

DANIEL

Living the Beatitudes

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Introduction

French painters of the 1870's were experts in the style of painting called impressionism. Impressionism is described as a quick brushstroke or dabs of thick applications of paint. The impressionist painter was interested in the optics of painting, which means the small strokes and colors they chose would simulate actual reflected light. In other words, viewing an impressionists painting up close, one could focus on the individual brush strokes. Further away from the work one can view a beautiful painting of various images and reflective light.

As students of the Bible, we sometimes only look at specific verses, scriptures or stories up close. This year's study for the Feast is a close look at the story of Daniel and the Sermon on the Mount given by Jesus Christ. We will step back to see how Daniel applied the Beatitudes to his life long before Jesus gave them and how we can learn to do the same.

WHAT ARE THE BEATITUDES?

To begin, an attitude is how one feels or thinks about something. Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount, which lists the Beatitudes. Each attitude begins with the word blessed or happy. When God favors someone, he receives His favor and kindnesses. Pleasing God will bring joy and peace.

In the Old Testament, psalmists and prophets wrote about beatitudes. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Psalm 1:1-3). The beatitudes, written in the Old Testament, promised peace, prosperity and that God would stay close to a righteous individual. God gave Moses the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. These laws were

given to guide people's conduct and service. Other Old Testament scriptures to read about beatitudes are; Psalm 4:1; 65:4; 84:5; 106:3; Proverbs 8:32, 34; Isaiah 32:20.

In contrast, the Beatitudes of the New Testament were given by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount to guide our conduct and service to Him and God the Father. The beatitudes stress the lasting joy and peace one receives when he shows each of these right attitudes described by Jesus. The joy Jesus describes is not about laughter and pleasure when everything is right, but the joy and inner peace one has when life becomes difficult. This kind of joy is possible because one knows God has forgiven one of his/her sins and promised eternal life. There is hope even when outward circumstances seem to suggest otherwise. The eight Beatitudes are Christ's description of what every Christian should strive to be.

"BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN."

To be poor means to be in need of something. To be "poor in spirit" means you admit to having a spiritual need. When you come to an attitude of being "Poor in spirit" you are completely dependent on God. Your attitude is, "Please Father I need your help." God relates to a humble and contrite heart.

"BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN, FOR THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED."

Jesus is not speaking about crying about every detail in life that does not go your way. Jesus came down to man's level to save man, not the other way around. Jesus died for the sins of mankind. He wants you to mourn and be truly sorry for being a sinner. The comfort we receive is in knowing someday there will be no mourning in the Kingdom of God. "God will wipe away all tears..." (Revelation 21:4).

"BLESSED ARE THE MEEK, FOR THEY SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH."

Being meek does not mean one is weak. When one chooses to be meek one is gentle, kind, humble and submissive. See yourself as God does and you will be meek. A meek person accepts what God has given—both the good and hard situations and then makes the best of it. Take the focus off of yourself and accept to enjoy the blessings that surround you—such as family, friends, health, sunshine and good food.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled."

The definition for righteousness is doing what is right. Some believe money or pleasures will satisfy. Jesus says the only thing that will satisfy the inner you, your soul and spirit, is if you hunger and thirst for righteousness. As you read God's Word and pray, you will be filled with inner satisfaction and will keep going back for more.

"BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL, FOR THEY SHALL OBTAIN MERCY."

To be merciful means to show mercy to those who do not deserve it. The merciful forgive others, do not condemn or look down on others and they reach out to help. God was merciful to every human being when He sent His son to die for the sins of mankind. A special blessing from God is given to the person who helps those less fortunate than themselves or when one forgives those who have been hurt or disappointed.

"BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART, FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD."

A pure heart means to be cleansed from sin. "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:7). When one's heart is pure, he is able to see God at work in his life. The heart is cleansed

when sins are confessed. Reading the Bible and talking to God in prayer are the two ways to stay close to Him.

"BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS, FOR THEY SHALL BE CALLED THE SONS OF GOD."

A peacemaker has the ability to bring peace between enemies. A peacemaker is truthful, kind and calm even when under attack. "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (James 3:17,18).

"BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN."

The best way to avoid persecution is to live like those in the world. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). You will be persecuted for following Christ. Those who follow Jesus must be prepared to be persecuted. Jesus set the example, "...because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (I Peter 2:21). There is hope for the future. Persecution will last for a while, but the Kingdom of God will be forever.

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

As 2 Corinthians 4:9 states "Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed". Through God's grace and love may we all have the courage to remain firm for righteousness sake. By our actions may we bring glory to God's name and give Him praise just as Daniel did.

DANIEL

Preparation

During the Feast of Tabernacles, you will have the privilege of leading your students to a greater understanding of the importance of having a proper attitude. The Sermon on the Mount, which Jesus gave, proclaimed His attitude toward the law. Man believes money, authority and power are important. Jesus taught that faithful obedience to God is what is important to inherit the Kingdom of God.

In Matthew 5:3-12, Jesus teaches His followers through the Sermon on the Mount how to be different. Being different is the underlying theme of Jesus' sermon. His sermon teaches a Christian code of ethics. A clear picture is drawn between the values of the Kingdom, which are forever, and man's values, which are temporary. Jesus has set the standard. It is a challenge for every Christian to live by that standard.

You will be teaching your students they cannot pick and choose which attitudes they would like to have. There are no multiple choices to the Beatitudes. All nine attitudes need to be applied in one's life as a whole. When they take their cue from Jesus and not their friends, persecution will occur. Their comfort is in knowing God's greatest prophets (Daniel, Elijah and Jeremiah). Persecution reveals one's faithfulness and their reward will be entrance into the Kingdom of God.

Your students will be looking at the challenges Daniel and his friends faced through the stories in the first six chapters of the book of Daniel. Daniel lived a life that exemplified adherence to the Beatitudes, which Jesus gave in the Sermon on the Mount long after the time of Daniel. Daniel lived a life of utter dependence upon God.

The Feast of Tabernacles is a perfect time to teach that salvation is the means by which God, through Christ, saves man from the penalty of sin and gives him eternal life. This festival analogously acts out the Millennium. It is a time when the source of evil, Satan, will not be around.

The great truth that we want our students to grasp at the Feast of Tabernacles is God does indeed speak to us through His Word. The Bible is the inspired Word of God and there are no errors. If God is to be known as our loving Heavenly Father, we must know His Word. However, just knowing His Word is not enough. Knowing the Word does not automatically bring about living the truth. We must be obedient to what God has revealed to us through His Word.

Your job at the Feast is to do more than just teach Biblical information, facts and help your students memorize scripture. It is important for your students to understand what they are learning at the Feast and how it applies to their everyday lives. Do not stress perfect recitation of scripture, but rather help your students to comprehend the meaning. Even younger children can give in their own words what the meaning of the scripture is. If you are not doing this, you are not fulfilling your responsibility as a teacher of the Word of God.

This Festival Planner is designed to help you, the teacher. You have the freedom to develop and create your lessons to meet the needs of your students. Use the materials in this book to generate creative ideas and guidance. We pray the tools we've provided will help make your ministry effective to the children in our church.

HOW TO USE

- There are six lessons provided for the Feast. These lessons are full of truths about the sovereignty, goodness and love of God. Prior to the Feast of Tabernacles read the lessons, go over the activity pages and craft ideas. Keep in mind the ages of the students you will be teaching.
- Shop for all the supplies you need for the craft projects. The more you prepare, the greater success you will have. Since we do not always know how many children will attend Sabbath school at the Feast, it is best to prepare for a greater

number of students. In order to save time, activities that require using scissors to cut out shapes should be done in advance. Once again, this depends on the age of your students. The crafts are an important part of the teacher's tools.

- All the activity pages are in the Planner. I will provide copies for each of the lessons so there is no need for you to make copies of the activity pages. The activity pages contain puzzles, coloring pages and activities that cover the Beatitudes and Daniel's story. Emphasize with your students they are expected to bring their Bible to class each day.
- Do not get discouraged if everything you do isn't a success. We, as teachers, are working toward being mature and complete. You will reach your highest potential as a teacher when you teach by example. Let your love for God, your Christian joy and your worshipful attitude inspire your students and help them joyfully worship and experience the love of God.
- As you prepare for Sabbath school, go to God in prayer, asking He prepare your heart and mind. The children you've been entrusted to teach are waiting to hear about God from you.

DANIEL

Israel's Story

History is replete with men who were oppressors. In our time, we have read or witnessed such tyrants as Adolph Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Osama Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein. The book of Daniel opens with the telling of the reign of Jehoiakim, King of Judah, who was equal to these men in his ability to torment and oppress his citizens.

In Daniel 1:2 it says, "the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into..." The question is why did the Lord allow King Jehoiakim to be besieged by Nebuchadnezzar and why were the best young Jewish men taken to Babylon? In order to answer these questions and understand the climate of the times Daniel grew up in, we must take a thumbnail look at the history of the children of Israel.

