



God Protects Daniel's Friends

Daniel 3



LESSON GOAL

Students will make worshiping the Lord their first priority.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to

- Explain why Daniel's friends disobeyed the king.
- Summarize what happened after the three Jews were thrown into the furnace.
- Analyze what God revealed about Himself by rescuing the three Jews.

KEY VERSE

"Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, 'Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God!'" (Daniel 3:28).

APPLICATION

- Be willing to suffer when you worship the Lord.
- Testify to God's greatness by living an obedient life.
- Keep yourself from idols.

NEXT WEEK

God Humbles Nebuchadnezzar
Read Daniel 4.

Symbol Key



Craft



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Activity



Q & A



Work Sheet



2 Grade Level

PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

"Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul....You shall teach them to your children" (Deuteronomy 11:18–19).

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God's Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here to aid you in understanding the Scripture.

Bible Background

Daniel and his friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego found themselves in a difficult situation while in Babylon. The Lord had used Daniel to reveal to King Nebuchadnezzar His plan for human history (Dan. 2). Although God's kingdom one day would fill the earth and last forever (2:44), a series of Gentile nations would have dominion over Israel until then. While under Gentile control, Israel was faced with the decision of how they would live as God's people in an environment hostile to God. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego had already chosen to please God and risk punishment when they chose not to eat the king's food (Dan. 1). In Daniel 3, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego would face an even more intense challenge when they had to choose between worshiping an idol and being thrown into a fiery furnace. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were willing to die rather than worship a false god. Everyone who desires to please God likewise must be committed to worshiping Him alone, regardless of the cost.

Nebuchadnezzar Commands Idol Worship (Dan. 3:1–7)

Nebuchadnezzar had been amazed at the ability of Daniel's God to reveal his dream and its meaning, but he did not respond by worshiping God. Nebuchadnezzar should have been humbled by the fact that his kingdom was under God's control. Instead, he usurped God's authority and commanded all his officials to worship an image that he set up. Perhaps inspired by the statue he had seen in his dream, Nebuchadnezzar built a 90-foot-tall image, covered the entire image in gold, and set it in the midst of a plain (Dan. 3:1). The king commanded his government officials to stand before the image and join in unified worship by falling before the idol when they heard "the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery" (3:5). Officials from a variety of "peoples, nations, and languages" (3:4) were commanded to demonstrate their loyalty and submission by worshiping as Nebuchadnezzar had instructed. Those who disobeyed would "be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace" (3:6). The furnace most likely had been used in the construction of the image. Furnaces had an opening on top (in which to pour the ore to be smelted), as well as an opening on the side (in which to place charcoal and wood for fuel). The furnace, with flames and smoke shooting out, provided whatever motivation the assembled officials needed. In unity, "all the people, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the gold image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up" (3:7).

Nebuchadnezzar Threatens Daniel's Friends (Daniel 3:8–18)

While the reader is anxious to hear how Daniel and his friends responded to the command, the narrator only slowly reveals what the Jews did (and never even mentions Daniel, who possibly was excluded from accusation because of his high position or was away governing affairs in Babylon). Some of the magicians

("Chaldeans") came to the king and announced that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego had not bowed down before the idol. They said to the king, "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" (3:12). The magicians understood that King Nebuchadnezzar would take disobedience as a personal insult to his greatness. Perhaps jealous of the positions these young Jews held, the magicians pitted the faith of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego against the pride of Nebuchadnezzar.

Nebuchadnezzar could not believe that anyone would be so bold and foolish as to disobey him. In "rage and fury" (3:13), he commanded Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego to come before him and threatened that if they did not worship the image, they would be thrown into the furnace. Nebuchadnezzar finished his tirade by asking, "And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?" (3:15). Even Nebuchadnezzar's previous encounter with the God of Israel (Dan. 2) did not lead him to believe that God was more powerful than him. Nebuchadnezzar had exalted himself above the gods of the nations, and the gods of every other nation had yielded to Nebuchadnezzar's demands. Surely the God of the Jews would not be able to stand against the mighty Nebuchadnezzar either!

