

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

Four young Israeli men, though captive in Babylon, refused to compromise their faith. Even when the king changed their names—names that reminded him of the true and living God, they refused to compromise. 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; 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!

When the Babylonians conquered Judah, Daniel and his friends were among the captives carried away to Babylon. There, far away from home, they were servants who were dependant on their masters' good favor, and they were surrounded by the appeal of the most wealthy and glamorous culture of the day. The pressure on Daniel and his friends to compromise was strong! Instead of giving in or giving up, Daniel proved himself a courageous young man. His life of faith is a beacon of light to all of us faced with an opportunity to make a stand for God in a dark time.

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 whom they considered the most important people (wise, competent, young) back to Babylon and left the poor and less competent behind to take whatever land they wanted and live peaceably there. Thus, Nebuchadnezzar would gain the favor and loyalty of those left behind; and at the same time, ensure a steady supply of wise and talented people for Babylon's civil service—service in the king's palace.

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? Can 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 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 Daniel and his friends had names that honored the God of Israel, Nebuchadnezzar decided to change their names to Babylonian names. The people of Babylon wanted them to be like them in every way, even in their religious worship. New names, they reasoned, would help them blend into the culture; and the names that honored God would no longer be an offense to the people.

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)." Misael, 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. No longer would they be acknowledged by names that honored God and reminded them of their commitment to Him. The pressure was "on" for these young men to blend in and be accepted by the wicked culture that surrounded them.

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 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 into the basket. The one who gets all three objects in the basket first 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, the group has to start over (but the timer does not 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. The players should get better each time they try because they are learning to *work together*.

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.

Most likely, Daniel chose not to eat the meat because it had been first offered in religious ritual as a sacrifice to the pagan gods of the Babylonians—a common practice. The fat was burned in sacrifice, and people would eat the remaining meat. Though Daniel, a captive in a strange land, had every excuse he needed to give into the Babylonian ways, he was determined to not allow the Babylonian culture to affect him. His heart was set to please God. He would not compromise. **Stand faithful in a sinful world.**

Note, Daniel “purposed” in heart. He did not wait to make a decision—“eat the food or not”—at the time the food was put in front of him. He made up his mind before faced with temptation.

It is much easier to resist temptation if you have thought through your convictions well before the temptation arises. Don't be “caught off guard” in the spiritual warfare we face. In 1 Peter 5:8,9 we are exhorted, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.” To be sober is to be serious; to be vigilant is to be watchful, alert. Long before temptation comes our way, our hearts should purpose to please God and our convictions (boundaries, limitations) should be well established. Don't let yourself get caught off-guard by temptation. Before a situation of temptation arises, decide on your commitment and be faithful.

Notice, Daniel put the situation into God's hands. He did not have a rebellious attitude towards the commander of the officials. Instead, he asked the superintendent for permission to eat other foods. Putting the situation in God's hands, left room for God to work in the heart of the commander.

DANIEL 1:9-14

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."

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

Perhaps, you can understand the great concern the official had over 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.

When it seemed the chief official had denied Daniel's request, 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 requested that they be compared to the youths that were eating the king's choice food.

God intervened on Daniel's behalf, moving in the overseer's heart to show favor to him and his friends.

DANIEL 1:15

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 were granted permission to continue with their diet. Though God did not prohibit eating meat (Genesis 9:3, Romans 14:14, 1 Corinthians 10:25-26), the vegetable diet was, no doubt, a healthier choice 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. God blessed the firm decision Daniel and his friends had made to be faithful! God's blessing will always be upon those who seek to obey His commands and put their trust in Him.

How you behave reveals what you believe—what your convictions are. How will you stand under pressure to compromise loyalty to your God? Determine *now* how you will respond to those people or situations that could cause you to stumble. As Daniel did, let us learn to pray, putting our situation into God's hands. Let us *purpose* in our hearts to stand strong for God in the midst of a way-ward culture that would seduce us (tempt us to compromise). Like Daniel, we too, can be faithful when “the pressure is on” and bring honor and glory to the God we serve. **Stand faithful in a sinful world.**

*Dare to be a Daniel,
Dare to stand alone!
Dare to have a purpose firm!
Dare to make it known.
Author: Philip P. Bliss*

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, instruct them mark off the 1/8, 1/4, 1/2, and inch marks on the strip; and then 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 Daniel and his friends.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to stand strong and faithful in a sinful world. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity.