

# LESSON 9

## DANIEL AND HIS THREE FRIENDS

### BEFORE YOU TEACH

#### The Babylonian Empire

In 722 BC, 200 years after Israel's division, the Assyrians conquered it. Babylon rebelled against the Assyrian Empire and overthrew the Assyrian capital of Nineveh in 612 BC. In 605 BC, Nebuchadnezzar became king of Babylon and surrounded Jerusalem, making Judah his vassal state. Then he took prominent young men of the city to Babylon. Among this group were Daniel and his three friends. Nebuchadnezzar trained these young men in a rigorous education program. Judah did not fall to Babylon and Jerusalem was not destroyed until 586 BC. In 539 BC, Babylon was overthrown by the Medo-Persian Empire.

#### Daniel and His Friends

Daniel was born during Josiah's reign and grew up during his reforms. He was a Jewish youth of noble birth when he was carried off in 605 BC to Babylon in the first captivity under Nebuchadnezzar. As a captive, Daniel ministered as a prophet and government official for the Babylonian Empire. He interpreted dreams for Nebuchadnezzar and advised him in many situations. Daniel's role was not as prominent with Nebuchadnezzar's successors. When Babylon was conquered by the Medes and Persians, Daniel regained importance under King Darius.

As young noblemen, Daniel and his three friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, were taken from their home nation to a foreign land, likely never to see Jerusalem again. This alienating experience was furthered by having to change their names. Nebuchadnezzar thought that changing their names would make them Babylonian. The name 'Daniel' meant "God is my judge" in Hebrew. His name was changed to Belteshazzar, meaning "he whom Bel favors." Bel was the chief Babylonian god. Hananiah meant "the Lord shows grace." His new name, Shadrach, meant "under the command of Aku," the moon god. Mishael meant "who is like God?" His new name was Meshach, which meant "who is like Aku?" Azariah meant "the Lord helps." His new name, Abed-nego, meant "servant of Nebo," the fire god. Of course, merely changing their names did not shift the loyalty of these men away from God.

Daniel was described as a "man greatly beloved" (Dan 10:11) by men and surely by God. His loyalty to God and to God's chosen people was shown in his steadfast prayers to God and intercessions for His people. His friends likewise manifested loyalty "to the death" for the one true God. None allowed their present circumstances (persecution or worldly success) to affect their faith or deter them from keeping God's commands though they had long been away from their homeland. Such a steadfast faith can be seen in young and old. As teachers, what and how we teach can mold our students to have a similar steadfast faith towards our God almighty.

### BIBLE TEXT

Daniel 1

### BIBLE TRUTHS

1. God will protect and help His faithful believers.
2. To be faithful, we must trust in God and obey His commandments.
3. God gives us brothers and sisters in church to help us do what is right.

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. To resolve to do what is right and not give in to peer pressure.
2. To stand firm and live by God's standards in a culture that doesn't honor God.
3. To remember that God gave us brothers and sisters in church.

### MEMORY VERSE

"Trust in the Lord  
with all your heart, and lean not on  
your own understanding."

(Proverbs 3:5)

### PRAYER

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we pray. Thank You, Lord, for providing us with our daily needs. You are the Creator of all things who has given us food to eat. We know that we need to obey Your words, keep the Ten Commandments, and not worship idols. Help us to be strong and to have faith that You will always help us. Praise be to Your holy name. Hallelujah! Amen.

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR STUDENTS

When Daniel and his friends were brought into the foreign nation, they lost any form of familiarity or comfort they once had. There was no place for true worship, and the culture and language was completely different. Your students have only recently started formal schooling. School is where, for the next twelve to sixteen years, they will form friendships and be immersed in the world's thought patterns and culture. It can seem foreign and scary to them, especially if they emigrated from another country. It cannot be emphasized enough how important it is with whom your students make friends. Teach them that church friends will be the most important friends they'll ever have because they can share the same values and always pray together.

