

Daniel And His Friends Obey God

Daniel 1:1-17

MEMORY VERSE

DANIEL 1:17

“As for these four young men, God gave them knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Six towels, six beanie babies (or wadded up paper if not available), a stopwatch or watch with a second hand and two baskets.

Yellow construction paper (pre cut into 1 1/2” strips, one for each child), red yarn, a hole punch, markers and red construction paper.

A vegetable tray with dip.

ATTENTION GETTER!

Change-A-Name Word Game

In today’s lesson we will learn about the four young men from Israel who are taken to Babylon and refuse to compromise their faith. The king even changes their names because they remind him of the true and living God. Let’s see what those new names are and play a fun word game.

Divide the class into four groups of equal number (if possible). Give each team a name and see who can come up with the most words using the letters contained in the names. For example:

Beltshazzar – harsh, star, beat, test, belt, sale, share, etc.

Shadrach – had, dash, harsh, car, hard, has, etc.

Meshach – me, he, she, chase, shame, mesh, etc.

Abednego – be, no, go, bed, done, ago, need, gone, etc.

These are just examples and there are more words. Allow the children to go 3 – 5 minutes, then say stop. Count up the number of words from each group and declare a winner.

For the younger children you can write the names on the chalkboard and have the children work together to come up with words.

LESSON TIME!

Today, we live in a world today that is filled with wickedness. People who love righteousness and good are laughed at today. When those who fear and love God speak out, the majority of people who love and desire evil deeds rebel in outbursts of anger. Sometimes the pressures of an ungodly society can be overwhelming for those who stand for what is right.

In the middle of such an overwhelming tide of evil, could anyone make a stand for righteousness to make a difference for the kingdom of God? Daniel and his three friends did just that. When Judah was conquered by the Babylonians, King Nebuchadnezzar demonstrated his dominance by taking many of Jerusalem's wisest men and most beautiful women to Babylon as captives. Daniel and his friends were among this group.

Daniel found himself facing a king who was filled with himself and surrounded by idolaters. Instead of giving in or giving up, this courageous young man held fast to his faith in his God. In our lesson today we will learn that **We can live a faithful life in a sinful world**. Daniel knew that despite the circumstances God was sovereign and was working out His plan for his life and countrymen. Daniel's life of faith would be a beacon of light to all of us faced with an opportunity to make a stand for God in a dark time. Let's look at what happens.

DANIEL 1:3-5

Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel and some of the king's descendants and some of the nobles,

young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans.

And the king appointed for them a daily provision of the king's delicacies and of the wine which he drank, and three years of training for them, so that at the end of that time they might serve before the king.

King Nebuchadnezzar, the supreme leader of Babylon, was feared throughout the world. When his army swept into a country defeat was certain. After a victory, the Babylonians usually took the most valuable people back to Babylon and left the poor behind to take whatever land they wanted and live peaceably there. Nebuchadnezzar would get the favor of those left behind who would be loyal to him and at the same time ensure a steady supply of wise and talented people for Babylon's civil service.

Thrust into an entirely new world, Daniel and his friends would have to learn the Babylonian ways. How would you feel if you were taken captive into a different country, no longer free to live the life you desired? Could you imagine the fear and helplessness that Daniel and his friends faced? This trial would reveal their true characters, as they would be faced with decisions to honor God or to compromise with the world.

Ashpenaz, the chief of the court officials had the overwhelming responsibility to teach the young captives the language and

literature of the people. For three years, he was to prepare them for the king's service. This educational program would have included mathematics, agriculture, architecture, astrology, astronomy, law and may have included a strong dose of magic.

DANIEL 1:6-7

Now from among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

To them the chief of the eunuchs gave names: he gave Daniel the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abed-Nego.

The Bible doesn't mention how many young men were taken captive, but four are mentioned here for their later significant role in Babylon. Because these lads had names that honored Yahweh, the God of Israel, their names were changed.

Nebuchadnezzar wanted to change the names of Daniel and his friends to make them Babylonian. The people of Babylon wanted them to be like them in every way, even in their religious worship. In trying to remove God from their lives, Daniel and his friends would be like them. New names would help them blend into the culture. The names that honored God would no longer be an offense to the people.

Together is Better!

You will need six towels, six beanie babies (or wadded up paper if not available), a stopwatch or watch with a second hand and two baskets. In our lesson today we learned that the four Hebrew children stuck together and didn't compromise. This game will show us how we need to stick together to get God's work done.

The object of the game is to toss the three objects from one towel to another and then another and into the basket. The fastest one with all three objects in the basket is the winner. Each team will need seven children (you may need to take turns or alternate if you have less than 14 children). Spread the children out from one team and have one child on each end of the three towels. The children will hold the two corners on each side. Have the children spread out at least 6 – 8 feet apart. The seventh child will place the object onto the first towel. When you say go the two children with the towel that has the object will gently toss the object onto the towel of the next pair of children in their line. Then that pair will toss the object to the third pair. The third pair will try to get the object into the basket. If anyone drops the object on the floor or touches it then the group has to start over (but the timer doesn't stop).

After the first group has gone, let the second group go. Allow each group to play a couple of times and see who has the faster time. Notice that the players should get better each time they try because they are learning to work together.

