



## LESSON 2: FAITHFUL WORSHIP

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### DAY 1: THE GOLDEN IMAGE (DAN. 3:1-7)

After conquering Jerusalem, King Nebuchadnezzar carried many of the best young men (most likely they were older teenagers) back to Babylon. Although Daniel and his three friends were captives in a foreign land, they continued to honor their faith in God. Then King Nebuchadnezzar erected a 90-ft tall golden image and gathered the citizens of his country for its dedication. According to the king's edict, when the music played, all people were required to fall down and worship the golden image. Those who refused to worship the image would be cast into a blazing furnace.

Now the three friends faced an even greater challenge. When the music played, how do you think Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego felt as they watched all the people around them fall to the ground in worship? Imagine what they were thinking as they realized they were the only three people standing in a sea of kneeling people. But they made their choice. They would stand firm in their worship of God by refusing to join the crowds who worshiped the king's idol.

What objects of worship has our culture created? While we may not be required to worship the golden image of a pagan idol, we are offered many objects to worship: designer clothing, luxury cars, grandiose homes, perfect bodies, celebrity status, dream vacations . . . and more. If we're not careful, we'll join the multitude around us in pursuing these things instead of pursuing God.

### DAY 2: STANDING FIRM (DAN. 3:8-13)

Certain Chaldeans wasted no time in reporting that "certain Jews," whom the king had appointed to positions of authority in his kingdom, did not worship the image he created. These native citizens wasted no time in pointing fingers at the foreigners who refused to obey the king's commands. The king responded in rage. He could not allow anyone to go against his law for fear of showing weakness and losing his grip on the people. He immediately ordered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego brought into custody.

As newly-appointed leaders in this foreign land, these young men were expected to conform to the king's demands. But they knew God had forbidden them to create idols or worship any god other than Him. Rather than obeying a human authority, they chose to obey the Highest Authority.

Have you ever been forced to choose between obeying an authority in your life whose directives contradicted your beliefs? What choice did you make? If you stood for your beliefs, what happened? If you compromised, how did you feel? In either case, what did you learn from the situation? Considering all these things, how will you respond in the future if you face a similar conflict?



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### DAY 3: CHOOSING GOD (DAN. 3:14-18)

King Nebuchadnezzar offered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego one last chance to bow before the golden image. Before he played the music, the king emphasized the stakes—bow and worship the image or burn in the fiery furnace. His final statement revealed his belief that no god could save these three young men from his hands. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego never faltered in their faith. They would worship only God—whether He saved them from the fire or not. Because they were completely committed to God, they chose to honor Him with their lives, and if He so deemed, with their deaths.

How do you know when you must be willing to suffer ridicule, rejection, hardship, punishment, or even death for what you believe? Maybe you're facing some of those situations right now. Make a list of them and spend time with God in prayer, asking Him to give you the strength to respond in ways that honor your faith in Him.

### DAY 4: FOUR MEN IN THE FIRE (DAN. 3:19-24)

Filled with fury, King Nebuchadnezzar hardened his heart against the Jewish men. After ordering the furnace heated seven times hotter, he ordered men of his army to tie Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in their garments and throw them into the furnace. Because of the intense heat of the furnace, the king's men were killed when they cast Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego inside. The king was certainly astounded by what he saw next: four men, unbound, walking unharmed in the midst of the flames. Some believe the fourth man, one like “a son of the gods,” was a pre-incarnation appearance of Jesus, whom God sent to encourage His servants in their most desperate time of need.

Whenever you take a stand for your faith, you may face consequences. But God will never leave you to face them alone. By the presence of the Holy Spirit, God will offer guidance and comfort in your times of desperate need. How does the certainty of God's comforting presence give you courage to worship only Him? How could you encourage someone else who is suffering persecution for his or her faith in God?



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### DAY 5: BLESSED BE GOD! (DAN. 3:25-30)

King Nebuchadnezzar called Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego out of the fire, and in the presence of his satraps, prefects, governors, and counselors, inspected them and found no evidence of their fiery ordeal. Their hair was not singed, their clothes were not burned, and no smell of smoke lingered over them. Because Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had not worshiped any other gods, the God of the Jews had protected His servants from the king's hands! Witnessing this evidence of God's power, the king blessed God and proclaimed that anyone in his kingdom who spoke against God would be killed. The king then honored God by promoting His servants to positions of authority within the province of Babylon.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's commitment to worship only God provided an opportunity for the God of all creation to display His glory to all. At the same time, King Nebuchadnezzar was forced to admit that both he and his gods were powerless to destroy the servants of the all-powerful God of the Jews.

When has your commitment to worship God, perhaps in desperate circumstances, given Him an opportunity to display His glory? When people have witnessed God's glory through your devotion, how have they responded? Conclude this week's study by committing to faithfully worship God, despite the potential costs to your health or comfort, so that others might see His glory.