

GUILTY: Middle School Lesson Pack

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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) Mishael – 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:

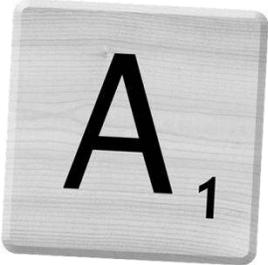
- Explain to the students that today's story is about a teen-aged boy who was kidnapped, taken to a foreign country and given a new name. But before you start on that story, ask them to find their original name tag—the one with their REAL name on it—and then be seated.
- After the students have settled 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

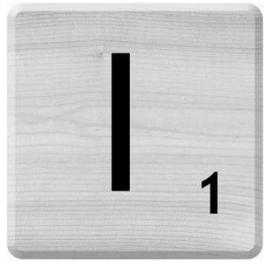
- 1.1 – Daniel Acrostic
- 1.2 – “Decide Now to Stand Strong” Crossword
- 1.3 – Daniel 1:8 Coloring Page
- 1.4 – SOAP Journal

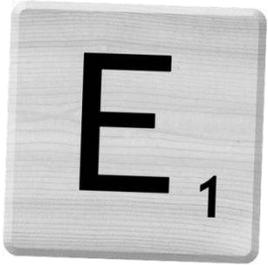
Instructions: Using the word 'Daniel,' create an acrostic that describes how you can be like Daniel. Example: "D—Daring"

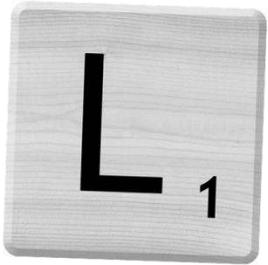




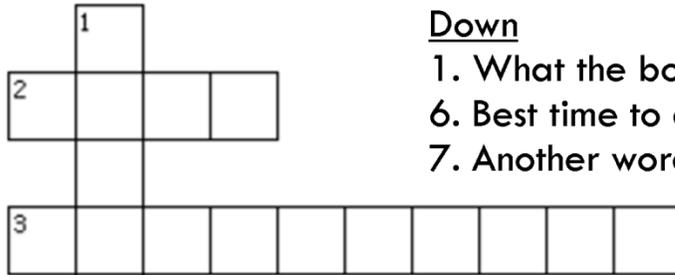








DECIDE NOW TO STAND STRONG

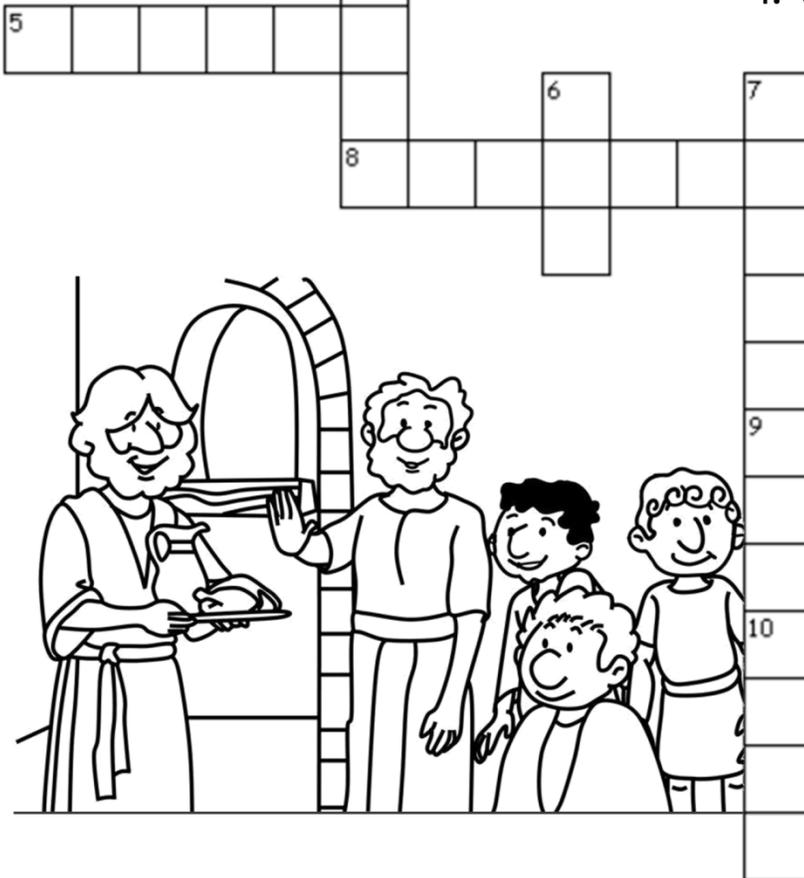


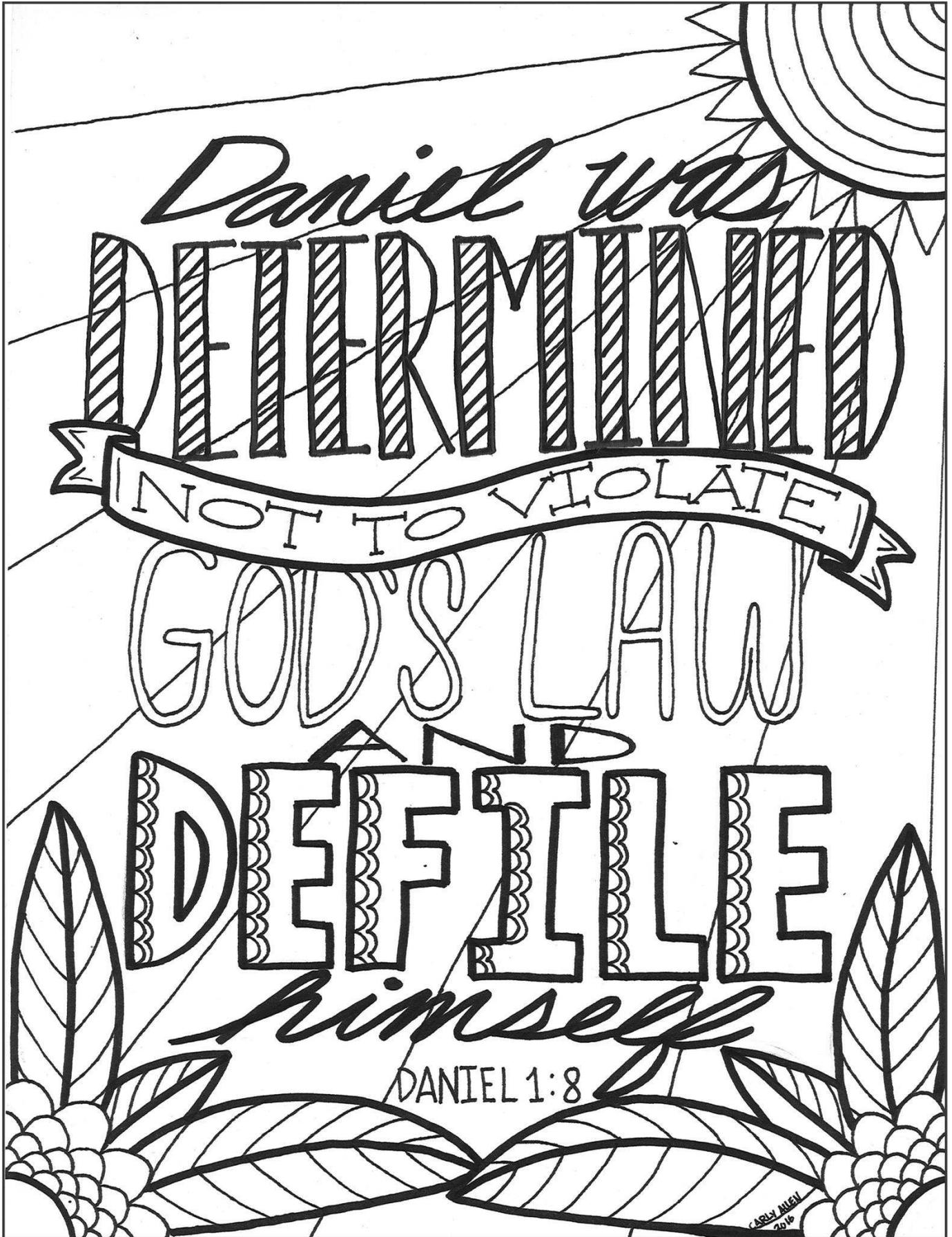
Down

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 for Prayer

P 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

Lesson Two: Do I Really 'Wanna' Be Guilty? (Middle School)

Lesson Theme

God is always there for me. He is able to save and rescue me. He gives me the courage to be obedient to Him, no matter what is going on around me.

Bible Story - Daniel in the Lions' Den

Ice Breaker Questions

What did we learn this morning in class? What's been your favorite part of church camp so far?

What's the hardest thing you've ever had to do?

Have you ever had to stand up to someone because of what you believed? In today's lesson, we will learn about three guys who were punished for standing up for what they believed in.

Active Listening Activity - Bible Doodling

Give each student a blank sheet of paper and have them doodle what they hear. They can take notes, draw pictures, or a combination of each. Ask students to share what they 'doodled' after every few paragraphs. Look for the natural breaks in the paraphrase below.

Daniel 3 (Paraphrase)

King Nebuchadnezzar made a huge statue (90 feet tall) in Babylon and sent for everyone to come to the dedication of the statue. Everyone who came to the dedication heard "You are commanded to fall down and worship the golden image every time you hear music. Anyone who doesn't fall down and worship the golden image will immediately be thrown into a fiery furnace!"

The Chaldeans (or astrologers) were jealous of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, so when the music played, they told the king that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego weren't bowing and worshiping the statue like he commanded. 🕒

King Nebuchadnezzar was furious! He commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought before him. When they arrived he asked them, "Is it true that you do not serve my gods or worship the image I set up? When you hear the music, if you fall down and worship the statue, all will be forgiven, but if you do not worship the statue, I will immediately throw you into the fiery furnace! What god that can save you?"

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king and said, "We don't have to explain ourselves to you. If this is your rule, our God can save us from the fiery furnace and from your anger O King. But if our God doesn't save us, we will still not serve your gods or worship your statue!"

