Lesson 4: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

This includes:
1. Leader Preparation
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1. LEADER PREPARATION

LESSON OVERVIEW
Under the rule of King Nebuchadnezzar, Jerusalem was conquered, and a number of young men—including Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—were taken into the king's royal service. These three men earned the king's favor until they took a stand for God—and then they faced death. God blessed their desire to honor him, he saved their lives, and the king praised God.

LESSON OBJECTIVES
1. WHAT: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were young men who stood up for God even when facing death.
2. WHY: Trusting God, even in challenging situations, is hard but matters.
3. HOW: Students will consider what lessons they can learn from Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego about courage and trust—lessons that they can apply to their lives today.

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE
Daniel 3:1-30

SECONDARY SCRIPTURES
1 Corinthians 10:13

TEACHING PREP
The short overview below is designed to help you prepare for your lesson. While you may not want to convey this information word-for-word with your teenagers, you’ll definitely want to refer to it as you lead.


King Nebuchadnezzar, the leader of Babylon, had conquered Jerusalem and the surrounding area. He took the most valuable people back to Babylon as captives.
Three of those young men he captured were men named Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, whom he renamed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The king knew they were loyal to God and his ways; he wanted to try to influence their loyalties by giving them Babylonian names.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego found favor with the king through their service. He appointed them to important positions over the province of Babylon. However, they never stopped holding to their convictions about God, even in the face of the many forms of idol worship of the Babylonian culture. They faced the test of their lives when the king built a 90-foot-tall gold statue and commanded everyone to bow to it.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were forced to make a choice: stand for their beliefs and be thrown into a fiery furnace to their death, or compromise their beliefs and bow to the statue. Even in the face of the ultimate temptation, the friends chose God over the king’s command. They were thrown into the furnace to die—but God literally stepped in to save the day. God protected them from sure death in the furnace. As the king called them out of the furnace, he was amazed at their willingness to die for God—and he himself turned to God in praise.

Your students likely will never be commanded to bow before a golden statue, but they do face a culture filled with other kinds of idol worship, such as fame, fortune, celebrity, power, and possessions. Encourage them to recognize how God desires to be worshipped and how he alone deserves our worship.

THE BEFORE & AFTER [OPTIONAL]

Text Message Questions

We’ve provided a couple of different text message questions to send out to your students prior to your meeting. Feel free to use one or both of the questions below. As with the rest of the curriculum, edit these questions to fit the needs of your ministry.

- What’s the bravest thing you’ve ever seen someone do? Share your answer tonight with the group.
- What movie didn’t end the way you thought it would? Join the group tonight for some fun conversation.
Dear parents,

We’ve finished our final week of our four-lesson study on “Unlikely Heroes.” We took a look at people from the Old Testament and how God used them to do great things, even though the world might not have seen them as heroes.

Our fourth lesson focused on Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in Daniel 3. In this lesson, we talked about how these young men took a stand for God in the face of adversity, risking their lives to show their faith and trust in God. And God rewarded their obedience.

As you go throughout the week, help reinforce this teaching in your child’s life by asking the following questions as you have the opportunity.

- Why is it often easier to go along with the crowd than to make a stand for God?
- When have you experienced God’s presence in the middle of a situation where you felt completely alone? What was that like?
- Scripture makes it clear that just because you believe in God doesn’t mean you won’t have temptations. How can this truth help you when you are tempted?

Have an adventurous week!
GETTING THINGS STARTED [OPTIONAL]

You’ll need old magazines or newspapers for the opening activity.

Welcome your students and invite them into your meeting area. Open in prayer, have students form groups of three or four, distribute the old magazines or newspapers, and then SAY SOMETHING LIKE:

Today we’re going to study a passage of Scripture that talks about three guys who were ordered to bow down before a huge statue and worship it. It’s highly unlikely that you’ll ever be commanded to worship a huge gold statue, but we do live in a culture that promotes its own forms of idol worship. In your group, spend a few minutes looking through these magazines (or newspapers) for evidence of what our culture worships.

Give groups time to review the magazines or newspapers. If students need additional help, encourage them to look for images, articles, or advertisements that promote our culture’s worship of such things as fame, fortune, celebrity, power, and possessions. After a few minutes, ask students to share some of their findings.

ASK:

- Why does our culture try to get us to worship these things?
- What are some possible consequences if you make these things the central focus of your life, instead of God?
- How can you stay focused on God as the center of your life when you’re bombarded daily with all of these messages?