The story of the nation of Israel begins with Abraham, which starts in Genesis 12:1 and continues through to Genesis 25:18. Abram, whose name was later changed to Abraham, was living in the godless, man-centered city of Ur. Ur is located on the southern section of Mesopotamia. During Abraham's time, as in the time of Noah, the people of the world turned their backs on God. One day, God appeared to Abraham and promised three things: 1) Abraham would be blessed with a home in the land of Canaan, 2) He would have a great nation of people and 3) All nations of the earth would be blessed through his descendants. The final promise is of course the promise of a savior, Jesus Christ, whose lineage is through Abram's family tree. The one condition to all of these promises was Abraham had to be obedient to God.

Through faith Abraham obeyed God's commands. He had two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. Isaac was chosen by God to fulfill the three promises given to Abraham (Genesis 17:19; 22:15-18).

Isaac had two sons, Esau and Jacob. The covenant promise made to Abraham and Isaac was offered to Jacob (Genesis 28:10-15). Jacob's name was changed to Israel and he had twelve sons.

These men were referred to as "the sons of Israel" (Genesis 32:28).

Jacob favored his two youngest sons, Joseph and Benjamin. This may have been because Jacob loved their mother Rachel. The older ten brothers were jealous of Joseph because their father gave him a coat of many colors and he had unpopular dreams. His brothers sold him to a group of Midianites. They took him to Egypt where he became a slave. In spite of the trials he faced, Joseph never allowed himself to become bitter. His character was exemplary.

Joseph was used by God to save his family. When a terrible famine came upon the land of Canaan, Joseph brought his family to live in Egypt where he could care for them during the remaining years of the famine.

Over a 400-year period the children of Israel grew into a great nation just as God had promised. During this time, new Pharaohs came and went until the time of Joseph was almost forgotten. One Pharaoh decided to make slaves out of the descendants of Joseph and his brothers.

God does not forget a promise. Moses was a leader who demonstrated courage, humility and wisdom. He was used by God to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. The children of Israel were a stiff-necked people who did not obey God. Because of their disobedience they wandered in the wilderness for forty years. God continued to keep His promise and Joshua was anointed as Moses' successor. Joshua led the children of Israel into Canaan.

Joshua was an effective leader. He was successful in capturing almost all of the land of Canaan. Prior to his death, God told Joshua to divide the conquered land among the twelve tribes (Joshua 13:1). By his example, it is evident Joshua made a commitment to God. His spiritual leadership is

obvious by the fact he was able to lead a nation to follow God throughout his lifetime. Joshua challenged the children of Israel to continue to stand firm in their faith. They claimed they would never forsake the Lord (Joshua 24:14-16). After the death of Joshua, one generation followed the Lord. After that generation died, the following generation did not, "...an entire generation grew up who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel" (Judges 2:10).

The book of Judges is about the oppression and deliverance of Israel. It is a story of how Israel spiraled into sin and then cried out to God for forgiveness. Continuously, Israel "did evil in the sight of the Lord." Time after time God mercifully forgave them and brought up a strong judge who would deliver them from their enemies. This dark time in Israel's history lasted about 400 years. Then a godly woman named Hannah prayed for a son. Samuel was born to Elkanah and Hannah. Samuel grew up to become the spiritual leader and judge of Israel.

A judge such as Samuel had not been seen since Joshua. Samuel was a godly leader, but not a good father. In his old age, the people of Israel gave Samuel three reasons why they wanted a king. First, Samuel's sons were evil and corrupt, second, all the other nations around them had a king, and third, they thought a military commander would make them strong (1 Samuel 8:5, 20). The children of Israel rejected the Lord as their King and asked for a man to be king just like the pagans who surrounded them. The first king of Israel was Saul.

Saul started out well, but eventually his pride got in the way. He had courage and generosity, but he made bad choices, which resulted in him being cut off from God and alienated from his people. Saul was rejected by God as king and Samuel was directed to anoint David king.

David was a shepherd, poet, giant killer, king and ancestor of Jesus Christ. He was one of the greatest kings who provided the children of Israel godly leadership. Along with those beautiful traits, David was an adulterer, betrayer, murderer and liar. How could it be God would refer to him as "a man after his own heart?" David was a man who willingly and honestly confessed his sins to God and accepted the consequences of his sins. God forgave David of his sins (2 Samuel 12:10), but David reaped what he had sown--- continual unrest in his household. When David died, his son

Solomon became king.

Solomon knew what was right but he did not do it. He went against his father and the direct commands of the Lord. Solomon married foreign wives and practiced idolatry. God's judgment on Solomon was the lineage of Solomon would not continue to rule over a united kingdom. Therefore, one of his sons would not be king. After the death of Solomon, the kingdom was divided in two. The servant who was king of the northern ten tribes was Jeroboam. The king of the southern tribes (Judah and Benjamin) was Rehoboam.

The Lord said He would judge all of Israel for their terrible sins. Eventually the Assyrians captured the northern kingdom and the Babylonians deported those who lived in the southern kingdom.

This brief history lesson brings us to the first verses in the Book of Daniel. Before speaking about Jehoiakim, we must first understand the time that Daniel was born, which was during King Josiah's reign (2 Kings 22, 23). King Josiah was a good king who ruled Judah, the southern kingdom. Daniel grew up during the time of Israel's reform and when the children of Israel were doing right in the sight of the Lord. After Josiah's death it took only four years for the southern kingdom to return to its evil ways.

There were twenty kings who ruled Judah. Out of those twenty, eleven were evil. Jehoiakim was considered one of the most evil, "And he [Jehoiakim] did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord..." (2 Kings 23:37). Jehoiakim was one of the last three Kings who ruled Judah.

Nebuchadnezzar became king of Babylon in 605 B.C. During this year, Nebuchadnezzar swept down to Jerusalem and surrounded it, making it a vassal state. According to the American Heritage Dictionary, a vassal state means, "in feudal times, a person granted the use of land by a feudal lord, in return for which he rendered military or other services." This leads us to believe King Jehoiakim struck a deal with Nebuchadnezzar. This explains why Jehoiakim did not take seriously the Prophet Jeremiah who said, Nebuchadnezzar would destroy Jerusalem. Jehoiakim must have believed he was safe because he gave Nebuchadnezzar what he wanted.

The destruction of Jerusalem took place over a period of 20 years with three attacks by King Nebuchadnezzar. We read about his first attack in Dan-

iel 1:1. Since the Bible uses the word "besieged" it may be that Jehoiakim gave a bit of a fight and then gave up. Note that God was in control of the entire event, as it says, "And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand..." (Daniel 1:2). So, Nebuchadnezzar left Jerusalem with the sacred vessels from the temple and Jerusalem's wisest young men. Daniel and his friends were among them. Each time Jerusalem was attacked, captives were taken to Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar's second attack of Jerusalem was in 597 B.C. This time he captured 10,000 Jews and took them to Babylon (2 Kings 24:14). Three years later, "Jehoiakim turned and rebelled against him [Nebuchadnezzar]" (2 Kings 24:1). Jehoiakim did not keep his deal with Nebuchadnezzar and the citizens of Jerusalem paid the ultimate price.

The final attack took place in 586 B.C. Jehoiakim was dead and two other kings had ruled. King Zedekiah was the last king of Judah. The city of Jerusalem was completely destroyed and Judah lost its existence as a nation.

What is one of the lessons for us to take to heart from the example of the nation of Israel? There are blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. Prior to entering the land of Canaan, Moses prophesied what would happen to them if they did not obey God. "If thou shalt hearken

diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth.... If thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; all these curses shall come upon thee...The Lord shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them: and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth" (Deuteronomy 28:1, 15, 25).

The children of Israel were given the freedom to make their own choices. They chose disobedience. Jehoiakim was allowed to make a choice. He chose to dishonor God. Daniel lived during a very wicked time. He chose to honor and obey God. We are given the same freedoms. What will our choices be?

The first six chapters of the book of Daniel are a historical look at his life. The main theme is God's sovereignty and Daniel's faithfulness under every kind of pressure. While evil was rampant during Daniel's time, he never complained or groaned helplessly about his situation. His attitude was one of complete obedience and service to God.

DANIEL

Jesus, The Master Teacher

Jesus Christ referred to Himself as a teacher, others called Him "Teacher" and His enemies recognized Him as a teacher. Forty-five times Christ is referred to as Teacher in the Gospels. It is no surprise then that teaching was an important part of Christ's public ministry. But, what was it that made Jesus a great Teacher? Do those of us who volunteer to teach at the Feast of Tabernacles have what it takes to be a great Teacher?

Educators in public schools use the terms, direct and indirect instruction to classify teaching methods. They believe every method has an advantage and disadvantage. It is believed as well that there is no one "right" method of teaching. To some degree this is true. Look at Jesus' example.

Jesus was not bound to one "right" way. He was able to move from the simple to the profound, concrete to abstract and at every turn His objective was clear. Never did He grandstand or become the "sage on the stage." He was a Teacher that was committed to changing lives. What is the "right" way when teaching children in Sabbath School?

What is "right" for a particular lesson depends on the age, what does the student already know, time, space, objective of the lesson, materials etc. The Christian Teacher must be concerned about these variables along with dispensing Biblical information and transforming lives. It is an enormous challenge. Let's take a look at some of the methods Jesus used and see how we as Christian Teachers can apply His techniques.