Then King Nebuchadnezzar was filled with rage against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and he ordered the furnace to be heated to seven times hotter than normal. He ordered some of his strongest men (aka mighty men) to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and to throw them into the fiery furnace. Because the king's order was so urgent and the furnace was overheated, as the mighty men were throwing Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the furnace, they died from the heat. 🕒

The King was watching all of this and suddenly he jumped up and asked his counselors, "Didn't we throw three men into the fire?" They answered him "Yes, only three" and the King responded, "But I see four men walking around in the fire! They aren't hurt or burned, and the fourth man looks like a son of the gods!"

Then Nebuchadnezzar went to the door of the fiery furnace and said, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, get out of there and come here!" So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the fire and all the governors, counselors, and rulers of the land saw that the fire didn't harm them. The hairs on their heads were not singed, their cloaks were not burned, they didn't even smell like smoke! Nebuchadnezzar saw this too and said, "Blessed be the god of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who saved his servants from the fiery furnace! They trusted in Him and chose

the fiery furnace over worshiping any god but their own. Because of this, I make a decree that Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against their God will be killed and their houses destroyed. There is no other god who is able to rescue the way that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's God does." Then the king promoted them in Babylon. 🕒

Review Questions

How tall was the golden statue that Nebuchadnezzar built? What is something that you have seen that is as tall as that statue?
(90 feet tall; that is the equivalent to a nine story building)

What were the people commanded to do when they heard the music?
(Bow down to the golden statue)

Who told the king that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego didn't bow down?
Have you ever had someone 'tattle' on you? Why did they do it?
(The Chaldeans or astrologers)

What was the punishment for not bowing to the statue?
(They would be thrown into the fiery furnace.)

What did Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego do when the music played?
Why did they do that? (Nothing—they did not bow! God's law says that we should have no other gods other than the one, true God—Jehovah. They did not want to break God's Law.)

What happened when Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were thrown in?
(They were unharmed. Another man was seen with them. Etc...)

How many men were in the furnace? Who was the fourth man?
(4, Jesus or the Angel of the Lord)

Probably none of us have ever been thrown into a fiery furnace, but God still wants to save us today. What does it mean to be saved? (*Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego literally trusted their lives to God when they stood up to the King and would not bow. This is a beautiful picture of salvation because when we trust God with our lives, He saves us just like He saved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fire. Give a simple explanation of the gospel—Jesus saves us from our sin!*)

Activities & Games

Musical Chairs Game (Introductory Activity)

What You Need:

- Chairs (1 less than the number of children)
- Music

How to Play:

- Explain that every time the music starts, the students must walk around the chairs in a circle.
- When the music stops, the students must sit down immediately.
- Remove one (or more) chair and continue as time allows.

Application:

- Ask the students if it was hard to stand up as soon as the music started and sit down as soon as it ended.
- Explain that music is a part of today's Bible story.

Popcorn Toss

What You Need:

- Popcorn

How to Make It:

- Have students line up in two lines facing each other, 10 feet apart.
- Instruct the children that on your signal, they will toss the piece of popcorn 10 feet across the aisle to the person directly facing them in the other line.
- Many of the tosses will fall short since the children are so far apart.
- Keep a record of the number of successful throws.
- Now let the other line take one 'small' step forward and give them an opportunity to throw a piece of popcorn to the other line.
- Continue this process—each time moving closer—until the children can simply drop the popcorn into the hands of the other child, resulting in no misses.

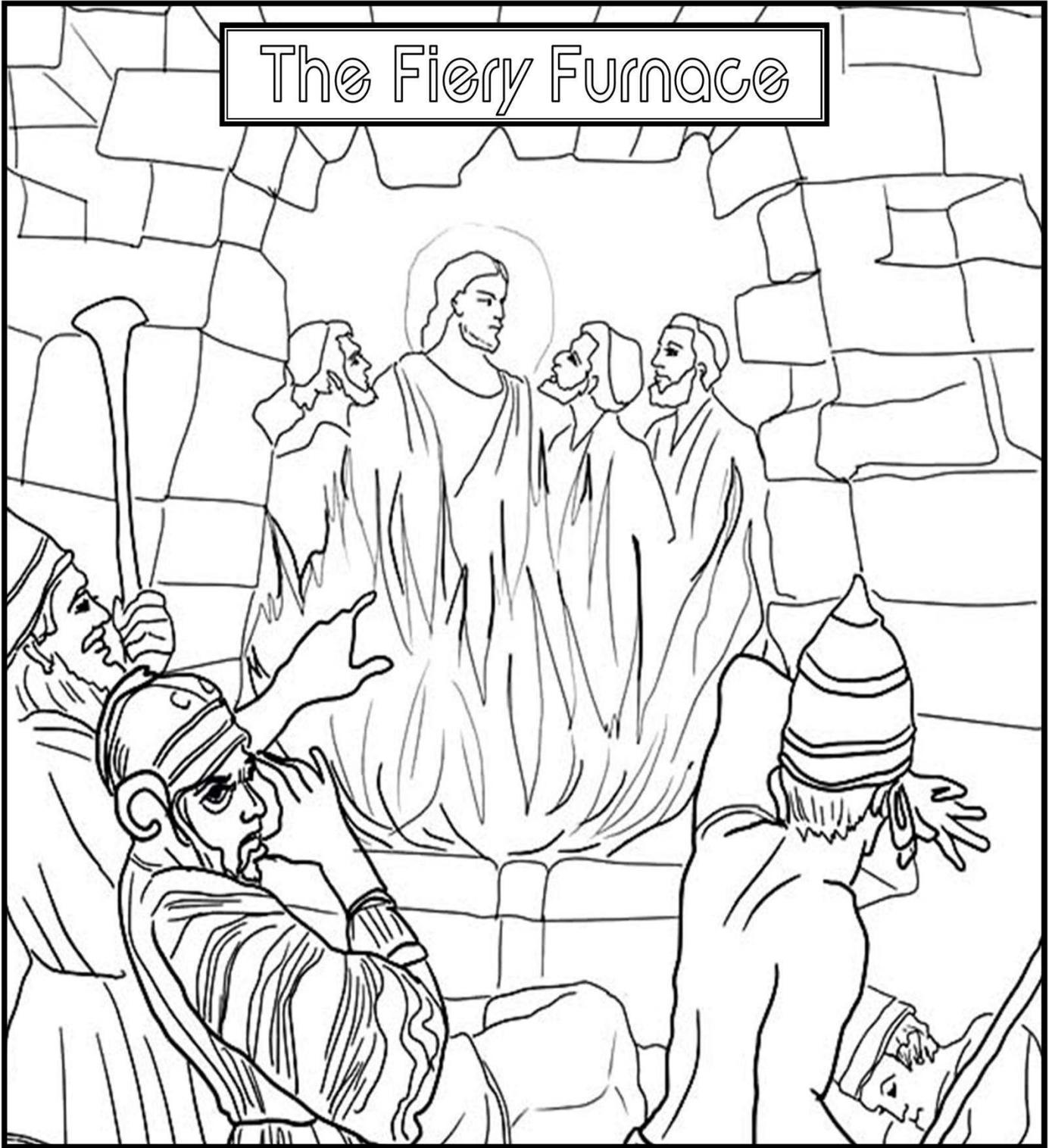
Application:

- Tell the students that the popcorn in this activity represents our relationship with God.
- Explain that our relationship with God is like what just happened—the further away from each other, the harder it was to catch the popcorn. The further we are from God, the harder it is to have a relationship with Him.
- On the other hand, the closer we are to God, the easier it will be to have a strong relationship with Him.
- So how do we get close to God?
 - Trust in Him as our Savior
 - Read our Bible and pray every day
 - Go to church and learn more about Him
- Remind the students that God loves us and always knows what we are going through. He has the power to rescue us from any situation.

Activity Sheets/Coloring Pages

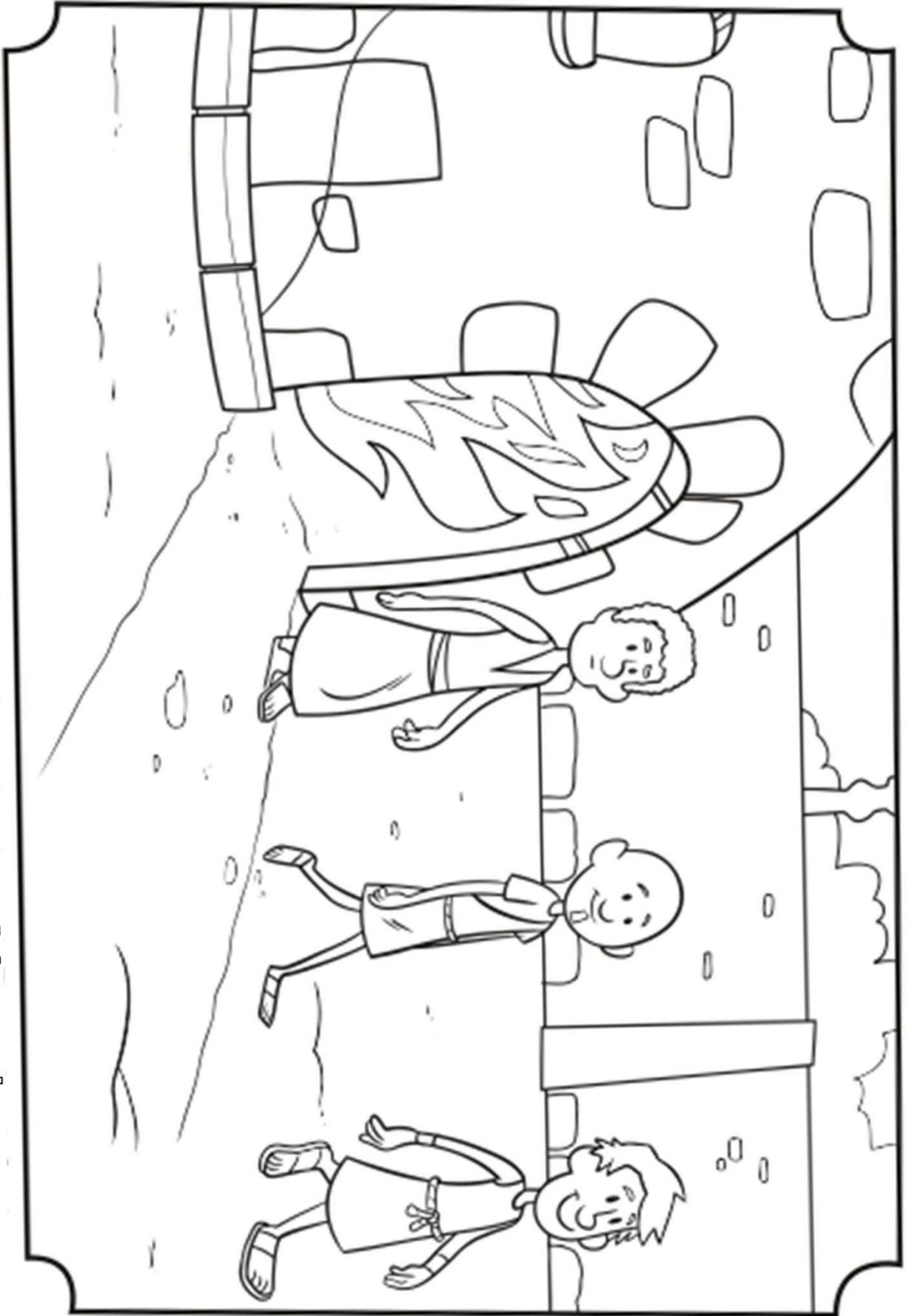
- 2.1 – “The Fiery Furnace” Coloring Page
- 2.2 – “Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego” Coloring Page
- 2.3 – “CH@T” Prayer Bookmarks
- 2.4 – “Standing Together”
- 2.5 – “Q & A”

