

WARM-UP

- Have you ever been in a situation where you were not sure if you should follow the instructions given to you? What happened?
- Share about a time when you were asked to share about something very personal to you. How did you respond?
- Have you ever been punished for doing something you felt was right? What happened?

WORD *¹⁶Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. ¹⁸But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."*

DANIEL 3:16–18

(Read also **DANIEL 3:1–15, 19–30.**)

When Nebuchadnezzar set up a large golden image in Babylon and decreed that everyone should bow down to it when certain music was played, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Daniel's friends) privately refused to obey the king's order. Idolatry is a violation of the second commandment, so the three Hebrew men refused to participate—even if it meant death for them. Curiously, they didn't tell anyone of their resolve not to worship the idol. The king only knew about it because certain Chaldeans brought the matter to the king. Here are three lessons from Daniel's friends about taking a stand when the odds are against us that we can apply in our own lives and communities.

1 Daniel's friends had private convictions that were tested publicly.

12"There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, pay no attention to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up." *13*Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the king. **DANIEL 3:12-13**

King Nebuchadnezzar's decree to worship the golden statue spared no one, including Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. But this did not deter them from their faith in God and their resolve to worship Him only. While they held their own convictions privately, the Chaldeans intended to gain the king's favor and harm the three of them. Only when the three men were asked by the king did they declare their decision to honor and obey God. Recall a time when someone challenged your beliefs. How did you respond?

2 Daniel's friends chose to obey God over the king.

*14*Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, "Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? *15*Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?" *16*Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter." **DANIEL 3:14-16**

When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were told to obey the king over God, they refused. While they maintained a respectful demeanor when answering the king, they stood by

their belief that God is the only one worthy of worship. They also did not return any ill intention or publicly challenge the Chaldeans who got them in trouble. They knew that the king was not the one they needed to obey or trust, even if it could mean certain death in the fiery furnace. When others don't agree with our beliefs, we ought to maintain our convictions to obey God while conducting ourselves in a manner that represents and honors Him. What does Ephesians 6:10–20 say about how we are to be strong in and for God?

3

Daniel's friends trusted God for deliverance and experienced miraculous protection.

17"If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. 18But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up." **DANIEL 3:17–18**

The answer of Shadrach, Meschach, and Abednego to King Nebuchadnezzar reflected their confidence in God. They would trust God who can deliver them, and they would trust Him even if He did not. Either way, they would not bow down to the golden statue. God came through for them. He did not only deliver the three men out of the furnace, but was with them in person. The king himself saw a fourth person who appeared as a son of the gods. When he ordered them to come out of the furnace, everyone saw that they were not harmed at all. This caused the king to praise God and issue a new decree that no one was to speak against God. Even when the odds are stacked up against us, God stands at the center of our situations and makes Himself known to those around us. Recall a time when God delivered you from a seemingly impossible situation. How did it change the way you perceive the challenges you face today?

APPLICATION

- How does our society view private convictions and public platforms? What can we learn from the convictions and response of Daniel's friends?
- Why is it important to maintain respect and honor even when disagreeing with others? How can this affect the goal of them turning to God?
- Are you going through a situation where your convictions are being tested and you need God's deliverance? Like Daniel's friends, who can you stand with and how can you maintain your conviction to honor God?

PRAYER

- Thank God for being with you when your faith is challenged and when the odds are against you. Pray that He will deliver you and even when He does not, your faith will remain strong in Him.
- Pray for wisdom and self-control when you take a stand for your faith. Pray that the people you encounter will see God's presence and hand in your life.
- Pray that you would stand with friends who will help you trust God even in the worst of times. Pray that you would experience God's deliverance together.