Jesus would consistently include Scriptures into His teachings. Read Matthew 19:4-6, Luke 24:27, 32, 44, 45. A story or parable was not told just because Christ enjoyed telling stories. They were used as a method of teaching an important lesson. An example of this is seen in Matthew 13:3-53. When the disciples asked Jesus why He used parables to teach, Jesus answered them with

a riddle. "I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand." He went on to use a metaphor—the seed that a sower casts will only grow on fertile ground. Real life opportunities were used as well to teach a valuable lesson (Matthew 12:1-8). His use of asking questions formed the center of His teaching method.

The Gospels record over a hundred different questions Jesus asked. He used a variety of question techniques. He used questions as a springboard to teach (Matthew 13:10-23). To get the attention of His students, He would ask questions. He would ask rhetorical questions (Luke 13:18,20) and provocative questions that would make a student think. "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God" (Mark 10:18). To elicit what His students believed, Jesus asked probing questions. The young lawyer asked Jesus what he had to do to inherit eternal life. Jesus answered, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?" (Luke 10:26) At the end of a lesson, Jesus would ask a question (Luke 10; 36-37).

Jesus was a creative Teacher because he used the concrete to teach a difficult abstract concept. He would make a comparison of what was known and understood to help the student comprehend (Matthew 23:37). He used everyday objects as visual aids (Matthew 6:26-30; John 4:35). He created the symbols to help each of us understand spiritual realities and remember Him (Matthew 26:26-29).

There are basic teaching principles demonstrated by Christ that we can use today. He was always well prepared (Matthew 5-7) and He developed His lessons around the needs of His students (Matthew 4:18, 19). He was concise, clear and went to the heart of the matter. He did not ramble (Mark 2:2-12). As already discussed, He used great illustrations and was never distracted (John 4:7-25). In a kind and loving way, He would challenge His

student to put to practice the truth he had heard (Mark 10:17-27). Finally, Jesus always glorified God and encouraged His students (John 11:38-44; 15:1-17).

The Christian Teacher has a unique opportunity to help mold and develop his students as disciples for Christ. He is their shepherd and friend. He has the privilege to model the attitude of loving service and there can be no nobler experience.

Jesus set a perfect example and held a high standard of personal qualities for each of us to follow. As you prepare yourself spiritually and mentally to teach at the Feast of Tabernacles, read the following qualities Jesus possessed and then ask yourself if you strive to possess the same.

- Christ lived a holy and righteous life (Matthew 3:13-17).
- Jesus prayed and trusted in the Lord (Mark 1:35, Luke 5:16; 6:12-16).
- Jesus was warm, friendly and patient

(Mark 10:13-16).

- Jesus cared about people (Luke 8:40-56).
- Jesus was always courteous and He spoke the truth in a loving way (John 4:16-18).
- He served others (John 13:1-17).
- He was sensitive to the needs of those around Him (Matthew 17:24-27; Luke 5:4-10; John 2:1-11).

Jesus Christ means more to us than being the perfect "Teacher". He is the chief cornerstone and foundation of Christianity. He is the living Head of His Church. Christ was there at the beginning of creation and He will be there at the end. He is the center of God's redemptive plan of salvation for all of mankind. He is our Savior who is ever present and dwelling in our souls (Galatians 2:20).

In prayer, ask Jesus to mold, develop and equip you to be the best teacher you can be. Then in faith, allow Him to use you as the tool to produce fruit in the lives of the children you teach.

DANIEL

Games

You are the teacher. A good teacher will learn his or her students' names. For some children their name is their most valuable possession. Teachers need to direct their students. The direction you move is more important than the pace. Here are a few "get acquainted" things to do. Get to know your students and enjoy being a teacher!

"I'VE GOT A TERRIBLE MEMORY..."

- Take photos of students with a digital camera and review them like flash cards.
- Repeat the name 3 or 4 times in your first conversations with the student (e.g., "It's great to meet you, Mary").
- Ask for identifying information.
- Associate the name with someone else you know with that name.
- Study the student's face while you're being introduced.
- Transfer the name to a concrete image to help you remember.
- Ask God to help you remember—we recollect what's important to us.
- Write the name down (on a card, or scrap paper). The act of writing will help you remember.
- Have the student test you by asking—"What is my name?"
- If your class is too large to recall each student's name, use name tags.

DO YOU KNOW?

By the end of the Feast could you answer the following questions about your students?

- Do you know where they are from?
- Do you know how many siblings are in their family?
- Do you know who their parents are?
- Do you know what grade they are in?
- Do you know what they fear?
- Do you know their favorite foods?
- Do you know their hobbies?
- Do you know who their minister is?

QUESTION BOWL

Time: 5 minutes

Supplies: Small cards, pen, large glass bowl.

Objective: To give the students an opportunity to recall information from previous lessons.

Instructions: Write out Bible names from the content of recent lessons. Add a score, such as 20, 30, and 40, depending on how obscure the name is. Fold the cards in half and place them in the bowl. Make enough questions to allow each student two or three turns. One at a time, children take turns picking a card from the bowl. Choose a scorekeeper. The first child must tell who the person is that is named on the card she drew. If she is correct, she gets the number of points listed on the card. The teacher is the judge. If the student is partially right, the teacher can award her half or a quarter of the points. The individual student with the highest score is the winner. Play for five minutes.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Time: 10 minutes.

Supplies: 3 x 5 cards and pencils.

Objective: To encourage parents to be involved in what their children are learning in Sabbath school.

Instructions: Give your students a "question of the day" or a "question of the week" to take home. Their assignment is to get their parents' answers to the questions. Let the students in the group come up with the questions. Give them examples to consider such as, "What are the most important things in your life?" "What gives you the greatest satisfaction in life?"; or a question from the lesson of the day, such as, "Where does God tell us about His Armor?" or "Why does a Christian need to wear the Armor of God?"

Questions such as these will open discussions between kids and their parents and will also provide excellent material for a group discussion in which your students compare parents' answers with their own.

THE NAME GAME**Time:** 6 minutes (great for the first day of class)**Supplies:** None.**Objective:** To learn the names of all your students.**Instructions:** Have everyone sit in a circle. Ask them to think about an object that begins with the first letter of their first name—e.g., Jill, jam; Bill, box.

Starting anywhere around the circle have someone begin the introductions by stating his or her first name along with finishing the following sentence: "While packing to go to the Feast of Tabernacles, I packed_____."

Whatever they packed begins with the first letter of their name. First person: "Hi my name is Nancy. While packing to go to the Feast of Tabernacles I packed nuts." Second person: Hi Nancy, my name is Bob. While packing for the Feast of Tabernacles I packed books." Third person: Hi, Nancy and Bob. My name is Whitney and while packing for the Feast of Tabernacles, I packed whistles" (and so on).

The person on the right repeats the first person's name, say "Hi, _____!" and states his or her own name in the same way. The game continues around the circle with each student having to repeat the names of everyone who has gone before them. This means that the last person gets to name everyone! Whew!

To ensure success with this activity, below are some suggestions:

- If you have a large group, break into smaller groups.
- Students who are unable to come up with what they packed may ask the group for help.
- Younger kids might name something that does not necessarily begin with the first letter of their name. For example: My name is Jill and I packed a pea.

HOW TO BEE...**Time:** 5 minutes.**Supplies:** Chalkboard and chalk, dry-erase board and pens or large poster board and wide-tip pens.**Objective:** To encourage students to think about how their actions should reflect the teachings of Jesus.**Instructions:** On the board draw a picture of a beehive. On the bottom write, "Bee Helpful." Ask your students to think of as many "Bees" as they can that show they are followers of Christ.**WHO ARE YOU?****Time:** 5 minutes.**Supplies:** Paper and pencils.**Objective:** To get to know your students and reinforce that they are important to you and to God.**Instructions:** Give each student a piece of paper and a pencil. Ask them to describe themselves in 15 words.

Either they can read what they wrote or you, the teacher, can read them and the students can guess who is being described.

BLIND ART**Time:** 5 minutes.**Supplies:** Paper and pencils.**Objective:** To get the students' mind on the subject for the day. Use any picture that relates to the story of the day.**Instructions:** Give each student a piece of paper and pencil. You will say a word and they will draw a picture of a related item. Be sure your students keep their eyes closed while they draw their "picture." When the time is up—a minute is about enough—let them look and hear the laughter begin.

Make the shift from the picture to the lesson.

UNDER THE TABLE**Time:** 5 minutes**Supplies:** Beanbag**Objective:** To make the opening moments a happy time and to guide the students into a happy Bible study.**Instructions:** Arrange the students evenly around the table so that they can easily reach the hand of the next person. Explain the rules; the beanbag is to be passed under the table person to person. When the teacher claps his hands, the student holding the beanbag must call out a Bible book or one of the Beatitudes. Continue passing the beanbag. When the teacher claps his hands again, the student holding the beanbag must call out another Bible book. No Bible books or Beatitudes can be renamed. Be sure the students pass the beanbag quickly. The teacher will not be able to see who has the beanbag, so he cannot be accused of clapping unfairly. Keep going for not more than five minutes. All those who have not missed three times are declared the winners.

