

# The Fiery Furnace

Daniel 3:1-30

## **MEMORY VERSE**

DANIEL 3:28

“Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him.”

## **WHAT YOU WILL NEED:**

Prior to class do some research on the persecuted church. Here are a few great organizations with a lot of information:

Voice of the Martyrs ([www.persecution.com](http://www.persecution.com)), Open Doors ([www.opendoorsusa.org](http://www.opendoorsusa.org)), and Gospel for Asia ([www.gfa.org](http://www.gfa.org)).

Choose a story about a persecuted Christian to share with your class.

You will also need paper and markers.

## **ATTENTION GETTER!**

### **Strength in Numbers**

Gather children into a group and choose one child to be the “caller.” Designate a “safety zone” at one end of your classroom. Explain to the children that you will choose one child to be the “caller.” Their job will be to shout a number between 2 and 5. The rest of the group will need to get into groups of whatever that number is before the “caller” can tag them. The “caller” will try to tag a child before they either get into a group or safety zone. If a child is left out of a group they can get back to the safety zone before being tagged. Whoever is tagged is the next “caller.”

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego went through a difficult trial; but, not only did they have each other for encouragement, God was with them through their trial. We need each other and God to help us get through difficult times in our lives.

## LESSON TIME!

You remember that King Nebuchadnezzar was a little bit of hot head. In our past lesson, he ordered all his wise men slain because they could not tell him what he had dreamed nor, of course, could they interpret it. Remember, God gave Daniel the interpretation for the king.

King Nebuchadnezzar's temper is about to flair again; and this time, it will plunge three of Daniel's friends into a fiery trial. However, **God is with His children through their trials.**

### DANIEL 3:1-12

Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

And King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

So the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

Then a herald cried aloud: "To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages,

"that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up;

"and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."

So at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp, and lyre, in symphony with all kinds of music, all the people, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the gold image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews.

They spoke and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever!

"You, O king, have made a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the gold image;

"and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

"There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; these men, O king, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up."

Babylon, under the rule of King Nebuchadnezzar, had taken control over the whole world of that day. King Nebuchadnezzar was a very powerful man. King Nebuchadnezzar decided to construct a huge statue made entirely of gold. This was in direct defiance to the dream God gave him—a revelation interpreted by Daniel.

You may remember, in the dream, the Babylonian empire (represented by the head of gold) was to be replaced by an inferior empire—the Medo-Persians (the chest of silver). It would seem Nebuchadnezzar sought to ignore the plan of God and enact his own plan—the rule of Babylon forever. Some feel the massive 90-foot image may have been an image of Nebuchadnezzar. Perhaps he thought himself the greatest person on earth and desired to be worshipped as such. Does that sound pretty prideful?

Nebuchadnezzar invited all the governors, mayors, and other VIP's to come to a “big” party. Sometimes images were created to show the power of the one who made it. No doubt this massive image in the splendor of gold seemed grand and magnificent.

As important officials to King Nebuchadnezzar's court, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had no choice about attendance when the king threw his grand party; they were expected to be there. At that big party with important people, great music, and much fanfare, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were challenged. Would they compromise?

Imagine the peer pressure as all the people--thousands of them—bowed down to worship the image; imagine the threat of the fiery furnace if you chose not to bow! But, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were committed to pleasing and serving God. They knew His commandment. They were to worship God only.

### DANIEL 3:13-23

Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king.

Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up?

"Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?"

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter.

"If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king.

"But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up."

Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated.

And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, and cast them into the burning fiery furnace.

Then these men were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

Therefore, because the king's command was urgent, and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego.

And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

So, King Nebuchadnezzar was furious! Could it be that he was embarrassed by the behavior of three of his VIP's? However, he was willing to give them a second chance.

Yet, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not need a second chance. Their mind was made up. They basically said, "O King, we don't need any more time to think about this issue." God's law was written in their hearts, and they would not break His commandments.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were confident in God's ability to deliver them—to rescue them from any plan man might have; yet, their commitment was such that they determined not to waver even if God chose not to rescue them. What faith these men exercised! They knew **God is with His children through their trials.**

May we, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, trust our lives to God. May we surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Paul speaks of such a surrendered life in Galatians 2:20: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

Did their stand for the Lord cause the king to admire their courage? No way! They were bound hand and foot and thrown into the fire!-- A fire heated up seven times hotter than normal. So hot was the furnace that it burned and killed the soldiers who had to throw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into it. It was truly a trial by fire.

## **Standing Up for Jesus Today**

Sometimes trials are in the form of persecution—subjection to cruel or unfair treatment because of one’s faith. In this country, the persecution we face may only be being mocked or laughed at for loving the Lord Jesus; in other countries Christians are beaten, thrown in jail, or their churches or homes may be destroyed.