Your students will also face an environment in which they can apply the Ten Commandments. Daniel and his friends could have easily been tempted to eat the food. They could have come up with excuses to justify their actions. But they knew that they would be disobeying God. They were determined to put God first in their lives and stand firm in their faith, no matter what!

Your students are faced with many situations that

might cause them to compromise their faith. When things that are important to them are denied, they may see it as unreasonable.

"What's wrong with going swimming on Saturday morning? All my friends go!"

"It's only one time, I promise! Please let me go to the baseball game."

Making excuses comes easily to them, and it seems sensible and reasonable. But it is very important to stress putting God first in their lives. Putting God first means thinking about whether their actions please God. It is not all right to skip Sabbath to attend a game, even if only for one Saturday. God set aside one day for us to rest and worship Him. It should not be taken lightly. By stressing the significance of Sabbath at a young age, it will become a part of the students' lives, and not a chore, as they grow up in God.

Ask your students how many times they praise God in one day. Do they only think of Him during their prayers? Challenge them to put God first in their lives at all times so that their faith will remain strong.

### VOCABULARY

**captive:** prisoner

**defile:** to corrupt, to pollute, to make dirty

**advisor:** a person who helps someone else make decisions

**faithful:** loyal to and always believing in something or someone

### REVIEW

Last week, we learned about two people called Ezra and Nehemiah. These two people were faithful servants of God who were living in Babylon with many other Israelites as exiles. However, they never stopped thinking about their homeland of Judah. Ezra and Nehemiah both wanted to return to Jerusalem, but for different reasons. What were their reasons? (Ezra wanted to go back and teach the Israelites about God, and Nehemiah wanted to go back and repair Jerusalem's city walls.) What were Ezra and Nehemiah both worried about when they decided that they wanted to go back? (They were both afraid that King Artaxerxes would not let them go back.) What did Ezra and Nehemiah do to lessen their worries? (They both prayed to God for help.) In the end, God moved King Artaxerxes to allow both Ezra and Nehemiah to return to Jerusalem. Ezra and Nehemiah both demonstrated a strong faith in God and showed us that when we have worries or troubles, we should bring them to God in prayer because He will always be there to help us.

## BIBLE STORY

### Introduction

The kings of Israel and Judah were very evil and did not obey God, so God allowed another kingdom to conquer His people. This new kingdom was known as the Babylonian Empire. This kingdom ruled just before Queen Esther's Persian kingdom.

The king of Babylon was called Nebuchadnezzar. Please repeat after me: Nebuchadnezzar. When he conquered Judah, his army went into the city of Jerusalem, and they removed all of the treasures and golden vessels from the temple of God. Nebuchadnezzar told his men to take them to his own temple in Babylon, where they worshipped idols. Which commandment did Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon break by doing this? (The first and second.) Not only did the king worship idols, he also wanted all his captives to be just like him, so he gave another order. He told the chief of his court to bring the most healthy and handsome young men from Judah to work for him in his palace. Among those who were taken captive were four friends who worshipped the one true God. Their names were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. But before they could serve the king, they had to be trained for three years. They went to school and learned the Babylonian language, among other things. They were well educated. The king also changed their names so that they would seem Babylonian. Daniel's name became Belteshazzar; Hananiah was called Shadrach; Mishael's name was changed to Meshach; and Azariah was called Abed-nego. Imagine how lonely Daniel and his friends felt in Babylon! Do you think it was easier for Daniel because he had his friends with him? [Allow students to discuss.]

### Royal Food

During those three years of training, Nebuchadnezzar not only wanted them to be wise and knowledgeable, he also wanted them to be well fed. What kind of food do you think the king gave them? (The best!) The king provided them with delicious royal food and wine. Everyone gladly ate it. But Daniel and his friends refused to eat or drink what was offered to them. Even though the king's food was probably the most delicious, they knew that the king's food and wine had been sacrificed to idols. If they accepted the food, God would become very angry. Daniel and his friends were determined to obey God. They did not want to defile themselves. However, to obey God, they would have to reject the king's food, which meant disobeying the king's orders and that was a very dangerous thing to do! What do you think Daniel and his friends did?

### Daniel's Suggestion

Daniel and his friends explained to the chief eunuch why they did not want to eat the food. When the eunuch heard their reason, he did not become mad. He was very

understanding because God made sure that the eunuch was kind to Daniel. But the eunuch also had his own problem to solve.

The eunuch said to Daniel, "I am afraid of the king. If he sees that you are not as well fed and healthy as the others, he will kill me."

Daniel suggested to the eunuch, "Why don't you test us for ten days? Let us eat only vegetables and drink water for those ten days. Afterwards, compare us to the others who are eating the king's food and see if we are any less healthy or strong."

The suggestion sounded reasonable to the eunuch, so he agreed to try it for ten days.

### Daniel Becomes the King's Counselor

After the ten days were up, the chief eunuch went to see Daniel and his friends. He expected them to be skinnier and weaker because they had only been eating vegetables and drinking water for ten days. On the contrary, he was surprised when he saw that they were even healthier and fatter than the others who had been eating royal food. So he agreed not to force them to eat the king's food and continued feeding them vegetables and water. To look better and fuller than others just by eating vegetables and water was a miracle from God!

God guided Daniel and his friends during their training and education because they obeyed Him and always trusted and believed in Him, even though they were living in a foreign land that worshipped idols. He helped them understand everything that they learned. Daniel was also given the gift of interpreting dreams and visions.

After three years, all the young men who had been chosen and taught went to see the king. Nebuchadnezzar spoke with each of them one by one to test how much they knew. He found that Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were ten times smarter than all the others in his kingdom. The four of them became advisors to Nebuchadnezzar and helped to look after the country.

Even after Daniel and his three friends had been brought to a foreign land, they still continued to worship God and never lost their faith in Him. They knew that God would always be there to help them. God protected them and gave them strength and wisdom because they kept His commandments. Together, they encouraged one another to remain faithful to the one true God, even when they were in a place that worshipped idols. In this way, Daniel and his friends remained together and they continued to worship and glorify God, even when everyone else around them told them to do otherwise.

## CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

Fill In the Blank/True or False/Questions to Think About

1. Nebuchadnezzar was the king of \_\_\_\_\_ (Babylon).
2. The king took away treasures and golden vessels from the \_\_\_\_\_ (temple) in Jerusalem.
3. Daniel suggested that they eat vegetables and drink water for \_\_\_\_\_ (ten) days.
4. Daniel and his friends wanted to eat the royal food but were afraid to. False.
5. After the ten days, Daniel and his friends were not as healthy as the others. False.
6. Why did King Nebuchadnezzar want to teach the young men? So they could serve him in the palace.
7. Why couldn't Daniel and his friends eat food that had been sacrificed to idols? Food offered to idols is of Satan and is not pleasing to God.
8. Why did the chief eunuch agree to Daniel's suggestion to let him and his friends eat vegetables and drink water, knowing that he might be killed? God gave him kindness and favor towards Daniel.
9. How did Daniel and his friends look after the ten days were up? They looked even healthier and fatter than those who had eaten the king's food.
10. How did God help Daniel and his friends through all their learning? He made the chief eunuch kind, gave them strength and wisdom, and helped them understand everything they learned.

## MEMORY VERSE PRACTICE

Please reinforce the memory verse every week.  
You can practice the memory verse with your students anytime during class.

**“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding.” (Proverbs 3:5)**

## HOMEWORK ANSWER KEY

1. Babylon
2. temple
3. vegetables, water
4. False; Daniel and his three friends did not want to eat the royal food.
5. False; they were even healthier and fatter than the others.
6. True
7. Food sacrificed to idols is of Satan and eating that food is not pleasing to God.
8. He made the chief eunuch favor Daniel, and gave Daniel and his friends strength and wisdom.
9. Answers may vary.

## SPIRITUAL TEACHING & LIFE APPLICATION

### 1. We should resolve to do what is right and not give in to peer pressure.

In this lesson, we learned that Daniel resolved not to eat the king's food. Does anyone know what “resolve” means? [Let students answer.] To resolve means to commit firmly on a course of action. It means to be devoted to a principle. In the case of Daniel and his three friends, they all resolved not to defile themselves. They remained firm in their obedience to God and refused to eat the king's food, which had been offered to idols. What were Daniel and his three friends thinking at that time? How could they be so sure that they would be able to live just as healthily as the others did while only eating vegetables and water? Students, this is called faith. Daniel and his three friends did not fear doing what is right in God's sight because their strong faith in God brought about courage. God said in the Bible, “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you

wherever you go" (Josh 1:9). Even in a foreign land, Daniel and his three friends did not give in to pressure from their conqueror. They knew that God was with them, and they were not afraid to do God's will, even if it meant disobeying the king of Babylon. They knew that they could do all things through Christ who strengthened them (Phil 4:13).

Likewise, today we should resolve to do what is right and not give in to peer pressure. We must stand strong in our faith and never be influenced by those who disobey God. We need to be able to consistently make the right choices every day. What are some choices we make at school that would displease God? Let me share an example with you.

For this year's Halloween, Stephen's friends are planning to go trick-or-treating together in their neighborhood. Stephen told his friends that he wouldn't be joining them, since he doesn't celebrate Halloween. Stephen's friends said to him, "Really? That's not cool! Why don't you celebrate? It's so much fun!" Then, Stephen explained to them that celebrating Halloween contradicts with his belief in God. However, Stephen's friends didn't believe in him. They said to Stephen, "No, I think you don't celebrate because you're scared!" Stephen was embarrassed that all his friends think that he is scared of Halloween. No matter how Stephen tried to explain to his friends, they wouldn't believe him. Finally, Stephen said to them, "Fine! I'll prove it! I'll go trick-or-treating with all of you, just to prove that I'm not scared of Halloween!"

### Discussion Questions

- 1. How did Stephen give into peer pressure?** He didn't want his friends to think that he was scared of Halloween, so he decided to go trick-or-treating with them to prove them wrong. He would rather prove to his friends that he's not scared of Halloween than stand firm on God's words.
- 2. How could Stephen have "resolved to do what is right"?** While being misunderstood by friends is not a good feeling, it's more important to do what is right in God's sight. To resolve to do what is right, Stephen should have remained firm in his decision not to go trick-or-treating with his friends.

### 2. Stand firm and live by God's standards in a culture that doesn't honor God.

Why is it so important for us to watch out for peer pressure? We're not here to assume that our friends are not as good as us because they are not Christians—not at all! Rather, we are here to remind ourselves that we live in a culture that doesn't honor God. In a society, people constantly influence one another. If many people exhibit good behavior, our society becomes better. Unfortunately, our society continues to fail in living by God's standards. If we don't stand firm in what the Bible teaches us, we can easily be pulled away by other standards that society has set. In Daniel's time, the Babylonians were trying to change the thinking of the Jews by giving them a new education. They tried to pull the Jews away from God by changing their names, their diet, and even the places where they lived and worked! Other Jews who had been chosen to be in the palace along with Daniel and his three friends ate the king's food. It was an "easy" option for them since the king's food was delicious, and they wouldn't get into trouble for eating it. They easily conformed to the "new ways." Today, there are also many new ways of thinking that are far different from God's standards. While your friends may likely choose to live by society's standards, we should never compromise our standards. We're God's children, and there is only one set of standards that we should live by—that is, the Bible.

