



Community Group Discussion Guide

November 23, 2025
Daniel 3:1-30 | Courage

MOTIVATE

⇒ *Starter Question: Play "Would You Rather?" Ask questions like: "Would you rather give a speech on national television or sing the national anthem at the Super Bowl? "Would you rather go skydiving or deep-sea diving?"*

DISCUSS

At times in our lives, we have to make choices that test our priorities. Daniel and his friends previously had chosen to obey God over King Nebuchadnezzar regarding food, risking a demotion, or worse. In spite of their initial challenge in Daniel 1 upon their arrival in Babylon, these young men had enjoyed great blessing as Judean exiles. Nevertheless, they may have wondered whether one day they would have to take a stand to honor God in a pagan nation.

In Daniel 3:1-30, Nebuchadnezzar personally made Daniel's friends choose between worshipping an enormous, golden statue or immediately being thrown into a fiery furnace. As faithful worshipers of the living God, this really wasn't a choice. God alone deserved their worship and glory. The courage of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stemmed from their belief that God is worthy of trust and obedience, whatever the cost.

⇒ *What was Nebuchadnezzar's attitude toward God, Daniel, and his three friends in Daniel 2:46-49?*

1. God is always able to save.

Daniel 3:1-7: *¹King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its breadth six cubits. He set it up on the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. ² Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent to gather the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. ³ Then the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. And they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. ⁴ And the herald proclaimed aloud, "You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, ⁵ that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. ⁶ And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace." ⁷ Therefore, as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.*

King Nebuchadnezzar ordered that a huge, golden statue be erected on a plain outside the city of Babylon. The statue was ninety feet high and nine feet wide. Nebuchadnezzar assembled his officials who were to demonstrate their allegiance to him and to Babylon's gods by bowing before the colossal statue. All the people of various nations and languages were also ordered to bow down before the golden image. This worship was to occur when an orchestra of musical instruments began to play.

- ⇒ *In a polytheistic society such as Babylon that worshiped hundreds of gods, why might the people have concluded that worshipping one more was not a big deal?*
- ⇒ *Why was it a big deal for God's people?*

Daniel 3:8-12: ⁸ *Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews. ⁹ They declared to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! ¹⁰ You, O king, have made a decree, that every man who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image. ¹¹ And whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace. ¹² There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, pay no attention to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."*

In a vast crowd, the king evidently could not see that three men were left standing when the signal to worship the statue was given: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—known in Daniel 1 by their Jewish names, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had determined not to bow to the statue because they worshiped God alone, even if it meant facing a gruesome death. Some Chaldeans, who lived in the southern part of Babylon, likely jealous these Jews were set over Babylon's affairs, maliciously reported to the king that these three men would not serve his gods nor worship his statue. The Chaldeans also reminded Nebuchadnezzar of the penalty for this disobedience.

- ⇒ *As believers today, is pressure placed on us to deny God in various ways?*
- ⇒ *In our culture, do we pay a penalty of some sort for refusing to deny God?*

Daniel 3:13-15: ¹³ *Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the king. ¹⁴ Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, "Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? ¹⁵ Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?"*

Shadrach Meshach, and Abednego determined to obey God's commandments: "Do not have other gods besides me. Do not make an idol for yourself" (Exodus 20:3-4). Nebuchadnezzar's opening question provided them an opportunity to speak for themselves. Perhaps the king suspected those who accused them were jealous of their position over the province of Babylon despite their Jewish identity. Perhaps these three exiles had become trusted officials, and he did not want to order their deaths. At any rate, Nebuchadnezzar would spare the men if they would bow before the statue.

The words "you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image" identified the heart of the issue. The word translated "serve" always refers to service of a god or the Lord God in the book of Daniel. By admitting to this part of the charge, the Jewish men affirmed they did not share the king's worldview nor that of Babylon's population. Certainly the Babylonian conquerors were aware of Jewish spiritual distinctives. However, if these men did not bow before the gold statue, they would be violating the king's direct order and would face dire consequences. Nebuchadnezzar asked another question: Who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?