Although able to smell the smoke and see the flames from the furnace, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego expressed unwavering confidence in God. They were so unashamed of God that they did not even apologize for their faith or make an excuse for their disobedience (3:16). They were confident that God could and would deliver them from the fiery furnace (3:17). Their faith was not just empty hope that everything would work out in the end. They knew and served God (3:17). Their past obedience to Him had grown their present confidence in Him. Nebuchadnezzar had boasted in the power of his hand, but to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, being in the king's hand was nothing compared to being in God's hand. Ultimately, whether or not God saved them, their faith would not be shaken. They answered Nebuchadnezzar, "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" (3:18). Even if God chose to glorify His name by the death of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, they would worship only Him.

Nebuchadnezzar Punishes Daniel's Friends (Dan. 3:19–25)

Nebuchadnezzar proceeded with his threatened punishment but was surprised by the outcome. Even angrier than before, Nebuchadnezzar commanded that the furnace be made as hot as possible (Dan. 3:19). The temperature was so intense that the mighty soldiers who threw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego into the furnace were killed by the heat (3:22). Nebuchadnezzar was astonished when, instead of seeing the three bound men quickly consumed, he saw "four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire" (3:25). Although the furnace was hot enough to kill those near it, the men were not hurt. Looking at the fourth man, Nebuchadnezzar could only say, "The form of the fourth is like the Son of God" (literally "a son of the gods"; 3:25). Pagan Nebuchadnezzar was able to ascribe some kind of deity to the fourth man. Although called an "Angel" by Nebuchadnezzar in verse 28, the fourth man most likely was pre-incarnate Christ. (See Genesis 18:1–2, 10–13, where God came to Abraham in the form of a man.) God not only had rescued His saints from the fire, but He also had visited them, no doubt to comfort and encourage them.

Nebuchadnezzar Praises God (Dan. 3:26–30)

Because of what God had done for His servants, Nebuchadnezzar appreciated that the God of the Jews is God Most High. He identified Shadrach, Meshach, and

Abed-Nego as “servants of the Most High God” and called for them to come out of the fire (Dan. 3:26). When they came out, all the officials could see that the fire had not affected them: “The hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them” (3:27). Nebuchadnezzar then praised God because He had delivered His servants (3:28). Before God rescued His servants, their devotion had seemed empty to Nebuchadnezzar. But when he saw the power of God, Nebuchadnezzar praised the men for ignoring his word, yielding their bodies to be burned, and not worshiping any god except their God (3:28). Though not embracing God Most High as his own God, Nebuchadnezzar learned to respect God and commanded that all his subjects also respect Him. He even proclaimed that anyone who spoke “anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego” would be destroyed “because there is no other God who can deliver like this” (3:29). The men’s commitment to worship and God’s power to rescue worked together to convince Nebuchadnezzar that the God of Israel was unlike the gods of the nations.

Conclusion

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego served the same God believers serve today. God is unchanging, and as Nebuchadnezzar learned, there is no other God who mercifully works on behalf of His people. Although God is unchanging and always worthy of worship, believers are not always faithful in their worship of Him. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were willing to die rather than worship anything or anyone besides God. They had counted the cost and were committed to worship Him, whether or not He chose to deliver them. Many believers today are not as faithful. While balking at the idea of bowing to an idol, they quickly submit to other idols—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. While being quick to promise that they would die rather than forsake Christ, they choose not to die to themselves daily and do not place Christ first in their affections. But God is still a God who delivers. He does not let His children be tempted beyond what they can bear, and He will provide a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13). The Lord delivered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego as they faithfully followed Him, and He will do the same for every saint who takes up his cross daily and follows Him.

POINT TO THE TRUTH

*“Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth”
(Psalm 78:1).*

This section includes questions to review last week’s lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week’s lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



Review Questions

Use these questions to review and reinforce key truths.

Why did the king call all his wise men?

The king had a dream, and he wanted the wise men to tell him what the dream was before telling him what it meant.

Could any of the king’s wise men tell the king what his dream was about?

No. None of them could tell him about the dream.

What did the king do because no one could tell him his dream?
He said that all the wise men would be killed.

What did Daniel do when he heard the news of the death sentence?
Daniel asked the king for some time before the killing of all the wise men. Daniel and his friends prayed, asking God to have mercy and reveal the dream so that they would not die.

How did God answer Daniel?
God revealed the king's dream to Daniel.