The Fiery Furnace



“O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. But even if he doesn’t, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up.”

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego



ch@t
prayer pattern

c- cheer God on for who He is
what fact about God
makes you glad?
h- humble yourself
if Jesus took a tour of your
heart, what would he find?
@- appreciate what He has done
what happened in your life today
that you can thank God for?
t- tell God your needs
where do you need God
to work in your life?
rachelwvjp.com

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STANDING together

Living courageously is hard, and we aren't meant to do it alone. Standing without fear is easier when we have someone to stand with us. One of the best ways to foster this type of community is to seek out a mentor.

Begin to think and pray about an older individual that you trust and respect who could serve as a mentor to you. Ask God to guide you in this process.

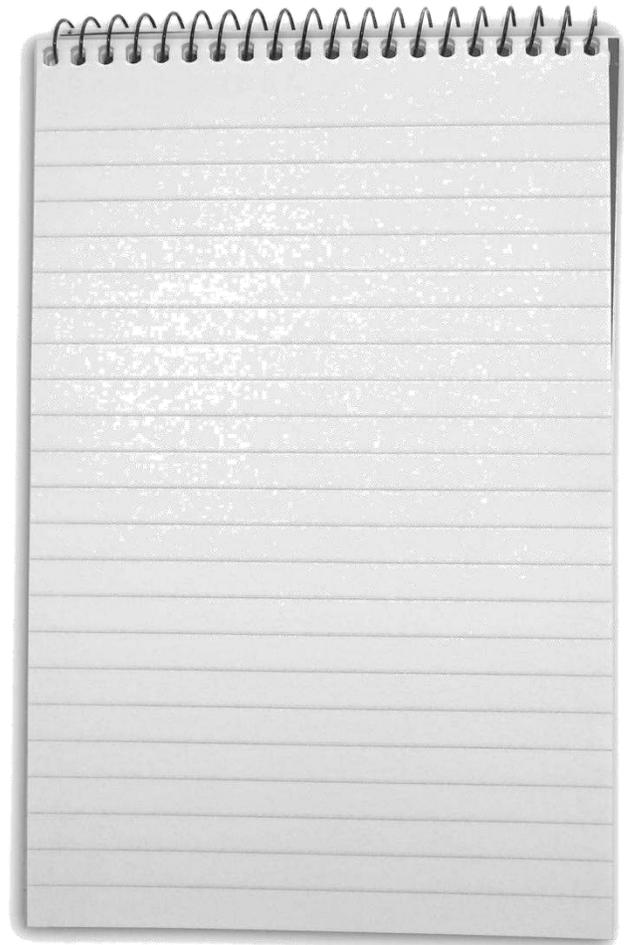
Outline how you think you could benefit from a relationship like this. Ask the individual to meet with you so you can explain why you would like them to mentor you and how you would like to grow in your walk with Christ.

This may not be an easy conversation to have. It will require courage and vulnerability on your part.

Ask the person if they would be willing to walk with you as you seek Christ and learn to stand courageously for what you believe. If the person agrees, set up a meeting plan and dive into what God has for you.

Who might be a good mentor for you?

In the space below, write out a prayer, asking God to guide you through this process. List any possible mentors at the bottom.

A spiral-bound notebook with lined pages, intended for writing a prayer and listing mentors.



Despite how distant or disconnected you feel, God hasn't gone anywhere.

Q. I feel far from God right now. I pray and hear nothing. How do I know he's listening? Or even there? I'm afraid I'm missing his answers or that he's not hearing me.

Answer You're not alone. Almost every Christian feels this way sometimes. Read Psalm 22:1-2. King David, who certainly knew God, wrote: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? . . . I cry out by day, but you do not answer" (NIV). We often feel God is distant or

disconnected. Even Jesus felt this way—and quoted this Psalm—when he was on the cross.

But despite how you feel, God hasn't gone anywhere. He created you, and he loves you so much that he made arrangements for you to live with him forever (Romans 8:32). Since God is so deeply committed to you, he's not going to walk away from you. In fact, he's watching over you. Right here. Right now. You may not see him or hear him, but you're on his mind, and he loves you. Keep your eyes open, and watch for God's presence in your life. You may not see him all the time, but like the wind, you can see the effect he has. Maybe you see him in how he provides. Or comforts. Or the people he sends into your life.

God wants you to keep looking for him by praying, reading his Word and living out your faith. "Come and pray to me, and I will listen to you," God says. "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:12-13, NIV).

Written by Marshall Shelley

Lesson Three: God Gives Me the Choice to Obey (Middle School)

Lesson Theme

I have the choice to obey or not obey God, but there will be consequences if I choose to disobey Him. I will choose to do what is right!

Theme Verse

“Make a *clean* break with your sins and invest in what is right.” (4:27 VOICE)

Bible Story - Nebuchadnezzar's Pride & Punishment

Ice Breaker Questions

Options #1:

Have you ever gone through an extremely difficult experience? What effect did that experience have on your personal relationship with God?

I have often heard stories about people coming into a relationship with God only after they ‘hit rock bottom’ in their lives. Have you—or someone you know—experienced this? What happened?

In your opinion, how important is it to God that we depend upon Him? In what ways do difficult circumstances bring about dependence upon God?

Option #2:

Why do bad things happen in life? What is God’s purpose in allowing difficult circumstances to come up in our lives? (see Genesis 50:20)

When bad things happen, people often quote Romans 8:28. What does that verse say? It mentions the purposes of God at the end of that verse. What is God’s purpose for salvation? (Romans 8:29 explains that God’s purpose for salvation is for every believer to be conformed to the image of God’s Son. Ephesians 2:8-10 explains that we have been saved by grace

through faith for a purpose—we are created in Christ to do good works. The purpose of salvation is to be like and act like Jesus.)

 *In our study today, we are going to look at the lives of two kings in Babylon to see how God brought about circumstances in their lives to show them that He is the one true God and sovereign over everything.*

Active Listening Activity (Optional)

Before sharing the Bible story, give each student a piece of paper (use Activity Sheet 3.1 if you want it to look like a story board) and ask them to draw a picture of what is happening in the story.

Daniel 4 & 5 (Paraphrase)

A long time ago in a land far, far away called Babylon, there lived a king. This king's name was Nebuchadnezzar. King Nebuchadnezzar was the greatest king of one of the greatest kingdom that ever existed. All this 'greatness' kind of went to the king's head. He became very proud of all he had accomplished.

One day, while Nebuchadnezzar was sleeping, God sent him a vision. He had a vision of a giant tree that was tall and green, and it provided shade and fruit for everyone—birds, animals and even people. But in his vision, a holy messenger commanded that the tree be chopped down, leaving only the stump to remind the people of the greatness of the tree.

One of the king's wise men, Daniel, explained the dream to the king. He said, "Here is what the dream means: the kingdom of Babylon will fall and you, O King, will live outside and eat grass like an animal for seven years. God is doing this to you so you will learn that He is the one who rules over the kingdoms of the world." Then Daniel begged the king, "Please take my advice. Stop sinning and do what is right. Break from your wicked past and be merciful to the poor. Show God that you've really changed and then maybe he will change His mind and let you remain as king."

The king did not change. In fact, a whole year went by and nothing ever happened. Then one day, as King Nebuchadnezzar was looking out from the roof of his palace, he said, "Look at what an awesome city I have built.

Babylon is my creation. I built this by my own power. I built this as my royal home so everyone can see how awesome I am.”

As the king was saying those words, a holy messenger came down and proclaimed, “O King Nebuchadnezzar, you are no longer the king of this kingdom. You will no longer live like a real person; you will live in the fields with the wild animals and eat grass to keep you alive. For seven years, you will live like that. Then we will see if you have changed your attitude and recognize that God is the One who is really in control.”

And so it happened, just as the holy messenger said...

DISCUSS

God gave Nebuchadnezzar this dream as a warning of what would happen to him if he did not recognize that the Most High God is in control of all the kingdoms of the world. When did this dream actually come true (Daniel 4:28-33)? Why did God choose that moment to implement this punishment upon Nebuchadnezzar?

Have you ever had an experience where you felt that God was trying to warn you to stop doing the sinful things you were doing? What happened? What did you do in response to this warning?

But this is a tale of two kings—King Nebuchadnezzar and King Belshazzar. King Belshazzar was a descendant of King Nebuchadnezzar. He too was the king of Babylon, and he too had the wrong idea of the origin of his power and authority. Here’s his story:

DISCUSS

Read Daniel 5:1-4. What is Belshazzar doing? There were many things that were happening at Belshazzar's party. What were some of those things? How does that compare to the parties that people you know have today?

