

Daniel and His Three Friends Care for Their Bodies



Overview

Materials You'll Need

- light snack foods (e.g. fresh fruit, vegetables and dip, chips, candy)



Scriptures

Dan 1

Bible Truth Objective(s)

We cannot eat any food that has been sacrificed to idols

Behavioral Objective(s)

To identify ways we can take care of our bodies

Memory Verse

"Glorify God in your body." (1 Cor 6:20)



Bible Knowledge

Daniel and His Friends

Daniel, a young man of nobility, was taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar with the first group of captives in 606 BC. Daniel and his friends met the king's stiff requirements for the captured youths he wanted to prepare for service in his court (Dan 1:4).

Daniel had the opportunity to acquire the best possible secular education. The Babylonians had a knowledge of math and astronomy, as well as medicine. Chemistry and metallurgy were established sciences of Daniel's time; theology and philosophy would also have been a part of his education.

Daniel had his name changed from one that honored God ("God is my judge") to one that honored a Babylonian god. His new name was Belteshazzar ("Bel protect his life"). Perhaps the Babylonians thought they could force allegiance to Babylon by removing anything that had to do with Daniel's nationality and religion.

The food and wine assigned to the young men

from the king's table (Dan 1:5) were probably very rich, luxurious, rare foods that only the wealthy could afford. But the problem with the king's food and wine was that they had all been involved in worship ceremonies to idols, and anyone who ate them was honoring the idols.

Daniel knew very well that God forbade His people to eat any food that had been sacrificed to idols. Daniel was gracious in his request to the official, and his suggestion for a test was reasonable. Seeing that this was a matter of principle with Daniel, the official agreed to the ten day test. Daniel and his friends ate vegetables and grain foods. They looked so good at the end of the test that they were allowed to continue their chosen diet. God blessed the work of these young Jewish men who loved Him; when finally they stood before the king, he found them to be outstanding youths, and they were given high rank in the kingdom.

Daniel served not only in the Babylonian empire but remained a high ranking official during the reigns of Cyrus (539-529 BC) and Darius I of Persia (522-486 BC). It is likely he would have been close to one hundred years old at that time. All his life, Daniel demonstrated great faith in God.



Understanding Your Students

In this lesson, Daniel and his friends refused to eat food that had been offered to idols. They knew they would defile their bodies if they ate the king's food. They asked for vegetables and water instead. And in the end, God protected them and made them stronger and healthier than all the others. But in this day and age, it is unlikely that the students will encounter those kinds of situations, where they may have to eat food that has been offered to idols. However, if there are truthseekers or a student whose family does not believe, it is still important to stress that it is against God's commands to eat food offered to idols.

It may be more relevant to our students today to focus on making healthy choices when eating. There are more and more fast food choices these days. It is common for children to eat out at McDonald's or Burger King once a week. Because the children love it, they don't realize that it is not the most healthy choice they can make. Instead of talking about fast food as bad food, introduce the idea that there are healthier foods they can enjoy. You can help the students by categorizing what items might fall into junk food (chips, candy, soda, fries), and what might be healthier options (chicken, vegetables, fruit, water). This way, they can have a mental picture of what is considered good-for-you food. It is not likely that the students will give up all junk food so do talk about eating all things in moderation.



Vocabulary

Idol

something we worship in place of God; someone or something that we think is more important than God

Chief

the head of all the people

Healthy

when we don't get sick very much, eat the right kinds of food, and exercise, then we will stay healthy



Before You Teach

"Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor 6:19-20).

According to Paul, we are to offer our bodies as living sacrifices to God. In fact, he says that our bodies belong to God. When Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross, and ultimately died for our sins, He bought each of us with His precious blood. So indeed, we belong to Him. But that does not mean we are a slave to God. Some people may view religion as having strict rules about what a person can do or cannot do. This is not true. God is not a dictator. He is our Father in heaven. When we believe and worship God, we will naturally want to do what pleases Him. It will not feel like a burden, but

rather, we will be filled with joy.

