



Silverdale Baptist

STAND. A STUDY IN DANIEL • STANDING UP • DANIEL 3:1-30 • 6/13-14/2020

MAIN POINT

The power to stand confidently for our convictions in the face of opposition comes from knowing God.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Would you say you are confident in your faith? Can you be confident and, at the same time, go with the flow? Explain.

What do you have strong convictions about? How have you been pressured not to act on those convictions?

What situations make you personally feel the pressure to conform to the wrong standard?

As you know, Daniel's home country of Judah was captured by Babylon and forced into exile. Daniel, Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abed-nego) were pressured to conform by being educated at the University of Babylonian in chapter 1. They were given new names, learned a new language, taught a new way of thinking, and totally surrounded by a new culture. Now, in chapter 3, they are pressured to go along with the crowd or die a horrible death.

In this story, we learn principles that help us stand against the pressure to conform.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DANIEL 3:1-7.

Considering the story of chapter 2, what may have motivated Nebuchadnezzar to build the statue?

Describe the statue the king built.

How does the description compare to Daniel 2:31-32?

Who did Nebuchadnezzar call on to worship his statue? Why do you think he chose those people?

What was their motivation for worshiping the golden image?

Nebuchadnezzar built a 90-foot statue, perhaps based on the dream of chapter 2. In the dream, the head is gold and represents Nebuchadnezzar. But the king had the entire figure covered in gold in chapter 3. He then called the leaders in the empire to worship the statue, probably as a sign of loyalty to the king. However, they did not worship out of allegiance to the king, but out of fear for their lives. Death by fiery furnace was a strong motivator.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DANIEL 3:8-18.

Why do you think the Chaldeans told Nebuchadnezzar about the Jews not following his orders?

Based on what you have already learned about Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abed-nego) in chapters 1 and 2, what would you expect their response to be in chapter 3?

How does verse 15 explain Nebuchadnezzar's confidence in his own power?

What exactly is the response of the 3 Hebrew friends in verses 16-18?

How did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego have courage when facing the furnace?

What empowered them to stand with integrity?

The Chaldeans likely told Nebuchadnezzar about the Jews because they were jealous of the Jews in Nebuchadnezzar's court. Daniel had just been assigned a position in the king's court. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were put over some affairs of the empire at the request of Daniel (Daniel 2:49). Nebuchadnezzar would not like his newly appointed leaders failing to follow orders. However, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego courageously stood in their faith because they trusted God and would not worship anyone other than Him. Their confidence in God gave them the power to stand because they believed God is able, and God is worthy.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DANIEL 3:19-30.

What was Nebuchadnezzar's response to Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Asariah's (Abed-nego) refusal to conform to his false system?

How did God protect Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego?

Why might God have protected them?

Who was with Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah in the fiery furnace?

How did Nebuchadnezzar respond to what happened in the furnace?

Nebuchadnezzar did not care for disobedience and, in his rage, ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual. It consumed the men who threw in Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. God protected the Jews with His power and presence. A fourth person was seen in the furnace with them—this was almost certainly Jesus. They survived the fire by the power of Jesus' presence.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What are some culturally accepted or politically driven issues where we today feel pressured to go along with the crowd? What could be our motivation for doing so?

Have you been in a similar situation at work or in your career? What happened?

What does the statement, "But even if He does not rescue us" in verse 18, teach us about standing up for our Christian convictions?

To what things of the world are you most tempted to bow? Why?

How can this group pray for you in your confidence, convictions, and commitment to the Lord?

The power to stand only comes by knowing God intimately and personally. It has been said many times before, but the only way to recognize the counterfeit is to be intimately acquainted with the true one. God is the true one. Unless we know Him intimately and personally, we will always fall for the counterfeit.

PRAYER

Thank God for the example of believers who have gone before us, facing opposition with confidence, conviction, and commitment. Pray specifically for group members who face situations where they are tempted to compromise their beliefs.

