along with this privilege came problems – they were to be fed from the king's table.

Daniel 1:5

The king assigned them a daily ration of food and wine from his own kitchens. They were to be trained for three years, and then they would enter the royal service.

When Daniel and his three friends came into the dining room for their first meal, they realized that the food being served was strictly against God's laws. Certain meat, such as pork, is forbidden by the Jewish law. And, there are many special instructions in the Old Testament regarding how to fix food the proper way. The food offered to them had not been prepared according to those laws and therefore would not be right for them to eat.

Also, before eating, the king usually offered his food to the false gods as part of worshiping the idols of the Babylonian people. Eating *that* food would be just like worshiping the idols—not honoring God.

Daniel might have been thinking, "If we obey the king and eat the food, we will disobey God. But if we don't eat the food, we will disobey the king and he may have us killed." This was a tough decision for Daniel to make. It would have been easy for Daniel and his friends just to go ahead and eat the king's food. They might have thought, "No one will ever know. Our parents are not here and besides, that law is so old-fashioned..."

Daniel and his friends decided that no matter what happened they would obey God. They knew they must do what is right. God gave Daniel and his friends courage to obey God's rules.

Daniel 1:8

But Daniel was determined not to defile himself by eating the food and wine given to them by the king. He asked the chief of staff for permission not to eat these unacceptable foods.

The word "defile" means to make dirty or impure.

Daniel chose not to eat that which he knew would displease God.

God wants you to keep your life clean from things which will harm your body. Can you think of ways your body can be harmed or mistreated? (e.g., drugs, alcohol, cigarettes.)

You must make a promise to yourself and to God that you will always do what is right and not to give into pressures around you.

It must have been hard for Daniel to keep this promise with the others eating all that fine-looking food. But to eat it would be wrong.

It's easier to resist temptation if you have thought through your principles well before the temptation arrives. Daniel and his friends made their decision to be faithful to the laws of God long before they were faced with the king's delicacies, so they did not hesitate to stick with their beliefs.

We get into trouble if we have not previously decided where to draw the line. Before such situations arise, decide on your commitments, then when temptation comes, you will be ready to say, "No!"

Daniel 1:9

Now God had given the chief of staff both respect and affection for Daniel.

God blesses those who honor Him. And, He will bless you, too, if you make a commitment to always do what is pleasing to God, no matter what others may think or say about you.

Daniel was determined to obey God. And God gave him an idea. Daniel asked if it would be all right if they had just vegetables and good plain water to drink. He suggested they be put on a 10-day test to see if they stayed strong and healthy.

Daniel 1:12-14

"Please test us for ten days on a diet of vegetables and water," Daniel said. (13) "At the end of the ten days, see how we look compared to the other young men who are eating the king's food. Then make your decision in light of what you see." (14) The attendant agreed to Daniel's suggestion and tested them for ten days.

The guard agreed to try the experiment. For ten days, Daniel and the other boys ate nothing but vegetables and drank only water.

Daniel 1:15-16

At the end of the ten days, Daniel and his three friends looked healthier and better nourished than the young men who had been eating the food assigned by the king. (16) So after that, the attendant fed them only vegetables instead of the food and wine provided for the others.

At the end of the 10-day test they looked fit and were allowed to continue their vegetarian diet for the next three years. God honored the boys for honoring Him.

Then, God gave them knowledge, skill in learning, and wisdom.

Daniel 1:17

God gave these four young men an unusual aptitude for understanding every aspect of literature and wisdom. And God gave Daniel the special ability to interpret the meanings of visions and dreams.

God gave these four young men more wisdom than the king's own advisors.

Daniel 1:20

Whenever the king consulted them in any matter requiring wisdom and balanced judgment, he found them ten times more capable than any of the magicians and enchanters in his entire kingdom.

Daniel and his friends had made the right choice. God gave them the courage they needed to obey Him. God will give you the strength to make the right choices if you make a decision in your heart to please God in all that you think, all that you say, and all that you do. God will help you say "No" to sin and He'll help you choose what is right.

