

# Lesson One: Decide Now to Stand Strong (Middle School)

## Lesson Theme

In a culture that discourages devotion to God, I will determine now to discipline myself to stand strong for God!

## Theme Verse

“... Daniel was determined not to violate God’s law and defile himself...”

(Daniel 1:8 VOICE)

“... Daniel resolved not to defile himself...” (Daniel 1:8 NIV)

## Bible Story - Daniel in the Lions' Den

### Ice Breaker Questions

Start the class time with the ‘New Name’ Activity. [See instructions below.]

How did it make you feel to be called by a new, different name? How did you feel when someone introduced themselves using your name?

### Active Listening Activity

*Before sharing the Bible story, assign the following characters and props to students in your group:*

- |   |                         |
|---|-------------------------|
| 1) King Jehoiakim – King of Judah             | Crown w/his name on it. |
| 2) King Nebuchadnezzar – King of Babylon      | Crown w/his name on it. |
| 3) Daniel – Jewish teenager                   | Lanyard w/his name      |
| 4) Hananiah – Jewish teenager                 | Lanyard w/his name      |
| 5) Mishaël – Jewish teenager                  | Lanyard w/his name      |
| 6) Azariah – Jewish teenager                  | Lanyard w/his name      |
| 7) Chief Ashpenaz – Babylonian official       | Lanyard & toy sword     |
| 8) Guard – assigned to Daniel and his friends | Lanyard & toy sword     |

Divide the rest of the class into “Jews” and “Babylonians.” Have each group sit together. If you want, you can prepare self-adhesive name tags with “Jew” and “Babylonian” on them and give to the members of each group.

What You Need:

- *Lanyards can be a piece of poster board with string or ribbon attached to hang around neck . . . essentially a “sign” to designate each character.*
- *Crowns can be poster board/cardstock crowns covered in aluminum foil, or even Burger King crowns with name glued on the front.*

As you tell the following story, each character should stand when the story mentions him. The “Jews” should stand when you talk about King Jehoiakim. The “Babylonians” should stand when you mention Babylon. You may have to coach the students when to stand and when to be seated. Some coaching suggestions are included. The constant up-and-down movement is intentional and should add to the fun. A plus sign (+) in the story indicates movement of the characters.

### *Daniel I (Paraphrase)*

When Jehoiakim (+) ruled Judah way back in 605 B.C., his country was invaded by Babylon. (+) Babylon was a super-power during those days, and King Jehoiakim and the Jews could not stand against their power. As a result, Babylon captured Jerusalem, the capital city, and all of Judah. (*all seated*)

The King of Babylon (+) was named Nebuchadnezzar (+), and when he captured Jerusalem, he stole some of the expensive treasures from the Temple of God and took them back to Babylon and put them in the temple of his own god. (*all seated*)

King Nebuchadnezzar (+) had a military leader called Chief Ashpenaz. (+) The king gave Chief Ashpenaz an order to gather up some of the teen-aged boys in Judah and bring them to Babylon (+) so they could be trained to work in the king’s castle. The king told Chief Ashpenaz to only choose strong, handsome and smart boys. (*all seated*)

The Bible tells us the names of four of those boys . . . Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. (+)

When they finally reached Babylon, Chief Ashpenaz (+) put the four boys in school for education and training so they would be like other boys in Babylon. They were to do this for three years.

Chief Ashpenaz also changed their names to Babylonian names. Daniel was named Belteshazzar, Hananiah was named Shadrach, Mishael was named Meshach and Azariah was named Abednego. *(all seated)*

Daniel and his friends (+) were also given meat and wine and other foods from the king's (+) own dinner table. This was the best food in the land, and was prepared for the king and his staff. *(King seated)*

Daniel and his friends, however, made a personal decision that they would not eat the meat nor drink the wine because it would be breaking God's law to the Jews. God had told the Jews that they could not eat certain foods, like pork, and they were not to drink wine.

Since Daniel and his friends loved God very much and had been followers of God for a long time, they knew that eating these foods and drinking the wine would be disobeying God's rules. So they said "we can't do that!"

They went to Chief Ashpenaz (+) and asked if they could just have vegetables and water to eat. Chief Ashpenaz really liked Daniel and his friends, and really wanted to help them, but he was worried that the king (+) would be angry if he did not follow the rules! So Chief Ashpenaz said "I cannot change the king's rules." *(King seated)*

Chief Ashpenaz left the 4 boys in the care of a guard. (+) *(Ashpenaz seated)* So Daniel went to the guard and asked if they could eat meat and drink water for only ten days. Daniel told the guard that they would be stronger and healthier if they could only eat veggies and water for ten days . . . and then the guard could check them out and decide for himself.

The guard agreed on the 10-day diet of veggies and water. And then, at the end of ten days, the guard checked out Daniel and his friends, and sure enough! They looked healthier and they were stronger than all the rest of

the kids! So the guard agreed to let them eat veggies and water for the rest of the 3 years. (*Guard seated*)

Daniel and his friends got smarter and smarter, because God gave them their “smarts,” and God gave Daniel an extra-special ability to understand dreams! (*Daniel & friends seated*)

At the end of the three years, Chief Ashpenaz (+) brought Daniel and his friends (+) in to see the king. (+) The king spent some time talking to Daniel and his friends, and the king said that they were the smartest of all the kids, and he wanted them to be part of his crew. The king said that Daniel and his friends were ten times smarter than the king’s smartest men! The end! (*All seated*)

## Review Questions

What was the name of the King of Judah? What about the King of Babylon?

