



Like the story of Joseph’s rise within the court of Pharaoh which we find at the end of the book of Genesis, Daniel’s rise within the Babylonian court seemed to be against all odds. God’s favor over Daniel created intense jealousy among the native Babylonians serving alongside him who eventually hatched a scheme to trick King Darius into having to execute Daniel for his faithfulness to God.

In verse 4, it notes that the jealous administrators “could find no corruption in him [Daniel].” The tactics used by Daniel’s foes remind us of an important principle as we think about standing for truth. Sometimes people throw stones not because you are doing something wrong but precisely because you are doing something right.

Each day that Daniel’s power and authority grew, the cost of faithfulness grew as well. What are you willing to risk to stand for truth?

GPS for Families

GrowPrayStudy.org/family

Read Daniel 3:1-30. If you have younger children, consider also watching the VeggieTales DVD “Rack, Shack and Benny.” This Bible passage and this DVD are about Daniel and his friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They demonstrate the courage to act like God wanted them to, even though the world around them said to behave in another way.

Kids seem to really enjoy this Bible passage because of the fiery furnace and the miraculous rescue. So, have fun reading it aloud to them. The DVD is cute as well, and the annoying, but fun, “bunny” song will stick with you. Discuss with your family how the situation these friends were in is similar to our everyday lives. We are surrounded by people who are not always trying to follow God like we are. This means we have to make choices that are different from our friends. When some people choose to be mean to another kid or choose to cheat on a test or choose to lie to their parents, we have to stand up for what we believe in and do the right thing. This is not always going to be easy.

Tell your kids you will always support them when they make those hard decisions. Prepare them by telling them that making the right choices may not make them popular with their friends. But that is okay. We know we have each other and God on our team. Pray together for courage to be strong in our faith just like Rack, Shack and Benny.

MESSAGE

“Standing for Truth”

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Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon:

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PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

Lord, I know that you have called me to be a light in a dark world. I confess to you today, Lord, that sometimes I feel inadequate in that task. Sometimes I cower in fear. Sometimes I retreat in the interest of self preservation. Give me courage today, Lord, to honor you with my life, especially when it would be easier for me to withdraw to a place of safety. Help me, Lord, to stand for what is right, to fight for what is good and to defend what you have taught me is true. AMEN.

Imagine losing everything. The book of Daniel begins with such a scenario as Nebuchadnezzar besieged and conquered Israel. The temple structure was gutted. The sacred artifacts of Israel were carried off, and men like Daniel were displaced from the only homes they had ever known to find a new life in the king's palace in Babylon.

As we move forward in this story, we will see how Daniel and his friends respond to the adversity of living in a foreign culture whose religion was radically different from their own. How do you think you would respond in that type of situation?

Being taken from their homes and asked to live in a foreign world must have been a terribly discouraging situation for these men. Can you think of a time when you felt a similar sense of discouragement? What kept you from quitting?

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The first test faced by Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah came in the form of the diet prescribed by the king. According to the *NIV Study Bible*, "Israelites considered food from the king's table to be contaminated since the first portion of it was offered to idols. Ceremonially unclean animals were used and were neither slaughtered nor prepared according to the regulations of the law." As an expression of their allegiance to God, these men requested to avoid these "unclean" foods.

It has been said that "our character is what we do when we think that no one is looking." Daniel and his friends faced no immediate consequences for their actions outside of their own awareness that they had broken the law.

How would you describe the strength of your own character? How do you respond when you think no one is looking?

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When a vision was given to the king sometime later that his own people could not interpret appropriately for him, the king responded in anger and declared that all the wise men of Babylon should be put to death. Daniel, a man skilled in the interpretation of dreams, was then brought before the king in order to assuage the king's anger.

How does Daniel describe the skill he seems to possess? What does this exchange reveal about Daniel's courage in the face of adversity?

In verse 47 of chapter 2 when Daniel finishes his interpretation of the dream, the king exclaims, "Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery." How might the outcome have been different if not for Daniel's courageous response in verse 28?

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Throughout the first four chapters of Daniel we see repeated instances where Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego face tough decisions that require them to choose between the hard road of faithfulness and the easy path of conformity. When Nebuchadnezzar created a ninety-foot high and nine-foot wide idol plated with gold and decreed that all people should bow before it, another test was presented to these Jewish men living in a foreign land.

At this particular time, all four of these Jewish men were serving in high positions in the court of the Babylonian king. Their disobedience not only undermined the king's authority but represented a rebellion by the king's own inner circle.

How do Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego reply to the king? Did they expect to be saved from the fire? What does this act reveal about the hope they had placed in God?

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