Sometimes we may feel afraid or worried about many different things. We might worry about what will happen if we don't do what our friends want. God understands our feelings and He promises to give us courage to obey Him, no matter what situation we are in.

Closing Prayer

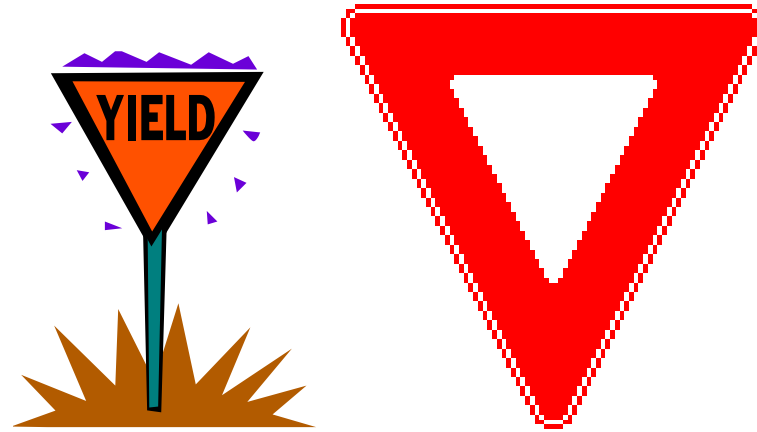
Father, help us to follow Daniel's example. We want to make a choice to do what is pleasing to You at all times. Please give us the courage we need to obey You no matter what situation we find ourselves in. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Yield Sign

Have the children draw a "yield" sign, and then place a line through it. This sign means do not yield or give in. Have them put the drawing in a place they will see each morning to remind them not to give in to others who want them to do things that will harm their bodies.



Scratch and Sniff Pictures

Materials: One package each of orange, cherry, strawberry and grape Kool-aid. One copy of the fruit pattern for each child. (copied on card stock.)

Procedure: Before class place the Kool-aid in separate containers and label them. Add water to powdered Kool-aid to make paint. Have the children paint with the appropriate Kool-aid flavor to make fruits that actually smell like the picture they are painting. When the pictures are dry, show them how to scratch them with their fingernails to smell the fruit.

Note: Kool-Aid stains so make sure you cover up the children well. Let only a few of them paint at one time.

Game Center

Timeline Relay

Preparation:

Print these points from the Bible story on pieces of paper. Make a set for each team.

- King Nebuchadnezzar took young men from Israel to Babylon.
- The king ordered that the young men learn the language and literature of Babylon.
- The king provided royal food and wine for the young men to eat.
- Daniel knew that the king's food was not food God wanted him to eat.
- Daniel asked the official for other food to eat.
- The official was worried that Daniel and his friends would look thinner than the other men.
- Daniel asked for a test for 10 days. He and his friends would eat vegetables and drink water.
- The official agreed to give Daniel and his friends only vegetables and water for 10 days.
- After 10 days, Daniel and his friends looked healthier and better than the other men.
- The official gave Daniel and his friends only vegetables and water for the rest of the time.
- God helped Daniel and his friends understand and learn.

Play:

Group the kids into teams. Tell kids they will work with their team to put the story statements in order. Mix the statements of each team. Give a statement to the first player of each team. On your signal, the first players run to the opposite wall to tape up their statements. They return and tag the next player. Those players get a statement, run to the wall, and tape the statement in the appropriate place (before or after the first statement). Subsequent players can rearrange the

statements as they place theirs in the appropriate places. After a team has all statements on the wall, quickly review them. If something is incorrect, a player can run down and rearrange the statements. Continue until one team has all the statements in correct order. Talk about the story and the Life Point.

The Choosing Game

Have kids sit on chairs in a circle. Read each of the following statements one at a time. For each statement, have kids follow the instructions it gives or stay put. Kids will end up sitting on top of each other in the circle.

Move one chair to the right if...