Who was Ashpenaz? What was his job?

Since these boys were from a very rural area, and were suddenly taken to a huge city, do you think they might have been scared? What might have been scary to them?

When you are in a new place—like a new school, new house, new church—what scares you?

God told His people not to eat certain food, so Daniel made up his mind to obey God. When do you think he decided to obey God? Do you think he decided when the king offered them the ‘meat and wine’ or did he decide before he ever left Judah?

You are faced with difficult decisions every day. Which decisions do you think it is important to determine your answer before you get into the situation?

What happened after the ten days? What did the king say? How were the Hebrews rewarded by the king?

Not only did Daniel make up his mind to do the right thing, but he was also disciplined! That means he had self-control. What is self-control?

Part of discipline is saying 'no' to things that are wrong. When do you say 'no' to things that are wrong?

Part of discipline is doing hard things that are good for you. What are some of the hard things you do that are good for you?

Another man in the Bible, named Peter, said "We ought to obey God rather than men." Are there times when people will tell you to do something that God says is wrong? What is an example? Are you strong enough to say "no" when people want you to do things that are wrong?

How will you live out the truth of this passage?

- **Be faithful.** Ask God to help you be faithful to Him at school, in your interactions with others and in the challenges you face this week.
- **Be involved.** Get involved in daily, spiritual disciplines, such as praying, reading your Bible and SOAP journaling.
- **Be bold.** Be willing to stand up for God when others try to tell you to do something that is wrong.

*God wants us to obey Him first!*

## Activities & Games

### A New Name Game [Opening Activity]

What You Need:

- Self-adhesive name-tags for students
- Markers to write their name on the name-tag.

What to Do:

- Have each student print his/her first name on a name-tag without removing the adhesive backing.
- Each student (including you) should then take his/her name tag and attach it to any other random class member (only one name tag per person).
- Once each person has placed his/her name-tag on someone else, introduce yourself by your "new" name . . . "Hello! My

name is Rachael, and I don't know where I'm from!" Invite others to follow suit.

- Call out others by their "new" name... such as "Welcome to camp, Judy!" or "Where are you from, Bob?" Have fun with this!
- After a few minutes of this confusion, ask them "So, how do you like your new names?" or "Do you like your new name better than your old name?"

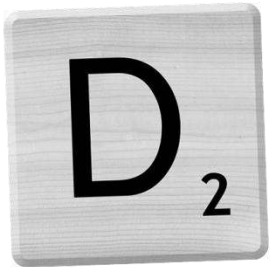
#### Application:

- Explain to the students that today's story is about a teen-aged boy who was kidnapped, taken to a foreign country and given a new name. But before you start on that story, ask them to find their original name tag—the one with their REAL name on it—and then be seated.
- After the students have settled down, you can tell them "The guy who was kidnapped was named Daniel – the same "Daniel" that's in the Bible. And yes, he was given a new name and it wasn't at all who he was! Today's Bible study will feature Daniel, his new name and his new life."
- Refer to Activity Sheet 1.1 for more background information on the Book of Daniel.

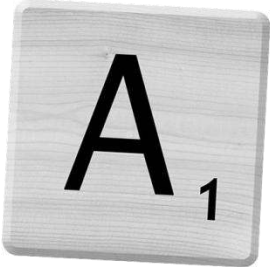
### Activity Sheets/Coloring Pages

- 1.1 – Daniel Acrostic
- 1.2 – "Decide Now to Stand Strong" Crossword
- 1.3 – Daniel 1:8 Coloring Page
- 1.4 – SOAP Journal

**Instructions:** Using the word 'Daniel,' create an acrostic that describes how you can be like Daniel. Example: "D—Daring"



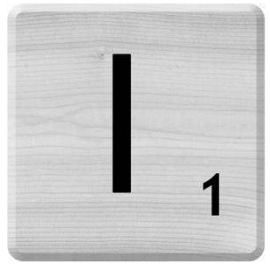
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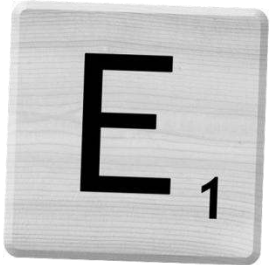
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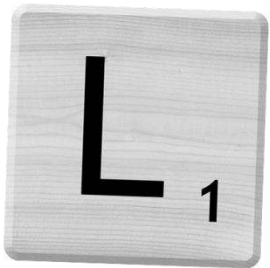
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# DECIDE NOW TO STAND STRONG

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1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

