

LESSON 73

Four Men in the Furnace

DANIEL 3



BIBLE TRUTH

OUR GOD IS ABLE TO DELIVER US

LESSON SNAPSHOT

1. **OPENING REVIEW** **5 MIN**
Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.
2. **BIBLE STORY** **10 MIN**
Read Daniel 3 from the Scriptures or read story 73, “Four Men in the Furnace,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.
3. **OBJECT LESSON 1** **10 MIN**
Set up an Idol
SUPPLIES:
 - ✓ roll of gold foil wrapping paper or aluminum foil
 - ✓ tape
 - ✓ string
 - ✓ prizes
4. **TEACHING/DISCUSSION** **10 MIN**
5. **OBJECT LESSON 2** **10 MIN**
Our Hidden Idols
SUPPLIES:
 - ✓ twenty-dollar bill
 - ✓ mirror
 - ✓ handheld gaming device (e.g., Game Boy or Nintendo DS)
 - ✓ set of headphones
 - ✓ four boxes to cover these items
6. **SWORD BIBLE MEMORY** **5 MIN**
7. **ACTIVITY TIME** **15 MIN**
The Fiery Furnace
SUPPLIES:
 - ✓ colored pencils, crayons, and paper
8. **CLOSING PRAYER** **5 MIN**
9. **BONUS OBJECT LESSON** **20 MIN**
Just Say No

TOTAL 90 MIN

PREPARING TO TEACH

TEACHING POINTS

Nebuchadnezzar demands that all his subjects worship his gold statue—King Nebuchadnezzar builds a gold statue ninety feet tall and commands everyone to worship it. The people of Babylon don't mind this because they already worship many gods. But for the faithful Jews who live in captivity in Babylon, worshipping another god would mean breaking the first of the Ten Commandments.

Today, there is no king requiring us to bow down to an idol, but there are many things that we can easily be tempted to love too much. No matter who you are or where or when you live, there is always a temptation to worship something other than God.

Through faith, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refuse to worship—Daniel's three friends are brought before Nebuchadnezzar, and he threatens to burn them alive if they do not bow down to the statue. Their refusal is one of the most powerful statements of faith in the whole Bible. They declare that they will trust God no matter what happens, even if they are thrown into the furnace. They know that God is able to save them from the fire, and they want to be saved from the fire, but they leave the result up to God. They do not demand anything from God. They simply trust him to do what is best. They know that the most important thing is to be obedient to God by not bowing down to the statue.

God delivers his servants—Nebuchadnezzar is amazed by what he sees in the fiery furnace. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego emerge unharmed, he knows that they serve the one true God. A few moments earlier, Nebuchadnezzar had been demanding that everyone in his kingdom bow down to the statue he had made. But after one glimpse of the power of God, he issues a proclamation forbidding anyone to say anything bad about God. The faith of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego didn't just save them from death; it allowed all the Jews who had been taken captive to Babylon to worship God freely!

A LITTLE BIT MORE

Polytheism

The pagan cultures depicted in the Bible had polytheistic beliefs. Polytheism is a belief in a plurality of gods. Pagans had no problem with worshipping the God of Israel along with all their other gods. The idea of polytheism is that everyone's gods are welcome. But God sets himself

apart from all other gods by demanding exclusive worship (Exodus 20:2–3) and by exposing the impotence (inability to do anything) of other gods (Psalm 115:3–8).

WHERE IS JESUS? _____

How does today’s Bible story fit into God’s greater plan of redemption?

Read Hebrews 11:34.

In the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, there is an obvious answer to “Where is Jesus?” The Son of God was with them in the fire as the fourth person. Just as God was willing to come down to earth to save them from the fire, so Jesus was willing to come down to earth as a man to save us from our sins. God delivers these men from the flames so that not even their clothing is singed!

Though not mentioned by name in Hebrews 11:34, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego certainly “quenched the power of fire.” These three men are a part of the “great cloud of witnesses” that the book of Hebrews says should motivate us to look to Jesus (Hebrews 12:1–2).

THE LESSON

OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read Daniel 3 from the Scriptures or read story 73, “Four Men in the Furnace,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

OBJECT LESSON 1 10 MIN

Set up an Idol

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ roll of gold foil wrapping paper or aluminum foil

- ✓ tape
- ✓ string
- ✓ prizes

Before class use the wrapping paper to make a tall idol-like figure, and hang it in front of your classroom.

When the children come in make no mention of the prop. Once the class is settled ask for four volunteers. (Avoid choosing uncooperative children or those who might use participation in an exercise like this to draw attention to themselves by being overly silly.)

