

Courageously Refusing to Bow Down to Anyone or Anything but the Lord
Message 3 of 6 in the series: "Daniel: Living with Courage and Confidence"

A. One day, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon pridefully set up a huge golden statue to celebrate his greatness and test the loyalty of his subjects.

"King Nebuchadnezzar made a gold statue ninety feet tall and nine feet wide and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. Then he sent messages to the high officers, officials, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all the provincial officials to come to the dedication of the statue he had set up. So all these officials came and stood before the statue King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. Then a herald shouted out, '**People of all races and nations and languages, listen to the king's command! When you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes, and other musical instruments, bow to the ground to worship King Nebuchadnezzar's gold statue. Anyone who refuses to obey will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.**' So at the sound of the musical instruments, all the people, whatever their race or nation or language, bowed to the ground and worshiped the gold statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up." Daniel 3:1-7 (NLT)

Note: Fifteen years earlier, Daniel had interpreted a dream for Nebuchadnezzar in which God revealed that He had given Nebuchadnezzar greater power and authority than any of the kings that would follow him.

"Your Majesty, you are the greatest of kings. **The God of heaven has given you sovereignty, power, strength, and honor.** He has made you the ruler over all the inhabited world and has put even the wild animals and birds under your control. You are the head of gold." Daniel 2:37 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! God wants us to use the gifts and insights He gives us to build others up, NOT to glorify ourselves. "But **knowledge puffs up** while love builds up." 1 Corinthians 8:1b (NIV)

B. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego courageously and confidently refused to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar's statue.

"But some of the astrologers went to the king and informed on the Jews. They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, 'Long live the king! You issued a decree requiring all the people to bow down and worship the gold statue when they hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes, and other musical instruments. That decree also states that those who refuse to obey must be thrown into a blazing furnace. But there are some Jews—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—whom you have put in charge of the province of Babylon. They pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They refuse to serve your gods and do not worship the gold statue you have set up.' Then Nebuchadnezzar flew into a rage and ordered that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought before him. When they were brought in, Nebuchadnezzar said to them, 'Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you refuse to serve my gods or to worship the gold statue I have set up? I will give you one more chance to bow down and worship the statue I have made when you hear the sound of the musical instruments. But if you refuse, you will be thrown immediately into the blazing furnace. **And then what god will be able to rescue you from my power?**' Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, **the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power,** Your Majesty.'" Daniel 3:8-17 (NLT)

1. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego knew that God had commanded His people to never worship anyone or anything else. "**You must not have any other god but me. You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind** or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea. **You must not bow down to them or worship them**, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God who will not tolerate your affection for any other gods." Exodus 20:3-5a (NLT)

IMPORTANT! "Dear children, keep away from **anything** that might take God's place in your hearts."

1 John 5:21 (NLT)

2. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not doubt God's ability to save them, nor did they place their desires above God's will. "**But even if he doesn't, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up.** Nebuchadnezzar was so furious with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that his face became distorted with rage. He commanded that the furnace be heated seven times hotter than usual. Then he ordered some of the strongest men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. So they tied them up and threw them into the furnace, fully dressed in their pants, turbans, robes, and other garments. And because the king, in his anger, had demanded such a hot fire in the

furnace, the flames killed the soldiers as they threw the three men in. So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, securely tied, fell into the roaring flames.” Daniel 3:18-23 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! Placing our faith in God means trusting that His will is always better than ours even when it’s painful or costly to follow Him. “Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. **Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.**” Luke 22:42 (NLT)

C. God rescued Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace, and because of their courageous witness, He was praised throughout the entire Babylonian empire.

“But suddenly, Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in amazement and exclaimed to his advisers, ‘Didn’t we tie up three men and throw them into the furnace?’ ‘Yes, Your Majesty, we certainly did,’ they replied. ‘Look!’ Nebuchadnezzar shouted. **‘I see four men, unbound, walking around in the fire unharmed! And the fourth looks like a god!’** Then Nebuchadnezzar came as close as he could to the door of the flaming furnace and shouted: ‘Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!’ So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stepped out of the fire. Then the high officers, officials, governors, and advisers crowded around them and saw that the fire had not touched them. Not a hair on their heads was singed, and their clothing was not scorched. They didn’t even smell of smoke! Then Nebuchadnezzar said, **‘Praise to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego!** He sent his angel to rescue his servants who trusted in him. They defied the king’s command and were willing to die rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. Therefore, I make this decree: If any people, whatever their race or nation or language, speak a word against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they will be torn limb from limb, and their houses will be turned into heaps of rubble. There is no other god who can rescue like this!’ **Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to even higher positions** in the province of Babylon.” Daniel 3:24-30 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! When we face rejection or persecution for following Christ, we must remember that these are opportunities for telling others about Jesus. “You will be dragged into synagogues and prisons, and you will stand trial before kings and governors because you are my followers. But **this will be your opportunity to tell them about me.** So don’t worry in advance about how to answer the charges against you, for **I will give you the right words and such wisdom** that none of your opponents will be able to reply or refute you!” Luke 21:12b-15 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! When we face difficulties and problems that overwhelm us, we must never forget that God knows exactly where we are and is always with us. “O Israel, ‘Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. When you pass through the waters, **I will be with you;** And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. **When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you.** For I am the Lord your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior...” Isaiah 43:1b-3a (NKJV)

IMPORTANT! Because Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had been faithful while facing smaller trials, they were ready to face a giant test of their faith when it came along. “If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones.” Luke 16:10a (NLT)

IMPORTANT! The only things that were burned in the fire were the ropes that bound Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Sometimes God uses fiery trials to refine us and set us free from things that have been holding us back. “There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. **These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—** though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.” 1 Peter 1:6b-7 (NLT)

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Connect Group Discussion Questions:

Read Daniel 3, and then discuss the following questions:

1. Share a time in your life when you were called out as a believer. How did you respond? How did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego respond? How did Peter respond? (Matthew 26:69-75)
2. How did Nebuchadnezzar respond when God revealed to him that God had given him great power, authority, and honor? (Daniel 2:37 & 3:1-7) How does God want us to use the gifts and insights He gives us? (1 Corinthians 8:1 & 13:1-3)

3. Discuss the first and second commandments. (Exodus 20:1-5) What kind of idols might we be tempted to bow down to? (1 John 5:21)

4. Discuss the following observations from the story of the fiery furnace:

- When we face rejection or persecution for following Christ, we must remember that these are opportunities for telling others about Jesus. (Luke 21:12-15)
- When we face difficulties and problems that overwhelm us, we must never forget that God knows exactly where we are and is always with us. (Isaiah 43:1-3)
- Because Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had been faithful when facing smaller trials, they were ready to face a giant test of their faith when it came along. (Luke 16:10)
- The only things that were burned in the fire were the ropes that bound Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Sometimes God uses fiery trials to refine us and set us free from things that have been holding us back. (1 Peter 1:6-7)
- Placing our faith in God means trusting that His will is always better than ours even when it's painful or costly to follow Him. (Luke 22:42)

5. Quotations worth considering:

"The human heart is a perpetual idol factory." John Calvin

"When God puts His children into the furnace, He keeps His hand on the thermostat and His eye on the thermometer." Warren Wiersbe

"The furnace is a good place for you, Christian; it benefits you; it helps you to become more like Christ, and it is fitting you for heaven." Charles Spurgeon