

PPT Title

The Fiery Furnace

Main Point: God is faithful.

Key Verse: *We might be thrown into the blazing furnace. But the God we serve is able to bring us out of it alive. He will save us from your powerful hand. - Daniel 3:17*

Props: A small statue painted gold.

BACKGROUND/REVIEW



Say: At this point in history, the Babylonians had kidnapped the Israelites from the southern kingdom of Judah. The Babylonian King, Nebuchadnezzar, had chosen Daniel and his three friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, to serve on his royal court. Because they depended on God and obeyed Him, they were found to be wiser than all of the other advisors to the King.

One night, God gave King Nebuchadnezzar a disturbing dream. God used Daniel to explain the dream to the King. Through the dream, God wanted Nebuchadnezzar to understand that even though Nebuchadnezzar was a very powerful King, his kingdom would pass away. All earthly kingdoms would pass away, but the Kingdom of God will stand forever and ever. The message to Nebuchadnezzar is the same to us: we should spend our days focused on the Lord, knowing Him deeper each day, and working to build His Kingdom.

Nebuchadnezzar began to understand a little about God that day. However, he did not understand everything fully. Nebuchadnezzar was from a culture that worshipped many "gods." He told Daniel, "I'm sure your God is the greatest God of all." Nebuchadnezzar mistakenly believed there were many gods, and Daniel's God was the greatest among them. He did not understand that Daniel's God was the **ONLY** God! Nebuchadnezzar was about to learn something more about Daniel's God.

THE IDOL & THE COMMAND (Daniel 3:1-18)



Teacher: Ask for two volunteers. **Say:** King Nebuchadnezzar had a huge statue built. It was 9 feet wide. Have your volunteers stand about 9 feet apart. **Say:** The statue was about this wide. Let's imagine that each one of our volunteers is a foot of this giant statue. It stood 90 feet tall. That is as tall as a 9-story building. Stand next to the volunteers and look straight up as if looking to the top of the statue. That is one BIG statue. And it was covered in gold.

The King called together all the important people of the kingdom. He called for the rulers, officials, advisors, wise men, judges, and every other official. Everybody came to see what was going on.

Then a messenger called out loudly, "Listen, you people who come from every nation! Pay attention, you who speak other languages! Here is what the king commands you to do. You will soon hear the sound of horns and flutes. You will hear zithers, lyres, harps and pipes. In fact, you will hear all kinds of music. When you do, you must fall



down and worship the gold statue that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. If you don't, you will be thrown into a blazing furnace right away." - Daniel 3:4-6

Say: This is one of the most famous stories in the Bible. Sometimes when we are familiar with a story, we may think of it somewhat like a fairytale. But, be sure, this really happened. Let's listen with fresh ears today. It was very well known that Nebuchadnezzar had done some **really** cruel things in his life. When he said he would throw anyone who didn't worship his statue into the furnace, he meant it! A furnace is like giant oven in which metal is melted. This furnace was probably used to heat up the gold to make the huge statue. There would have been no doubt in anyone's mind that Nebuchadnezzar would do what he said.



Note to Teacher: In the previous chapter, Nebuchadnezzar was ready to kill every one of his wise men because they could not tell him his dream. 2 Kings 25 tells us that Nebuchadnezzar had King Zedekiah's sons killed right before his eyes, then put his eyes out. Nebuchadnezzar was no stranger to using fire for execution (Jeremiah 29:22).

All of a sudden, the instruments began to play. And all those important people fell flat in front of the golden statue to worship it. **Ask:** Does anyone see a problem with this? *Listen for answers.* **Say:** All those people were worshipping a STATUE! **Thank your volunteers and have them sit down. Hold up your gold-painted statue.** **Say:** I have a small statue here. There's nothing wrong with having a statue. Museums are filled with statues, and some of them are really pretty. But there is NO statue that is worthy of being worshipped! Every statue that had ever been made has been made by human hands. It may be formed of clay, or chiseled out of stone, but make no mistake, each one was made by a person. What can a statue do for you? It can do absolutely nothing! (Jeremiah 16:19) The prophet Isaiah once said, "All who make idols are nothing, and the things they treasure are worthless." (Isaiah 44:9)



There were a few officials in Nebuchadnezzar's court who did not come out and bow down to the idol. **Ask:** Can anyone guess who did not bow down? *Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.* **Say:** Some of the King's astronomers noticed these men were not bowing down. More than likely, the astronomers were jealous of Daniel and his three friends because they had been given high positions with the King. They went and spoke to Nebuchadnezzar. They said:

You have appointed some Jews to help Daniel govern Babylon and the towns around it. Their names are Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They don't pay any attention to you, King Nebuchadnezzar. They don't serve your gods. And they refuse to worship the gold statue you have set up. - Daniel 3:12

Say: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were Jews, which is another name for Israelites. These men were determined not to sin against God. They remembered God's Law that God gave to His people many years before.



"I am the Lord your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery. 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 20:2-5a

Say: Only the one true God deserves to be worshipped. All the people who bowed down to the huge idol were taking the praise that belonged to God and giving to the statue. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego would NOT worship anything but the one true God.

Nebuchadnezzar became very angry when he heard this, and he sent for the three men.



The king said to them, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, is what I heard about you true? Don't you serve my gods? Don't you worship the gold statue I set up? You will hear the horns, flutes, zithers, lyres, harps, pipes and other musical instruments. When you do, fall down and worship the statue I made. If you will, that's very good. But if you won't, you will be thrown at once into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to save you from my powerful hand?"