Many people do not realize that even though they are free to do what they want with their bodies, they are actually enslaved by their fleshly desires. They are bound by the need to smoke, to watch television, to do ungodly things, etc. This is not really having freedom. True freedom comes from knowing God and being filled with His Spirit so that we are no longer bound by these desires. True freedom is wanting to put away our worldly desires and following our Lord Jesus.

How do we offer our bodies as living sacrifices? We must live according to God's standards. Because we are human, those standards often seem hard to reach. That is why God has given us His Holy Spirit. He does not expect us to walk alone in this world. He has promised to be with us every step of the way. But as Paul said in 1 Corinthians, it is our duty to do our best to glorify God daily, both in speech and action. Once we become His believers, we have no excuse not to do things according to God's way.



Bible Story

In the last lesson, we learned about a good king. He became king when he was only eight years old. Do you remember his name? He was called Josiah. He loved God very much and spent the early part of his life learning about God. When he was older, he decided to clean the temple so that the people could worship God there. While the people were cleaning, they found a scroll. A scroll was like a book. When it was read to King Josiah, the king knew that it was the words of God. This scroll had been lost for many years. Now that it was found, the king knew that the people had not been following God's commands for a long time. He gathered all the people and read them the words from the scroll. After the people heard the words, they promised that they would follow God's rules. King Josiah was happy the people wanted to follow God. It makes God happy too when we do things that please Him.

After King Josiah, there were more kings, but they were all bad kings. They did not love God or follow His commands. So God allowed a king from another country to come and capture the Israelites.

Daniel and His Friends Are Taken Away

The king was from a country called Babylon. At that time, it was a powerful country. This king of Babylon came with his big army and captured God's people. This king also took some young children and put them in his palace. Do you know why he did that? He wanted to teach them to serve him when they grew up.

So these children were taken from Israel and put into Babylon. The children probably didn't want to go to a new country but they didn't have a choice. The king picked them to go and they had to move. Among the children was someone named Daniel. Daniel had three close friends who were also with him. These four friends loved God very much. Even though they were forced to go to a different land, they did not forget God.

Once the children were settled in, the workers who looked after them began the training program. That means, the children had to go to special classes to learn all about this new country and how they could serve the king. It was hard work going to all

these classes. They probably had to do homework too. The king wanted to make sure they had enough energy to learn so many new things, so he told the workers to give these children the best food. This fancy food was the same food the king ate. The king thought he was being good to them by sharing his best food.

Daniel and His Friends do not Eat the King's Food

The king's servants prepared a lot of good food every day. This food was very tasty, but it was not the food that God wanted Daniel and his friends to eat because it was food that had been offered to idols. Do you remember one of God's important commands about idols? We should never worship idols or eat any food offered to idols. What is the command again? (Have students repeat the answer.) Since Daniel and his friends loved God, they did not want to eat this food.

Daniel and his friends knew that it was wrong to eat the king's food. But they knew they still needed to eat. They went to talk to the chief worker. The chief was not happy when he heard that the four friends did not want to eat the king's food.

He said to them, "If you don't eat the king's food, then you will not be as healthy as the others. Then when the king sees that, I will be punished."

Daniel didn't want the chief to get into trouble. So he and his friends thought of a good idea.

Daniel said to the chief, "Please let us eat something else. Let us try it for ten days. Instead of eating the king's food, can we just have vegetables and water?"

"Vegetables and water?" thought the chief. He wasn't sure the king would like that. He was worried that the king would notice that Daniel and his three friends didn't look as healthy.

"Please, just do a test," Daniel said. "My friends and I will eat just vegetables and drink water for ten days. Then see how we are doing. If we look sick then we will do as you say."

The chief thought about Daniel's idea. Since it was for ten days, he agreed to Daniel's plan.

What do you think will happen to Daniel and his friends? Do you think Daniel and his three friends will be stronger and healthier than the other boys after ten days even though they aren't eating any of the king's food? Let's find out.

