



## Life Guide applying God's Word to life

### The God We Serve Is Able To Save Us February 2, 2020

(Daniel 3.13-27)

<sup>13</sup> Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, <sup>14</sup> and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, 'Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? <sup>15</sup> Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?' <sup>16</sup> Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. <sup>17</sup> If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. <sup>18</sup> But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up." <sup>19</sup> Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual <sup>20</sup> and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. <sup>21</sup> So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. <sup>22</sup> The king's command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, <sup>23</sup> and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace. <sup>24</sup> Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, "Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?" They replied, "Certainly, O king." <sup>25</sup> He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods." <sup>26</sup> Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!" So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, <sup>27</sup> and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them.

1. There are some Babylonian names in here. Let's review pronunciations!  
Shadrach = SHAD-rack  
Meshach = MEE-shack  
Abednego = ah-BED-neh-go (two Aramaic words- Abed-Nego)  
Nebuchadnezzar= neh-buh-kuhd-NEH-zr (two words Nebu-Chadnezzar)
2. Think of a time when being a Christian has made your life difficult?  
**Answers will vary.** The sermon pointed out that being a Christian makes dating more complicated as boyfriends and girlfriends try to honor God's will for sex and marriage. Being a Christian can be difficult at work if the best way to get ahead is dishonesty. Being a Bible-believing Christian can be embarrassing if it means others label you "anti-intellectual" or "unloving."
3. Agree or disagree: The cultural situation of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego was the same as our cultural situation in 2020 America.  
**Agree:** They were a minority in their faithfulness to God, surrounded by many people who did not honor God, as are we (generally speaking). Some government regulations made it difficult for them to practice their faith, as it does for us in some areas.  
The peer or cultural pressure was against them, as it is against us.  
They found their strength in God's power to save, as do we.  
**Disagree:** Their government-mandated worship of false gods, while ours maintains freedom of religion.  
They faced death as a result of their faithfulness, while we face less deadly forms of hostility.  
Their opponents actively attempted to harm them, while ours often think we are irrelevant or silly.  
They found strength in God's past deliverances; we have those *plus* Jesus' words "*Blessed are you when men persecute you.*" (Mt. 5:11)  
**Resolution:** While both ancient Babylon and present-day America are opposed to worship of the true Lord, ours is less deadly and more insidious.
4. List some things you can observe about Nebuchadnezzar based on his quote from 14-15.  
He worships other gods.  
He set up an image of gold.  
He is a ruthless punisher.  
He thinks he is more powerful than any god.  
He likes Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego enough to give them a second chance.

5. Predict how Nebuchadnezzar's words might change after he witnessed God save the three men from the blazing furnace. (After your predictions, the leader will read what he said in the verses following the story.)

He might know that the Lord is more powerful than him.

He might be even angrier.

He might convert to following the true God.

**Daniel 3:28-30**<sup>28</sup> *Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God!"*<sup>29</sup> *Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can deliver like this."*<sup>30</sup> *Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon.*

Note: He did not renounce all his false gods. It seems he added the Lord as chief among the Babylonian pantheon, still breaking the first commandment. Nonetheless, his words stand as a great testament to God's ability to save.

6. A miracle is something only God can do. Verses 24-28 are a visible miracle. Can you describe the miracle that happened in v. 16-18?

On our own, no person can stand up to the forces of the devil, an evil culture, and our sinful nature. (St. Paul cried out, "Who will rescue me from this!?" Rom. 7:24) The forces against us are simply too strong. If it were up to us, our culture would persuade us, the devil would tempt us and our sinful nature would indulge itself. But it's not up to us. God did something that only God can do—he won the hearts of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, just as he has won your heart. When God converts a person through the gospel, that is a true miracle. Their response to Nebuchadnezzar is evidence of a miraculous victory God won not to save their bodies but to save their souls. In that victory he defeated a much more fearsome opponent than Nebuchadnezzar, he defeated sin, Satan, and hell.

7. POP QUIZ! What is the First Commandment? (Hint: Martin Luther explained it like this: "We should *fear, love* and *trust* in God above all things.")

The First Commandment: You shall have no other gods. (Exodus 20:3)

8. What does it mean that these three men *feared* God above all things?

What does it mean that these three men *loved* God above all things?

What does it mean that these three men *trusted* God above all things?

Fear-They had plenty to fear if they disobeyed Nebuchadnezzar, but they were more afraid of disobeying God. (*Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.* Mt. 10:28)

Love- As much as they loved their jobs or their comfort or their lives, they loved God more. (*Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.* Ps. 73:25-26)

Trust- They didn't handle their trouble on their own; they took it to God because they believed that he could deliver them one way or another. (*Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver you and you will honor me.* Ps. 50:15)

9. The three men did not know what God planned to do. What was most important to them? Think of a personal situation in which doing or saying the right thing could be unpopular. In what different ways could this event from the book of Daniel be encouraging to you?

It's clear that what mattered most to these three men was honoring God no matter what happened to their lives.

Personal situations may vary. If someone is stuck, encourage them to think of the different roles they fill through the week at school, work, home, and with friends. Then ask which situation makes it hardest to do what is right.

The story from Daniel can be encouraging in many ways. Give everyone at least a minute to think about this part. Some possibilities:

- God is with you, no matter how other people react.
- Worldly powers are no match for God.
- God has won your trust through his word so that you can stand up for him.
- Any persecution you endure is entirely under God's control.
- God himself is much better than any specific thing God can give you.
- You are never alone when you confront difficulty.
- You truly are blessed, even when people persecute you.
- There could be many more!

10. In what ways does Jesus' death and resurrection for you, and the Holy Spirit's miraculous faith-creation in you change your battle against a culture that's hostile to Christianity?

We have the most potent force in the universe on our side—the love of Jesus. We have a miracle worker in our corner, the Holy Spirit. If your salvation and your faith was up to you, you would stand no chance against the world. But Jesus secured heaven for you. When you are weak, he is strong. The

Holy Spirit puts faith in your heart, to show his strength in your weakness.  
To God be the glory!

11. If someone asks you tomorrow what you discussed at life group, what will you identify as your big takeaway?

Answers will vary. Allow everyone enough time for everyone to identify a take-away.