DANIEL

Lesson 1

Daniel & Friends Tested

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

When King Nebuchadnezzar, of Babylon, swept down to Jerusalem in 605 B.C., this was the first of three defeats the people of Judah would suffer. This first invasion established Babylonian authority in Jerusalem. While in Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar took young men back to Babylon where he educated them in the lifestyle and thinking of the Babylonians. Nebuchadnezzar's goal was for these young men to forget about Jerusalem, their families and heritage and more importantly, he wanted to erase their knowledge of God. These young men were faced with difficult choices. Did they continue to hold true to their convictions of faith and obedience to God or did they become Babylonian and melt quietly into that culture?

INTRODUCTION

When the time came for my husband and I to take our oldest daughter to college, it was not done with great rejoicing. We loaded our car and hers with all her belongings and made the eight-hour trip to her new home. After spending a day and a half getting her settled, it was time for us to go. We kissed her goodbye in the parking lot of her apartment. As we drove away, tears streamed down her face and I cried all the way back home. I was proud of our daughter, all she accomplished and her determination to step out into adulthood, but the pride I had did not erase the pain of having to let her go. Daniel and the other young men of Jerusalem didn't have the privilege of deciding when they wanted to move away from home nor did they get to choose a college.

PROGRESSION OF EVENTS

Do you know young people at school who drink alcohol, use drugs or smoke? Do you have friends who try to entice you into taking part in these illegal activities? You may believe that if you don't do what everyone else is doing you will not have friends. God wants you to keep your body clean

and away from harm. Daniel and three friends were faced with a challenge to keep their lives clean.

- King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon invaded Jerusalem.
- Ashpenaz was ordered by King Nebuchadnezzar to bring back strong, healthy and intelligent young men from royal families. There was little Daniel and his friends could do. In their early teens, these young men were taken eight hundred miles away from their home and families. To rebel would have brought dishonor to their monarch.
- These intelligent young men were to receive special training in three years. The training included palace protocol, learning the Chaldean language and everything there was to know about Babylon. Daniel and these young men excelled at their studies and enjoyed all the privileges of living in the king's palace.
- Nebuchadnezzar commanded that these young men have their names changed. Daniel's name which means "God is my judge," was changed to Beltshazzar, "Bel protect his life." He changed Hananiah, "Yahweh is gracious," to Shadrach, "the command of Aku." He changed Mishael, "who is like God?" to Meshach, "Who is what Aku is?" And he changed Azariah, "Yahweh is my helper," to Abed-Nego, "after the god Nebo." Nebuchadnezzar wanted these young men to forget God.
- There was no Jewish law that said these young men could not enjoy all the perks of living in the king's palace. Nor was there a law against them accepting a name change from a foreign king. Could a name change make you forget who the true, loving, and holy God is? No, Daniel and his friends knew God, and changing their name would not make them forget Him.
- In Leviticus 11:47 and Ezekiel 4:13, God spells

out His dietary laws for His people. The food Daniel and his friends received probably had not been prepared according to these laws. It was a common custom of a Babylonian king to first offer his food and drink to a heathen god (Deuteronomy 32:37,38). If Daniel and his friends accepted the food offered to idols, it would indicate they believed in those false gods and participated in the worship of these pagan gods.

- Daniel 1:8 says, "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank..." The word defile means to make dirty or impure. If you take drugs, smoke, look at dirty magazine and listen to inappropriate music these are all things that can and will defile your body and mind. God wants you to keep your body and mind free from the things that can harm. Daniel "purposed in his heart" means he was firm in his convictions. Daniel and his friends made up their minds to be faithful to God. When tempted with the delicious food from the king, they did not waiver in their conviction. Daniel had drawn the line and purposed in his heart to do what was right according to God's way. Daniel led an uncompromising life. You will keep yourself out of trouble by deciding early on where you need to draw the line. If you have the courage to hold strong Godly convictions, when faced with temptation you will have the strength to stand against all forms of evil.

- Daniel asked the chief eunuch if he could be excused from eating the king's food. God gave Daniel favor in the eyes of the head eunuch. The chief eunuch feared for his life if he granted Daniel's request.

- Daniel made a respectful request not an insulting demand for a ten-day trial of just water and vegetables. Daniel lived in a culture that wasn't pleasing to God. He did not conform to that culture nor did he rebel against it. Rather, he negotiated a way to live in his situation without compromising God's laws.

- The ten-day test was granted to the four young men. Today when you stand firm for what is right, you may be ridiculed or made fun of. These young men may have endured some mockery, but they were firm and did what was right. I Timothy 6:11 says to flee what is wrong and follow after godliness.

- At the end of the ten-day trial all four young men looked to be in better condition than those who ate from the king's table. "God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams" (Daniel 1:17). Daniel and his friends learned a valuable lesson and set a fine example for us today. You can have a successful life in today's society without compromising your allegiance to God.

- The king had magicians and astrologers as his advisors. God honored Daniel and his friends for their obedience. He gave them knowledge, wisdom and understanding that was greater than anyone else in the king's realm.

- Daniel and his friends were removed from their home and families. Commentaries differ on Daniel's age, but it was somewhere between 13 and 17. These young men were taken from Jerusalem to Babylon, which is about eight hundred miles. King Nebuchadnezzar enrolled them in an intense three-year course of study, which was designed to transform them into loyal Babylonians. Daniel and his friends did not have to compromise their convictions to find favor in the eyes of the chief eunuch or the king. When you are faced with a challenge, God is your strength and refuge. "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Proverbs 16:7). Daniel put his energies into pleasing God and lived an uncompromised life.

"BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN."

To be "poor in spirit" means you are completely dependent on God. Daniel knew his strength came from God. With courage and conviction Daniel believed in the Word of God. He remained confident God would not let him down because God knew Daniel was depending on Him for strength. When your beliefs are challenged and your friends pressure you to compromise—don't. Please God through obedience, depend on Him and He will take care of you.

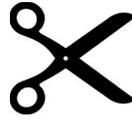
MEMORY VERSE

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

QUESTIONS

For class discussion ask your students the following:

1. Describe the emotions Daniel may have been feeling in verses 3, 8, 15 and 20?
2. What did King Nebuchadnezzar do to orient Daniel and his friends to a Babylonian lifestyle?
3. Explain the comparisons between what Daniel and his friends endured then with what you as a Christian face today.
4. Explain the dietary laws in Leviticus 11:47 and Ezekiel 4:13 and why they were important to Daniel.
5. Do you think Daniel made more about the food issue than he should have? Explain.
6. What was the trial test Daniel proposed and how long did it last?
7. What did you learn from Daniel's attitude and actions?
8. How will you respond when your values are challenged?
9. Explain the phrase "purposed in his heart."
10. What character trait or conduct of Daniel most impressed you?

**CRAFT:
SELF-CONTROL TRAIL MIX****Materials**

Paper cups
A large bowl
Peanuts
Raisins
Chocolate chips
Butterscotch chips
Coconut

Directions

1. Before reading the story, have the children make the trail mix and enjoy it while you tell the story.
2. Show the children all the ingredients for the snack.
3. Let them help put the mix together and serve one another. Encourage them to include plenty of the healthy ingredients.

DANIEL

Lesson 2

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

One of the most evil kings of all time was King Nebuchadnezzar. He was proud, powerful and the basest of men according to Daniel 4:17. God entered the heart and mind of this evil king, and through his dreams God gave a detailed outline of the future. The second book of Daniel is one of the most important chapters of the Bible, in that it tells of future events.

INTRODUCTION

Everyone dreams and according to scientist we dream every night. For the most part our dreams are enjoyable. Have you ever had a dream that seemed so real you were afraid to wake up? During the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, God spoke to him through a recurring dream. These dreams sent from God were troubling to the king.

PROGRESSION OF EVENTS

During ancient times, dreams were considered to be messages from the gods. Those who claimed to be able to interpret dreams could only do so if they knew what the dream was. In our story, Nebuchadnezzar not only wanted his dream interpreted, he wanted the magicians, astrologers and sorcerers to tell him his dream.

- King Nebuchadnezzar called for the wise men of his realm. They were the astrologers, sorcerers, magicians and Chaldeans. When they arrived, he told them he had a dream and the dream was troubling to him.
- The Chaldeans were sure they could interpret the king's dream; they just needed to know what it was.
- The king did not tell the wise men his dream. He wanted to test their ability to predict the future. The king may have believed, if these wise men cannot recall the past how could he trust their predictions with the future?

- The king promised gifts, rewards and honor to those who could tell him his dream and interpret it. If the dream could not be recalled and interpreted he promised them death. They would be cut in pieces and their homes burned.
- The wise men were worried. They asked the king a second time to share his dream with them and they in turn promised to reveal it's significance.
- Why would the king be this stubborn? It may have been because he inherited these wise men from when his father ruled. They would have been older than him and he may have believed they conspired to tell him misleading things. Or, maybe he was just plain suspicious of their so-called wisdom.
- The Chaldeans answered the king, "There is not a man upon the earth" that could know another person's dream. They continued with asserting only the gods, not man could interpret the future. This final statement may not have been too clever. Were they admitting, they (men) had deceived the king in past interpretations of dreams?
- The king, angry, commanded all the wise men of Babylon to be destroyed along with any wise men who claimed to have the ability to tell the future. This decree of the king included Daniel and his three friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego.
- They too were wise and Daniel could interpret dreams. "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" (Daniel 1:17).

- Daniel was not in the king's presence when the death sentence was given. He was not aware of what was going on. Daniel asked Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, why the wise men were to be slain. Arioch explained to Daniel what had

happened.

- Daniel did not run from a sure demise, but rather boldly came before the king. He asked the king to hold off on the executions and give him the opportunity to tell the king the interpretation. Daniel had complete confidence God would tell him all the king wanted to know.
- Daniel found his three friends and the four of them began to pray. They prayed for “the mercies of the God of heaven” (Daniel 2:18). Daniel knew his talents and abilities, but he turned to God to show them mercy. They did not want to die. Daniel expected the Lord to meet their needs. The prayer focused on God’s power and wisdom.
- “Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision.” God answered their prayers.
- Daniel did not rush off to see the king. First, he took time to praise God and credit Him who has all power and wisdom. He thanked God for answering his request.
- In verse 21 Daniel speaks about how God can change seasons and times, remove kings, give wisdom to the wise and knowledge to them that have understanding. In other words, Daniel knew God was in control. There is peace in knowing God is in control of events. No matter what happens, events take place according to God’s purpose and His end.
- Daniel went to Arioch, the captain whom the king had told to destroy all the wise men of Babylon and told him he was ready to interpret the King’s dream.
- Arioch wasted no time. He took Daniel immediately to the king.
- Daniel was subjected to the same questions the king demanded of the wise men.
- Before Daniel told the king anything, he gave credit to God. He told the king his wise men could not reveal his dream through talking to their gods. Daniel told him “there is a God in heaven that reveals mysteries.” He told him his dream was prophetic and for a second time Daniel said, “As for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom I have.” When Daniel gave credit to God, he showed God honor.
- The king saw in his dream a large statue. The statue was magnificent in size and appearance.

The head was made of fine gold, the chest and arms were silver, the belly and thighs were bronze, the legs were iron and the feet were partly iron and clay.

- A stone was cut without hands and thrown at the statue’s feet of iron and clay. The feet broke in pieces and the whole statue blew away in the wind like chaff. Chaff is the part of grain stalks, which is worthless. Farmers would get rid of it by throwing the grain into the air on a windy day. The kernels of grain would fall to the ground to be gathered while the useless chaff blew away.
- The stone, which destroyed the statue, grew into a giant mountain that filled the whole earth. This was Nebuchadnezzar’s dream.
- Now that Daniel told the king what his dream was, he continued with what the dream meant. In short, the entire dream is about kingdoms. Between verses thirty-seven and forty-four the word “kingdom” is used nine times.

1. The head of gold represents the first kingdom, which is Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon. While it was Nebuchadnezzar’s father who conquered Babylon militarily, it was Nebuchadnezzar who received his power from God (Daniel 2:21). “Babylon was a golden cup in the Lord’s hand” (Jeremiah 51:7).
2. The chest and arms of silver represent the second kingdom. The arms are two nations-- Media and Persia (Daniel 8:20-21). This kingdom lasted longer than the Babylonian, but was inferior.
3. The belly and thighs of bronze represent the third kingdom, the Grecian Empire. The kings of this kingdom were Philip of Macedonia and his son Alexander the Great. Historians tell of Alexander’s soldiers’ armaments being made of bronze.
4. The legs of iron represent the fourth kingdom. The Romans conquered the Greek Empire in 63 B.C. The Roman Empire was very strong and it crushed all empires that came before it. Iron is stronger than gold silver or bronze. The Roman Empire is also illustrated in the feet of iron mixed with clay. Just as oil and vinegar do not mix, neither do iron and clay. When the hot mix of iron and clay is poured into a mold and cools, the iron and clay separate. The Roman Empire was not a united kingdom. It is believed the ten toes of this statue represent the coming together of ten kingdoms to rule with the Beast during the period of the Antichrist.

5. The four kingdoms that stood on the great mountain which filled the whole earth (Daniel 2:35) would be destroyed not by human hands, but by the striking Stone. Jesus Christ is the striking Stone. When Jesus returns to earth, He will rule all the kingdoms forever. "And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 11:15).

- King Nebuchadnezzar was so overwhelmed by Daniel's interpretation; he fell on his face and honored Daniel and Daniel's God. "Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets..." (Daniel 2:47).
- Daniel was given many gifts and made a ruler over the province of Babylon. Daniel did not forget his friends. They too were given high positions as administrators who served under Daniel.
- Through the tool of a statue, Daniel chapter two accurately predicted the rise and fall of four empires. Man's government is a fragile one, which rests on a delicate foundation. This is an amazing chapter, which beautifully shows how God is in control of future events. The final empire Daniel describes has yet to occur. We look forward to the return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Jesus will strike man's government and roll His solid rock into place covering the entire earth and ruling forever and ever.

"BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN, FOR THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED."

Jesus died for the sins of mankind. Jesus was and is saddened by the evil and wickedness of mankind. While here on earth Jesus felt deeply the pain and sorrow of man. But, He knew there would come a day that our sorrow would turn to joy. Read Matthew 23:27. Jesus wants you to mourn and be truly sorry for being a sinner. Not only should we mourn and be sorry for our sins, but also for the sins of man. The sorrow we feel should not overcome us because we know something absolutely wonderful lies ahead. We know Jesus will return to earth to establish His kingdom. Peace, prosperity and joy will replace war, famine and the ugliness of a sin-sick world. When Jesus does return there will be no more mourning.

MEMORY VERSE

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his

judgments, and his ways past finding out" (Romans 11:33).

QUESTIONS

For class discussion ask your students the following:

1. Describe Daniel and his friend's situation. You may want to read Daniel 2:8-13 again.
2. Did Daniel panic or show fear?
3. Explain Daniel's emotional state of mind.
4. What did Daniel want from God and why? Daniel 2:18
5. How did God answer Daniel and his friend's prayer?
6. When Daniel received a response to his prayer, what did he do?
7. Before Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar his dream what did he tell him?
8. When something urgent happens in your life, do you have friends to call on to pray?
9. If God is in control, why should you pray?
10. How did Daniel show a humble attitude?



CRAFT: FOIL STATUE

Materials

- Aluminum foil
- Tape
- Metallic tempera paints (gold, bronze, black and brown)
- Paintbrushes
- Dishwashing detergent

Directions

1. Give each student about 3 feet of aluminum foil.
2. Crumple the foil and shape it to form a person.
3. If additional pieces of foil are used, join the pieces with tape. (Sculptures will look best if they are made with one large piece of foil.)
4. Paint the statue as follows:
 Head - Gold
 Chest and Arms - Leave silver
 Belly and Thighs - Bronze
 Legs - Iron (black)
 Feet - Part iron and part clay (brown)

Note: Add a few drops of detergent into the paint to help it adhere to the foil.

DANIEL

Lesson 3

Dare to Obey

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

The events in Daniel chapter three probably occurred while Daniel was away from the capital city of Babylon. According to the Septuagint, these events in Daniel three occurred in the 18th year of King Nebuchadnezzar's reign, which was 587 BC. Daniel and his three friends had been in Babylon about twenty years. Note: Septuagint was the first translation of the Old Testament from the Hebrew into the Greek language. Septuagint means "70," tradition says it got its name because seventy men worked on it.

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever been asked to do something that is against what you know the Bible teaches? Have you ever been pressured to ignore your beliefs and go along with the crowd? The following story is about three young men who were challenged by King Nebuchadnezzar to go against God.

PROGRESSION OF EVENTS

When was the last time you stood by a campfire? What did your clothing and hair smell like afterward? In today's story, three men are thrown into a furnace. They walk out alive not even smelling like a fire.

- "Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its width six cubits" (Daniel 3:1). The measurement for this statue was 90 feet high and 9 feet wide. Nebuchadnezzar's armies had been victorious in war. They brought back the spoils of war, which included a lot of gold. The image, made of gold, illustrates the wealth of Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar's pride. Remember Daniel told the king the statue's head in his dream was gold, which represented the king's kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar declared, "Your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets" (Daniel 2:47). For Nebuchadnezzar to build such a statue to worship shows his lack of humility. Although Nebuchadnezzar realized and acknowledged Daniel's God as

the greater God, he did not give up his worship of pagan gods.

- Eight classes of officials were summoned to the dedication of the image. Among those gathered for the dedication were Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego. These three young men would once again show how firm in their convictions they were.
- Once all the people were gathered together for worship of this golden image, a herald cried aloud: "To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace" (Daniel 3:4-6).
- When all these officials fell down before the golden image, their actions recognized Nebuchadnezzar as the absolute authority politically and religiously. These officials were representing the people they ruled; therefore, their act of submission included them as well. Awe struck by the idol, music and the king's command, the officials did as they were told.
- It is believed there were hundreds, maybe thousands of people who attended this dedication. When Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego did not bow down, imagine how they must have stood out from the crowd. These young men knew who the one true God to worship is and it was He alone they would worship (Exodus 20:4, 5; Matthew 4:10).
- A few Chaldeans came forward to accuse the three men of disobedience to the king. They said, "There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego; these men, O king, have

not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up" (Daniel 3:12). Could these Chaldeans have been jealous of the position of authority these Jewish men held in the kingdom? Here was their perfect opportunity to get on the king's good side and get rid of them.

