

A TRIAL BY FIRE

LESSON 50 → Daniel 3:1-18



The three Hebrew boys proved they could trust God even in scary situations.

About 2,500 years ago a king named Nebuchadnezzar lived in a place called Babylon. He was a very proud king, and we are told that he was quick to make decisions. His decisions were not always wise, but once he had said he

was going to do something, he went ahead and did it whether it was wise or not.

One day Nebuchadnezzar decided to build a golden image. It was like a statue, but it was really an idol. The image was very tall (about as tall as a



WITH JESUS, I DON'T NEED TO FOLLOW THE CROWD.

Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil. — Exodus 23:2

nine-story building) and very narrow (about nine feet wide). Nebuchadnezzar put it in a place where it could be seen for miles around. He called for a special group of musicians to play. He told the people that when they heard the music start, they had to bow down and worship the image.

*Three of the rulers in Babylon—*Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—were Jews and knew that there was only one real God. They knew that Nebuchadnezzar's man-made image couldn't do anything for anyone. They also knew that if they obeyed the king and worshiped that image they would be displeasing God. So they would not bow down.

The day the image was dedicated, the king had an announcer tell the people that they should bow down as soon as they heard the music. If they didn't bow down, they would be thrown into a burning fiery furnace.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego listened as the musicians started playing. They saw all of the people fall down and worship the golden statue. But they did not bow down, not even a little bit.

It might have been very easy for them to pretend to bow, and then to say, "We didn't really worship the statue. We know that the Lord is the only true

and living God. We simply don't want to cause any trouble." But they just stood there, not bowing at all.

Right away a group of men went to the king. "King Nebuchadnezzar," they said, "there are three men in this government who aren't obeying your orders. They heard the music play and they didn't bow down to your statue."

Nebuchadnezzar became very angry. "Bring those men here right away," he stormed. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came before him he questioned them carefully. "Didn't you bow down to my image? If you'll obey my orders the next time you hear the music play, I won't punish you. But if you continue to disobey me, you'll be thrown into a burning fiery furnace!"

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego didn't even ask for time to think it over. "We won't worship your god or your golden image. If you throw us into the burning furnace, our God can bring us out unharmed. But even if He doesn't choose to rescue us, we will not worship your golden image." And they didn't!

Sometimes when we read stories about things that happened a long time ago we wonder what they have to do with us. If this were a fairy tale about three men who dis-

obeyed a king, it wouldn't matter to us at all. But we know that everything we read in the Bible is true and has a special meaning. We can learn from it if we will.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did what they knew was right, even though all those around them were doing something different. That was not easy, but they did it. They were thrown into the furnace, but they were not alone, because God had sent His Son to be with them. God honored them for doing what was right.

You may be asked to do things that you know are not right. Friends may pressure you to skip school, tell a lie, or cheat on a test. You may be tempted to take drugs or to listen to music which has words that honor the devil. It may seem that everyone around you is doing those things! But it's important to say no to temptations, just as it was for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to resist the pressure to worship the golden image. God is the same as He was in Bible times. If we trust Him, as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did, He will help us just as He helped them.

WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Don't give in to anyone who tries to get you to do something you know is wrong. Do the things that will help you grow for Jesus. Read each story below and mark an X by the lines which you feel would be a good way to end the story.

Your classmates tease a boy for being overweight and having freckles. He moves and sits next to you. You . . .

- talk to him about today's lesson.
- refuse to say "Hi" to him.
- invite him to your house.
- pretend you didn't notice.
- roll your eyes at your classmates.

Three boys in your math class ask you to cut class with them. You . . .

- tell the teacher what they said.
- let them know they're creeps.
- say you don't want to get behind on your math lesson.
- go with them just this once.
- pretend you didn't hear them.

Your friends invite you to the beach Saturday. But you had promised to mow the lawn for old Mrs. Jones. You . . .

- conveniently "forget" the lawn job.
- call her up and say you have a cold.
- pay your little brother to do it.
- call her and ask if you could do it Monday.

The kids in your afternoon science class pass some test answers around during an exam. You . . .

- pass it on without looking.
- hand it back to the person who gave it to you and say "I can't cheat."
- take it straight to the teacher.
- tear it up and stomp on it.