

LESSON AIM: When we obey God and His commandments, He will be with us. God will use us in powerful ways when we purpose in our hearts not to defile ourselves with the things of this world.

KEY SCRIPTURES: Daniel Chapter 1-3

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

- 1) Did David become King right after he was anointed? Why not?
- 2) What animal in the Bible are we compared to?
- 3) Why do sheep need a shepherd?
- 4) Review last week's memory verse. Have students explain it in their own words.

INTRODUCTION:

- Daniel as a young teen was kidnapped along with three Hebrew friends when Jerusalem was besieged by the Babylonian empire.
- These young men were carried off to a strange country to be taught the Babylonian ways and even had their names changed, but they never compromised their commitment to God.
- They were ready to face death, and just when they thought it was over, God did something amazing!

LESSON:

Imagine this scary scene: It is night time and you are just getting ready for bed and suddenly there is a commotion and screams from your living room. You run to see what is happening and there are soldiers, in your house and they point at you and they say, "There he is, grab him!" That happened to Daniel at the time when Jerusalem was attacked and they kidnapped all the strong, smart, young men and took them to King Nebuchadnezzar the King of Babylon (modern day Iraq).

The reason they took Daniel is because they wanted smart young men who would be trained to be wise men for the King. Our story begins with Daniel and his three Hebrew friends are now living in the King's palace, being trained in special subjects and having a special diet prescribed by the King. But the diet included foods that they were not allowed to eat according to the books of the Law (i.e., the first five books of the Bible). Daniel was not about to eat the forbidden food and wine, because He believed God's word and did not want to defile himself and disobey God. (Have the students read **Daniel 1:8**).

The man in charge is brought in to deal with this problem, and the Bible says that "Daniel had found favor" with him. Here is an important question: how do bring yourself into "good favor" with the person that is in charge? What does that mean? (*Allow students to answer*) Let's say you get a new teacher at school. What is the best thing you can do in school so that teacher will be your friend and not you enemy? (*Allow students to answer... by being good, obey the rules, be helpful, get along with other people around you, etc..*) Sometimes we can't get the highest grades in the class, but when we decide we are going to get along with other people, (even those that are hard to get along with) God will give us favor with those who are over us. For the rest of your life, you will always find someone that is difficult to get along with, but God will help you if you ask Him!

Since Daniel had good favor with the chief he tells him, "If I eat this food and drink this wine it will not be good for me and it will defile me." (**Read verse 10 together**). But these were the King's orders! The chief was afraid of King Nebuchadnezzar and knew that he could lose his job and his life if he didn't follow orders. But Daniel proposes an alternative (sometimes we need to stop and ask God for wisdom when we are in a difficult situation, He will show us what to do!) Read **Daniel 1:11-14** together. The plan worked! And in fact it was so convincing that the chief permanently changed their diet.

Now in the next Chapter, King Nebuchadnezzar has a dream. He gathered all of his wise men and stewards together, and told them this dream was really bothering him and that he needed to know the meaning of the dream. So they said to him, "Well no problem, just tell us your dream, King Nebuchadnezzar!" At that time the King angrily folded his arms and said, "I pay you good money, you tell ME the dream." He continued, "Tell me the dream or you are all going to be executed." Since the wise men have NO IDEA what he dreamed, the soldiers start arresting all the wise men in the kingdom.

Now Daniel and his friends were wise men, too, which meant they also could be killed! So the chief of security shows up to arrest Daniel and tells him all that happened. Daniel said, "Well, I don't know what the dream was but **God** does and He can reveal the dream to me! Daniel asks his friends to fast and pray for him. He is brought before King Neb just before everyone was to be killed and Daniel tells King Neb the dream (The dream in described in 1:38-49, give a brief summary) The King remembers that it was in fact the dream he had, and Daniel gives him the interpretation. Because of this, all the wise men are saved and Daniel finds great favor with the King.

Later in Chapter 3, King Neb. decides to have a huge golden statue of himself built in a place where everybody in the Kingdom would go there and bow down to his image. Read **Daniel 3:9-12** together. Ask the students if they remember the first two commandments. Was the King breaking these commandments? YES! Now King Neb thinks he is a god, but Daniel's three friends can't worship the image because they serve the one TRUE God! (*Note that Daniel himself is not mentioned in this particular part of the story; he might have been away on some business for the King, but the focus of the story is on Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego).

Read **Daniel 3:13-18** with the students. As we can see from the story, there weren't many options, you either had to bow down to this image of the King, or be thrown into the giant furnace! This furnace was made out of iron and had a HUGE fire going. When Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego refuse to bow down, the King was furious! He gave them a second chance to bow, but they refused. The King was so angry, he sent his servants to heat up the furnace SEVEN times as hot and to throw the three of them in! It was so hot that the guards assigned to throw them in were burned up!

Right before they are thrown into the furnace, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego tell the King that their God is more than able to deliver them from the furnace, *but even if He doesn't save us*, O King, know that we will still not bow to your gods, nor will we worship your gold image! (**vs 16-18**) So the King throws them into the furnace!

Read Verses 23-25. Who was the fourth man in the fiery furnace? Jesus! He was with them in the fire, and they were not burned! Their hair didn't even smell like smoke! It was a miracle and proved to the King that there was a God bigger than him—the one true God! (**Read vs 26-27**) "And King Nebuchadnezzar said, "Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants. They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives than serve or worship a god except their own." And the King commanded that everybody worship Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego's God! What a miracle!

Ask the students: What lesson do we learn from this? (Allow them to answer...) When you stand up for Jesus, Jesus stands up for you. Jesus was with them in the fiery furnace and He will be with us when we stand up for Him. His Word tells us that He will NEVER leave us nor forsake us. Like Daniel, we need to make a covenant with God to live in a way that pleases Him and not defile ourselves with things not of Him. God honors those that put Him first!

MEMORY VERSE:

(Even year):

"I can do all things through Christ who gives me the strength" **Philippians 4:13**

(Odd year)

"Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you" **Hebrews 13:5b**