- When the king heard this, he was in a rage and commanded these three men be brought to him. This isn't the first time we read about King Nebuchadnezzar's fury. The last time he showed uncontrolled anger was when his wise men could not interpret his dream. Remember he had ordered that all of them be put to death (Daniel 2:12-13).

- To begin, the king gives the three men a way out by asking, "Is it true that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up?" There may be a chance Nebuchadnezzar didn't want to put them to death. After all, he had spent time and money in their education. They were among his most valued and highly educated officials. Once again, his pride got in the way.

- The king restates what will happen if they do not bow down and worship the gold image. "If you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?" (Daniel 3:15).

- We now view faith in action. These young men did not believe God because He promises deliverance; they believed Him regardless of the outcome. Obeying God was more important than life to these three men. They may work for Nebuchadnezzar, but they worship God.

- The three answered the king courageously. "We have no need to answer you this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up" (Daniel 3:16-18).

- While Nebuchadnezzar must have appreciated the faithful service these young men had, he could not exonerate them because it may have opened the door for others to disobey his commands. Nebuchadnezzar ordered the furnace to be heated seven times hotter than usual.

- Was Nebuchadnezzar trying to prove he was

greater than God? Had he forgotten what he had said several years earlier about Daniel's God being the "God of god's and the Lord of kings?" (2:47).

- The three men were bound and thrown into the fiery furnace. The heat was so intense the flames killed the soldiers who threw them in. When the king looked into the furnace, he was amazed to see four men, not three, walking around in the fire. He then realized the fourth man was a supernatural being. The one sent to protect these young men from harm was more than human. The one sent was Jesus Himself.

- When the king ordered the three to come out of the fire, "the hair on their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them" (Daniel 3:27). The king acknowledged once again that these three men are servants of the Most High God.

- Because of the courage of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego, the king declared everyone should honor the true God. God delivered His servants that day. Under the pressure to compromise their beliefs, the three men chose to trust in God and they were delivered. These are encouraging words for us today. Do not compromise your religious beliefs when you are under great pressure to do so.

"BLESSED ARE THE MEEK, FOR THEY SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH."

Being meek does not mean one is weak. Jesus Christ was "meek and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29). Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego accepted their situation and stayed focused on God. They were committed to the Lord and stood boldly before King Nebuchadnezzar and proclaimed their faith. Each of them showed great courage and strength in their convictions. They knew what this king was capable of. They understood two important principles of life; God will honor the faithful, "Our God is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace" (3:17), and God does not always deliver the faithful from death, "but if not, let it be knownwe will not worship the gold image" (3:18). A meek person accepts what God has given—both the good and the bad. Never does a meek person seek self-justification for his faults. He will not exalt himself above others or seek vengeance. He will not think of himself as "better" than others.

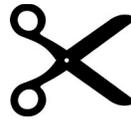
MEMORY VERSE

"We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

QUESTIONS

For class discussion ask your students the following:

1. Was it easy or difficult for the three men to obey God? Explain.
2. Have you ever been challenged about your belief? Explain.
3. When is it easy to obey and please God and when is it difficult?
4. Why did these three young men obey God?
5. Did Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego know God's rules? Explain.
6. Read Psalm 91. Why would Daniel and his three friends qualify for God's protection?
7. Do you think King Nebuchadnezzar had the guards make the furnace seven times hotter because the king knew who their God was? Explain.
8. When a tragedy strikes you, how do you know you are under God's wing of protection?
9. Read Daniel 3:17, 18 again. Explain in your words the principle the three Jewish men understood.
10. Describe a few false gods of our society.
11. How can you avoid worshiping these false gods?

**CRAFT:
THE FIERY FURNACE****Materials**

Black, red, yellow, orange and brown construction paper
 Scissors
 Glue
 Copy template of man pattern
 Crayons and pencils

Directions

1. Give each student an 8 1/2 x 11 black piece of construction paper.
2. Give them pieces of red, yellow and orange construction paper to cut flames of fire and glue them to the black construction paper.
3. Fold your brown piece of paper horizontally. Place the template on the brown construction paper and trace around it. Cut it out being sure not to cut where the hands and legs come to the fold. Glue the three men to the black construction paper with the flames. Allow the students to draw faces and clothes on their figures.

Lesson 4

Pride & Punishment

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

Pride can destroy you. Honoring God and giving praise to Him will bring blessings. There have been few men who have held greater power than Nebuchadnezzar. The success Nebuchadnezzar achieved made him a proud and boastful king. The following story is about the pride of Nebuchadnezzar and how God humbled him through a mental illness lasting for seven years. Nebuchadnezzar ruled Babylon for 43 years. The following story took place around the time of his 35th year as king—around the year 570 BC. This story takes place about thirty years after the fiery furnace story and when Daniel is probably sixty years old.

INTRODUCTION

When you do something well and are recognized for your achievement, it feels great. When you win a game, you feel excited and may want to keep challenging others to compete with you. When you are the winner of a game or are honored for excellence, do you constantly remind your friends about it? If you do, how do you think it makes them feel? King Nebuchadnezzar built Babylon, one of the greatest cities of the ancient world. He took tremendous pride in his accomplishments with boastful words and self-exaltation.

PROGRESSION OF EVENTS

The first three verses of this chapter are a preamble. King Nebuchadnezzar is giving a witness to the world about what God had done to and for him. King Nebuchadnezzar learned the hard way what God thought about a boastful and proud heart. Nebuchadnezzar is telling his story about what God had done for him in an enthusiastic way. Enjoy the last story of King Nebuchadnezzar.

- The story begins with Nebuchadnezzar having another dream. He tells of resting in his elegant palace, when he had a terrifying dream. Prosperity did not keep him safe from his fears.

- He summoned all the wise men to come and interpret the dream. This time he did not require them to tell him what the dream was. The wise men failed to interpret the king's dream.

- Finally, Daniel was called to see the king. Notice how King Nebuchadnezzar refers to Daniel's Babylonian name. Once again, the king had to come to the man who worshiped the true God for help. Could this be why Daniel was called? Three times in this story the king says, "In him is the Spirit of the Holy God."

- When Nebuchadnezzar referred to Daniel as the chief of the magicians, it does not mean Daniel sat in authority over them. Rather, he was the wisest among them.

- The king told Daniel his dream. In the king's dream he saw a tree growing so big its top reached into the sky. The tree gave fruit for people, shade for animals and a place for birds to nest in its branches.

- Then an angel (watcher) came from heaven and ordered it to be chopped down, leaving nothing but the stump.

- The angel gave a strange message: "Let him be wet with the dew of heaven, and let him graze with the beasts on the grass of the earth. Let his heart be changed from that of a man, let him be given the heart of a beast. And let seven times pass over him. The decision is by the decree of the watchers, and the sentence by the word of the holy ones, in order that the living may know that the Most High rules in the Kingdom of men. Gives it to whomever He will and sets over it the lowest of men" (Daniel 4:15-17).

- Daniel was astonished and troubled for a time by what the king told him. When Daniel interpreted the first dream, the king was exalted. He was the head of gold. This dream did the opposite.

- Daniel answered the king, "My lord, may the dream concern those who hate you and its interpretation concern your enemies" (4:19).
- God helps Daniel interpret the dream. The tree represented Nebuchadnezzar. The message from the angel meant mental illness would befall Nebuchadnezzar. He would live with the animals, eat grass like cattle and become wet with dew because he would be sleeping outside. After seven years, He would know God is in charge of the kingdoms of the earth.
- There was one positive aspect to the king's dream. Since the stump was to be left in the ground and the roots would not die this meant Nebuchadnezzar would be restored to his throne once he acknowledged "Heaven rules," this refers to God Himself.
- Daniel urged the king to confess his sins and do what is right. Daniel saw the selfish pride of the king. He witnessed his harsh leadership over his people. He heard him boast about his accomplishments—taking for himself the credit for his kingdom. God hates pride—it is a serious sin to Him. "Everyone proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord" (Proverbs 16:4). The Lord also says pride will destroy. "A man's pride will bring him low..." (Proverbs 29:23). Boastful words and proud actions are the result of a prideful heart and mind. You can know if you are proud by asking one simple question. Do I take credit for anything commendable I do in my life rather than give the praise and honor to God?
- The king did not heed Daniel's warning. Twelve months went by and the king continued in his sin. God gave Nebuchadnezzar an entire year to change his ways. This is evidence of God's grace and mercy.
- The king said, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:30).
- The words hardly finished coming out of the king's mouth when a voice came from heaven saying, "King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you" (Daniel 4:31).
- Suddenly the king's dream became a reality. This arrogant king was met with God's judgment. He no longer was the ruler of Babylon. The mighty head of gold became the stump of a tree. He ate grass like the cattle, he slept outside,

his hair grew like eagles' feathers and his nails became like bird claws.