Belshazzar was an evil king who liked to have enormous parties where people behaved very badly. One night, the king was having a party for 1,000 of his upper class friends. Everyone was involved with lots of drinking and uncontrolled passion and pleasure. This was not the first time that Belshazzar had a party like this, but at this party he was thinking about doing something that he had never done before—using the sacred, golden cups from God's Temple.

Many years earlier, about the time that Nebuchadnezzar became King of Babylon, the golden cups that were used to worship Jehovah God in the Temple in Jerusalem were brought to Babylon. This happened at the same time that Daniel and his friends were taken as captives to Babylon. These cups were set apart for an holy purpose, but King Belshazzar wanted to use them for an evil purpose.

DISCUSS

These things that were happening were drawing him away from a life lived for God. What are some things that draw us away from God?

Anything that draws you away from God is idolatry. What are some idols in our lives?

- Physical things – (i.e. living to eat and drink, focus on satisfying bodily appetites, addictions to sex, Rx and illegal drugs, alcohol, nicotine, pornography, etc.)
- Material things – (i.e. clothes, electronic gadgets, cars, homes, boats, any kind of property etc.)

- Intangible things – (i.e. degrees, letters and titles, security that comes from wealth)
- Financial priorities – (i.e. buying cars, houses and other stuff, but not able to afford to ‘tithe’)
- Recreational things – (i.e. hunting, fishing, vacations, picnics, outings, sports of all kinds, etc.)
- Social standing – (i.e. power, prestige, influence, etc.)

In both of our stories today, each of these kings had a choice to make—choose to honor God by obeying His command or choose to dishonor Him with their actions and attitudes.

So what did they choose?

King Belshazzar chose to dishonor God. He used the golden cups in his wild party and praised their idols made of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone while he did it. As soon as he did, all the people at the party saw the fingers of a human hand writing on the plaster wall of the king’s palace. When the king saw this, his face turned pale with fear, his knees knocked together and his legs gave way beneath him.

So what was the hand writing on the wall? It wrote these words in Aramaic: **“Mene, mene, tekel upharsin.”** King Belshazzar did not know what the words meant. Fortunately, Daniel was able to explain the meaning of these words.

“Mene means ‘numbered’—God has numbered the days of your reign and has brought it to an end.

Tekel means ‘weighed’—you have been weighed on the balances and have not measured up.

Parsin means ‘divided’—your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians.” (Daniel 5:25-28)

With these four simple words, God declared that the Babylonian Empire would cease to exist. That very night, King Belshazzar was killed.

Belshazzar had a choice—honor God or dishonor God—and he chose poorly! The result of his choices not only brought about his death, but also brought about the end of one of the greatest empires in the history of the world. God tried to get his attention, but he chose to do what he wanted to do with no regard for God and His ways.

So what happened with King Nebuchadnezzar? I'm glad you asked!

You see, King Nebuchadnezzar was also given a choice to honor and recognize God as the ruler over everything. Do you remember what had happened to him earlier? Just after declaring how great he was and how awesome the city of Babylon was, God declared that he would lose his kingship and live like an animal for seven whole years.

At the end of that seven years of living like an animal, the Bible tells us that Nebuchadnezzar looked up to heaven—his sanity restored—and he ‘praised and worshipped the Most High and honored the one who lives forever’ (Daniel 4:34a). In fact, Nebuchadnezzar went on to say this about God:

His rule is everlasting,
and his kingdom is eternal.
All the people of the earth
are nothing compared to him.
He does as he pleases
among the angels of heaven
and among the people of the earth.
No one can stop him or say to him,
‘What do you mean by doing these things?’

“When my sanity returned to me, so did my honor and glory and kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored as head of my kingdom, with even greater honor than before.

“Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and glorify and honor the King of heaven. All his acts are just and true, and he is able to humble the proud.” (Daniel 4:34b-37)

When Nebuchadnezzar recognized God as the supreme ruler of all things, God restored him as the King over the Babylonian Empire. But there was even more to it than that! You see, Nebuchadnezzar recognized that before

his seven years living like a wild animal, he was a very prideful person. The king realized that God was the one who humbled him and brought him to a point of repentance.

DISCUSS

As we consider the outcome of each man's life, what can we learn and apply to our own life? What will it take for God to get our attention?

The Bible says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (Proverbs 3:34, James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5). The Bible also tells us that God hates a prideful attitude (Proverbs 6:16-17), and He will do whatever it takes to humble us and bring us to repentance! What is it going to take in your life for God to get your attention?

When faced with this decision, will you choose your way or God's way?

Activities & Games

SOAP Journal Review

- In Lesson 1, the concept of SOAP Journaling was introduced. The goal in this activity is to encourage the students to continue 'SOAPing' and answer any questions that they might have concerning this process.
- Ask the following series of questions:
 - How many of you tried to do your SOAP Journal yesterday during your quiet time?
 - Is there anything that you didn't understand about it?
 - Why is reading your Bible, prayer and journaling important in your personal spiritual growth?
 - Would anyone like to share something that God taught them through their SOAP Journal yesterday?
- You might consider repeating this activity in Lesson 4.

Building Block Challenge (Optional Introductory Activity)

What You Need:

- Multiple, matching sets of building blocks (wooden blocks, legos, etc.)
- Flat surface that is sturdy for the students to work on. This can be the floor if solid table tops are not available.

How to Play:

- Divide the group into multiple teams (however many sets of blocks that you have available).
- Explain to the students that the goal of this activity is to build the most unique structure out of the sets of blocks within 3 minutes. After the students complete their structures, take pictures of each one with a digital camera.
- Next, explain that they will have another 3 minutes to build the tallest and strongest tower possible out of their sets of building blocks. Again, take pictures of each tower when completed.

Application:

- Ask the students how they felt about their structures. “Was yours the best out of all of them?”
- Explain that the man in our story today was a great builder just like them, but his problem was that he was too proud of what he built.

Loud & Proud Role Play

What You Need:

- Imagination and a little extra time.

How to Do It:

- Role play with students by asking them what they feel they are gifted at. If they don't know, ask them what others have said they do really well.
- Using their answer, ask the class to role play what a person who is filled with pride says when a compliment is given.
- Then allow them to share ways they can respond that point others to God because He is the one who gave them that ability.

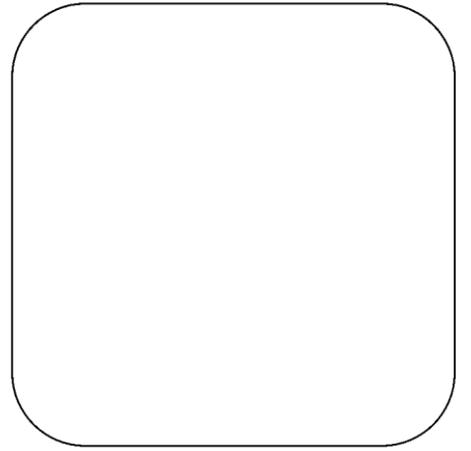
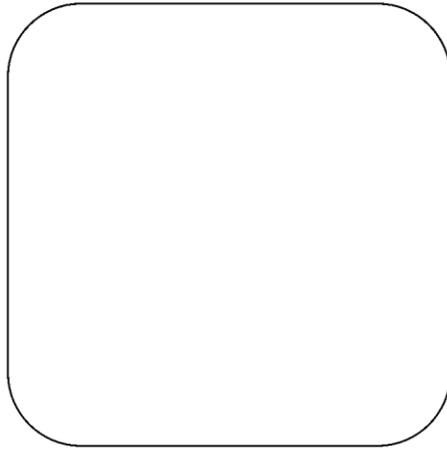
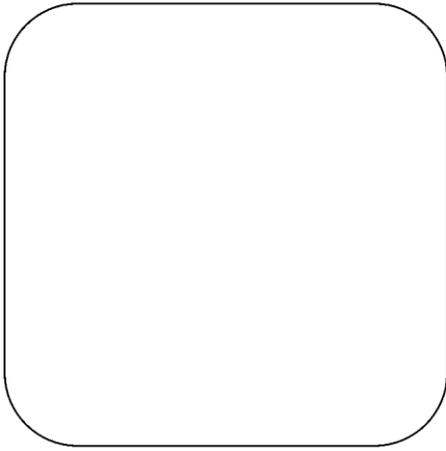
Application:

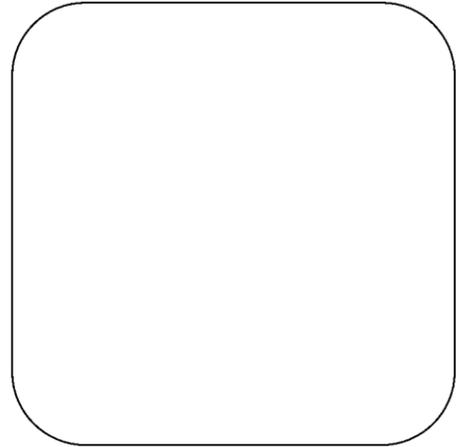
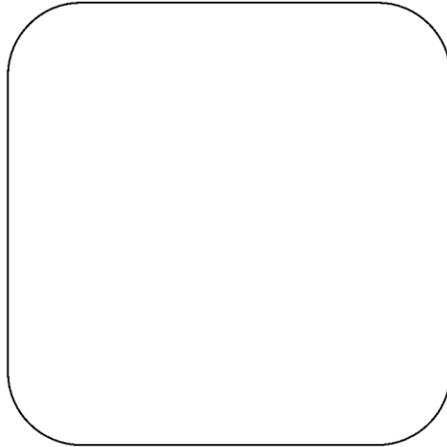
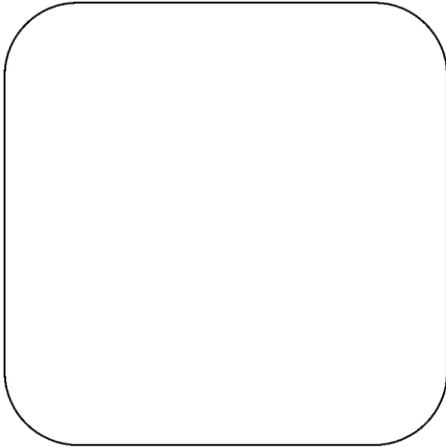
- The goal of this exercise is to help the students understand that what they say when complemented can come across as boastful and proud—and help them to know what to say instead.
- Be sure to point out that we need to give God the glory when we are able to do something well.

