

Three Men in a Furnace

(Daniel 3)

Introduction

What would you do if an adult told you to do something you know you are not allowed to do? Would you have the courage to do what is right even when everyone else was doing wrong?

Three young men in the Bible were challenged by a king to go against what God had said – or die. What would they do? It all started when the king built a statue as tall as a building.

Opening Prayer

Father, strengthen our faith in You this morning as we learn of Your power and might. Use this Bible lesson to encourage us to stand firm in our belief in You, so that we'll do what is right even when others are disobeying You. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

We must obey God rather than men! (Acts 5:29)

Lesson

Last week we learned that because of the unfaithfulness of the children of Israel, God allowed the Babylonians to invade Israel, capture the people, and march them 900 miles away to Babylon into slavery.

We learned that Daniel and his three friends were chosen to become part of King Nebuchadnezzar's special advisors. They were taken into the palace and trained in the language and customs of this new land.

Nebuchadnezzar grew in power. Year after year he added new countries to his kingdom. In every land he was greatly feared. But he became proud of his success.

One day, King Nebuchadnezzar decided to build a statue. This statue wasn't just a small, plain, ordinary statue. It was to be one of the largest statues ever built—nine feet wide and ninety feet high—and it was to be made from gold!

When the statue was finished, the king called all the important people from the countries he had conquered to come to Babylon and admire it.

Daniel 3:2

Then he sent messages to the high officers, officials, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all the provincial officials to come to the dedication of the statue he had set up.

What a sight it must have been, thousands of people filling the area. Daniel's three friends Shadrach (SHAD-rak), Meshach (MEE-shak) and Abed-Nego (uh-BED-nee-go) were part of the crowd.

Then, one of the king's messengers stood up and spoke to the crowd.

Daniel 3:4-6

Then a herald shouted out, "People of all races and nations and languages, listen to the king's command! (5) When you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes, and other musical instruments, bow to the ground to worship King Nebuchadnezzar's gold statue. (6) Anyone who refuses to obey will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace."

The people were commanded to fall down and worship the king's golden statue as soon as they heard the sound of music. And anyone who dared to disobey this command would be immediately thrown into a blazing fiery furnace.

I'm sure that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego could hardly believe their ears! Bow down and worship a statue of gold?

They were in a tough situation. They knew the first two of God's Ten Commandments:

Exodus 20:3-5 [Teacher, read...]

“You must not have any other god but me. (4) “You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea. (5) You must not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God...”

If they obeyed the king and worshiped the statue, they would be disobeying God. But if they did not worship the statue, they would be thrown in the fire.

How do you think Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego felt about the king’s orders? What do you think they did?

Soon it was time...

Daniel 3:7

So at the sound of the musical instruments, all the people, whatever their race or nation or language, bowed to the ground and worshiped the gold statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

As the trumpets blew and the music began, everyone bowed to the ground, that is, almost everyone...

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego stood straight and tall. They knew the one true God who made heaven and earth, the One who made you and me. They knew and worshiped Him alone and could never bow to this statue. They would be true to God and His commandments.

It didn’t take long for the news to reach King Nebuchadnezzar. When the king heard that the men had not bowed to his statue, he flew into a rage!

Daniel 3:13-14

Then Nebuchadnezzar flew into a rage and ordered that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought before him. When they were brought in, (14) Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you refuse to serve my gods or to worship the gold statue I have set up?”

Then Nebuchadnezzar gave them a second chance.

Daniel 3:15

I will give you one more chance to bow down and worship the statue I have made when you hear the sound of the musical instruments. But if you refuse, you will be thrown immediately into the blazing furnace. And then what god will be able to rescue you from my power?”

Nebuchadnezzar challenged their belief in the power of God. What courage it would take to stand for God in this desperate situation!

Standing for God is often hard. Has your belief in God ever been challenged? Has anyone ever tried to pressure you into believing something about God that isn’t true? [Teacher, let the children respond.] Maybe your teachers at school have tried to tell you that God didn’t create the universe in six days. Have they tried to tell you that everything just evolved out of nothing?

As a Christian, you need to let God give you courage to stand for Him. That means speaking up for what God’s Word teaches. You need to be ready... some may laugh at you or argue or even refuse to be your friends. But God promises that if we stand strong in our faith in Him, He will stand with us and give us courage. He will reward our faith. (Matthew 5:11-12).

The three young men could have said to themselves, “We wouldn’t really be worshipping the image. Just bowing down once won’t matter very much.” But they didn’t. They remembered their God and responded very courageously.

Daniel 3:16-18

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. (17) If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. (18) But even if he doesn’t, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up.”

These three young men did not know whether God would save them from death or *through* death, but they were depending on God to give them courage to stand for Him. They trusted in God so much that they were willing to disobey what the king was telling them to do!

When the three refused to bow down to the statue, the king ordered them to be bound with ropes and thrown into the furnace.

Daniel 3:19

Nebuchadnezzar was so furious with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that his face became distorted with rage. He commanded that the furnace be heated seven times hotter than usual.

Nebuchadnezzar was furious that these men disobeyed him and he ordered that the furnace be heated up seven times hotter! Then he ordered his soldiers to seize Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, bind them and throw them into the roaring flames.