- Finally when the seven years had come to an end Nebuchadnezzar looked up to God and was immediately restored. The terrible illness left him.
- With his sanity restored, he responded with praise and worship toward God. Read Daniel 4:34, 35.
- God returned the kingdom to Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar's humility brought greater wealth, honor and respect than he had ever known when he was full of pride.
- Nebuchadnezzar learned a great lesson the hard way. It is a lesson we all need to learn. God will honor those who are humble and God is able to humble those who walk in pride.

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS, FOR THEY SHALL BE FILLED.

The commandments of God are righteousness. The commandments define what is right and what is wrong. Nebuchadnezzar lived by his own set of rules. He defined what was righteous in his eyes. The Bible defines righteousness, "All thy commandments are righteousness" (Psalm 119:172). If you hunger and thirst for righteousness, you will be willing to change your beliefs and practices when you are proven wrong. The good and perfect will of God means far more to you than your own feelings about a cherished belief or custom. Nebuchadnezzar learned this important lesson.

BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL, FOR THEY SHALL OBTAIN MERCY.

Mercy is the opposite of vengeance, wrath and hatred. If you are merciful, you are forgiving. It is not enough to just define what mercy is. Jesus expects you to exercise mercy. One way to live mercy is to abide by the "Golden Rule": "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Nebuchadnezzar was not a king who dealt out mercy. He was a king who held thousands in his power. If anyone upset him, he would decide if they would live or die. If you want mercy do as Jesus said, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you" (Matthew 6:14, 15).

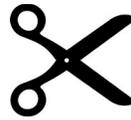
MEMORY VERSE

"And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Matthew 23:12).

QUESTIONS

For class discussion ask your student the following:

1. Verse three in chapter four summarizes King Nebuchadnezzar's attitude at the end of the story. Explain his attitude.
2. Explain the significance of, "In him [Daniel] is the Spirit of the Holy God" (verses 8, 9, 18).
3. God gave Nebuchadnezzar a year to change his ways. What does this tell you about God?
4. Define pride.
5. Is selfish pride a problem in your life?
6. King Nebuchadnezzar gave a reason for why the decree was given. What is it? Read verse 17 again.
7. Why was it so important for God to "reach" Nebuchadnezzar?
8. Why did it take Nebuchadnezzar so long to change?

**CRAFT: HANDS OF MERCY****Materials**

Construction paper
Scissors
Pencil
Crayons, markers

Directions

1. Place your hand on a folded paper, with your little finger on the fold. Trace your hand and cut it out, being careful not to cut along the folded edge.
2. On the closed hand write names of people for whom you will pray. These may be people you need to forgive, people you need to try to be kinder to, or people who need help.
3. Open the hand. Inside, write things you will do for other people or show mercy. Examples: hugging, shaking hands, doing things for people.

DANIEL

Lesson 5

Handwriting on the Wall

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.

Daniel was born into a Judean nobleman's family. He was probably 16 when King Nebuchadnezzar took him from his home to Babylon. Daniel, with a select group of young men, were trained to be leaders in Babylon. Over time, Daniel rose to a very high position of power in this new land. When Daniel was probably in his 80's, Belshazzar became king of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar is referred to as Belshazzar's father (Daniel 5:2). He was not literally Belshazzar's father, but rather his ancestor or predecessor. Belshazzar's father was Nabonidus who was Nebuchadnezzar's son-in-law. Nabonidus was king of Babylon when this story took place and Belshazzar was his co-regent. However, Nabonidus was not in Babylon, he was out fighting the Medes and the Persians. This left Belshazzar to rule. Approximately 10 to 15 years into King Belshazzar's reign, Daniel was called to interpret some mysterious writing on a wall.

INTRODUCTION

Has there ever been a time you heard a friend brag about getting away with something that was wrong? Or, maybe you have done something wrong, and you think you have gotten away with it. King Belshazzar did something wrong and he thought he got away with it. God sent a message and set him straight.

Progression of Events

There are times in life when you may have insecure feelings. What do you do when you have these feelings? Was Belshazzar suffering with insecurity when he gave an elaborate feast for his leading men? He may have had a false sense of security, which in his heart led him to insecure feelings. The city walls of Babylon were high and the Euphrates River ran through the city giving plenty of water to the residents, but the Persians were just outside these walls. What better way to get your mind off your troubles than to be self-

centered and give an elaborate party?

- King Belshazzar gave a great feast for a thousand of his men and the king drank in front of his men. It was unheard of for a king to drink with his lords. It was considered beneath the king's dignity to do such a thing.

- Belshazzar gave the command to have the gold and silver goblets, which King Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, be brought to the banquet. This action by the king shows total contempt for God.

- Belshazzar had his guests, men and women drink from the goblets. They toasted their pagan gods, which were made of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone. Note; women were never invited to a banquet. When men gathered for a feast, women were known to hold their own party. Read Esther 1:1-9.

- As the king and his guests partied, drinking from the temple goblets, part of a man's hand appeared. Suddenly the merriment of the drunken orgy gave way to silent fear. The hand wrote on the wall. It frightened the king.

- The king's attitude changed. He became so frightened the joints in his hips loosened and his knees knocked against each other.

- The king cried out for all the wise men of Babylon to come to the banquet hall and interpret the writing on the wall.

- The reward to the one who could interpret the saying was a purple coat and a gold chain. A purple coat was a sign of wealth. It was a symbol of status and considered very valuable. In addition to the purple coat and gold chain, this individual would be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom.

- Although the wise men were offered a great reward, they were unable to interpret the message on the wall.
- The king was troubled and all his lords were astonished. The queen heard the commotion (the queen was either Belshazzar's mother or grandmother) from the banquet hall and came to investigate.
- The queen spoke saying, "O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts trouble you, nor let your countenance change. There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the Spirit of the Holy God. And in the days of your father, light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods were found in him. King Nebuchadnezzar made him chief of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans and soothsayers. In so much as an excellent spirit, knowledge, understanding, interpreting dreams, solving riddles, and explaining enigmas were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belshazzar, now let Daniel be called and he will give the interpretation" (Daniel 5:10-12). For the queen to know so much about Daniel and his dealings with Nebuchadnezzar she more than likely was Belshazzar's grandmother.
- Belshazzar took the queen's advice and brought Daniel in. He tried to belittle Daniel by referring to him as a captive brought from Judah.
- The king told Daniel what he heard about him and then went on to promise the same rewards to Daniel he promised his wise men.
- Daniel told him he could keep his gifts. Here is a sure sign Daniel had no respect for Belshazzar. Daniel did accept Nebuchadnezzar's gifts, therefore, he did respect him.
- Daniel's reply reminds the king how God dealt with Nebuchadnezzar's sinful pride. Daniel tells of the lessons learned by Nebuchadnezzar when God dealt with him.
- In chapter four, we read about the testimony Nebuchadnezzar gave to all peoples of the earth. Surely, Belshazzar knew of God's power and hatred of sin, and he should have known better than to defy God. Daniel says, "But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this" (Daniel 5:22).
- Daniel confronts Belshazzar with his sin. "You have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. They have brought the vessels [goblets] of His house before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines have drunk wine from them. You have praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know; and the God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified. The fingers of the hand were sent from Him, and this writing was written" (Daniel 5:22-24).
- This was the inscription on the wall, "Mene, Mene, Tekel Upharsin."
- The interpretation is this; "Mene: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; Tekel: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; [Belshazzar's character lacked—he was a light weight and did not measure up to God's standard of righteousness] Peres: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians" (Daniel 5:26, 27).
- Belshazzar gave the command, and Daniel was clothed in purple, the gold chain was put around his neck and the proclamation was made that he was the third ruler in the kingdom.
- That night Belshazzar was killed and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom. History tells us the course of the river, which ran under the city was redirected by the Medes and Persians allowing them to enter under the city walls on the dry riverbed.
- This event fulfilled not only what Daniel had interpreted on the wall, but also the prophecy in Isaiah 47:1-5 and the second kingdom of the silver chest and arms of the image described in Daniel 2. God dealt harshly with Babylon because they offended Him with promiscuity, permissiveness, pride and the general evils of a sinful nation.

"BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART, FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD."

The "pure in heart" will be "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (II Corinthians 10:5). A pure heart means to be cleansed from sin. Belshazzar was not "pure in heart". Don't be fooled into thinking God will allow just a little sin. Jesus shed his blood and paid the price for your sins, your salvation will not be taken away from a little sin, but your reward in the kingdom

may not be as great. God does hold you personally responsible for living a Christian life. God will discipline you for sin. How do you get a pure heart? Read your Bible and learn God's standard for true Christianity. Go to God in prayer and confess your sins. Learn from Belshazzar's story. You don't want God to reach down and discipline you for doing wrong. Develop a pure heart by confessing your sins to God.

"BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS, FOR THEY SHALL BE CALLED THE CHILDREN OF GOD."

Darius found personal peace in the miracle of the den of lions. He recognized God is sovereign. Darius saw the glory of God and he found personal peace in that knowledge. Only Jesus Christ can bring genuine peace to a troubled world. If you are a peacemaker, you are living evidence of God's love.