COMMENTARY

| DANIEL 3:1-30

3:1. The events of Daniel 3 probably took place shortly after Daniel explained the king's dream (see Dan 2), although some estimate that it could have been 10 or even 20 years later. Babylonian records indicate that there was a revolt against Nebuchadnezzar during the tenth year of his reign, so this may have led to the king's desire for the loyalty test described here. The gold statue was not likely solid gold but was instead overlaid with it. Nebuchadnezzar probably decked the entire thing in gold to negate the message conveyed by the statue of his dream, wherein only the head was gold and signaled that the Babylonian Empire would only be temporary. The location of the plain of Dura has not been conclusively identified. Daniel was not involved in the events here since he remained in the capital city "at the king's court" (2:49) while other officials—including his three friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—were called to Dura to show their loyalty. Had Daniel been there, he too would have refused to bow to the image.

3:2. The exact meaning of these seven positions is unclear other than that they are listed in descending order of rank.

3:4-5. Three of the instruments mentioned—zither, harp, and drum—are the only Greek words in Daniel. The presence of Greek words does not mean that Daniel was written later in the Greek period. Even Assyrian inscriptions that predate the Babylonian period refer to Greek instruments and musicians. Although some conjecture that the gold statue was of Nebuchadnezzar himself, this is unlikely because the Babylonians did not believe their king was divine. More likely, the image was of a Babylonian god, perhaps Nebuchadnezzar's patron Nabu or the chief Babylonian god Marduk. Nebuchadnezzar made this demand as some form of loyalty oath to him personally.

3:6. Incineration in a furnace of blazing fire—a punishment that Nebuchadnezzar had also used on two Judean false prophets, Zedekiah and Ahab (Jer 29:22)—was a normal Babylonian penalty as seen in the Code of Hammurabi, Sections 25, 110, and 157. Perhaps this furnace was built to smelt the gold for the image Nebuchadnezzar had made.

3:8. "Chaldeans" is both a general ethnic term for the Babylonian people and, as used here, a specific term for priests who served as astrologers, soothsayers, and wise men in the king's government. Their motive in denouncing the three faithful Jewish men was not devotion to the king's demand but rather a hatred for the Jewish people. Hatred of the Jewish people is often on display in the Bible, as with Haman (Est 3:5-6). It reflects a hatred of the God of Israel and is expressed through oppression and attempted genocide of His people (Ps 83:2-5).

3:17-18. The king offered Daniel's friends a second chance to worship the idol, but they persistently refused. The Aramaic imperfect verb *yeseziv* ("He can rescue") in this context

indicates possibility and not certainty. They were saying that God might deliver them or He might choose not to do so. Their faith in God did not rest on the belief that He would perform a miracle, but that their sovereign God could be trusted. They asserted that if God chose not to deliver them from this punishment but instead allowed them to become martyrs for Him, they would still refuse to serve the king's gods or worship the gold statue. This is one of the strongest examples of steadfast faith in the Bible.

3:19. The enraged king gave orders to heat the furnace seven times hotter than was customary, an idiom for "as hot as possible."

3:23. The furnace was built on a small hill or mound with openings at the top and side. So the three men fell into the furnace from the top, and the king was able to see four men in the furnace (v. 25) as he looked in through the side opening.

3:25. The king saw in the furnace a fourth figure who looked like a "son of the gods." This may have been an angel or even a pre-incarnate appearance of God the Son.

3:27. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the furnace, Nebuchadnezzar and all his government officials saw that the fire had no effect on the bodies of these men. Not only did the fire fail to burn their hair and clothing, but they did not even have the smell of fire on them. Hebrews 11:34 cites this miracle of faith, referring to those who "quenched the raging of fire."

3:28-29. After Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were spared, Nebuchadnezzar saw that the God of Israel was greater than all other gods. Even so, he remained a worshiper of many gods, falling short of full devotion of the one and only true God.