Down

1. What the boys wanted to eat

6. Best time to decide to obey God

7. Another word for 'discipline'

Across

2. What the king fed the boys

3. Daniel's polite request

4. What the boys wanted to drink

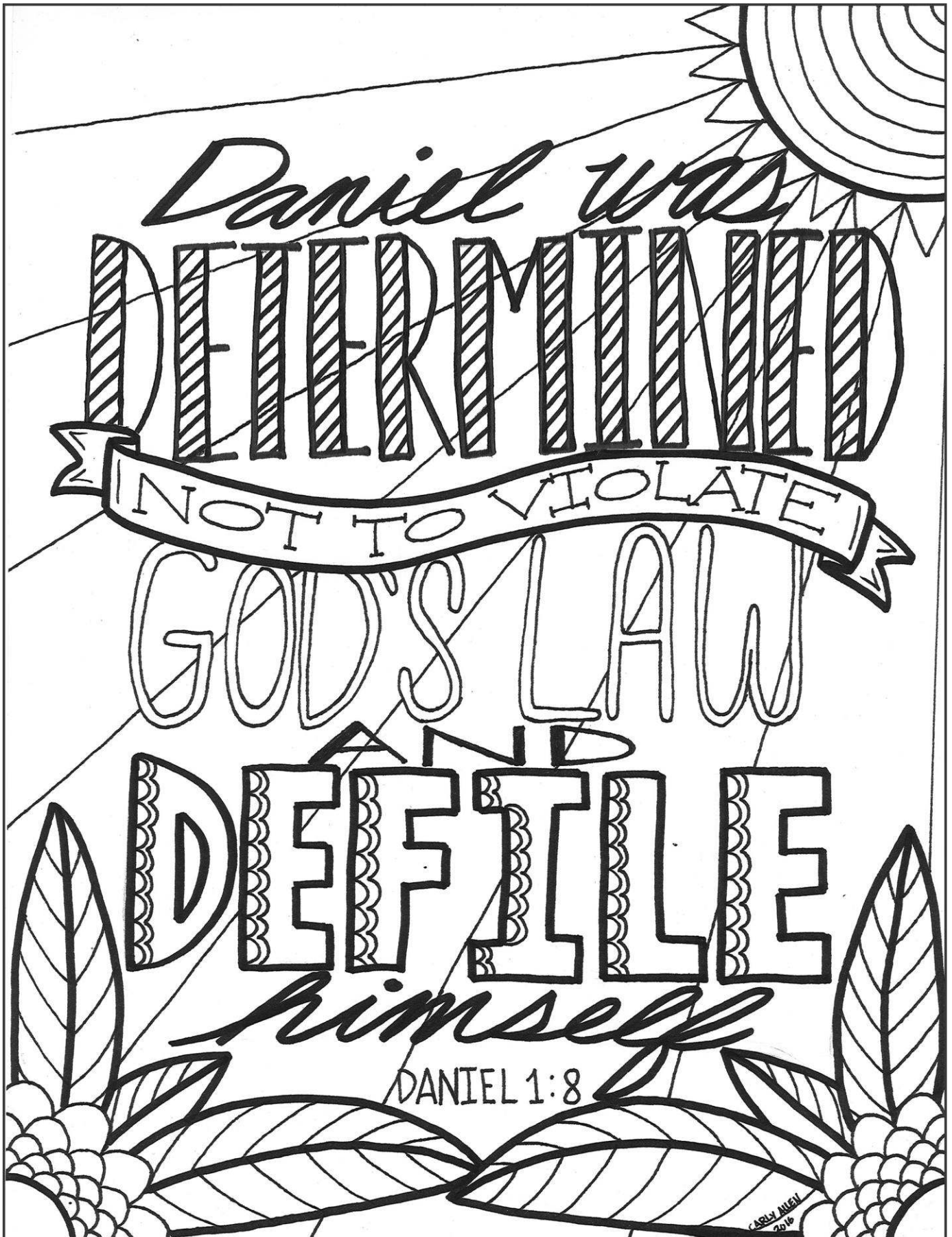
5. Where the boys went for 3 years

8. The results of the 10 day test

9. Where the boys went to train

10. Nebuchadnezzar stole this from Judah





Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Text Daniel 6:1-28

## S.O.A.P. Journaling

**S** SOAP is a method of Bible reading and journaling: Scripture, Observation, Application, Prayer. It can be used with any daily Bible reading plan. You'll need a Bible, a journal and a pen.

### **S for Scripture**

Open your Bible to today's reading. Take time reading and allow God to speak to you. When you are done, look for a verse that particularly spoke to you that day, and write it in your journal.

**O** **O for Observation**

What struck you and caught your attention in what you read? What do you think God is saying to you in this Scripture? Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you and reveal Jesus to you.

**A** **A for Application**

Personalize what you have read, by asking yourself how it applies to your life right now. Perhaps it is instruction, encouragement, revelation of a new promise, or corrections for a particular area of your life. Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

**P** **P for Prayer**

This can be as simple as asking God to help you use this Scripture, or it may be a greater insight on what He may be revealing to you. Remember, prayer is a two way conversation, so be sure to listen to what God has to say! Now, write it out.

Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Text Daniel 1:1-21

S

O

A

P

Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Text Daniel 3:1-30

S

O

A

P