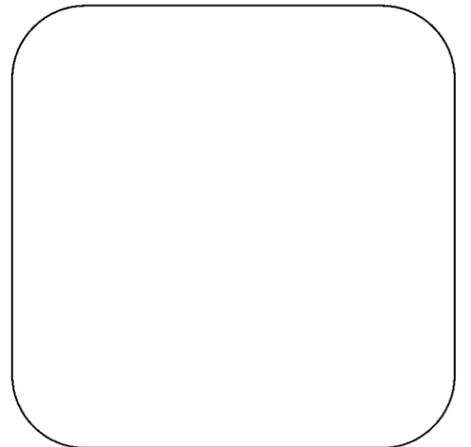
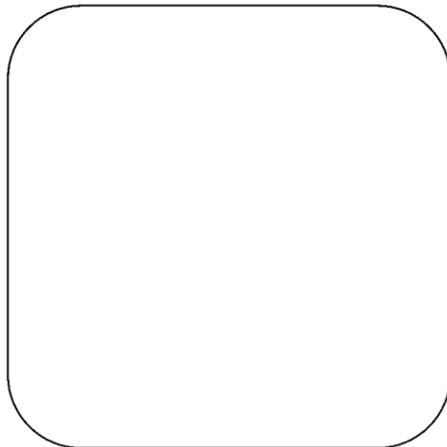
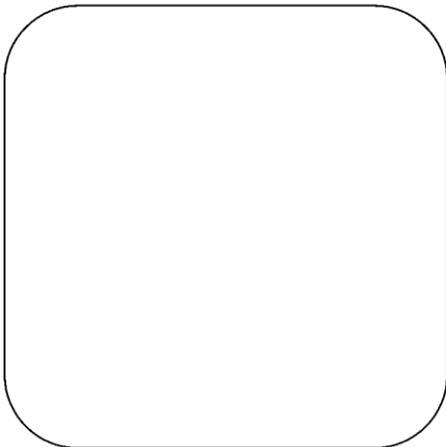
Activity Sheets/Coloring Pages

- 3.1 – Nebuchadnezzar’s Story Board
- 3.2 – “Nebuchadnezzar” Coloring Page
- 3.3 – “Choose Wisely” Maze
- 3.4 – “Repent” Maze
- 3.5 – “Change” Coloring Page
- 3.6 – “All Things” Coloring Page
- 3.7 – “Nebuchadnezzar” Word Search
- 3.8A – “A Tale of Two Kings” Outside Page
- 3.8B – “A Tale of Two Kings” Inside Page

THE TALE OF TWO KINGS







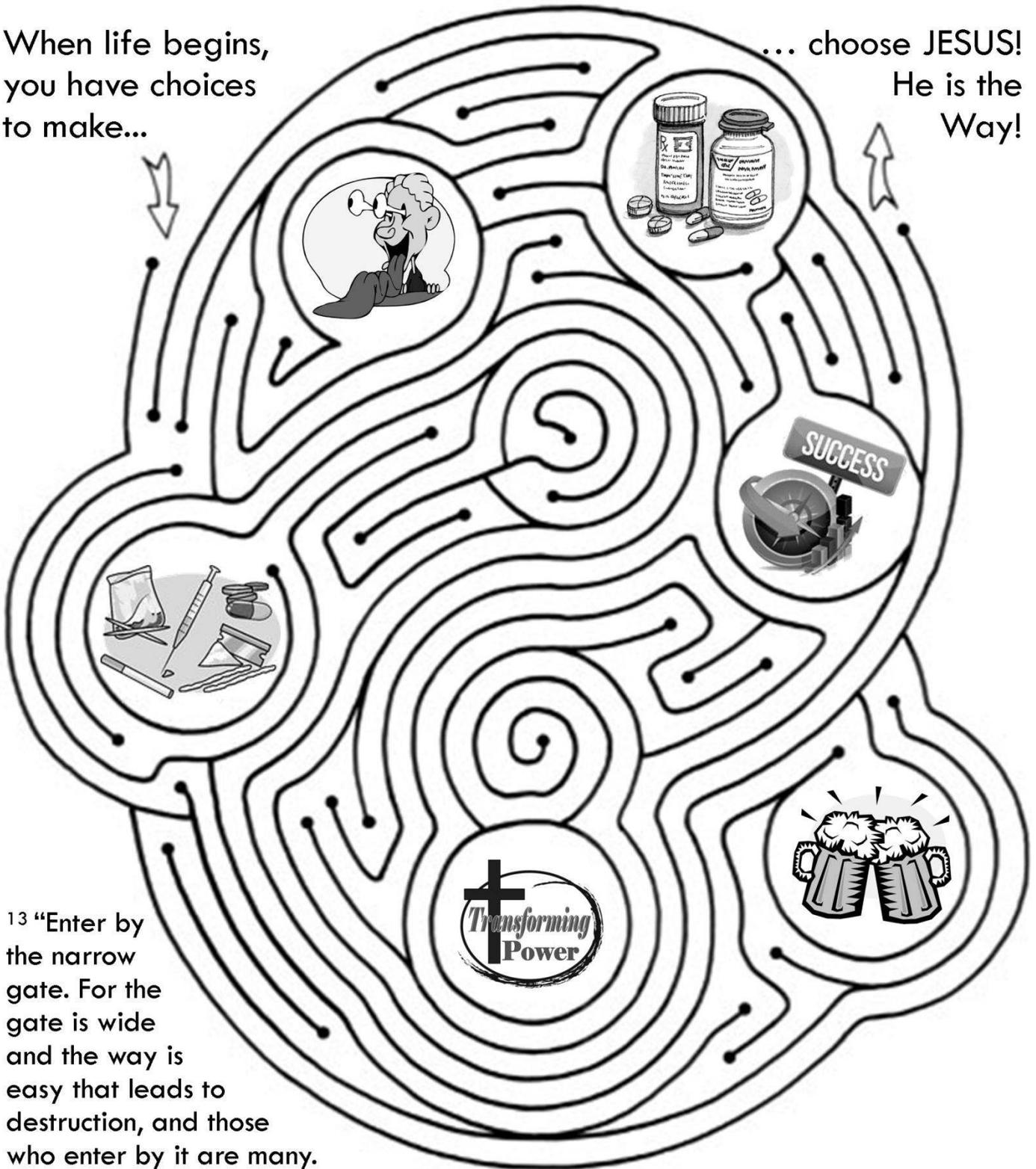


“That same hour the judgment was fulfilled, and Nebuchadnezzar was driven from human society. He ate grass like a cow, and he was drenched with the dew of heaven. He lived this way until his hair was as long as eagles’ feathers and his nails were like birds’ claws.” (Daniel 4:33)

CHOOSE WISELY

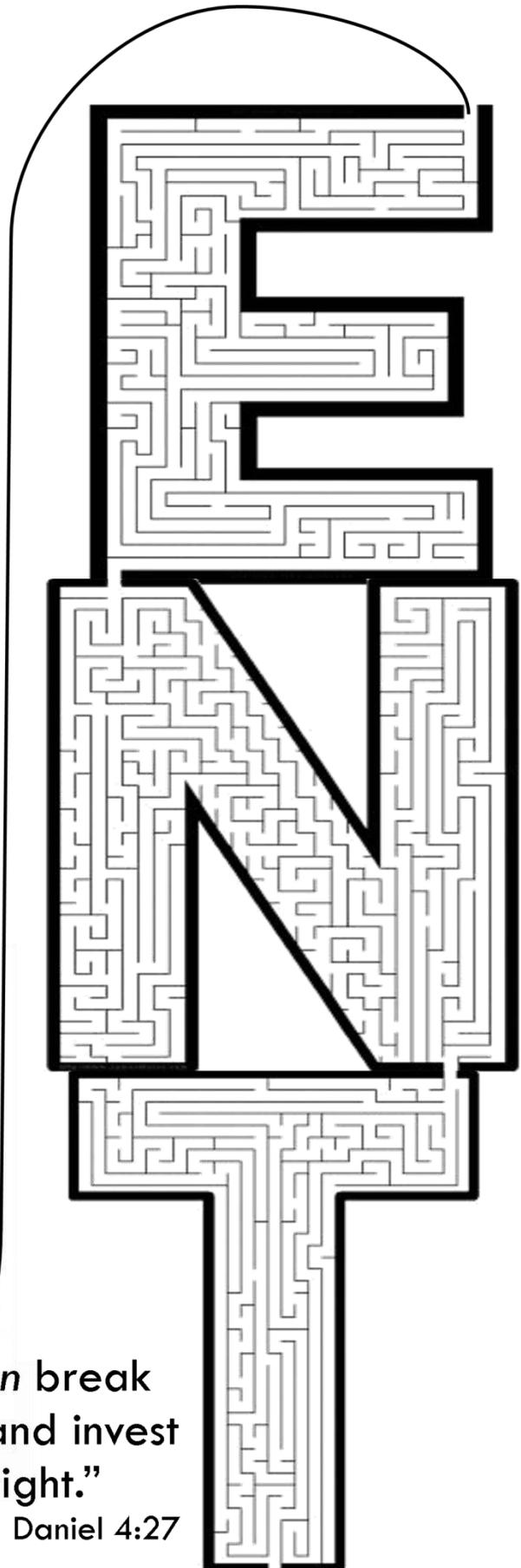
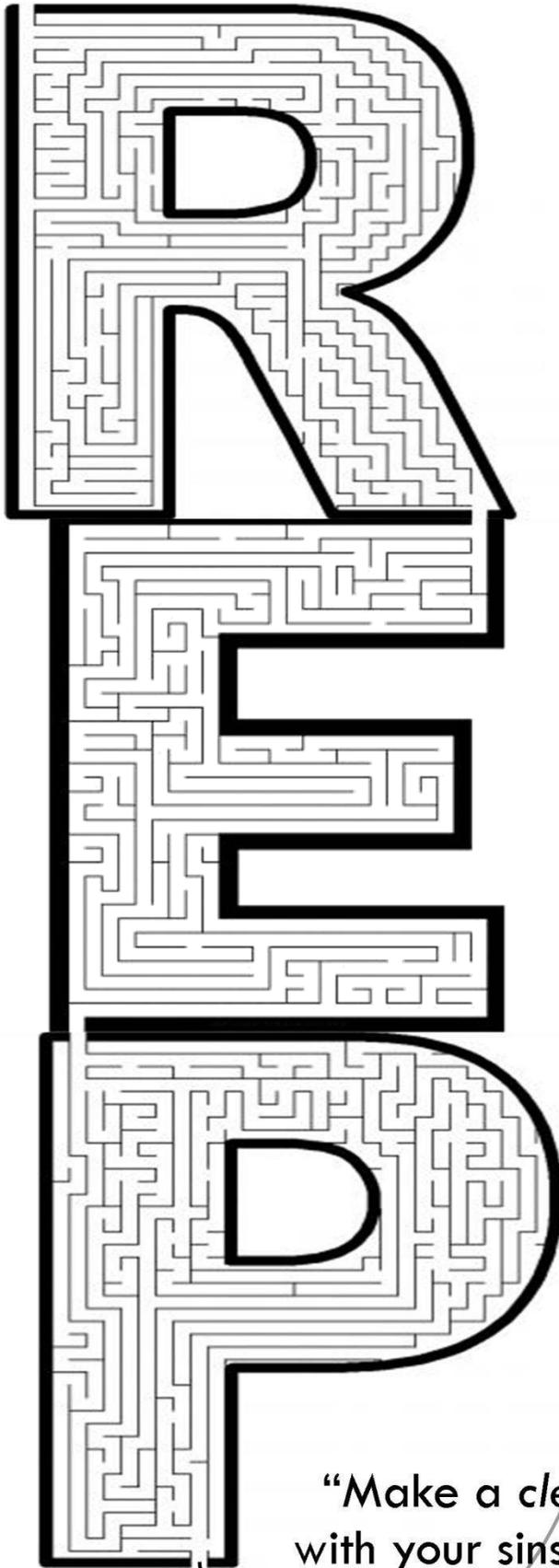
When life begins,
you have choices
to make...