Looking at their names helps us to realize how the Babylonians would be offended. Daniel which means “God is my judge” in Hebrew was changed to Belteshazzar, which means “He whom Bel favors.” Bel was a Babylonian god. Hananiah which means “Yahweh has been gracious” became Shadrach meaning, “I am fearful (of a god).” Misrael, which means “Who is what God is?” was given the name Meshach, meaning, “I am despised, contemptible, humbled (before my god).” Azariah which means, “Yehweh has helped” was named Abednego meaning “Servant of Nebo” the Babylonian god of writing and vegetation, the son of Bel. This was the king's way of beginning to change the religious loyalty of these young men from their God to Babylon's gods.

DANIEL 1:8

But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's

delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

Daniel had every excuse he needed to give in to the Babylonian ways. Now a slave to the king of Babylon, he no longer had his freedom. Yet, he set upon his heart to please God as he was faced to compromise God's laws.

Daniel chose not to eat this food because the meat was probably pork or some other food forbidden in Leviticus. The food would also have to be prepared according to Jewish law, and it had probably been sacrificed to idols. Although Daniel was in a culture that did not follow God's laws, he chose to obey God's laws. **We can live a faithful life in a sinful world.**

Daniel had made up his mind not to eat the food before he was faced with the decision to be faithful to God. When he was faced with the king's delicacies he did not hesitate to stick to his convictions.

It is much easier to resist temptation if you have thought through your convictions well before the temptation arises. It's easy to get caught off-guard because we have not decided beforehand where to draw the line. Before a tempting situation arises, decide on your commitment to be faithful.

Notice also that Daniel did not have a rebellious attitude towards the commander of the officials. Daniel asked the superintendent for permission to eat other foods instead. Daniel had put the situation in God's hands, leaving room for Him to work in the heart of the commander.

DANIEL 1:9-13

Now God had brought Daniel into the favor and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs.

And the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who has appointed your food and drink. For why should he see your faces looking worse than the young men who are your age? Then you would endanger my head before the king."

So Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,

"Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink.

"Then let our appearance be examined before you, and the appearance of the young men who eat the portion of the king's delicacies; and as you see fit, so deal with your servants."

Daniel desired to live a faithful life to honor God, and God honors him. Daniel had trusted his situation to God who intervened on Daniel's behalf to move in the official's heart to show favor and compassion to him and his friends. Though they are surrounded in a sinful environment, Daniel and his friends desire to live a faithful life to God rising above the moral standard around them. **We can live a faithful life in a sinful world.** As a result, God would bless them.

When Daniel's request seemed to have been denied by the chief official, he approached the overseer whom Ashpenaz placed in charge and requested a ten day trial period with a diet of vegetables and water. Daniel and his friends could eat the vegetables without defiling themselves according to the Mosaic Law. Daniel was confident of the outcome, and requests that they be compared to the youths that are eating the king's choice food.

Perhaps, you can understand the great concern the overseer had for Daniel and his friends. He was assigned the responsibility of supervising the physical and mental development of these men as they prepared to serve the king; to allow them to eat a diet different than that prescribed by the king could put him in great danger. If he failed to present Daniel and his friends to the king in the same good health as the other men, he would be executed.

DANIEL 1:14-15

So he consented with them in this matter, and tested them ten days.

And at the end of ten days their features appeared better and fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king's delicacies.

After ten days, the four who lived on vegetables appeared healthier than those who had eaten the king's food, as a result they could continue with their diet. Though God did not prohibit eating meat altogether (Genesis 9:3, Romans 14:14, 1 Corinthians 10:25-26) the vegetable diet was better than the king's food.

Daniel and his friends had every excuse to compromise their loyalty to God, but they chose to honor and obey Him. Because of their faithfulness, God blessed them. He blesses those who obey His commands and prospers those who trust in Him.

Will you make a stand for righteousness in the midst of pressure to compromise your loyalty to God? Make up your mind now on how you will respond to those who would make you stumble. Pray and put the problem in God's hands as Daniel did with his situation. Like Daniel, we too can live a faithful life in a culture that did not honor God. As God's people, we can make a difference in the world around us, as long as we do not compromise our convictions. How we behave reveals what we believe. May others see Christ living in

you and you will make a difference for the kingdom of God. **We can live a faithful life in a sinful world.**

Measuring Up

Daniel and his friends had decided in their hearts that they would live up to God's standards no matter what everyone else was doing. Make this bookmark to be reminded that we need to live by God's standards and not our own or this world's.

You will need yellow construction paper (pre cut into 1 1/2" strips, one for each child), red yarn, a hole-punch, markers and red construction paper. Give each child a yellow strip of construction paper. Using a ruler have them mark off the 1/8, 1/4, 1/2, and inch marks on the strip. Next have them number them with a marker to make their own ruler. At the top, punch a hole and tie a piece of yarn to the strip.

Next cut out a heart shape from red construction paper or a star shape from yellow. Punch a hole in the shape and tie on the other end of the yarn. On the heart or star write out, "I will live up to God's standards!"



Snack Time

Bring a veggie tray and dip for the children to enjoy some vegetables just like in our story.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to live faithfully even if the world around them is evil. Ask the Lord for strength to always choose what is right. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so.