1. Tell the first volunteer to look at the image as a sculpture. Ask them to critique it telling you what they think it most resembles. This could be humorous. You could give them a few suggestions such as a golden knight or a ray of sunshine. Thank the volunteer and award them a prize.
2. Tell the second volunteer that the image is a memorial to all the great generals who fought to keep our country free. Tell them that today it is appropriate to salute the memorial to honor them. After they salute the statue, award them a prize.
3. Tell the third volunteer that the statue is a symbol of good luck. They should rub the statue and if they do, they will be blessed for the day. Award them with a prize explaining that the prize is their blessing.
4. Tell the fourth volunteer that the figure is a golden image and when you clap your hands they should fall down on their knees and worship it. They should refuse, and when they do, ask them to explain why they won't worship it. Try to bribe them by offering the prize as a reward for worshipping it. They should still refuse and when they do, congratulate them and give them the prize. If they consent, stop the exercise without allowing them to actually perform the false worship.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- How did you feel when I got to the fourth volunteer and said they needed to worship the paper as a golden image?
(They most likely felt uneasy since they know it is wrong to worship anything other than God.)
- How was the fourth volunteer's assignment different from the others?
(The first three requests presented to the volunteers were a bit odd but not sinful. It would have been a sin for us to worship the paper as a god.)

- At what price should we give in? Would you worship the paper if I offered you ten dollars? a hundred dollars? a thousand dollars? What if someone told you they would kill you if you did not bow down to it? Would it be okay to bow down then?

(No, under no circumstances should a person ever worship a false god.)

Read the story of the fiery furnace in Daniel 3 and talk about the faith and courage of the three men to say no even though they did not know if God would deliver them.

TEACHING/DISCUSSION 10 MIN

Using the teaching points, teach through the lesson for today.

OBJECT LESSON 2 10 MIN

Our Hidden Idols

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ twenty-dollar bill
- ✓ mirror
- ✓ handheld gaming device (e.g., Game Boy or Nintendo DS)
- ✓ set of headphones
- ✓ four boxes to cover these items

Before class set the items on a table in front of the class and cover them with boxes. Mark the boxes so you remember which box conceals which item.

The object of this activity is to help the children recognize their idols. We might think we would be just like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, when in reality we all serve idols in our hearts. It is easy to dismiss an idol of gold; however, an idol is anything we worship or give our lives to in place of God. The items selected in this object lesson should help the children recognize some things that they worship other than God.

Read aloud through Daniel 3 together paragraph by paragraph. Tell the children that although we don't have the same temptations as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, we are still tempted by idols in our hearts. If we allow our idols to rule our lives, we are in effect bowing down to them.

Ask the children to guess what our idols might be today.

1. The money represents the love of wealth and its corresponding independence and power.
2. The mirror represents love of reputation and self.
3. The handheld gaming device represents the love of power and control.
4. The headphones represent love of peace and privacy.

Explain to the children that though these items are not evil, to allow them to distract us from our worship of the one true God is idolatry. You can identify an idol at work in your heart by gauging your reaction when you do not get what you want. How do you react when you are told not to play your video game? to take headphones off? to listen to different music?

Make the connection to Christ. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego made the right choice because they trusted in God who meant more to them than their very lives. In the end, they ended up standing with a fourth person in the fire. God will be with us when we place our trust in his plan. His plan for us is found in Jesus Christ not in the things of this world.

Read Psalm 115:3–8, and ask the class what we learn about idols in this passage. Then ask how the words in this psalm apply to modern-day idols.

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITY TIME 15 MIN

The Fiery Furnace

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ colored pencils, crayons, and paper

Have the children draw a picture of four men in the furnace.

CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

Pick several children to pray prayers based on the day's scripture passages.

BONUS OBJECT LESSON 20 MIN

Just Say No

Divide the class into three groups. Each group will act out one of the following skits. (Be prepared to walk from group to group helping them prepare.)

Group #1 scenario: Act out the story in Daniel 3 (today's Bible story).

Group #2 scenario: A group of children try to convince another child to join them in stealing candy from a local store. The child resists and tells the group he could not steal because that would go against God's commandments. They make fun of him and then threaten to beat him up. In the end a person from the neighborhood overhears their threats and chases the children away, telling them that he is going to call their parents.

Group #3 scenario: The children are sitting around watching TV when one child switches on an inappropriate show filled with violence and bad language. They all agree it would be fun to watch, but one girl stands up and says she is going to leave. The others make fun of her and try to convince her to stay. She tells them that the show does not honor God. Just then a parent walks in having heard the entire conversation.

After the children perform their skits, talk about how our sinful desires are no better than Nebuchadnezzar's demanding worship of his idol. Share the gospel with the children, and talk about how we have all broken God's commandments and need Jesus to save us from our sins.