1. you like math better than English.
2. you'd rather talk to your mother than your father about a problem.
3. you prefer to wear red T-shirts instead of blue T-shirts.
4. you like redheads better than blondes.
5. you'd rather go to the beach than the mountains.
6. you'd rather go to the movies than skating.
7. you like Pepsi better than Coca-Cola.
8. you prefer hamburgers to pizza.
9. you like pepperoni pizza more than cheese pizza.
10. you like chocolate ice cream better than vanilla ice cream.
11. you'd rather play baseball than basketball.
12. you'd rather watch sports than play sports.
13. you like comedy TV shows better than action TV shows.
14. you'd rather stay up late than get up early.
15. you like cats more than dogs.
16. you'd rather learn to play a musical instrument than listen to somebody else play.
17. you'd rather your friend tell you the truth than protect your feelings.
18. you like advice from friends more than from your parents.
19. you'd rather spend time with your brother or sister than your friends.

20. you trust your grandparents more than your teachers.

In this game, every time you made a choice, it caused you to either move or stay where you were. It's like that in real life, too. The choices you make determine where you'll be and the kind of life you'll live. Now, let's look at real-life situations and practice our decision-making skills.

Situation Cards

Discuss the following situations:

1. Amy and Julie have been best friends for years. Amy is also friends with Karen. As Amy's birthday party approaches, Julie insists that Karen can't be invited. She says that if Amy invites Karen, she won't come to the party. Amy decides to go along with Julie and leave Karen out.
2. Danny goes camping with Steve and his father. Steve's father leaves the boys at the campsite to go fishing downstream. A young man comes up and says he's hungry and asks the boys for something to eat. Danny says "sure" and asks the fellow to join them.
3. Denise hasn't missed a single meeting of her church group. The group is preparing for a special program they'll present soon to the congregation. Denise is excited about playing one of the main parts. Then, Mitch, who she really likes, calls and asks her to go with him and his parents to the movies. It'll mean missing practice. She decides to go with Mitch to the movies.

[Teacher, ask the students if the person in the situation made a good or bad decision. Then have the students work together to come up with an alternative solution for each situation. Commend the students in their decision-making skills.] As you can tell, even right decisions don't fully solve problems. That's why you need to think and pray about the decisions you make, so you'll know you're doing what's best in every situation.

Or, use the following questions in a review game of your choice:

1. Why did the people of Israel go to Babylon? (Because they did not remain faithful to God and God allowed them to be captured by the Babylonians.)
2. Why does God sometimes allow trials in our lives? (To catch our attention and hopefully turn us back to following His ways.)
3. What orders did King Nebuchadnezzar give to his chief official? (To select some of the Israelites to serve in his palace.)
4. What were some of the special privileges given to those selected to serve in the king's palace? (They were to be taught the language and other courses of study as well as given special food to eat from the king's table.)
5. Why might Daniel and his friends be pleased about being selected? (They wouldn't be treated as slaves.)
6. When do you think Daniel and his friends might have been afraid? (When Daniel and his three friends came into the dining room for their first meal they realized that the food being served wasn't "kosher." This would displease God.)
7. What did Daniel do that showed courage? (He chose NOT to eat the food that displeased God.)
8. Why was this a tough decision for Daniel to make? (He could have been killed.)
9. What are some ways your body can be harmed or mistreated? (Drugs, smoking, drinking.)
10. What is a good thing to do to make it easier to resist temptation? (Make a decision before you get into trouble that you will always choose to please God, no matter what!)
11. Rather than just refusing to eat the king's food, what did Daniel do? (He suggested that they have a 10-day test of eating only vegetables and water to see if they stay strong and healthy.)

12. How did God honor Daniel's commitment to Him? (He gave Daniel favor with the King and also gave him wisdom.)
13. What do you think it means to be courageous? (Be brave and do what is right even when you are scared.)
14. What are some things that courageous people do?
15. What might he have done instead? (He could have eaten the forbidden food.)
16. When are times kids your age need courage to do what is right? (When friends are doing wrong things. When they are alone.)
17. When have you needed courage to obey God? What happened? How did God help you?
18. When are some times that it is hard to obey God? Why?

[For more expositional lessons for children, visit
<https://www.FreeChildrensMinistryLessons.com>]