

**Day 1:** Daniel 3.16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king, ‘O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to present a defense to you in this matter.

These three had been set up by jealous persons close to the King to be killed. The three posed a threat because of their competence in government work. The three would not bow and worship at the statue of the King. They did not make a public announcement but quietly kept praying to their God and following their dietary laws. They refused not only out of religious reason but to keep their ethnic traditions lest they forget who they are and where they came from.

**Question:** Did they really make the best choice? Was there another they could have made?

**Challenge:** Read Daniel 1 to see the background of the courtiers jealousy.

**Day 2:** Daniel 3:17-18 If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire and out of your hand, O king, let him deliver us. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden statue that you have set up.’

It is more than piety that caused these three to refuse on the point of death to worship and serve the Babylonian gods. The King has called their identity into question and tried to eliminate all traces of their Hebrew background. Their refusal was a witness to the hope that some day the exiles would be returned to their homeland. They were determined not to allow the conquering of Jerusalem by the Babylonians to erase them from history.

**Question:** How do you think they found the courage to tell the King no?

**Challenge:** Read about the Exile in II Kings 24:1-17

**Day 3:** Daniel 3.19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was so filled with rage against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that his face was distorted. He ordered the furnace to be heated up seven times more than was customary,

Warning, do not make decisions when very angry because it might hurt innocent people. The furnace was heated so much that those who had to put them in the furnace were killed in the effort. People in power need to control their acting out of anger. We all should heed the words of James in the New Testament-from the same mouth come blessing and cursing? My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so.(Jas.3:10). We can cause great harm by speaking violent words designed to hurt.

**Question:** What made the King so angry?

**Challenge:** How do you deal with your anger? Are you ever tempted to be violent?

**Day 4:** Daniel 3.20 and ordered some of the strongest guards in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and to throw them into the furnace of blazing fire. <sup>21</sup>So the men were bound, still wearing their tunics, their trousers, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the furnace of blazing fire.

In the Gospels Pilate washed his hands as he delivers Jesus to be crucified. By his action he is trying to say “I have no other choice-I am bound by law:”. Nebuchadnezzar is also saying “I am bound by law to kill these three innocent men”. In the king's violent act he has lost any moral ground he might have had. God did not allow these men to be consumed by the flames as God did not allow the people of Israel to be eliminated from the earth.

**Question:** Do you think the three young men believed they would not be harmed?

**Challenge:** Read about Pilate's decision in Matthew 27:15-26

**Day 5:** Daniel 6:11-13 Then they responded to the king, ‘Daniel, one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the interdict you have signed, but he is saying his prayers three times a day.’

Change of scene- Daniel is being set up by jealous men to be killed by the King's law. The courtiers played to the King's vanity and had him pass a law that said all had to bow down before his statue. Daniel like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, would not worship another god but the God of creation. This whole event shows us that if we have great power we ought to pair it with great humility.

**Question:** How do you think Daniel prayed? At home, at work, in very public places

**Challenge:** How would you respond to someone in the middle of the day in public kneeling to pray.

Would you think it was normal or odd?

**Day 6:** Daniel 6.16 Then the king gave the command, and Daniel was brought and thrown into the den of lions. The king said to Daniel, ‘May your God, whom you faithfully serve, deliver you!’

Nebuchadnezzar feels bad that Daniel has to die (mainly because he is such a good administrator) but feeling bad does Daniel no good. I believe the point is not that God did deliver Daniel but that we have to do more than just feel bad when we can do something about people being hurt.

**Question:** How could the King keep the law and save Daniel from being thrown to the lions?

**Challenge:** Think about the death penalty. Do you think it is correct or do you think it is wrong?