

Four Boys Take a Stand

TEXT Daniel 1:1-21

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to explain that the four Hebrew boys were wiser and healthier than the others in their group because they put God first. They will recognize that God blesses us when we choose to follow Him.

MEMORY VERSE God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom. — Daniel 1:17

MEMORY VERSE SONG

God gave them know - ledge and skill, God gave them
know - ledge and skill in all learn - ing and wis - dom:
God gave them know - ledge and skill.

MEMORY VERSE IN ACTION

GOD GAVE THEM — Both hands up, look up.
KNOWLEDGE — Tap hand on forehead.
AND SKILL — Right hand writing on left palm.
IN ALL — Make a circle in front of you with both hands.
LEARNING — Make a book in front of you, palms up.
AND WISDOM — Touch temples with index finger of both hands.

MEMORY VERSE VISUALIZED

Cut apart into sections the scroll with a banner behind. (See pattern at end of lesson.) Place the scroll on the board, and add the surrounding sections as each portion of the verse is learned.

BIBLE LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction: Bring a collection of pairs of things to illustrate making choices. Some possibilities: red and green construction paper, two kinds of match-box cars, picture of beach and mountains. Explain that these are in-

significant choices — but the choice between right and wrong has eternal consequences.

Progression of events:

1. The four Hebrew boys were chosen to live and be taught in the king's palace.
2. They purposed not to defile themselves with the king's meat.
3. They asked for a ten days' trial period in which they ate only pulse and water.
4. God honored them, and they appeared better after ten days than all the others.

Climax: The king recognized the superior abilities of the four and found them ten times wiser than his wise men.
Conclusion: God's blessing was upon these young men for choosing to do right. He will bless us, too, when we choose to obey Him.

Response: Your students will be able to retell how the four Hebrew boys took their stand to do right. They will be able to tell of some instances in this day when they may be faced with making a choice between right and wrong.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Upon Solomon's death, the nation of Israel was divided into two kingdoms. The northern kingdom was called Israel and the southern kingdom was called Judah and was ruled by David's descendants (I Kings 12). God promised to bless both these nations if they would obey but they each persisted in disobedience. Because of this God sent foreign armies to chastise them. On approximately 721 B.C., the king of Assyria captured and deported the northern kingdom of Israel and they never returned (II Kings 17:17-23). Although the southern kingdom of Judah had several revivals they also persisted in evil and in approximately 587 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, destroyed the city of Jerusalem and deported the people (II Kings 25:8-11,20,21).

The fall of Judah actually came in three stages. The first in 605 B.C. (II Chronicles 36:5-7), the second in 597 B.C. (II Chronicles 36:9,10), and the final destruction in 587 B.C. (II Chronicles 36:14-20). Daniel and the three Hebrew children were taken captive during the first phase in 605 B.C. (Daniel 1:1).

The first mention of the city of Babylon in the Bible is in Genesis 10:10. The city was founded by Nimrod and was the center of rebellion against God. However, not until 605-562 B.C. did the city reach its full glory under the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. Under his building program the city was enhanced by vast fortifications, wide streets, canals and temples. It was truly a magnificent city. Nebuchadnezzar himself said, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:30). After Cyrus conquered Babylon in 539 B.C., the city began to decay and eventually was only ruins (Jeremiah 51:8,9). In the Book of Revelation, Babylon is pictured as the capital city of all those who are in rebellion against God.

Daniel and the three Hebrew children, although intent upon keeping themselves pure from the spiritual contamination of this idolatrous city, were not at all reticent about being involved in the political and cultural affairs of the society in which they found themselves. In fact, during Daniel's long life, he exerted great influence on three of history's greatest world rulers, Nebuchadnezzar, Darius and Cyrus.

IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES

Hand out Cheerios, raisins, carrot sticks, for the healthy food the four boys ate. Then show potato chips, candy, etc.

Role playing — tempt student to do something bad; for example, erase memory verse on board, tear lesson

sheets. Then explain how God blesses when we do what is right.

A Sad and Happy Puppet — Fold a sheet of construction paper in half. Trace a sad puppet face on one half and a happy puppet face on the other (see Patterns). Under the sad one print, "When I do wrong, I am sad." Under the happy one print, "When I do right, Jesus makes me glad." The child may color and decorate the hand puppet. Help him glue or tape sides. Leave the bottom open so he can insert his hand.

Give each child a copy of the sheet showing various suggestions to do wrong (see Patterns). Let them fill in the speech balloons beside it with what they feel would be an appropriate response. Discuss your answers, bringing out that Jesus can give us strength to do what we know is right.

Cut out the finger puppets representing the characters in today's story (see Patterns). Give one to each of your students and have them help you dramatize the story. Be sure they are familiar with the story first, then ask them questions that will draw out the proper response.

Trace the outline of a shoe onto heavy paper. Cover with clear contact paper. Make a list of short questions concerning the lesson. Around the edge of the shoe punch small holes at even intervals, putting in a few less holes than you have questions. Obtain a length of yarn long enough to go around the shoe plus about 8", and a needle with a large eye. In class, discuss what it would have felt like to have been in the shoes of the four boys who took a stand. Review the lesson by asking the prepared questions. Whoever can answer the question correctly may take one stitch around the shoe. Challenge the class: Can they answer enough questions correctly to get all the way around?

QUESTIONS

- Who was the king in this story?
- Why were these four boys chosen for special privileges in the king's palace?
- Why wouldn't the four boys eat the king's meat?
- Did their decision place them in danger? Why?
- Did the four Hebrew children grow weak and pale?
- What happened to the four boys when they didn't eat the king's meat?
- Who gave the boys good health and knowledge (wisdom)?
- What did God want them to eat?
- What did the king say about them?
- Who is our King?
- What will Jesus look at to see if we are ready to go to Heaven?
- Tell of a time when God blessed you.