God Blesses Daniel and His Friends

So for ten days, Daniel and his friends ate only vegetables and drank water. Every day, they thanked God for the good food.

After ten days, the test was over and the chief looked at Daniel and his friends. He could not believe what he saw. They looked healthier and stronger than those who had been eating the king's special food. So the chief decided that he would not make Daniel and his friends eat the king's food. They could continue to eat the vegetables and drink only water.

God was very pleased with Daniel and his friends because they did not eat the king's food. So God blessed them by making them smarter and wiser than all the other young men.

Finally, the training and classes were over. The king asked to see all the young men. He wanted to pick the best people to help him. He talked to the

people who were brought to him. And do you know what? He found that Daniel and his three friends were smarter than all the others. This is because God blessed them for obeying Him and His commands. So the king picked Daniel and his three friends to be his helpers.

Let's Keep Our Bodies Healthy

Today, we may not have to worry about eating food that has been offered to idols. But it is still important to keep our bodies healthy. That means we should exercise. It also means we shouldn't eat too much of some foods, like chips and candy. We should try to eat more fruits and vegetables because they are good for us. When our bodies are healthy, then we will have energy to work for God and pray to Him. God wants us to keep our bodies clean.



Check For Understanding

1. **Who refused to eat the king's food?** (Daniel and his three friends.)
2. **Why didn't they eat the king's food?** (It had been sacrificed to idols, and they knew God wouldn't want them to eat this food.)
3. **What did Daniel ask the chief?** (He asked him to give them vegetables and water for ten days.)
4. **What happened after ten days?** (Daniel and his friends looked healthier than all the others.)
5. **Do you think God was happy with what they did?** (Yes. He blessed them by keep-

ing them healthy and smart.)

6. **After the classes were over, who did the king pick to be his workers?** (Daniel and his three friends.)
7. **God wants us to keep our bodies healthy. How can we keep our bodies healthy?** (We should keep it clean by taking a bath, eating right, getting enough sleep, playing safely, exercising, etc.)
8. **What are some of the wrong ways to take care of our bodies?** (Eating junk food, staying up late, playing dangerously, not brushing our teeth, etc.)
9. **Why does God want us to grow up healthy and strong?** (God wants us to stay healthy and strong because He knows we need energy to do His work.)



Life Application Story

Cookies or Carrots

It was a hot summer's day and Tommy and

Julie had just come home from swimming.

"Boy, am I hungry! I could eat a horse!" Tommy said. "Can we get something to eat? Pleeeeeease, Mom?"

Tommy and Julie swam for about an hour ear-

lier at the local swimming pool. Many of their friends had also gone. They had so much fun playing all sorts of water games. They didn't even realize how hungry they were until they were on their way home.

Mrs. Lewis, Tommy and Julie's mom, was cooking spaghetti for dinner.

"Spaghetti!" Julie shouted! "That's my favorite. When will it be ready?"

"Not for a while. There are some carrots in the refrigerator if you want something eat," Mrs. Lewis said.

"Carrots?" Tommy said. "Can't we have some of those chocolate chip cookies we bought last week instead?"

"Carrots would be a healthier choice," Mrs. Lewis said. "Plus, you had some cookies earlier today as a mid-morning snack. Besides, we're going to have dinner in about forty-five minutes."

"But I really want cookies instead. They were so delicious when I had them this morning," Tommy said once again, trying to change his mom's mind.

"It's okay to eat some cookies but when you have too many of them, they aren't good for you," Mrs. Lewis explained.

"Why?" asked Tommy.

"Well, for one thing, cookies have a lot of sugar in them. Too much sugar isn't good for our bodies. Actually, too much of anything isn't good for us," said Mrs. Lewis.

"Even carrots?" asked Julie.

"Even carrots, if you have a whole bag every day. It would probably make you sick. We want to eat a bit of everything that is good for us. For example, carrots have things in them that are better for our bodies than cookies, so we should eat some now and then," Mrs. Lewis explained. "Remember, we

have to take care of our bodies by not eating too much junk food! You need to eat the right foods to help you grow up. How will you swim faster if you don't grow stronger?"