Take this opportunity to share with the children about the reality and needs of the persecuted church. Excellent resources are found through Voice of the Martyrs ([www.persecution.com](http://www.persecution.com)), Open Doors ([www.opendoorsusa.org](http://www.opendoorsusa.org)), and Gospel for Asia ([www.gfa.org](http://www.gfa.org)). Through these websites or other sources, find a story to share with the children concerning modern day persecution of the church. Voice of the Martyrs distributes a great map showing the countries in the world where persecution exists.

Ask the children what they think it would be like for them if they weren’t free to worship the Lord. How would that change their lives or their family’s lives? Choose a country that is currently lacking freedom to worship. Give the children some background



and ask them to pray together with you for that country--that the Lord would soften the leader's hearts towards His people and allow them to worship freely.

Perhaps, you can give each child a blank sheet of paper and markers and ask them to draw the shape of the country and color it in. Write the name of the country below the drawing. At the bottom of the sheet, write Hebrews 13:3, "Remember the prisoners as if chained with them—and those who are mistreated—since you yourselves are in the body also." Encourage them to post their picture somewhere at home and remember to pray for the people of that country.

### DANIEL 3:24-30

Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king."

"Look!" he answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and spoke, saying, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here." Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came from the midst of the fire.

And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king's counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power;

the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them.

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!

"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."

Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon.

King Nebuchadnezzar was amazed! He jumped out of his chair. How could there be four men? Who was the fourth man? (Allow for answers.) It was the Lord Himself. The king called Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego out of the furnace. Notice, he addressed them as "servants of the Most High God." This was quite an acknowledgement from a king who had just ordered the whole kingdom to bow down to the golden image he had set up. A few minutes later he would declare, "There is no other God who can deliver like this." God, as He had through Daniel, once more revealed His greatness and power to the stubborn and prideful king. The king and all the officials crowded around them.

A fun question: Did you notice only one thing was burned up in that fire? What was it? *Lead the class to the realization that Shadrach, Meshach, & Abednego were thrown into the furnace being bound. Next they were walking around.* The fire only burned their bindings. What a miracle! They didn't even smell like smoke.

Again, how many men were in the furnace walking around? How many came out? How great to realize that the Lord meets us in the middle of our trials. He gets closer to us; He gives us the grace to endure the trial.

The Lord had quite a plan for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, didn't He? He didn't deliver them from the fire; he delivered them in the fire. Sometimes trials are like that. We will all face "trials by fire"—times that test our faith. God does not always answer our prayer for deliverance—our prayer that circumstances would miraculously change for us. Sometimes, His plan is to be our deliverance *through* a fiery trial—to cause us to lean hard upon Him, to experience His presence and grace to endure, and thus to grow and be strengthened in our faith, patience, and purity. God uses trials because trials work well to produce good fruit in our lives (see 1 Peter 1:3-9, 4:12-14; James 1:2-4).

Fire is something that is used to make gold and silver cleaner and more pure. Fire is used to make steel stronger. Likewise, a fiery trial, a situation in our life that makes us feel hot or uncomfortable in our minds or hearts, can be used by God to make us clean inside, free from the entanglements of sin (pure), and stronger in our hearts and minds than ever before.

God is glorified when we endure trials. Just as Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged the greatness of God, so those who observe our victory through suffering may be drawn to faith in God or strengthened in their own walk with the Lord.

After this fiery trial, the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Having a prominent position in Babylon would now truly give these young men an opportunity to shine their light of faith in God in a dark culture. It would also seem that it was these three men who received honorable mention in the Hebrews 11 “Hall of Faith”: “who through faith...quenched the violence of fire,...” (Hebrews 11:33, 34). The fiery trials in our lives are often to prepare us for the great ways God desires to use us. The Bible says that promotion comes from the Lord (Psalm 75:6,7). Trials often precede that promotion.

So, do not be afraid of fiery trials—the hard places and times you will need to endure. Remember, **God is with His children through their trials.** He’ll be right there with you--staying close to you, helping you and teaching you. Remember, God is working a good plan in your life. Through these trials, you will grow and be prepared for the great things He has in store for you to do for Him.

## Clay Charades

Just for a fun time have children form trios and choose one person to be the sculptor while the other two are the clay. Challenge children to think of something related to the fruit of the Spirit or another biblical theme. Then have the sculptor pose (or sculpt) the clay into that shape. For example, one person helping another who has fallen down might represent kindness. Let the rest of the class guess what’s been sculpted.

## PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to only worship the one true God and, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, to have confidence in Him through fiery trials. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity.