

Lesson 90 Daniel's Daring Decision

I. Scripture Text

Daniel 1:1-21 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it.

2 And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god.

3 And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes;

4 Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.

5 And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king.

6 Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah:

7 Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego.

8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

9 Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.

10 And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king.

11 Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,

12 Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.

13 Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.

14 So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days.

15 And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat.

16 Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and

the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse.

17 As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

18 Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar.

19 And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king.

20 And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.

21 And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus.

II. Bible Story

DA1-1 Nebuchadnezzar

In the magnificent city of Babylon reigned one of the greatest kings in all history, King Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar came to power in Babylon about 600 years before the time that Jesus came to earth, and he swiftly became the most powerful ruler of his day. Like all the people of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar worshiped many false gods, or idols. In fact, most of the people of the world worshiped idols in those days, and even God's chosen people, the Jews, had turned from God and were worshiping idols. Because of this, God kept warning His Jewish people that He would punish them if they did not turn away from idolatry and obey Him. God sent His prophet Jeremiah to call His people Israel back to Him, but most of the Jews would not listen to the prophet Jeremiah.

DA1-2 Daniel and his friends

Among the Jewish young people in Jerusalem was a handsome, intelligent Jewish youth named Daniel and his three friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. In the midst of all the idolatry in Jerusalem, these four young men had seen that God alone must be worshiped. They may have had God-fearing parents, for their names all have something to do with the worship of Jehovah. Daniel's name

means in Hebrew "God is my judge." Hananiah means "gift of the Lord"; Mishael means "He that is the strong God"; and Azariah means "the Lord is a help." The Bible says that these four young men, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, were "children in whom was no blemish, but well favored, and skillful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and had ability in them to stand in the king's palace" (Dan. 1:4).

DA1-1 (Use this card again.) Nebuchadnezzar besieges Jerusalem

Finally, the time came that God had to punish the people of Israel as He had promised, and King Nebuchadnezzar was the instrument that God chose to use. God allowed the great king, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, to march his well-trained soldiers 500 miles westward to Israel's capital city of Jerusalem, and there Nebuchadnezzar's army easily defeated the Jewish nation. On orders from King Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian soldiers went into the homes of the nobles of the city of Jerusalem and seized their young people as captives for great King Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom. The Babylonian soldiers also went into God's Temple in Jerusalem and took the sacred goblets and bowls that were used in the worship of God. Nebuchadnezzar then ordered these holy vessels carried to the great city of Babylon and put in the treasure house of his heathen idols.

DA1-2 (Use again.) Daniel and his friends

They, like the other Jewish people, were marched as captives across the wastelands. After three months of travel through the deserts, they finally came to the great city of Babylon.

When they arrived in Babylon, Daniel and his friends were not taken to a dungeon as they might have expected but to a large, ornate building, where they, and quite a few other young Jewish captives, were to be housed.

DA1-3 Daniel purposes in his heart to serve God

Not only were they given fine clothing to

wear, but they were surprised at the luxurious surroundings they were ushered into. This was not the treatment usually given to captives of war. They soon realized that they had been especially chosen to eat at the king's table and to be educated in all the learning of the Babylonians. King Nebuchadnezzar had chosen these Jewish young men to train as Babylonian leaders; they were to talk like Babylonians, act like Babylonians, and think like Babylonians so that they could later serve him as highly trained men of court.

Ashpenaz, the master of the eunuchs (the king's servants) was in charge of all these specially chosen Jewish young men. The first thing Ashpenaz did was to change their names. Daniel's name was changed to Belteshazzar (keeper of the treasure of Baal). Hananiah's name was changed to Shadrach (after the sun god). Mishael was renamed Meshach (after the goddess Shaca). Ashpenaz changed Azariah's name to Abednego (meaning servant of the shining fire).

Though the Babylonians could change the names of these young men, Daniel and his friends knew that, with God helping them, no one could change their loyalty to the true God of Israel. Daniel determined that he would have no part of the idolatry that surrounded them, for he knew that it was idolatry that had brought God's judgment upon his beloved people of Jerusalem and Israel. When Daniel saw the delicious food set before them, he discovered that it was unclean by God's standards. Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not disobey his God. His three friends agreed to stand with him. They purposed together that they would not eat the meat from the king's table for this was in disobedience to God's laws. They noticed that the other Jewish young men went ahead and ate the meat at the king's table. Since this food was prepared at the same time and at the same place the king's food was prepared, it was considered the best food in all the kingdom. And yet Daniel and his three friends determined that they could not eat of it. Daniel's daring decision came from his heart, where all decisions really come from, for Daniel had determined in his

heart that he would be true to his God, and he would not defile himself with the king's meat even if it meant his death.