As Julie munched on some carrots, she said, "Actually, we learned about not eating too much junk food at school just last week."

"I remember teaching the older kids in church last week that our bodies are the temple of God," Mrs. Lewis said.

"What does that mean?" Tommy asked.

"It means that we should look after our bodies, just like we look after the church, because it is God's house!" Julie explained.

"That's right," Mrs. Lewis said. "God promised to live inside of us by giving us the Holy Spirit. But He will only live inside of us if our bodies are clean. So we should keep the temple of God clean and healthy, right?"

"Right," Tommy said. "So Julie, how about passing me some carrots?"

"Sounds great," Julie said.

Questions to Think About

1. **Why did Mrs. Lewis suggest that Tommy and Julie have carrots before dinner instead of cookies?** (Carrots are healthier than cookies.)
2. **How should we take care of our bodies, since it is the temple of God?** (Allow students to share. Some possibilities: exercising, eating healthy foods, reading the Bible, sleeping early at night.)
3. **What are healthy foods and what are considered junk food?** (Allow students to answer. The teacher can create a chart to help the students visualize the two groups.)



Activity 1

Healthy Vegetables

Daniel and his friends ate only vegetables. Can you name the vegetables in the picture that are good for us? Color the vegetables. Add your own vegetables at the bottom of the page.



Activity 2

Keeping Our Bodies Healthy

What can we do to keep our bodies healthy? Fill in the blanks with the words from the word bank.

1. We can eat healthy foods.
2. We can brush our teeth morning and night.
3. We can go to sleep early.
4. We don't eat junk food or stay up late.



Activity 3

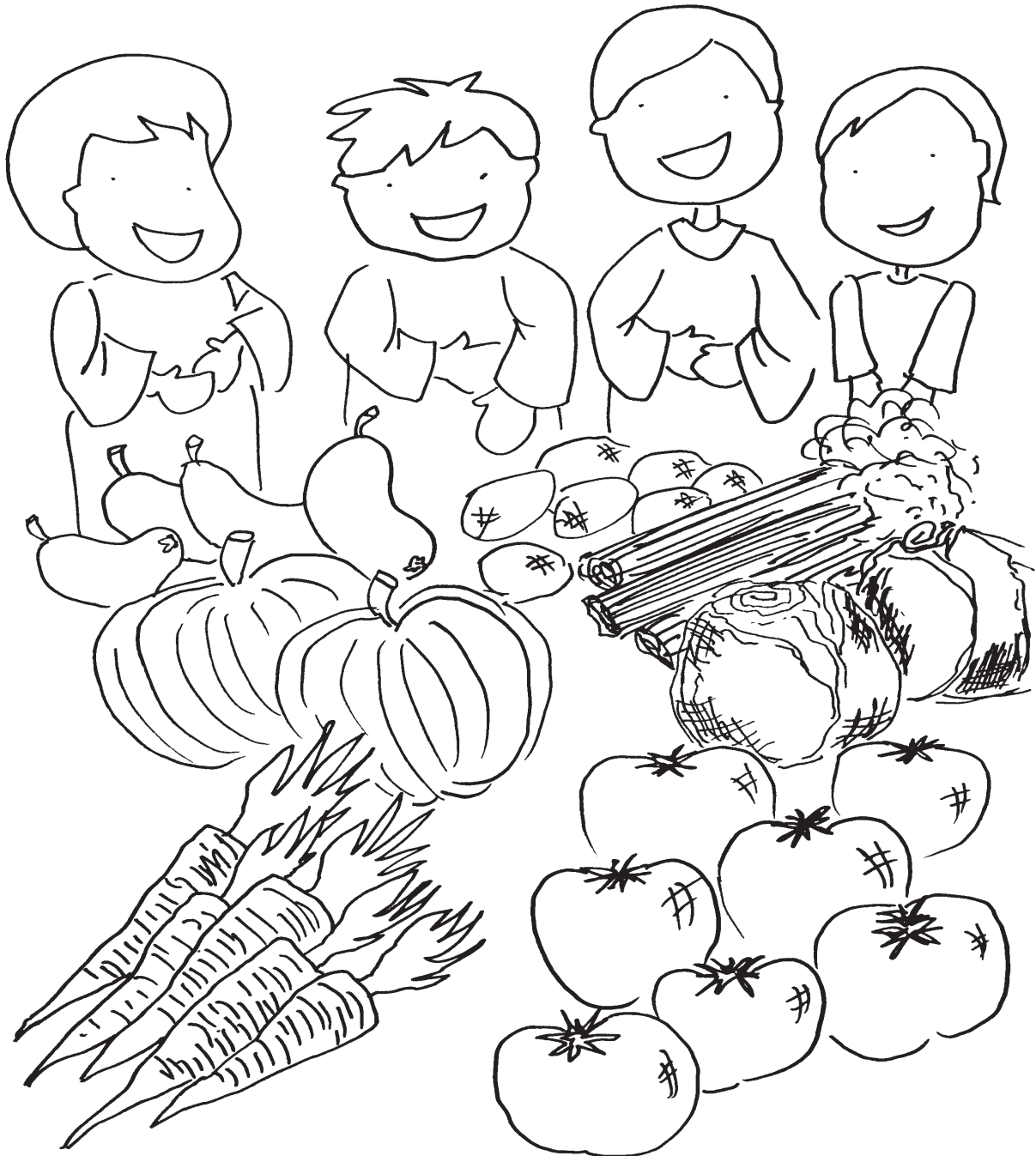
Making Healthy Eating Choices

Today's lesson talks about not defiling our bodies because our bodies are a temple of God. In the two previous activities, we talked about some good choices to make to keep our bodies healthy. To make the objective even more clear to the students, provide some foods for them to snack on after the lesson. Provide both healthy foods (e.g. vegetables and dip, fresh cut fruit, milk) as well as foods considered to be junk food (e.g. chips, candy, soda). When the students are able to see the variety, they will learn to discern for themselves and make healthy choices.

Activity 6:1

Healthy Vegetables

Daniel and his friends ate only vegetables. Can you name the vegetables in the picture that are good for us? Color the vegetables. Add your own vegetables at the bottom of the page.



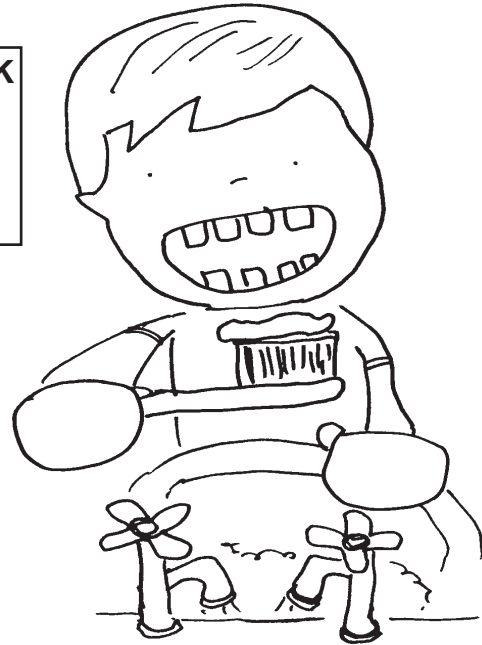
Activity 6:2

Keeping Our Bodies Healthy

What can we do to keep our bodies healthy? Fill in the blanks.

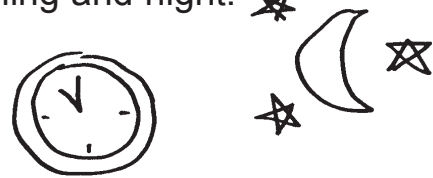


WORD BANK
foods
teeth
sleep
junk



We can eat healthy f _____.

We can brush our t _____ morning and night.



We can go to s _____ early.

We don't eat j _____ food or stay up late.