- ⇒ *What are some ways believers today experience difficulties and persecution for their faith?*
- ⇒ *How can we become people who exhibit faith and courage even in the face of death?*
- ⇒ *As a believer, how would you answer Nebuchadnezzar's question?*

Daniel 3:16-18: *¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷ If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. ¹⁸ But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."*

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego faced a very real threat and their earthly lives seemed to be in Nebuchadnezzar's hands. At the same time, these three men saw the ultimate weakness and smallness of Nebuchadnezzar compared to the almighty, sovereign power of the very real God they believed in.

- ⇒ *Though we may not face death, should we expect consequences for standing firm for the gospel?*
- ⇒ *When the world plays its "music" and expects you to bow, what courageous response will you make?*

The persecution coming for these three courageous Jews was perilous, yet they saw this as an opportunity to give glory to God. Nebuchadnezzar mocked their God, claiming to have supreme power in this matter. Still, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego remained firm in their faith. They would worship God alone, no matter the cost. God could rescue them with a miracle, but He might not. Both were acceptable outcomes because the Lord alone is the true God who is worthy of worship.

- ⇒ *Discuss this statement: Jesus told His disciples they would be persecuted for His name (Matthew 10:16-18). Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were forerunners for those courageous disciples, and for us. They knew they faced the king's fury not because of a failure of faith but precisely because of their faith, and they trusted God with the outcome.*
- ⇒ *For the believer, is there a losing situation? Consider Matthew 10:28 and Philippians 1:21 for your answer.*

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied to Nebuchadnezzar knowing their next words could be their last. He had already warned them of the consequences of their disobedience. The three men's words "we have no need to answer you in this matter" references Nebuchadnezzar's question in verse 15. The king certainly had intended the question as rhetorical, that is, it really was more of a statement than a question. No god—so the king thought—could rescue Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from his power.

These men of God courageously answered the king's question. They had made up their minds to obey God, but they wanted the king to know that someone greater than he actually controlled the outcome. They would testify about their God, regardless of how their God responded to their situation.

⇒ *Discuss this statement: Courage is born from regular, everyday moments of reality with God as we grow in faith and learn how to live from His Word. God is always preparing us for greater displays of courage that will bring Him glory, and He has given us His Spirit to supply us with the strength we need for the moment.*

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were standing on their faith in a God they knew continued to guide their steps. In light of that confidence, they assured Nebuchadnezzar that if God so chooses, He could deliver them from the king and from any death decree the king might bring. These three Jewish men were determined to set the record straight, even if it meant their death.

Verse 18 records the final decision Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego affirmed before Nebuchadnezzar. The words "but if not" acknowledged they had no certainty that God would intervene and save them. God might do that or He might not. Either way, they knew they must worship God alone. They could not bow to any pagan image, and they knew they could trust God whether in life or in death. Whatever the cost, they could not obey the king's decree.

⇒ *Do you have a "but if not" situation in which you are being challenged to courageously trust God regardless of the outcome?*

2. God saves so that all would know He is the Most High God.

Daniel 3:19-23: ¹⁹ *Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated. ²⁰ And he ordered some of the mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. ²¹ Then these men were bound in their cloaks, their tunics, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the burning fiery furnace. ²² Because the king's order was urgent and the furnace overheated, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. ²³ And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace.*

Infuriated, Nebuchadnezzar ordered that the furnace be heated seven times hotter than usual. The three men were tied up while still wearing their clothes and thrown into the flames. Their garments should have rapidly caught fire and engulfed the men in flames. The soldiers who were forced to carry out the command so hurriedly that they did not have time to protect themselves from the fire were themselves killed by the extreme heat.

⇒ *Why is it significant to remember that God did not prevent Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from going into the fire?*

Daniel 3:24-25: ²⁴ *Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." ²⁵ He answered and said, "But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods."*

Nebuchadnezzar was the one to notice the fourth man walking in the fire with the Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The king who believed he had power over life and death was beholding a supreme power unlike any he could achieve. Nebuchadnezzar exclaimed, "the fourth is like a son of the gods." Some interpreters have suggested this was a theophany—an appearance of the Son of

God in a pre-incarnate form. We cannot be sure if this was a theophany or an angel, but the text is clear that God miraculously intervened to save His faithful servants.