What did Daniel tell the king?
Daniel said that the God of heaven revealed the dream and its meaning. Daniel told the two parts of the dream to the king. After telling the dream, Daniel explained what the dream meant.

What did the king's dream mean?
Daniel said that God had given Nebuchadnezzar his kingdom, power, strength, and glory. He explained what the statue meant and said that each of the levels in the statue represented a group that would come to power after Babylon.



Nebuchadnezzar Says

In ancient times, a king's instructions were to be carefully obeyed. By not bowing down to the golden statue, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego showed that they were attentive to God's Word and had a bold confidence in God. Introduce the students to the lesson by playing a game of "Simon Says." In this case though, it's "Nebuchadnezzar Says," and there are certain actions that the students must not do, even if Nebuchadnezzar says to do them. Show them what actions they are not to do before starting the game. They are going to have to pay careful attention to your instructions. In the same way, Shadrach and his friends had to pay careful attention to God's Word so that they would not disobey God even when the king told them to.



But I Did Right!

Ask the students for some examples of wrong things they have done and been punished for. Have they ever done something good and been punished for it? In today's lesson we learn about three of Daniel's friends who did something right were punished for it.



What's That Smoky Smell?

When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were thrown into the fire, they came out not smelling like smoke. Blindfold some students and ask them what various substances smell like. Bring in a variety of things that they would recognize. In one of the containers have liquid smoke. It has a smoky aroma. This is what something in or near a fire should smell like. Then bring out an empty canister. Let the students sniff this. There is no smell. God protected Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego so much so that there was not even a smell of smoke on the men.



Guess Who's in the Furnace?

Tell the students that when Meshach, Shadrach, and Abed-Nego were thrown into the fiery furnace, Nebuchadnezzar saw another person in the fire with them. Play a game called "Guess Who's in the Furnace?" Have all the students stand up,

spread out, and close their eyes. Quietly tap one of the students on the shoulder and have him come out with you (without touching the other students). He can wait outside the door with a teacher. Then, have the rest of the children rearrange themselves. When the children open their eyes again, have them look around and try to guess the child who is missing. The child who guesses correctly wins. When the game has been played a few times, instruct the children to listen to today's lesson and see if they can tell who the fourth person in the furnace was.

PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

"Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done" (Psalm 78:4).

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included that you can use to proclaim your worship to God. Use the lesson questions to check the students' understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use during the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done directly from the Bible.

Bible Lesson

Introduction

Have you ever touched a hot stove or a fire and been burned? Just a little burn can hurt very much. What do you think would happen if you were to walk into a giant oven? In today's lesson we will learn about three of Daniel's friends, who were put into a very hot oven and were not burned. Not only that, but there also was someone else already in the fire. Let's listen and find out what happened.



Leadoff Questions (LOQs)

LOQ: What were the names of Daniel's friends?

Answer: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego.

LOQ: What did Nebuchadnezzar build?

Answer: King Nebuchadnezzar built a great statue that was 90 feet tall.

LOQ: What did the king require the people to do?

Answer: Nebuchadnezzar required that everyone bow down and worship the statue when they heard the instruments play.

LOQ: What did Nebuchadnezzar say would happen to anyone who would not bow down and worship the idol?

Answer: The king said that anyone who did not bow down and worship the idol would be thrown into the fiery furnace and burned alive.

LOQ: What had Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego decided to do when everyone else worshiped the statue?

Answer: They decided that it was better for them to obey God than it was to obey the king. They decided that they would not bow down when they heard the

instruments play. They knew it could mean that they would be killed for not worshipping, but they decided that they would do what was right.

LOQ: What did the king do when he heard that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego would not bow down to the idol?

Answer: The king called for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. He was very angry and gave them a second chance to obey him. He said that when they heard the music again, they were to fall down and worship the idol.

LOQ: How did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answer the king?

Answer: They answered the king by saying that they would not bow down and worship the idol. They knew that the God whom they served was able to deliver them.

LOQ: What did Nebuchadnezzar do to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego?

Answer: He had the furnace made as hot as it could get and had Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego thrown into the fire.

LOQ: What happened when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were thrown into the fire?

Answer: When they entered the fire, they were not burned. When the king and his men looked into the fire, they saw four men and not three. They also saw that the men had not burned but were fine inside the fire.

LOQ: What did the king do when he saw the four men in the fire?