... choose JESUS!
He is the
Way!



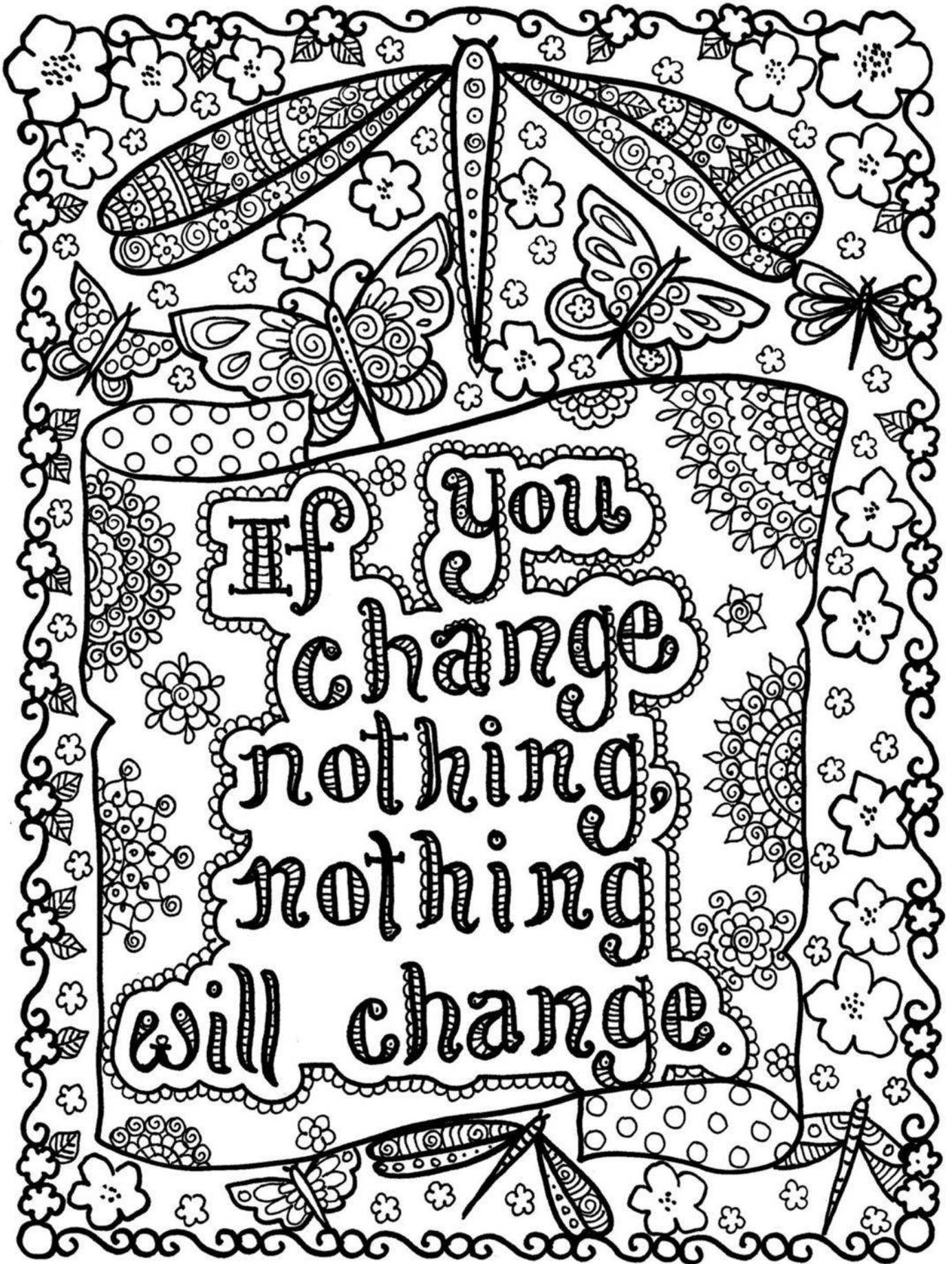
13 "Enter by
the narrow
gate. For the
gate is wide
and the way is
easy that leads to
destruction, and those
who enter by it are many.

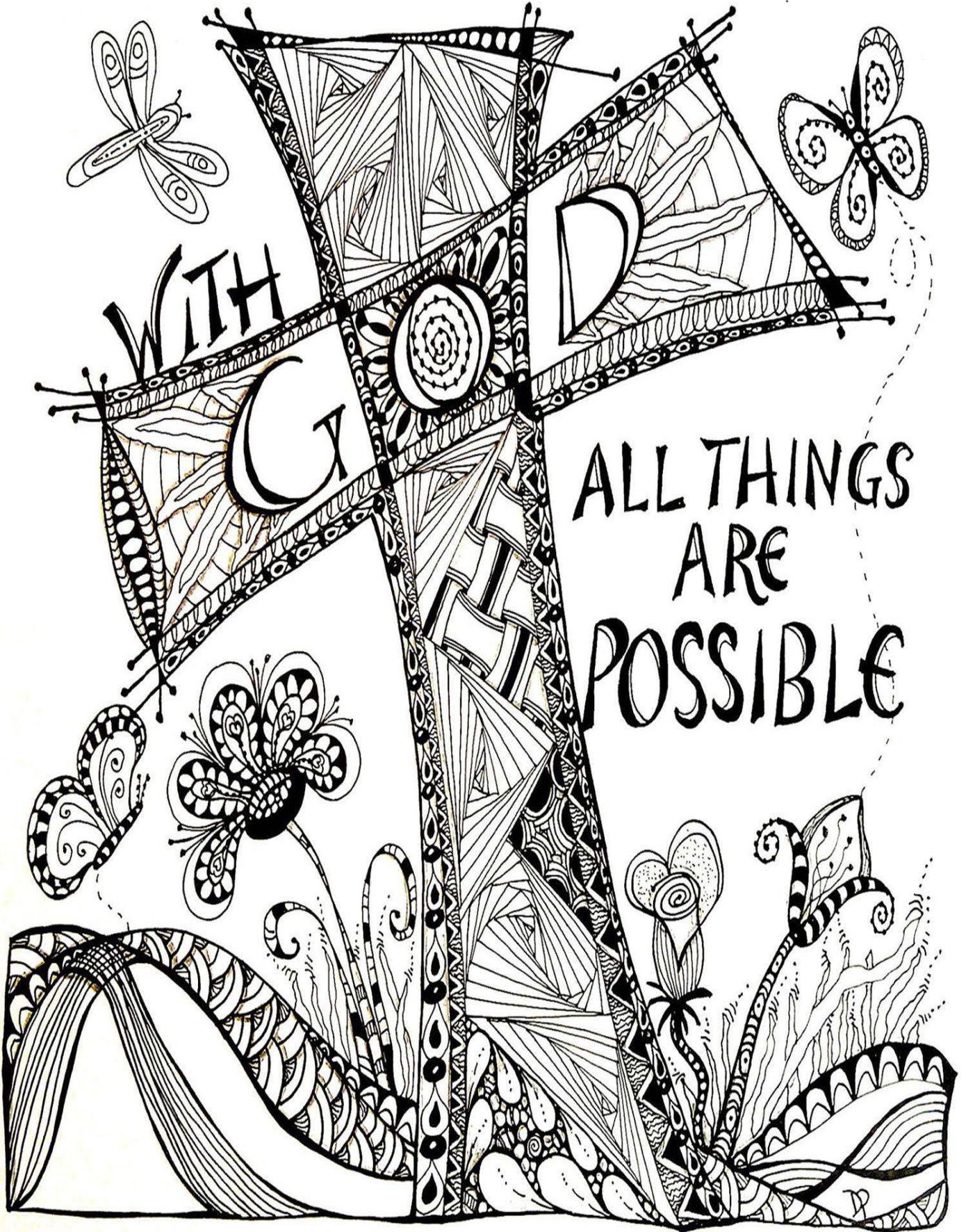
14 "For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads
to life, and those who find it are few." (Matthew 7:13-14)



**“Make a clean break
with your sins and invest
in what is right.”**

Daniel 4:27





NEBUCHADNEZZAR WORD SEARCH

H L J J Q M Z A Y F U Z C P E Z F H V T
I I K U H I F B J M D U A C M S L I R W
T J V Y F O W R N E W G Z N V T K U H Y
J C O K P D G L D T E F S C T V T P Y U
H J B R O K Y N O S A E R M O H I K G K
B H I B I E L E Y L E D D P J G Q R M Y
C D Y D H R N W I M E Y G R Q W S E P H
E L D S H Y A G B P B I P E L D S N U F
G Q G W Q T D Z A E D F C M P K B A V Q
H H C A U E C R Z Z V B V H V A O I E P
G Y G L F Z T F L E N L U Y B A E P Z H
Q O E C R E V Z O I N A I Y G G Z Q U M
P F W C D Q O A U I P D L Y Y S P F U G
O R E N M V S N P D Y O A M Q A E R I Q
C G Y Z N L R I A H N E P H D U U C L W
S Q B R V S K S W Z G Z N B C W V G Q G
P S Z D S R D E S S E L B P O U J O B X
Q C A Y L S L H C P N C S R O S B W V W
X P N R B B D L P Z W L C Y K Y I E B D
V C R Q G B F S R V Y W N R P H U J N I

BABYLON

GRASS

PRIDE

BLESSED

HAIR

REASON

CLAWS

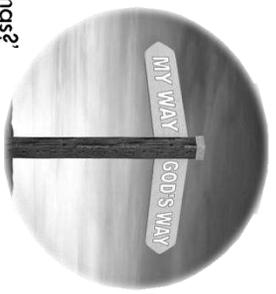
NEBUCHADNEZZAR

TRUTH

DEPARTED

OXEN

His rule is everlasting,
and his kingdom is eternal.
All the people of the earth
are nothing compared to him.
He does as he pleases
among the angels of heaven
and among the people of the earth.
No one can stop him or say to him,
"What do you mean by doing these things?"



"When my sanity returned to me, so did my honor and glory and kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored as head of my kingdom, with even greater honor than before.

"Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and glorify and honor the King of heaven. All his acts are just and true, and he is able to humble the proud." (Daniel 4:34b-37)

When Nebuchadnezzar recognized God as the supreme ruler of all things, God restored him as the King over the Babylonian Empire. But there was even more to it than that! You see, Nebuchadnezzar recognized that before his seven years living like a wild animal, he was a very prideful person. The king realized that God was the one who humbled him and brought him to a point of repentance.

The Bible says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (Proverbs 3:34, James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5). The Bible also tells us that God hates a prideful attitude (Proverbs 6:16-17), and He will do whatever it takes to humble us and bring us to repentance!

What is it going to take in your life for God to get your attention?

When faced with this decision, will you choose your way or God's way?



A TALE OF TWO KINGS

A long time ago in a land far, far away called Babylon, there lived a king. This king's name was Nebuchadnezzar. King Nebuchadnezzar was the greatest king of one of the greatest kingdoms that ever existed. All this 'greatness' kind of went to the king's head. He became very proud of all he had accomplished.

One day, while Nebuchadnezzar was sleeping, God sent him a vision. He had a vision of a giant tree that was tall and green, and it provided shade and fruit for everyone—birds, animals and even people. But in his vision, a holy messenger commanded that the tree be chopped down, leaving only the stump to remind the people of the greatness of the tree.

One of the king's wise men, Daniel, explained the dream to the king. He said, "Here is what the dream means: the kingdom of Babylon will fall and you, O King, will live outside and eat grass like an animal for seven years. God is doing this to you so you will learn that He is the one who rules over the kingdoms of the world." Then Daniel begged the king, "Please take my advice. Stop sinning and do what is right. Break from your wicked past and be merciful to the poor. Show God that you've really changed and then maybe he will change His mind and let you remain as king."

The king did not change. In fact, a whole year went by and nothing ever happened. Then one day, as King Nebuchadnezzar was looking out from the roof of his palace, he said, "Look at what an awesome city I have built. Babylon is my creation. I built this by my own power. I built this as my royal home so everyone can see how awesome I am."

As the king was saying those words, a holy messenger came down and proclaimed, "O King Nebuchadnezzar, you are no longer the king of this kingdom. You will no longer live like a real person; you will live in the fields with the wild animals and eat



grass to keep you alive. For seven years, you will live like that. Then we will see if you have changed your attitude and recognize that God is the One who is really in control!"

And so it happened, just as the holy messenger said...

But this is a tale of two kings—King Nebuchadnezzar and King Belshazzar. King Belshazzar was a descendant of King Nebuchadnezzar. He too was the king of Babylon, and he too had the wrong idea of the origin of his power and authority. Here's his story:

Belshazzar was an evil king who liked to have enormous parties where people behaved very badly. One night, the king was having a party for 1,000 of his upper class friends. Everyone was involved with lots of drinking and uncontrolled passion and pleasure. This was not the first time that Belshazzar had a party like this, but at this party he was thinking about doing something that he had never done before—using the sacred, golden cups from God's Temple.

Many years earlier, about the time that Nebuchadnezzar became King of Babylon, the golden cups that were used to worship Jehovah



God in the Temple in Jerusalem were brought to Babylon. This happened at the same time that Daniel and his friends were taken as captives to Babylon. These cups were set apart for a holy purpose, but King Belshazzar wanted to use them for an evil purpose.

In both of our stories today, each of these kings had a choice to make—choose to honor God by obeying His command or choose to dishonor Him with their actions and attitudes.

So what did they choose?

King Belshazzar chose to dishonor God. He used the golden cups in his wild party and praised their idols made of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone while he did it. As soon as he did, all the people at the

party saw the fingers of a human hand writing on the plaster wall of the king's palace. When the king saw this, his face turned pale with fear, his knees knocked together and his legs gave way beneath him.

So what was the hand writing on the wall? It wrote these words in Aramaic:

"**Mene, mene, tekel upharsin.**" King Belshazzar did not know what the words meant. Fortunately, Daniel was able to explain the meaning of these words. He said:

"**Mene** means 'numbered'—God has numbered the days of your reign and has brought it to an end.

Tekel means 'weighed'—you have been weighed on the balances and have not measured up.

Parsin means 'divided'—your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians." (Daniel 5:25-28)

With these four simple words, God declared that the Babylonian Empire would cease to exist. That very night, King Belshazzar was killed.

Belshazzar had a choice—honor God or dishonor God—and he chose poorly! The result of his choices not only brought about his death, but also brought about the end of one of the greatest empires in the history of the world. God tried to get his attention, but he chose to do what he wanted to do with no regard for God and His ways.

So what happened with King Nebuchadnezzar? I'm glad you asked!

You see, King Nebuchadnezzar was also given a choice to honor and recognize God as the ruler over everything. Do you remember what had happened to him earlier? Just after declaring how great he was and how awesome the city of Babylon was, God declared that he would lose his kingship and live like an animal for seven whole years.

At the end of that seven years of living like an animal, the Bible tells us that Nebuchadnezzar looked up to heaven—his sanity restored—and he 'praised and worshipped the Most High and honored the one who lives forever' (Daniel 4:34a). In fact, Nebuchadnezzar went on to say this about God:



Lesson Four: Obey God No Matter What (Middle School)

Lesson Theme

God loves me and always knows what I am going through. He wants me to obey Him no matter what the consequences might be. I will stand for God above and before everything else!

Bible Story - Daniel in the Lions' Den

Ice Breaker Questions

How does it make you feel if your teacher treats one of your classmates better than you?

In your experience, how do people typically react when they think that someone else is receiving special treatment?

What are some things that people might do to the person who is the 'teacher's pet'? Have you ever wanted to do one of these? Did you?

In today's lesson, we will learn about a guy who everyone thought was getting special treatment, so they did everything they could to sabotage him and get him in trouble.

Active Listening Activity

Before sharing the Bible story, divide the students into two groups. Ask each group to count the number of times you say one of the following names:

9) Group 1 – Daniel

10) Group 2 – Darius

When you finish telling the story, ask each group how many times they heard the name they were listening for. Give the team with the **lowest** number a prize—the bags of chips from the “What’s Inside?” activity. Then ask review questions to see if they comprehended the other details of the story.

Daniel 6 (Paraphrase)

Darius became the new king of Babylon and put Daniel in charge of the whole empire. All of the other officials became jealous of Daniel. They looked for ways to get Daniel in trouble, but could not find anything that Daniel had done that was wrong.

The officials knew that Daniel worshiped the God of the Hebrews, Jehovah. They decided to use this against him. They convinced King Darius to make a new law that said for 30 days no one could pray to any god or man except King Darius. Anyone who broke this law would be sentenced to death by being thrown into the den of lions.

Because the law of that empire was very strict, once King Darius signed this new law it could not be changed—not even by King Darius himself. When Daniel heard about the law, he went to his house, knelt down by an open window, and prayed to God. He knew that he was breaking King Darius' law, but he was obeying God just as he had always done before. He was more concerned about obeying God than the king.

The officials told King Darius what happened—how that Daniel had broken the new law. When Darius heard this, he became very sad, because Daniel was his friend. All day long, he tried to figure out a way to save Daniel. But, at the end of the day, King Darius had to carry obey the law and sentence Daniel to death in the lions' den.

As Daniel was being taken to the lions' den, Darius said, "I hope that your God will rescue you, Daniel!" The king left, and Daniel was cast into the den of lions. That night, the king could not sleep. Early the next morning, King Darius ran out to the lions' den and shouted, "Daniel, has your God been able to save you from the hungry lions?"

Daniel said, "My God sent His angel and shut the mouths' of the lions. They have not hurt me." This made the king very happy. He ordered that Daniel be taken up out of the lions' den and all the men who had tried to trap Daniel were thrown in. Then Darius wrote a new law that everyone in all the empire should worship the God of Daniel—Jehovah.

Review Questions

Who became king after Belshazzar?

What was Daniel's position in the government?

How does the Bible describe Daniel in verse 3? How do you think this kind of person would be described today?