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king. They said, "King Nebuchadnezzar, we don't need to talk about this anymore. We might be thrown into the blazing furnace. But the God we serve is able to bring us out of it alive. He will save us from your powerful hand.

"But we want you to know this. Even if we knew that our God wouldn't save us, we still wouldn't serve your gods. We wouldn't worship the gold statue you set up." - Daniel 3:14-18

Say: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego know that Nebuchadnezzar did not make false threats. They knew that they were defying the King's order and they WOULD be thrown into a blazing furnace. Yet, the men stood firm. They had decided *ahead of time* to follow God. Let's look back at the beginning of the 10 Commandments. Before God gave the command not to bow down to idols, He reminded His people who He was. He said, "I am the Lord your God, who **rescued** you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery." God is a RESCUING God! Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego believed that God would rescue them from Nebuchadnezzar, just as He had rescued their ancestors from Pharaoh. But even if God chose not to rescue them, they would never bow down to a statue.

"I am the Lord your God, who **rescued** you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery."

Application: Did you know that each of us will face situations similar to that of Daniel's three friends? (2 Timothy 3:12) We won't be thrown into a furnace, but at different times, we have to decide to do what God wants us to do or do what people want us to do. We have to choose to follow God or follow people. It is crucial that you decide *ahead of time* to follow God, no matter what, just like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Your "furnace" will look different than theirs. You may face a furnace of people making fun of you, or a furnace of not being invited to the "coolest" party. But if you make up your mind ahead of time, you will be able to stand your ground. Whether God rescues you *from that furnace* or goes with you *into that furnace* is up to Him. Either way, set your heart upon the one true God, and bow down to NOTHING else.

INTO THE FURNACE (Daniel 2:19-30)

Say: Nebuchadnezzar was furious that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused his order! The Bible says that even the look on his face changed. He ordered the furnace to be heated up seven times hotter than normal. A furnace that is used to heat metal has to be really hot, and now Nebuchadnezzar made sure it was even hotter. He ordered his strongest soldiers to tie up the three men and throw them into the blazing furnace.



This type of furnace was actually a building made of stone. It had openings at the bottom where metal could be brought in and taken out, and where the fire was controlled. At the top was a chimney for the heat and smoke to escape. In this case, the men were probably taken to the top of the chimney to be thrown in. The Bible tells us that the flames of the furnace were so hot that the soldiers who threw the men into the furnace were killed. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego fell into the furnace. Just listen to what happened next! The sight was so amazing that King Nebuchadnezzar couldn't believe his eyes!



Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet. He was so amazed he asked his advisers, "Didn't we tie three men up? Didn't we throw three men into the fire?" "Yes, we did," they replied.

The King said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire. They aren't tied up. And the fire hasn't even harmed them. The fourth man looks like a son of the gods."

Then the King approached the opening of the blazing furnace. He shouted, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, come out! You who serve the Most High God, come here!" - Daniel 3:24-26

Say: When Nebuchadnezzar looked into the furnace, he saw FOUR men! They were untied and walking around freely. One of them looked like a god to him. It was clear to Nebuchadnezzar that the "extra man" was not a man at all. In fact, he was an angel of the Lord! (Daniel 3:28) The three men came out of the fire. Not even one hair on their heads was burned by the fire! Their clothes didn't even smell like smoke. All the people that had been bowing to the statue gathered around to see this amazing sight.

"May the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be praised! He has sent His angel and saved His servants."

Then Nebuchadnezzar said, "May the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be praised! He has sent his angel and saved His servants. They trusted in Him. They refused to obey my command. They were willing to give up their lives. They would rather die than serve or worship any god except their own God."

"No other god can save people that way. So I'm giving an order. No one from any nation or language can say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego." - Daniel 3:28-29

Say: The King promised to severely punish anyone who spoke a word against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. This was another step forward for Nebuchadnezzar. He still did not fully understand that God was the ONLY God, but certainly this day he learned that God is FAITHFUL. He is a God who RESCUES His people. Then the King honored the three friends. He gave them even higher positions in the kingdom of Babylon.

We may wonder why God allowed all of this trouble to come to these three loyal men. Clearly God had a plan, and by obeying God, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were able to be a part of it. Let's look at God's plan. Almost all of God's people had turned away from Him. In fact, the reason God allowed the Jews to be captured by the Babylonians was because of they had been worshipping idols (Ezekiel 5:11-12). But God wants people to know Him and worship Him. When Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego entered the furnace, God sent His angel to be with them. God proved that He is faithful to rescue those who trust Him. Nebuchadnezzar saw a glimpse of God in the furnace. He saw that God was faithful, mighty, and good. He saw that God could do what no other "god" could do (Daniel 3:15). This King who began his day worshipping his man-made idol, ended his day praising the one true God! (Psalm 21:1) The Jewish leaders had failed to worship the one true God while they were in Israel in Judah. Now, in this foreign land, God has used a foreign King to announce God's greatness. By this trial, God made the way for His loyal followers to continue to worship Him.

Application: Just as we saw God use this huge trial to show His faithfulness and to make His name be praised, God may allow trouble in your life for the same reason. The great news is God is FAITHFUL! You can count on God being with you in your trials. Just like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, you may learn something new and wonderful about the Lord that you didn't know while you were standing outside the furnace. And, just as metal is purified in a furnace, the Bible says that our trials make us complete and perfected (James 1:2-4).

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