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: Today we’re discussing Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—three guys who had to choose between standing up for God or angering the king and being thrown into a furnace to their death. Their level of conviction in their beliefs is totally inspiring and gives a fantastic picture of what it means to stand up for your faith—even if no one ever tries to throw you into a furnace.
TEACHING POINTS

The goal of the Teaching Points is to help students capture the essence of each lesson with more discussion and less lecture-style teaching. The main points we have chosen are (1) If you stand up for God, your faith will be challenged, (2) If you stand up for God, you will face temptation, (3) If you stand up for God, you will never be alone, and (4) If you stand up for God, you will bless others.

Remember: All throughout these lessons, it’s up to you to choose (1) how many questions you use, and (2) the wording of the main points—keep ours, or change the wording to make it clearer for your audience.

Read Daniel 3:1-30 together as a group. Consider dividing verses among your students so everyone has a chance to read.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had earned King Nebuchadnezzar’s favor and had been appointed to high positions. The king knew of their faith in God, yet it didn’t influence his heart. He was a prideful man and wanted his way no matter what. When the king built his statue and demanded everyone worship it, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were faced with the ultimate challenge to their faith. Let’s see what we can learn from them.

1. If you stand up for God, your faith will be challenged

ASK:

• Has anyone ever made fun of you when they found out that you were a follower of Jesus or that you went to church? If so, how did you handle it?
• Why is it often easier to go along with the crowd than to make a stand for God?
• Look at verses 4-6. Why was this command so difficult for anyone who truly was following God?
• How do the astrologers in verses 8-11 remind you of people in your school or in other places?

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: Long before this event, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had decided that they would honor God in all situations.
The similar idea is true for us: If we haven’t determined ahead of time that we’ll stand up for God no matter what, then we probably won’t have the strength and wisdom to deal with challenges and temptations that will come our way.

2. If you stand up for God, you will face temptation

**ASK:**
- In verse 15, the king gives Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego one final chance to save themselves and serve his “god.” Why might his offer have seemed tempting?
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego respond in verses 16-18. Summarize what they said.
- Think about a movie with an ending you didn’t expect—how does this passage remind you of that kind of movie and how things might end?

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had no guarantee of how God would come through. It could have been God’s plan to allow them to die. But they exercised their faith and were bold in their stand. Their level of conviction was amazing and inspiring.

3. If you stand up for God, you will never be alone

**ASK:**
- When was the last time you were really, really scared? Did you feel like God was with you at that time—or did you not really think about it? Explain.
- In verses 19-23, why might it have been tough for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to know that God was with them? What words would you use to describe how they might have been feeling?
- Look at verses 24-25. When have you experienced God’s presence in the middle of a situation where you felt completely alone? What was that like?

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** This passage makes you want to stand up and yell, “God came through!” God honored Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego’s willingness to die rather than worship another god. Sometimes when we make a stand for God in a way that honors those around us, it can have an impact on people and move them closer to God.
4. If you stand up for God, you will bless others

**ASK:**
- Look at verses 28-29. What does King Nebuchadnezzar’s response reveal about God’s ability to change people’s thoughts and attitudes?
- How might the king’s decree have influenced the way people thought about the one true God?
- Have you ever experienced a time when someone noticed your conviction about your beliefs, and it made them think about God? If so, tell us about it.
- If you’ve not experienced this, what might you feel about God if he helped others to know him because of something you did?

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Taking a stand for God takes courage and conviction—and there’s no guarantee that it will be easy. We can be sure we’ll run into challenges when we stand for God, and we could be tempted to back down. But we need to remember we are never alone and God will provide what we need. The decision to honor and obey God could influence others to actually follow God—and that’s a very big deal!

**ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION [OPTIONAL]**
Ask students to form groups of two or three for these questions.

**ASK:**
- Read 1 Corinthians 10:13. What’s your reaction to this verse, and why?
- Scripture makes it clear that just because you believe in God doesn’t mean you won’t have temptations. How can this truth help you when you are tempted?
- God is faithful to provide a way out of any temptation. But what action do you need to take when you are tempted? How is that similar to the action Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego took when they were tempted to obey the king?

Bring everyone back together, and ask for volunteers to share answers to the previous questions, as time permits.
APPLICATION

ASK:

- What are two of the biggest obstacles you have in standing up for God at school or with your friends?
- What did you learn today that might help you stand up for God?
- Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego also had each other to stand strong together. Choose a person in our group to explain how you are going to use something from today’s conversation to help you stand up for God this week.

SUMMARY

End your lesson here. Provide your teenagers with a quick summary or take-home challenge based on (1) the content of this lesson, (2) the dialogue that took place during the lesson, (3) your understanding of the issues and struggles your teenagers are facing, and (4) the big picture of your youth ministry and what your leadership team wants accomplished with the teaching and discussion time.

FOR KEEPS [MEMORY VERSE]

Encourage and/or challenge your teenagers to memorize the verse below.

The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure (1 Corinthians 10:13).