Daniel 3:20-22

Then he ordered some of the strongest men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. (21) So they tied them up and threw them into the furnace, fully dressed in their pants, turbans, robes, and other garments. (22) And because the king, in his anger, had demanded such a hot fire in the furnace, the flames killed the soldiers as they threw the three men in.

The fire was so hot that the soldiers who threw the three men into the furnace died from just getting close to the flames.

Daniel 3:23

So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, securely tied, fell into the roaring flames.

The king and his officials watched to see what would happen. Suddenly the king's face changed from anger to fear. He jumped up in amazement.

Daniel 3:24

But suddenly, Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in amazement and exclaimed to his advisers, "Didn't we tie up three men and throw them into the furnace?" "Yes, Your Majesty, we certainly did," they replied."

King Nebuchadnezzar looked into the furnace and was amazed to see four men, not three, walking around in the fire.

Daniel 3:25

"Look!" Nebuchadnezzar shouted. "I see four men, unbound, walking around in the fire unharmed! And the fourth looks like a god!"

The king saw that the men were not burned and that the fourth man seemed to be a supernatural being. The fourth man may have been the Lord Jesus Himself or an angel of God sent to protect the young men.

God had protected them from harm. The Lord was with the three young men even in the flames of the furnace, and they were protected—much to the king's surprise!

Daniel 3:26

Then Nebuchadnezzar came as close as he could to the door of the flaming furnace and shouted: "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!" So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stepped out of the fire.

The three friends walked out unharmed. The flames had not touched them. Their hair was not singed and their clothes were not scorched. They didn't even smell of smoke. Only the ropes that had tied them had been burned off.

Daniel 3:27

Then the high officers, officials, governors, and advisers crowded around them and saw that the fire had not touched them. Not a hair on their heads was singed, and their clothing was not scorched. They didn't even smell of smoke!

When the king saw that their bodies were completely untouched by the fire, he knew their God was the only true God and praised God.

Daniel 3:28

Then Nebuchadnezzar said, "Praise to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! He sent his angel to rescue his servants who trusted in him. They defied the king's command and were willing to die rather than serve or worship any god except their own God."

Because of the courageous stand of these three men, the king declared that everyone should honor the true God.

Daniel 3:29

Therefore, I make this decree: If any people, whatever their race or nation or language, speak a word against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they will be torn limb from limb, and their houses will be turned into heaps of rubble. There is no other god who can rescue like this!"

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego not only knew that it was better to follow God rather than men, but they also had the courage to do it! As a result of their courage, the king believed in the one true God.

God honored the courage those three young men showed by standing firm for God. He will honor your courage, too.

You will probably never be asked to bow down to a large golden statue, but you may find yourself in a situation where you are tempted to disobey God. What are some situations you might feel tempted to go along with others in doing wrong things at school? Or, at home or in your neighborhood? How can you get the courage you need to obey God in these situations? (Pray and ask God for it. Choose to spend time with friends who want to obey God, Ask parents for help about what to do.)

Every day we make choices that show whether or not we want to obey God. It may not be easy. When you stand firm for God, not everyone will agree with you. Some will make fun of you or laugh at you. Some may call you names. But *some* will be encouraged to stand with you. Others will be impressed with your courage and will want to know more about God. Perhaps even those who make fun of you will change their minds about God when they see your faith. Remember, God is with you to help you speak up for Him. He will honor your faith just like he did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego.

Daniel 3:30

Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to even higher positions in the province of Babylon.

The king promoted the three young men to new positions of honor. God wants us to be faithful like these three, no matter where we are, or who we're with.

Closing Prayer

Father, please give us the courage to obey You, even when other people around us don't. We love You and want to show You our love by standing firm with You. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Game Center

Use the following questions in a game of your choice:

1. Why were the children of Israel in Babylon? (Because of their unfaithfulness to God, He allowed the Babylonians to invade Israel, capture the people and take them into slavery.)
2. When King Nebuchadnezzar became so powerful and proud of his success, what did he do? (He built a huge gold statue.)
3. When were the people supposed to worship the golden statue? (When they heard the music play.)
4. What would happen to someone who did not worship the image? (They were killed in a fiery furnace.)
5. Why did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego have the courage to refuse to bow down to the statue? (They knew their God and His Word; they had faith that God could save them.)
6. What happened to the soldiers that threw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego into the furnace? (They burned up.)
7. How many men were thrown into the furnace? (Three)

8. How many men did King Nebuchadnezzar see in the furnace?
(Four)
 9. Who was the fourth man in the furnace? (Jesus or an Angel of God.)
 10. Tell what happened after the king called the men out of the furnace.
 11. Who did the king praise after the three men came out completely unharmed? (The one and only true God.)
 12. What happened because of the courage of these three men?
(Many people believed in the only true God.)
 13. How did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego obey God rather than men? (They refused to bow down to the statue even though they knew they would be thrown into the fiery furnace.)
 14. How can you know if the things people are telling you to do are the things God wants you to do? (By reading the Bible and knowing what God says in it.)
 15. What does it mean to “*obey God rather than men*”? (To obey God’s commands, even when others are disobeying Him.)
- Tell me about a time someone your age needs God’s courage to stand firm in their faith at school? At home? In their neighborhood?

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