How did the other officials feel about Daniel's rise to power? What did they decide to do as a result?

When the other officials searched for 'skeletons in Daniel's closet,' what did they find?

What aspect of Daniel's life did they decide to attack? Have you ever been attacked because of your beliefs?

What new law did King Darius sign?

What did Daniel do when he found out about this new law? Was he aware of the consequences for disobeying the king's command?

How did the king feel when he found out that Daniel had disobeyed the new law? What did he try to do to save Daniel from the lions' den?

What happened when Daniel was thrown into the den of lions?

How did God defend Daniel when he was cast into the lions' den? What did Daniel say about why did God chose to protect him (Daniel 6:22)?

If the right thing is always worth the cost, why do we sometimes hesitate (or even fail) to do it?

How will you live out the truth of this passage?

- **Be faithful.** Ask God to help you be faithful to Him at work, at school, in your interactions with others and in the challenges you face this week.
- **Be involved.** Get involved in ministry and service. Help others discover and walk with Jesus. Daniel did not let opposition keep him from his work or his walk with God.
- **Be bold.** If you go to school or live in an environment that is hostile to Christ, don't back down. Let your faith in God be on display, but do it in a way that is loving and honors him.

God wants us to obey Him in spite of the outcome!

Activities & Games

The "What's Inside" Activity

What You Need:

- Purchase non-see-through snack size bags of Doritos or Cheetos (or any kind of chips). Get enough for at least half the class.
- Glue stick

What to Do:

- **Before class**, carefully open the bags **at the bottom**, switch the contents for something else (preferably less desirable), and then reseal the bag using a glue stick.

- Distribute the bags to the winner of the listening game (above).
- Tell them that they cannot open this snack until after the lesson.

Application:

- Students will be confused and possibly angry that they didn't get what they wanted. They might laugh, or get frustrated, or more!
- Explain that this was an object lesson teaching us that if we say we are Christians and the Holy Spirit is INSIDE us, then the way we act on the OUTSIDE needs to match up with that!
- They need to make sure their life accurately reflects what is inside of them!

Broom Hockey

What You Need:

- 2 brooms
- 32 paper plates—On the front and back of each plate write 1 letter:
 - D.A.N.I.E.L.
 - P.R.A.Y.E.R.
 - G.O.D. K.N.O.W.S. M.E.
 - A.L.W.A.Y.S. O.B.E.Y.
- 4 chairs (2 at each end of the room) – Place the chairs at opposite end of the rooms to serve as goals.

How to Play:

- Form two teams, one at each goal. Randomly scatter all of the paper plates on the floor.
- Assign one team the word *Daniel* and the other team the word *prayer*. (Assign each child a letter, if desired.)
- Give one student on each team a broom.
- Instruct the student to find a plate with a letter from his word (or his assigned letter), sweep it into his goal, and then hand the broom to a team member.

- After kids sweep all their letters through the goal, teams must arrange the letters to make the assigned word and explain the importance of the word in today’s Bible story.

Application:

- Talk about how Daniel prayed to God when he was in the lions’ den.
- Play a second round and assign the words *God Knows Me* to one team and *Always Obey* to the second team.
- Remind the students that God loves us and always knows what we are going through. He wants us to always obey Him—no matter the outcome.

Activity Sheets/Coloring Pages

- 4.1 – Daniel 6:10
- 4.2 – Hebrews 13:6
- 4.3 – Daniel Relaxing
- 4.4 – Daniel Praying
- 4.5 – Maze
- 4.6 – Word Search

Daniel in the Den of Lions



“Even though Daniel was aware the king had signed the ordinance *into law*, he continued to do what he always did... and get down on his knees three times a day and pray to his God and praise Him.” (Daniel 6:10 VOICE)

Daniel in the Lions' Den



The Lord is my help—
I won't be afraid of
anything. How can
anyone harm me?

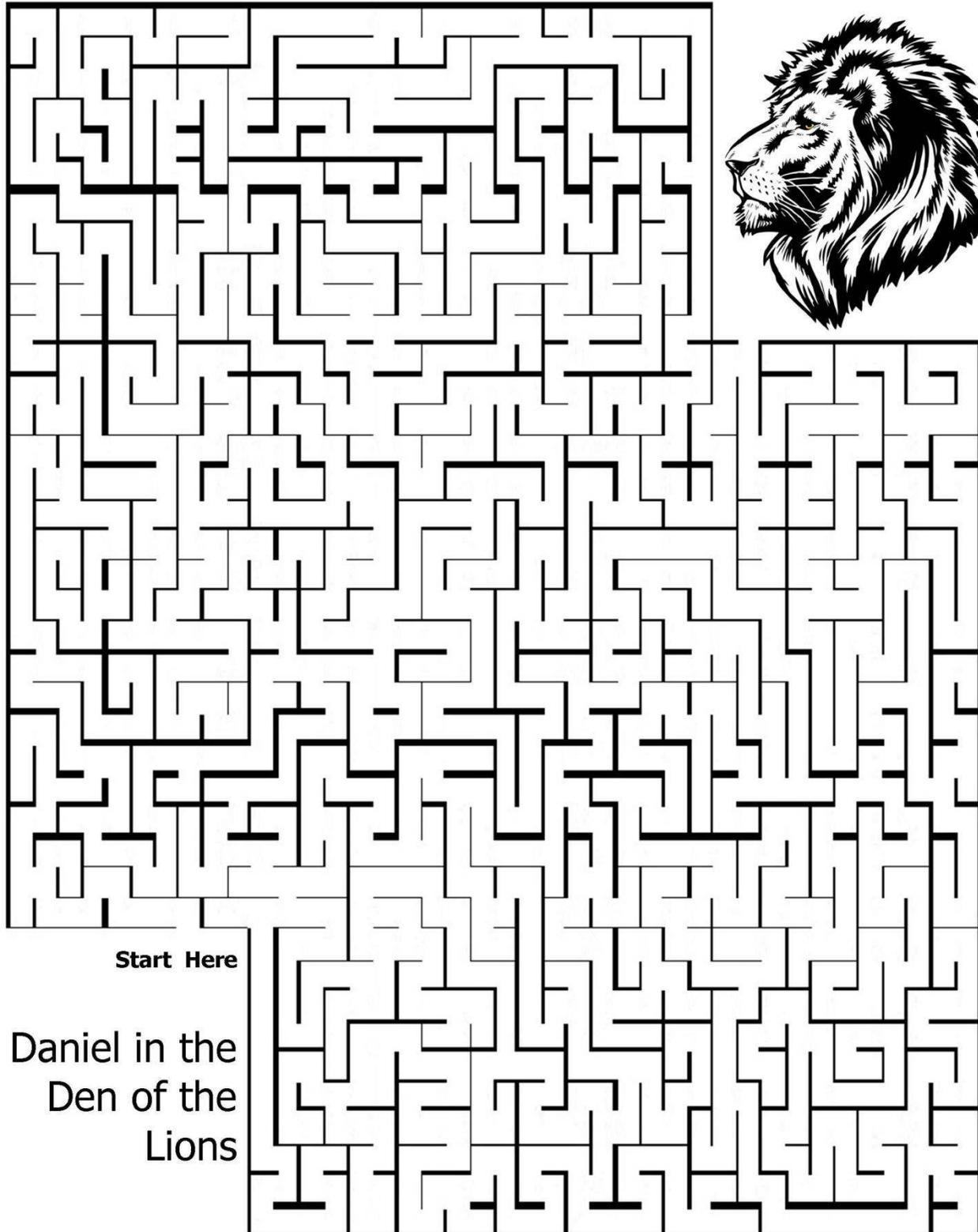
Hebrews 13:6



DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN

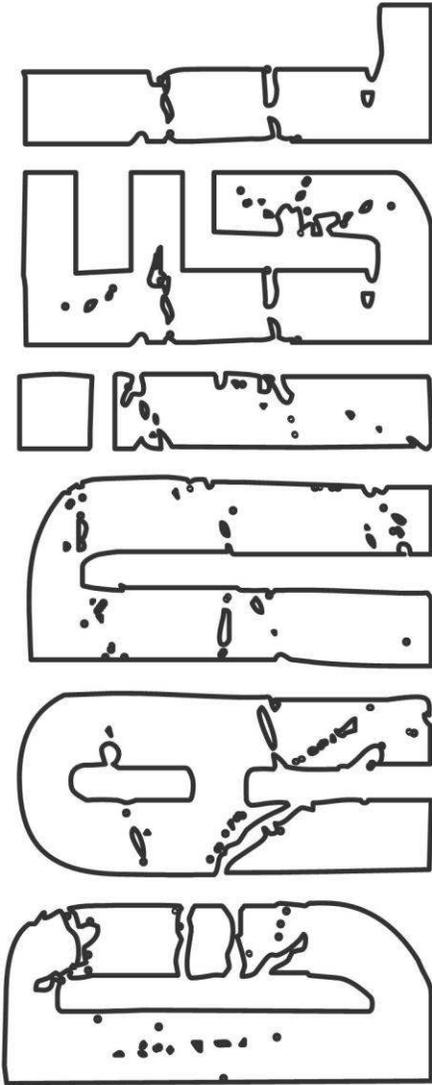
Daniel in the Lions Den





Start Here

Daniel in the
Den of the
Lions



N F Z Z J S U Y L O D C E Y F
 L I O N S L I W W A H E G S O
 V L B D E V U L R D R W L N D
 N M O B E Y W I N H D U A J K
 H G M B R Y U Y T G A E Y X I
 H D E Z A S A A B D N E C X D
 L A E S C B T R C O I O F Z L
 Y R G N U H Y R P G E X J E G
 M V K N S Y K L U Z L E F Z W
 F F J S E R A A O S G M F D Y
 V T C R I D B E U N T E Y T U
 P R I N C E S A K B B H S U K
 V G G W H P Q F E N J C S S I
 W O S I M M Z Y R A G S Q F N
 P Y O V B A A N A I Y Q H W G

- BABYLON
- DANIEL
- DARIUS
- DEN
- GOD
- HUNGRY
- KING
- LIONS
- PRAYED
- PRINCES
- RING
- SCHEME
- SEAL
- THREE
- TRUST

