The Fiery Furnace



Scripture Reference: Daniel 3

Suggested Theme: God is pleased when we stand up for Him and do the right thing even when no one else does.

Memory Verse: “Do not be shaped by this world. Instead, be changed within by a new way of thinking. Then you will be able to decide what God wants for you. And you will be able to know what is good and pleasing to God and what is perfect.” Romans 12:2, ICB

Story Overview:

King Nebuchadnezzar ordered a huge golden statue to be built. All the people were ordered to bow down to this idol or be thrown into a blazing furnace. The king heard that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow. They had been educated in the king’s palace and now served as government officials, but they told the king they only worshipped the true God and would not bow down. They were thrown into the furnace but did not die. When they walked safely out of the furnace, the king was impressed by the power of God. He promoted these Jewish men to even higher positions.

Background Study:

Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were among the young men who served the king as officials. Daniel became a ruler of a high position and served close to the king (Daniel 2:48). The other three also had positions of authority and lived outside of Babylon, in the provinces (Daniel 2:49; 3:12). Daniel was not present in today’s story.

King Nebuchadnezzar set up a huge golden statue and ordered his people to worship it. Large statues of this kind were probably not made of solid gold but were plated with gold. The image probably represented the god Nabu, whose name was associated with Nebuchadnezzar’s name. The penalty for disobedience was death in a blazing furnace.

Soon, it was reported that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were not worshipping as the king had commanded. It is interesting that King Nebuchadnezzar allowed them an opportunity to explain themselves. It seems he did not necessarily want the three young men to die.

The three Jews did not question whom they should obey – God or the king. They were confident God could save them. But even if God did not save them, these young men would not worship the idol. God’s will be done.

Nebuchadnezzar had tried to be lenient, to give these men another chance. Now, he was even angrier than before. The furnace was seven times hotter than usual. It was probably a kiln used for baking bricks. A kiln

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would have had an open top and an open door at the side through which the king could see the men. Bellows probably controlled the heat of the fire. It was so hot that it killed those who threw the three men in.

The three were unhurt, free from their bonds, and had a companion in the fire. God did not leave His faithful servants alone in their time of need. Although Nebuchadnezzar thought the fourth man was a son of one of the gods, he was sent from the only true God. Perhaps it was an angel, or perhaps it was God Himself.

Nebuchadnezzar's look must have changed from fury to awe when the men emerged unscorched, with no smell of smoke on their clothes. The king praised God for saving these servants who trusted Him so fully that they refused to obey the king's command. They risked death rather than worship any god except their own God.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had obeyed God even when everyone else had not.

The king did not completely understand God but he was impressed. In direct contrast to his earlier law, he now decreed that no one would be allowed to say anything bad about the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Disobeying this law was punishable by death.

Way to Introduce the Story:

Collect groups of items to display today. In each group, all items except one should obviously have something in common. Examples might be a knife, fork, spoon and pencil. Which is the odd one out? Do several groups of these. In today's story, we will learn about three men who were the odd ones out. Everyone else did something wrong, but they chose to obey God.

The Story:

The four young Jewish men who worshipped God were made leaders in Babylon. Daniel served near the palace while Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego served outside the city, in the provinces. Today's story is about Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

King Nebuchadnezzar was the ruler of all of Babylon. Everyone had to do what he said. If the king made a rule, then everyone had to obey it. King Nebuchadnezzar did not obey God and worshipped idols instead. He had his servants make a large golden idol. It was almost 30 metres high and 3 metres wide. He gathered all of the officials of the court together and also a band. King Nebuchadnezzar made a law for all of the people. "Whenever you hear the music playing, you must all bow down and worship the idol. If anyone does not bow down, then they will be put to death by being thrown into a furnace of fire."

Later, when the music began playing, everyone bowed down—all except for three people—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They did not bow down to an idol like everyone else. They knew that God only wanted them to worship Him. God's law said that they were to never bow down to idols. They knew they would get in trouble with the king, and everyone might laugh, but they still chose to obey God.

Some people noticed that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego did not bow down to the idol. They told the king that someone had dared to disobey the King's law.

King Nebuchadnezzar was very angry. How dare anyone in his kingdom not worship his gods! He called the three young men before him. "Why will you not bow down before the idol as I commanded? If you do not bow down to my idol immediately then I will have you thrown into a blazing furnace of fire," the king said angrily to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

"We don't have to explain to you," they answered, "we will never bow down to anyone but the Lord God. He is the only true God. If you throw us into the fiery furnace, then our God will save us. Even if He let us die, we would still love Him and not worship your false gods."