Answer: Nebuchadnezzar said that the fourth person in the fire was like "the Son of God" (3:25). He called the men out of the fire and praised the men for ignoring his word. He even said that if anyone said anything bad about God, they would be cut into small pieces. Nebuchadnezzar praised the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego.

Summary

The Israelites were given a difficult challenge. They were to live godly lives in a place where people did not love God. This was a very difficult thing to do, but it was what God expected from them. King Nebuchadnezzar was king at this time, and he built a great big statue. It was 90 feet tall! Nebuchadnezzar also made a law that anyone who did not bow down and worship the statue would be thrown into a fiery furnace. This may have frightened many people, but Daniel's friends knew that it was better to obey God than the king. They chose not to bow down, and this angered the king. He sent Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego to the furnace to be burned. The king was so angry that he had the furnace made even hotter that day, so hot that it even killed the soldiers nearby. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were thrown into the fire, and the most unusual thing happened. They weren't burned. In fact, their clothes did not even smell like smoke. While they were in the fire, a fourth person could be seen. All of this amazed the king, and he called them back out of the furnace. Because God had protected Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, King Nebuchadnezzar praised God.

Application

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego served the same God as believers do today. God does not change. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were faithful to God by doing what was right, even when it was very difficult. They were even willing to die



A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards

Use appropriate A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards with the lesson.



Betty Lukens Flannelgraph

Use appropriate flannelgraph pieces with the lesson.



Being Obedient Is Hard Work

Begin the lesson by asking the students to perform a task that is easy at first but then gets more and more difficult (for example, holding your arms out straight in front of your body, sitting still with your finger on your lips, etc.). Begin telling the story, and have the students fold their arms when they fail to obey your instructions. By midway through the lesson, there should be only a few students who are still obeying. Why were the others not able to obey? Following an instruction may be easy at first, but it can become very difficult over time, especially when the people around you no longer are trying to obey. Tell the students the rest of the story, explaining that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego's decision not to bow down to the idol was difficult; it could have cost them their lives. As everyone else in Babylon bowed down, it must have been difficult for these three believers to do what was right and trust God. This provides a good opportunity to explain the gospel to the students. Tell them that we can never fully obey God; it becomes too difficult. That is why we need Jesus to forgive our sins and give us the ability to obey.



What Was It Like?

During the lesson, help the students understand what it might have been like to be there with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. If you were to ask the students whether they would bow down to a golden idol, they probably would say no. But if they had actually been in that situation, it would be much harder to say no. There were many people there who were all bowing down and obeying. It may have been easy for someone to do what everyone else was doing. In addition, their lives were threatened if they disobeyed. Explain that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego's faith in God was great. They trusted in God's sovereign hand rather than obeying the king's sinful requests.

Praise and Worship

Awesome God

Come, Let Us Worship and Bow Down

God Is So Good

God Will Take Care of You

Great Is Thy Faithfulness

My God is So Great

O-B-E-D-I-E-N-C-E

Oh, Be Careful

Trust and Obey

PRACTICE THE TRUTH

"That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments" (Psalm 78:7).

Choose ideas from this section to review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



1
2

"First-Place Ribbon"

Materials: copies of the "First-Place Ribbon" craft page on blue paper, scissors, glue, crayons

Directions: Give each student a copy of the craft page. Have the students cut out the ribbon pieces and then assemble the ribbon by gluing together the circles and strips. They should glue the heart to the center of the circle. During craft time, explain that a blue ribbon represents a first-place award. Talk about who or what takes first place in the students' hearts—whom or what they love and serve most. Have them circle "God" and cross out "self" and "idols." Talk about what it means to have God in first place and what it means when we put idols or ourselves first. Encourage the students to take their ribbons home to discuss them with their parents.



Fire Painting

Materials: uncoated paper plates, food coloring (red, orange, and yellow or brown), water bottle, crayons

Directions: Sprinkle drops of food coloring onto a paper plate. Then spray the plate with water droplets. The food coloring will run and smear, making a pattern that resembles fire. Allow the plate to dry. As it does, the students can color pictures of Shadrach, Meshach, Abed-Nego, and a fourth figure in the fire. Have them cut the furnace out and glue it onto the "fire." It should look as though the men are standing in the midst of the flames. Talk about why Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were thrown into the fire. They would not bow down to the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had built. And the Most High God had a plan to save them.