Being God's children requires diligence and sacrifice. First, we must diligently seek after the truth. While many others believe in society's standards, we cannot be blinded by them, but rather follow only what is in the Bible. Many pastors will tell you that, even though they have been teaching the Bible full-time for many years, they still have much to learn from it. In fact, no one can ever say that he or she knows everything in the Bible. It's impossible! God's wisdom is infinite, and, as humans, we will never be able to understand it all. However, the more we know, the better and closer we can be with God. If we diligently seek after the truth, God won't let other people pull us away from Him. Second, we need to be willing to sacrifice. While society offers us more convenience and acceptance, we must be willing and ready to sacrifice for God. As we just discussed, Daniel and his three friends didn't choose the "easy" option. If they had, it would have been so convenient for them—they would have had the best food to eat and the king would not have given them any trouble. Moreover, no one would have looked at them as if they were strange. But Daniel and his three friends decided to sacrifice for God. They didn't care about the delicious food or how people looked at them. They were ready for any trouble. Was it worth it? Yes, it was! Sacrificing is not the best feeling, but what comes after—God's blessings—is nowhere to be found elsewhere in this world. Not only will you receive blessings in this world from God, He also promises salvation to those who obey Him. Let's not be afraid to live by God's standards. Let's not be afraid to be different. If we stand firm in our faith, God will never fail us!

### 3. God gave us brothers and sisters in church.

If you think that living by God's standards is difficult, I have good news for you. God gave us brothers and sisters in church! We, as brothers and sisters in Christ, can strengthen one another in faith and help each other be true Christians. We share a very precious lineage—we are all God's children! When we go through difficult times, or when we have some tough decisions to make, we're not alone. No one can walk his or her spiritual journey alone. God gave us brothers and sisters for a reason! The first way we can help each other is to pray for one another. We cannot underestimate the power of intercession. Remember how Esther requested all the Jews to pray for her? She wouldn't have asked for help if she didn't think that their prayers would be helpful. In the end, God did listen to all their prayers and helped Esther save the Jews. Likewise, if a brother and sister could use our prayers today, we should help without delay!

In addition, praying for one another to receive the Holy Spirit is also very important. John 14:26 tells us, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." The Holy Spirit helps us understand the truth and gives us wisdom from above to solve any problems we may have. He will guide us to make the best decisions. Once we have received the Holy Spirit, He will dwell in us and become our personal Helper in everything we do. Therefore, we can help one another by praying for them to receive the Holy Spirit. No matter how many friends we have in school, we still need brothers and sisters in church. Why? What makes our church friends different from our school friends? [Let students answer.] We need church friends because they worship the same God and hold the same values as us. We can pray for one another. We can help one another through our walks of faith. Let me share some examples with you!

1. Tina used to live very far away from church. For that reason, her family only went to church once a month, and they had to drive four hours every time to get there from where they lived. Last year, Tina's dad wanted to move somewhere closer to church, so he started looking for a new job near church. Tina was very excited; she couldn't wait to be able to go to church every Saturday and attend RE classes. She prayed so hard for her dad to find a new job. On the other hand, Tina's friends were very excited for Tina to be able to come join them every Saturday, too. But they knew that if Tina's dad couldn't find a new job, Tina would have to stay where she was. So Tina's church friends decided to pray for Tina's family together. For five weeks, they stayed after church for twenty minutes to pray for Tina's family together. Many other church members also joined them after they found out that Tina's family wanted to move closer to church. In addition, each of them also kept Tina's family in their individual daily prayers. After five weeks, Tina's dad finally found a new job and they were ready to move! Tina's new house is now only a couple blocks away from church. Not only can Tina attend RE class every week, she also gets to attend Bible studies during the week with her parents and go to different fellowships on the weekends. Their prayers worked!
2. Ron and his family are getting baptized today. Thinking back, Ron really witnessed the power of prayer. A year ago, Alex brought Ron to church to attend RE class with him and Ron has been going to church ever since. He was very eager to learn about God and all the wonders He had done for His people. One day, Alex was chatting with Ron and he found out that, during that time, Ron's dad was suffering from severe back pain. He was easily irritated because his back pain really bothered him. Ron had wanted to bring his dad to church, but he didn't know how to preach to him. He thought he was too young and he was worried that his dad wouldn't take him seriously. Alex said to Ron, "I understand your worries. Why don't we pray about this together? Many Bible stories teach us to pray. We can ask all our friends from class to pray with us for God to give you courage. We can pray for your dad! We need to pray and show God that we trust in Him and His power!" That day, Ron and Alex called all of their friends from church to pray together for Ron and his dad. They did the same every day for several weeks and Ron finally took a leap of faith and preached to his dad. Ron said to his dad, "I have been going to the True Jesus Church every Saturday and I have learned a lot about God. He is a loving and merciful God who has the power to heal people. I know that your back pain is bothering you a lot, and I have been praying for you for the past few weeks! Would you like to come to church with me this Saturday?" Surprisingly, Ron's dad didn't question his faith at all and told Ron that he wanted to go to church with him. Ron was really excited. He called all his church friends and asked them to continue praying for his dad. Ever since then, Ron's dad has been coming to church, and he's getting baptized today! He testified that he first went to church with Ron because Ron told him that he and his church friends had been praying about his back pain for several weeks, and his back pain was strangely gone during that exact time. He knew that it was because of Ron and his friends' prayers. His back pain has been completely gone for several months now and he knows that it was because God had heard their prayers. Their prayers really worked!