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The King was furious! He told some of his strongest soldiers to tie Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego up and throw them into the fire. He ordered the fiery furnace to be seven times hotter than normal. The fire was so hot that the soldiers died when they threw the men into it.

Then, an amazing thing happened! King Nebuchadnezzar looked into the fire and saw four men inside the furnace. Even though the fire was burning and hot, the men were walking around inside. The king leapt up in amazement and said, “Weren’t three men thrown in the fire?”

“Yes, O king, there were only three men,” answered the advisors. No one knew why the men were alive and how there could be four men.

The fourth man looked different. King Nebuchadnezzar wrongly thought that he was a god. Maybe the man was an angel, or maybe it was the presence of the true Lord God.

“Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, come out of the furnace!” yelled the king. The three men walked out of the fire unhurt, and their clothes were not burned. Everyone noticed that the men didn’t even smell like smoke! It was a miracle!

King Nebuchadnezzar said, “Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego! No other god can save men in this way.”

The King ordered that no one in the kingdom ever say anything bad about the Lord God. Then he gave Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego even better jobs in the Kingdom of Babylon.

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using various methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible, but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection or other group participation.

Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Click here for visual aids and more storytelling methods.

View this slideshow and download it from the original source:
http://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/meshach-shadrach-abednego/

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Review and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story. Reflection questions encourage them to internalise the meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child’s spiritual development and help them connect to God. Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.

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Review:

- What gold thing did King Nebuchadnezzar build? (An idol)
- What was the king’s law? (When the music played, everyone had to bow down and worship the idol)
- Who were the only ones who refused to bow down to the idol? (Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego)

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- How did the king punish them? (Had them thrown into a fiery furnace)
- How many men were walking around inside the furnace? (Four)
- Who was the fourth man in the furnace? (probably an angel or the Lord God)
- What did the king order after the men came out, not even smelling like smoke? (No one in the kingdom was ever allowed to say anything bad about the Lord God)
- What did the king learn about God from this event?

Reflection:

- What part of this story is most interesting to you?
- What question do you have for God about this story?
- What is something you wonder about in this story?
- How do you think Meshach, Shadrach and Abednego felt when they decided to not bow down to the king's idol?
- How do you think they felt when the king had them thrown into the fiery furnace?
- What do you think it felt like to stand in the fire but not be burned?
- Why do you think God had a fourth person stand in the fire with the three Hebrew men?
- Meshach, Shadrach and Abednego didn't bow down to the idol even though everyone else did. They did this because they wanted to obey God. When have you done something different so that you could obey God?
- Is there something good or right that you're afraid to do because it would make you stand out from other people?

Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a life-long friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. A variety of prayer methods are found here.

Song Suggestions:

- Three Young Men Lived Very Long Ago
- Goodbye World Song
- This Little Light of Mine Song
- I'm in the Lord's Army Song
- Refer to the Song Page on this website for more song options.

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Activities and Crafts:

- How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation.

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- Visit the activities and songs pages for additional activities and crafts.

Activities:

- King Nebuchadnezzar ordered the people to bow down and worship a gold statue. Display several items, one at a time, and compare them to God. Guide the children in considering how “things” are inanimate, can’t help us, can’t hear, man-made, etc. We can only pray to and worship the true God. Choose items that are age-appropriate and common to the children. For example, you display toys for younger children, but for older children, you might display a phone, video game, sports equipment, etc.
- Play a simple word game. Bible Wordz Game is an adaptable game in which children form words from letter tiles. The words relate to those in the Bible lesson.
- This is a great story to tell around a campfire or in front of a fire in a fireplace.
- Act out situations where a child might be the only one who obeys God (Example: All your friends want to watch a bad video with lots of swearing)
- Find Babylon on a map of the times. What modern-day countries are where Babylon was?

Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable “God’s Story” printable reflection page. Free printables for this story.

Crafts:

- Use salt dough to make a furnace. Try this salt dough recipe from learning4kids.net
- Draw four figures on a clay pot or jar and place a small candle inside to form a furnace.
- Help the children draw four stick figures in the middle of a paper. Then, glue strips of red, yellow, and orange paper over the figures to show four men in the furnace.

Print and use these free bookmarks, trading cards or timelines. Free printables for this story.

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Other Online Resources:

- Colouring page with text (Ministry Spark)
- Colouring page of entering furnace (Christian answers)
- Colouring page of inside the furnace (Christian answers)
- Craft: A simple paper plate idea (I did it, you do it)
- Worksheets about Daniel (Hub pages) Scroll down to the Daniel worksheets.
- Icebreaker game: The rules are a little complicated, but this could be a fun activity for a large group of older kids. (Creative youth ideas)

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