Into the Fiery Furnace

Materials: two paper plates per student, red and yellow crepe paper or tissue paper, copies of the "Into the Fiery Furnace" craft page, crayons, stapler, glue, three wooden craft sticks per student, scissors

Directions: Before class, cut about an inch off the top of the paper plates. Place two plates together, and staple around the edges to create a pocket. (The cut-off portion will be the pocket opening.) During class, give each student a paper-plate pocket and a copy of the craft page. Direct the students to color the pictures and cut them out. They should then glue the coloring sheet to one side of a paper plate, aligned so that the cut-off portion of the plate is at the top. The heads of Daniel's friends should be glued to the ends of the craft sticks. The tissue paper and craft sticks can be put inside the paper plate and glued. It should appear as though the three men are standing in the flames. Allow time for the glue to dry.



2
3

"God Protects Daniel's Friends"

Use this work sheet to reinforce the key truths of today's lesson. The work sheet is located at the back of the lesson.



Journal Page: "Making the Right Choice"

Give each student a copy of the journal page at the back of this lesson. The students can complete the page individually, in small groups, or at home.

Coloring Pages

Give each student a copy of the coloring pages at the back of the lesson. Students can color the pages in class or at home.



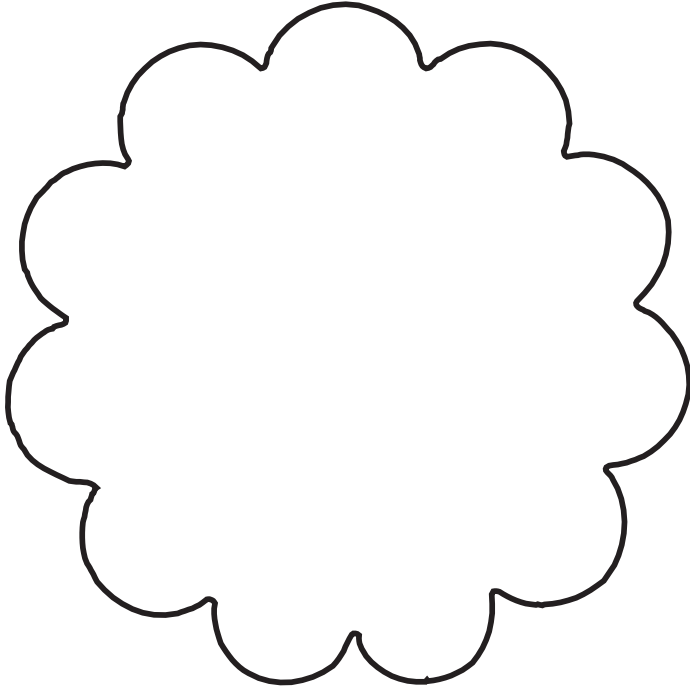
MEMORY VERSE

"Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said..., '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'" (Daniel 3:16a, 17b).

Into the Fiery Furnace



First-Place Ribbon



God
self
idols

Daniel
3:1-18

God *Protects* Daniel's friends



Daniel 3

Name _____

1. What did Nebuchadnezzar make? _____

2. What did Nebuchadnezzar want the people to do? _____

3. What would happen to those who did not worship the statue? _____

4. Why did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego disobey Nebuchadnezzar? _____

5. What happened to the mighty soldiers who threw Daniel's friends into the furnace?

6. Were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego burned by the fire? _____

7. How did Nebuchadnezzar respond to God delivering the three men from the furnace?

Making the Right Choice

“Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, ‘Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king’s word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their God!’” (Daniel 3:28).

What does it mean to be a faithful Christian? Does it mean going to church on Sunday, reading the Bible, and singing praises to God?

Faithful Christians do all these things willingly from the heart, but they do even more. Just as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego said “no” when everyone around them was saying “yes” to a false god, faithful Christians obey God regardless of the circumstances. They know it is better to obey God than man.

From your Sunday school lesson today, fill in the chart below to show how Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were faithful to God.

Circumstance	
King	
God	
Shadrach, Meshach, & Abed-Nego Chose	

Do you think their choice was easy? _____

Making the Right Choice

“Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, ‘Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king’s word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their God!’” (Daniel 3:28).