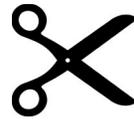
MEMORY VERSE

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." I John 1:9.

QUESTIONS

For class discussion ask your student the following:

1. What was the sin Belshazzar committed that brought him down?
2. Your body is the temple of God. Are you doing anything to desecrate it?
3. Does the possibility of God's discipline affect your choices?
4. There is a phrase the queen used to describe Daniel. It is the same phrase Nebuchadnezzar had used. What is it?
5. When Belshazzar fell as King, was this the end of the Babylonian Kingdom?
6. What prophecies were fulfilled when Babylon fell?
7. Why did God judge the Babylonian empire so severely?



**CRAFT:
APPEARING MESSAGE**

Materials

Photocopy following page.
Make copies according to the number of students in your class.
Lemon juice
Salt
Paintbrushes
Crayons

Directions

1. Give each student a piece of the photocopied paper.
2. Dip a paintbrush in lemon juice and write "pure in heart" on the paper. You will probably need to do this for the younger children.
3. While the writing is still wet sprinkle salt over the letters.
4. Once the writing is completely dry, brush salt away.
5. Rub a crayon over the paper and a message will appear.

DANIEL Lesson 6

Daniel in the Lion's Den

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my name sake.

When Daniel was called to the drunken feast, given by Belshazzar, King of Babylon he was an old man. Daniel did what none of the wise men could do he interpreted the mysterious writing on the wall. The writing told Belshazzar his kingdom would be taken from him and given to another. That night the army of Cyrus took over the city without a struggle. During the years of Darius' rule, he appointed men to be presidents and Daniel was one. The other presidents were jealous of Daniel and tricked Darius into signing a law, which prohibited praying to anyone other than Darius. Daniel was found guilty and his sentence was to die in the den of lions.

INTRODUCTION

The Babylonian kingdom was gone and replaced by the Medo-Persian Empire. This new empire was represented in Nebuchadnezzar's dream as the arms of silver. Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom was the head of gold and he did not share his authority with anyone. Darius on the other hand shared his leadership with 120 princes. He appointed three presidents who were liaisons between the princes and the kings. With each new ruler, Daniel continued to hold a highly respected position. In chapter three the question is asked about where was Daniel when his friends were thrown into the fiery furnace? A similar question could be asked now, where were Daniel's three friends when he was thrown in the lions' den?

PROGRESSION OF EVENTS

Darius appointed three governors to be the liaison between the princes and him. Daniel was one such governor. When viewing this from a human perspective it is odd because Daniel by this time was an old man. He was a foreigner and in an entirely new regime. Once again we see the sovereignty of God.

- From the time Daniel's story is told we read of a man who always did his personal best. This was the story of Daniel's life. Daniel did such an exceptional job for Darius, that the king decided to set him over the entire kingdom (Daniel 6:3).

- It is the course of human nature for the other two governors to be jealous of Daniel. They tried to "find some charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find no charge or fault..."(Daniel 6:4).

- Frustrated, these men plotted to use Daniel's faithfulness against him. These men who plotted committed the sin of jealousy. They had hatred and murder in their hearts. These men said, "We shall not find any charge against this Daniel unless we find it against him concerning the law of his God" (Daniel 6:5). There is no doubt by their actions they knew Daniel would face his life being in danger rather than be unfaithful to God. Be forewarned, anytime you hold the number one position in school, sports, politics, or church you will be watched. If there is a flaw in your character, your enemies will be sure to point it out. Daniel led a remarkable life and there were no marks to be found on his character.

- These evil men knew how to stroke Darius' ego to achieve their goal. "O King Darius, live forever! All the governors of the kingdom, the administrators and satraps, the counselors and advisers, have consulted together to establish a royal statute and to make a firm decree, that whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O king, establish the decree and sign the writing, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter" (Daniel 6:6-8). These evil men gave a laundry list of men who all agreed and wanted to pay tribute to the king. How could the king refuse? This decree put Darius right up there with the other gods.

From the time Daniel heard of this decree, he continued to do what he had always done. "When Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days" (Daniel 6:10).

- In lesson one, we learned how Daniel "purposed in his heart" not to defile his body with the king's food. He went to the chief eunuch and requested that he be excused from eating and drinking the food from the king's table. (Daniel 1:8). This time Daniel did not appeal to anyone. He certainly could have gone to the king and told him what these evil men were up to, but he chose not to.

- Daniel's enemies waited for him to pray to God. They did not have to wait long.

- Immediately they went to the king and reminded him of his decree, "Have you not signed a decree that every man who petitions any god or man within thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered, this is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians" (Daniel 6:12,13).

- Daniel's opponents answered the king, "Daniel, who is one of the captives from Judah, does not show due regard for you, O king, or for the decree that you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day" (Daniel 6:14).

- The moment the king heard this, he new the seriousness of his mistake. He labored to deliver Daniel till the sun went down.

- Darius was powerless to change the law of the Medes and Persians.

- Reluctantly, Darius commanded Daniel be cast into the den of lions. The king spoke to Daniel, "Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you." These words demonstrate the deep respect Darius, a heathen king, had for Daniel and his God.

- The king returned to his palace and spent the night fasting, he enjoyed no entertainment and he could not sleep.

- The king rose early in the morning and went in haste to the den of lions.

- When Darius got there, he said, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?" (Daniel 6:20).

- Then Daniel said, "O king, live forever! My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you" (Daniel 6:21, 22).

- Imagine how excited the king must have been. The king commanded Daniel to be removed from the den. When Daniel appeared, there was no injury found on him because he believed in his God.

- Darius commanded those who had accused Daniel to be thrown into the den of lions—they, their children and wives.

- Darius sent out a decree to all the peoples that dwelt in the nations. "Every dominion of my kingdom men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. For He is the living God, and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion shall endure to the end. He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in heaven and on earth. He has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions" (Daniel 6:26-27). This is Darius' personal testimony. It is very similar to the testimony Nebuchadnezzar gave in Daniel 4:1).

- The Bible does not tell us how long Daniel lived after this event with the lions. We do know the Bible says he prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

- This chapter opens with a new regime in place and it ends with a decree from a king whose life was changed

"BLESSED ARE THEY WHICH ARE PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN."

Those who do not conform to the ways of the world often find themselves faced with opposition. Daniel did not hesitate to practice his faith in front of his enemies. When you surrender to obey Almighty God, you put yourself at odds with the world. You may not face the same degree of persecution Daniel did, but you will be persecuted, rejected or opposed in some way. Paul wrote, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (II Timothy 3:12). Jesus said, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of

evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matthew 5:11-12). In the Kingdom of God there is a reward for all who cherish the Word of God and stand firm in their faith. Daniel was delivered from death just as his three friends were delivered from the fiery furnace. In both of these cases, deliverance was God's plan. As a Christian, God does not promise smooth sailing and no trials for those who follow Him. The depth of your character will be revealed when you are under pressure. Daniel never complained about his pain. He had a consistent attitude of faith and used every opportunity for growth.

BLESSED ARE YE, WHEN MEN SHALL REVILE YOU, AND PERSECUTE YOU, AND SHALL SAY ALL MANNER OF EVIL AGAINST YOU FALSELY, FOR MY NAME SAKE.

Just as in Daniel's day, we too live in a hostile world. No matter the challenge that came to Daniel, he actively stood strong. We too need to actively live out our faith for the glory of God. When we do we take to heart the promise our our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, "Theirs is the kingdom of God".

MEMORY VERSE

"When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Proverbs 16:7).

QUESTIONS

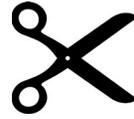
For class discussion ask your students the following:

1. Since Daniel's enemies couldn't find a flaw in his character, how did they decide to deal with him?
2. Did they set the king up to make their plan work?
3. How did Daniel look when he came out of the lion's den?
4. Did Daniel's accusers reap what they sowed? Explain.
5. What did the king command every one to do?
6. How was Daniel's faithfulness rewarded?
7. Now that you know Daniel a little better, what

would you say he did in his life to please the Lord?

8. Read James 1:3-4 and explain how these verses apply to Daniel.

9. Should you only obey God if you are assured of his safety and deliverance from trouble?



CRAFT: PUZZLE PIECE LION

Materials

Puzzle pieces
Orange paint
Paper plates
Crayons
Ribbon or yarn
Stapler
Markers
Glue

Preparation

Prior to Sabbath school, paint one side of the puzzle pieces orange. Note: Inexpensive puzzles can be purchased at thrift stores.

Directions

1. Give each student a paper plate. With a yellow crayon, color the plate.
2. Give each student a strand of yarn or ribbon. Fold it in half and staple the ends to the edge of the plate. This will allow the students to hang up their lions.
3. Glue puzzle pieces around the plate to create the lion's mane.
4. Using markers, have each student draw a mouth, nose and eyes for the lion. You may want to make sure they draw the face so that when the lion hangs, his face isn't sideways or upside-down.
5. On the other side of the plate, write one of the following scriptures; "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it" (Luke 11:28). Or, "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (I Peter 5:7).