⇒ *Why do you think God gave Nebuchadnezzar the ability to see "the fourth man" in the fire?*

Daniel 3:26-29: ²⁶ Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace; he declared, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire. ²⁷ And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men. The hair of their heads was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them. ²⁸ Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God. ²⁹ Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way." ³⁰ Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

The king and his leaders approached the door of the furnace whose flames had killed those who threw in Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. What they saw astounded them: "the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men." They appeared and smelled as if they had never even been near the furnace. The restraints Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers had put on them were gone, but Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had suffered absolutely no effect in the fire.

What the king had just witnessed called for action. Nebuchadnezzar naturally assumed that God might be angry with him for throwing His servants into a fire. Consequently, the king now exclaimed, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego." The king mentioned the "angel" or messenger their God sent to rescue them. He also described Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego as God's "servants who trusted in him." Nebuchadnezzar clearly was in awe of their God's power to rescue them. Nebuchadnezzar's anger at their refusal to obey disappeared as he witnessed God's miraculous work. The other officials also witnessed God's power.

⇒ *Discuss the significance of the details God oversaw in carrying out this miracle.*

To be sure, the three Jewish men had violated the king's command and risked their lives by doing so. However, the king changed his perspective when he witnessed God's saving miracle. He recognized that the men had not disobeyed him out of a lack of respect. Rather, they knew they could not serve or worship any god except their own God. In verse 15, Nebuchadnezzar had asked them, "Who is the god who can rescue you from my power?"

He now knew the answer to his own question: It was the God whom Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego faithfully served.

After giving praise to God, Nebuchadnezzar issued a decree that applied to "any people, nation, or language." The king did not insist that the people stop worshiping their own gods. However, he did prohibit them from saying anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The penalty to anyone who spoke anything offensive against God would be that the individual would

be torn limb from limb and his house laid in ruins. Public dismemberment and turning houses into garbage dumps would create a visible deterrent.

In verse 29, Nebuchadnezzar professed the reason for his counter decree: "There is no other God who is able to rescue in this way." The king had never witnessed such power, and he knew he had better respect it. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were not only honored by Nebuchadnezzar but they also received rewards, a job promotion, and respect among the people. Their courage in a dreadful trial resulted in great blessing.

⇒ *Has God somehow failed when a fiery trial doesn't end like this?*

⇒ *How can you use this story to encourage other believers who are facing "fiery furnaces?"*

God's rescue of His servants was not for their sake only. Their preservation brought glory to God. The king who had ridiculed the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego now praised the very same God. The three friends risked their lives to serve God, and God came through. That's a truth that rings through the ages. Whatever threat God's people face, it is nothing compared to God's power. He has all authority in heaven and on earth, and He laughs at the schemes of the wicked (Psalm 2:1-4). Nothing can move God from His throne, and nothing can thwart His plan of salvation for His people.

⇒ *How have you seen the power of God at work in your life?*

⇒ *How do Peter's words in 1 Peter 4:12-13 encourage you?*

TRANSFORM

The power God used to rescue Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. Neither fire nor death can stop God from fulfilling His will. The Lord is all-powerful, and He's always in control. So no matter the scenario we may face, may we always choose the courageous path of trust, obedience, and worship for the Lord.

1. HEAD: Miracles in the Bible can be disorienting. But taking God at His word means taking all of His Word to heart—even the miracles. After all, to believe in God at all is to believe in a miracle. Your faith is a miracle. Your life in Christ is a miracle.

⇒ *Why is it important that we believe the miracles in the Bible?*

2. HEART: Courage is a heart posture, a reliance upon God no matter the cost. Jesus doesn't coddle us but tells us the truth—we will have suffering in this world, but He also said He has overcome the world (John 16:33). No wonder the most repeated command in the Bible is "Do not fear" because "If God is for us, who is against us?" (Romans 8:31).

⇒ *What in your life keeps you from trusting God and obeying with courage?*

3. HANDS: Courage is faith displayed. We inevitably will run into obstacles, temptations, and hard decisions while following Jesus. Yet these are opportunities to show courage in Christ, knowing that He has saved us by grace through faith and has given us His gift of eternal life.

⇒ *How will you act with faith and courage this week, trusting the Lord for direction, words, and boldness?*

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Additional resource: *Shepherd's Notes: Daniel*, B&H Publishing, 1998, *pages 20-27*.