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Circumstance	
King	
God	
Shadrach, Meshach, & Abed-Nego Chose	

Do you think their choice was easy? _____

Just as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were faithful, God wants us to be faithful. Fill out the chart below to tell how you can be a faithful Christian.

I am in this circumstance	
Some people have made this wrong choice	
God has said to	
I can be faithful by choosing to	

When it is not easy to make the right choice, or when you make the wrong choice, what should you do?

Sometimes it is not easy to be a faithful, obedient Christian, but God is faithful; He does not let His children be tempted beyond what they can bear. He provides a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13). The Lord delivered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, and He is willing to deliver you, too. Just ask Him.

PRAYER

Thank the Lord for being faithful to you. Tell Him about the times you were not faithful to Him, and ask Him to forgive you. He is loving and kind and willing to forgive, and He will help you to be faithful.

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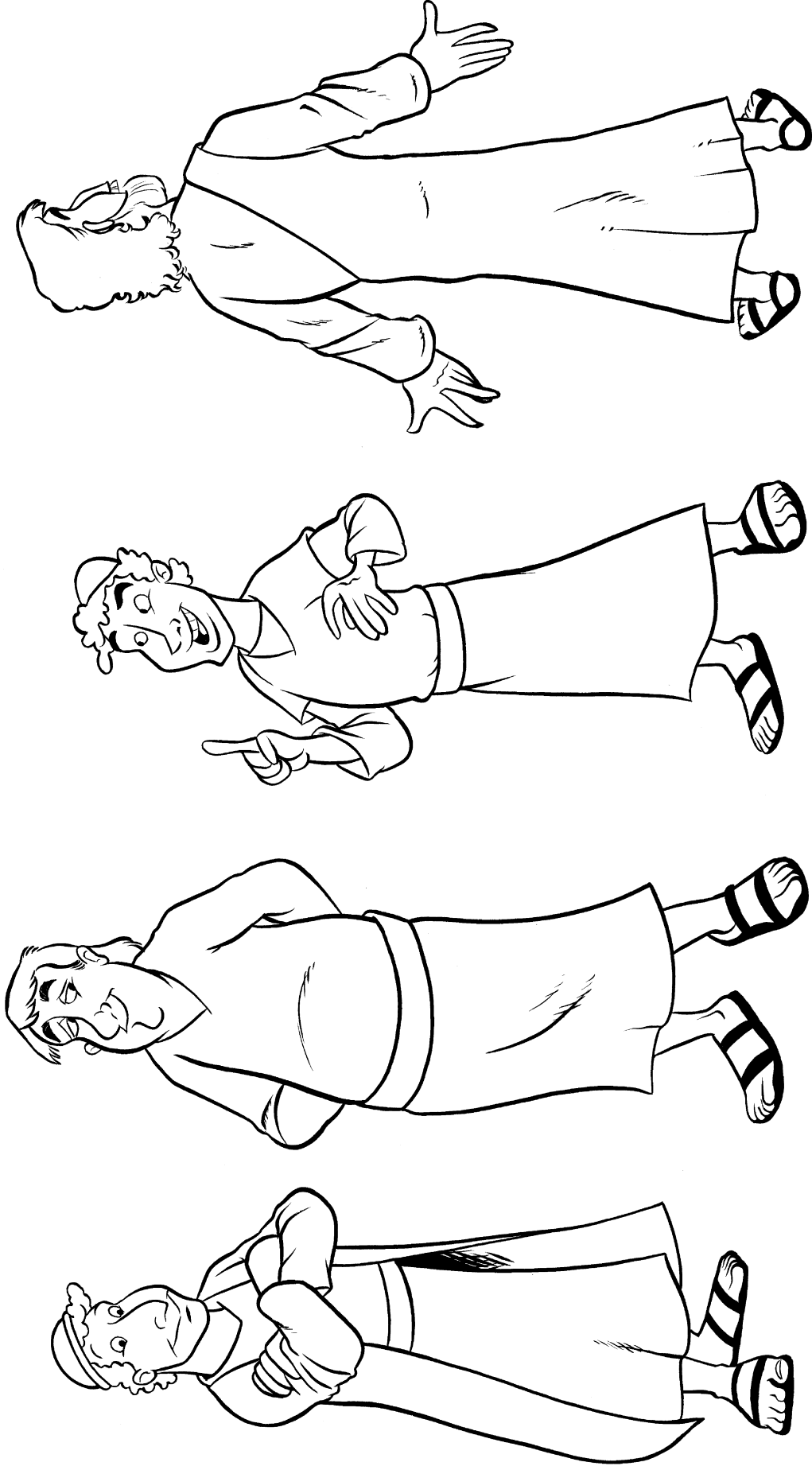