Students, Daniel and his three friends chose to live by God's standards and gave glory to God's name. Are we doing the same today? Are we diligently seeking after the truth and resolving to only do what is right in God's sight? Do we have friends like Daniel to help us stand firm in our faith? This week, let's reflect on all these questions and pray for one another so that we can be a strong team of Christian soldiers!

ACTIVITY

Putting God First

**Objective:** To illustrate examples in which children are obeying God and putting Him first in their lives.

**Instructions:** Look at the following pictures. Read each sentence carefully and decide whether that child has put God first in his or her life. Circle the children who are obeying God.

My friend's birthday party is on Saturday. I will ask my parents if I can go. Maybe I can go after church service.



I practiced so much for this game. I will definitely win!

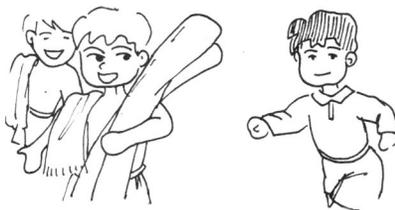


There is choir practice this afternoon. I will sing praises to God.



God, please help me on this test so that I can do my best.

All of my friends are going swimming on Saturday morning. I think I will go with them. I'll just pray to God later.



I can't find my hymn book. I guess I'll just skip choir practice.



E1 Year 2 Book 3 Lesson 9—Daniel and His Three Friends

# Homework Assignment

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- Bible Truths:**
1. God will protect and help His faithful believers.
  2. To be faithful, we must trust in God and obey His commandments.
  3. God gives us brothers and sisters in church to help us do what is right.

- Lesson Objectives:**
1. To learn to use and keep God's commandments in our daily lives.
  2. To understand that when facing trouble, we always need to believe that God will help.
  3. To remind and help each other to keep God's commandments.

**Bible Reading:** Please put a check mark in the space when you complete the reading each day.

**Prayer:** Please put a check mark in the space provided on the days you prayed to God.

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Bible Reading							
Prayer							

## Memory Verse

Please write down this week's memory verse.

(Proverbs 3:5)

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## What I Learned from the Bible This Week

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

# Homework Assignment

*Understanding What You Have Learned*

## Fill In the Blank

1. Nebuchadnezzar was the king of \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The king took away treasures and golden vessels from the \_\_\_\_\_ in Jerusalem.
3. Daniel and his friends ate \_\_\_\_\_ and drank \_\_\_\_\_ for ten days.

## True or False

4. Daniel and his friends wanted to eat the royal food, but they were afraid to. \_\_\_\_\_
5. After the ten days, Daniel and his friends were not as healthy as the others. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Daniel and his friends were ten times smarter than the rest of the people in the kingdom because God had given them wisdom and knowledge. \_\_\_\_\_

## Short Answer

7. Why couldn't Daniel and his friends eat food that had been sacrificed to idols?

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8. How did God help Daniel and his friends through their time in training?

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## Life Application

9. We must always remember to put God first in our lives and to follow His commandments, even when it is hard to do. Write about a time when you were faced with a problem and remembered to put God first in your life.

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