Daniel asked Ashpenaz if he and his three friends might be excused from eating the king's food and drinking the king's wine and instead if they could have permission to eat a vegetable stew (pulse) and drink plain water.

Ashpenaz was distressed by this request. He said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king."

Daniel did not argue with Ashpenaz. He went to the overseer that Ashpenaz had put in charge of the captive princes and asked him to please allow them to test their plan for ten days. "Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants."

The overseer agreed to try Daniel's plan for ten days. He must have reasoned that ten days couldn't hurt and if it didn't work, he'd have time to correct the situation before it became obvious to other people and especially the king.

And so, for ten days Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego ate only vegetables and water. The other Jewish young men probably laughed and ridiculed them for their refusal to eat the delicious food from the king's table! But Daniel could not be budged. He knew in his heart what was right, and he was determined to obey God.

After ten days, the overseer compared Daniel and his friends with the other young men, and to his surprise, they looked stronger and healthier than the young Jewish men who had eaten the king's meat and drank the king's wine. Convinced, the overseer allowed Daniel and his friends to continue on with their vegetable and water diet. Daniel and his friends knew it was their God who had answered their prayer, thus their faith in God grew and grew.

Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and

Abednego learned many things as they studied those three long years under their Babylonian teachers. They had to learn the language of Babylon, the literature of Babylon, and all the varied knowledge of their captors.

For those three years Daniel and his friends studied diligently, but they also kept praying and trusting in their God. They always did their very best in their studies, because they knew that was what their God wanted them to do. God wants you to do that, too, as you go to school. The Bible tells us: "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ" (Col. 3:23-24).

Daniel and his friends were rewarded for their faith in God, their obedience to Him, and their diligent study, for as the three years passed, "God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom" (Dan. 1:17).

DA1-4 The youths appear before Nebuchadnezzar

At last the three years were past, and it was time for Daniel and his three friends to appear before King Nebuchadnezzar and take their test. Ashpenaz, the prince of the eunuchs, took them to the throne room to be personally questioned by King Nebuchadnezzar. The king began to ask them many questions. Nebuchadnezzar listened with delight to their intelligent answers. These four young men were amazingly bright! In fact, they were ten times wiser than all the wisemen and magicians of his court. Nebuchadnezzar was so pleased with Daniel and his friends that he decided to use them as his personal advisors.

These four young Jewish princes had been faithful to God, and God had rewarded them. They had chosen to obey God even though they were far from home and far from the influence of their parents. They had shown that the Lord meant more to them than food, more than the acceptance of their Jewish friends around them, more than favor with their superiors, and more than even life itself. Daniel's daring decision, made from the depth of his heart, had

determined his destiny. God would now prepare him for purposes far more spectacular than he, or King Nebuchadnezzar, or anyone else could have imagined.

DA1-3 (Use again.) Application

Do you think it was easy for Daniel and his three friends to stand up for what they believed? And do you think it was easy for them to be different from all the other young Jewish captives? No, it wasn't easy; it was hard, because all the other princes from Judah ate the king's food and drank the king's wine, and probably laughed at Daniel and his three friends.

As Daniel and his friends were in the minority back then, so today true Christians are still in the minority. Many young people start smoking, drinking alcohol, or taking drugs because they don't want to be different from their friends. Maybe they use bad language or do other sinful things in order to be accepted by their nonChristian friends. This true story of Daniel will help us see that it is possible to go God's way even when everybody else seems to be going the other way. God always honors those who honor Him.

God had a reason for allowing Daniel and his three friends to be taken captive to the land of Babylon, just as He has a reason for allowing difficult things to come your way or happen to you. God was working out a glorious plan by which many people would hear of Him and would come to believe in Him. Today will you dare to be a Daniel? Will you dare to stand up for what is right even if it seems like everyone else is doing wrong?

activity sheet and then discuss with them how Daniel and his friends obeyed Jeremiah. Talk about how God has left us here in the world instead of taking us to heaven right away after we are saved so that we can serve him just like Daniel and his friends did when they were stuck in a place that seemed so far from God.

III. Activity 1

Age 3 through Grade 7

Materials needed:

- ☐ an age-appropriate copy of the *Children's Bible Activity Sheet* for each student
- ☐ a pencil for each student

Explain to the students that the prophet Jeremiah had written to the Jews who were now in exile with Daniel. Have them complete the