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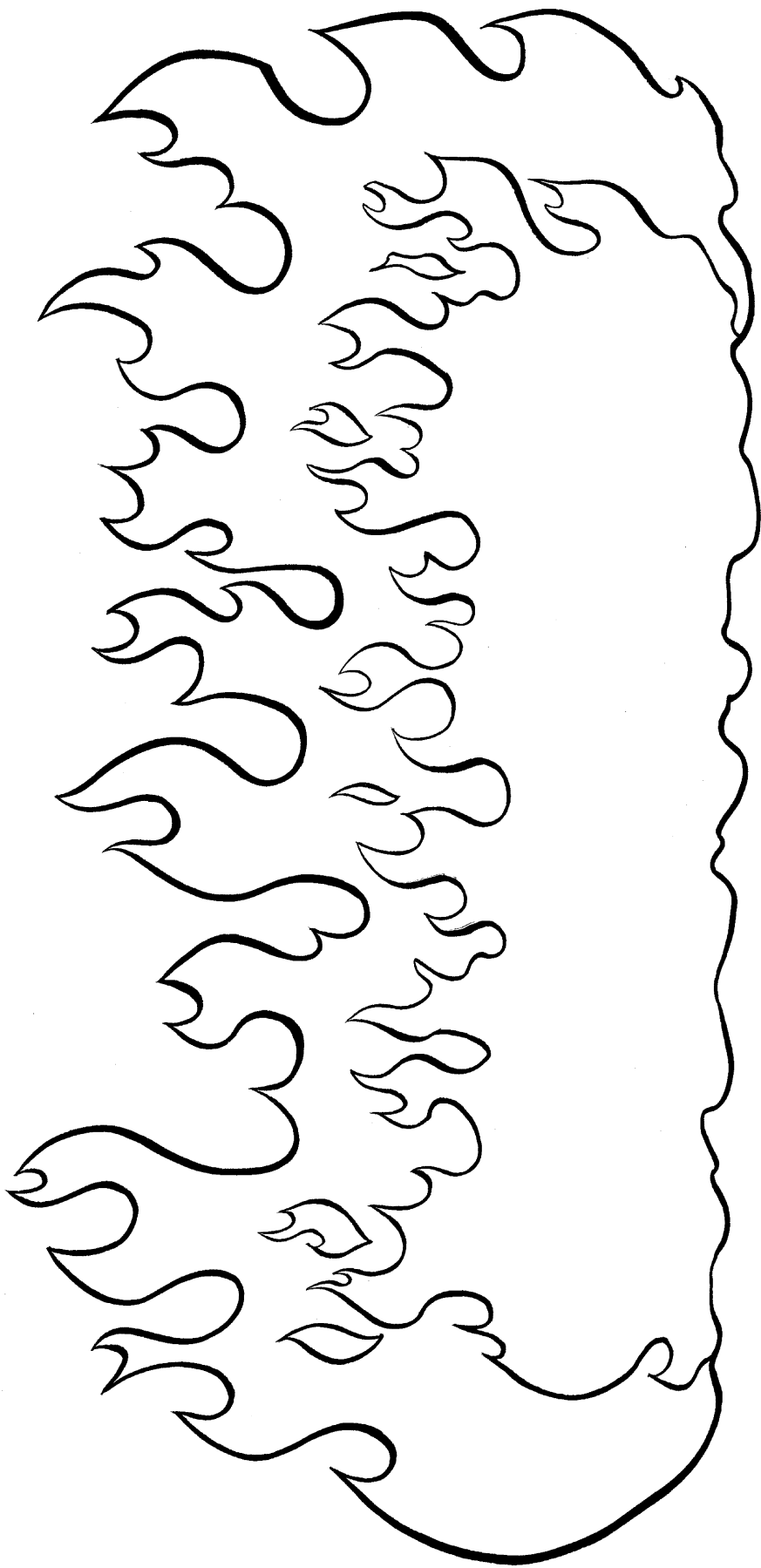
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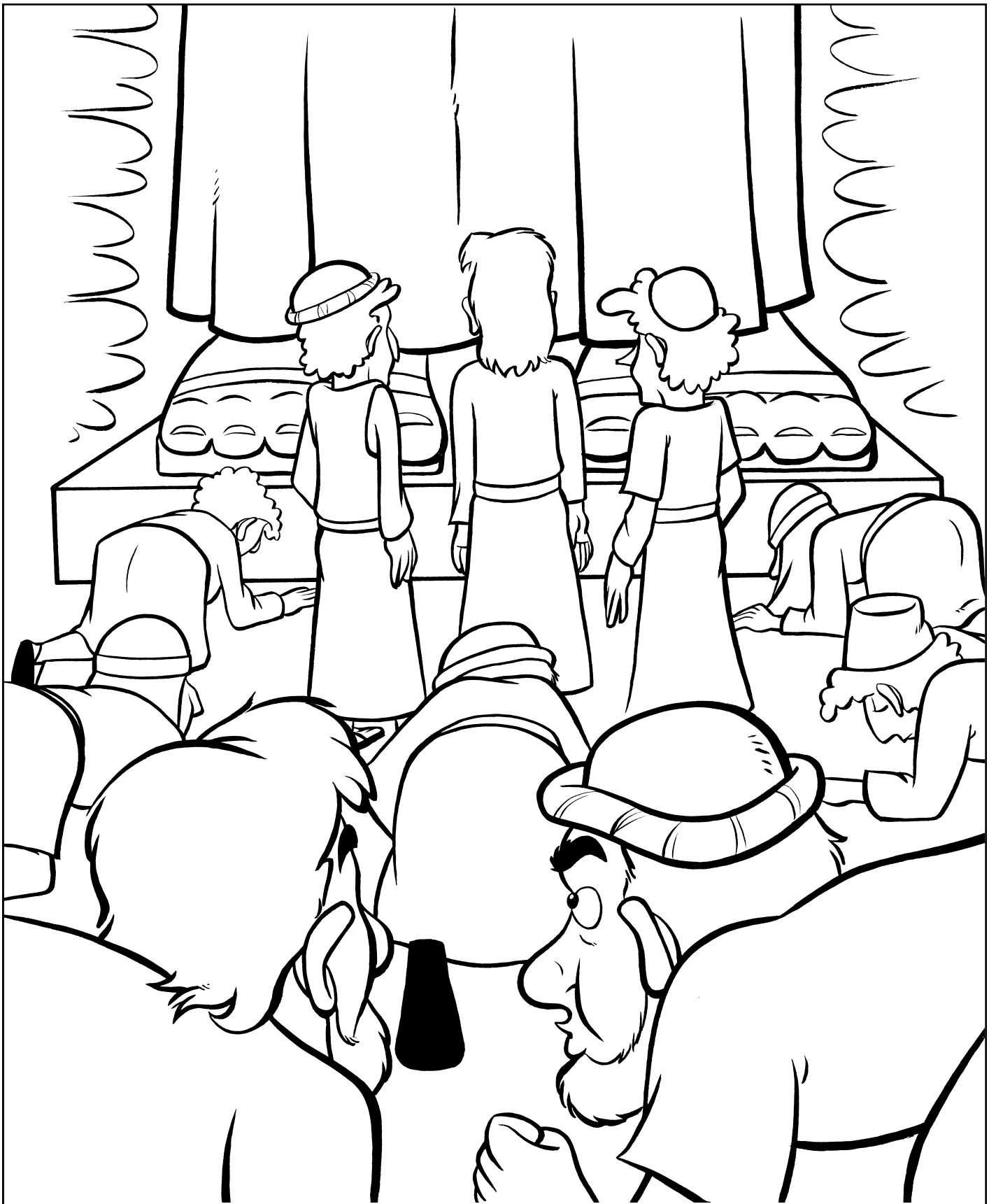
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PRAYER

Thank the Lord for being faithful to you. Tell Him about the times you were not faithful to Him, and ask Him to forgive you. He is loving and kind and willing to forgive, and He will help you to be faithful.







“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).



“Look!” he answered, ‘I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God’” (Daniel 3:25).

