

BIG IDEA:	God blesses us when we suffer for doing what is right, so we can stand up for him!
BIBLE BASIS:	Daniel 3
KEY VERSE:	"Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:10 (NIV)

THE BIG BIBLE STORY

Preschool video: <https://youtu.be/peFMKsJeme8>

Elementary video: <https://youtu.be/duyQTMKA4Wk>

After the fall of Jerusalem, the people of Judah were taken as captives to the enemy land of Babylon and forced to work for King Nebuchadnezzar. Thanks to their friend, Daniel, though, King Nebuchadnezzar chose three of the captives to serve as important government officials. Their names were Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Even though they had been forced to leave the Promised Land, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego still loved and followed God with their whole heart.

One day, King Neb made a giant gold statue that stood 90 feet (27 meters) tall and 9 feet (2.7 meters) wide. Then he called all of his government officials to attend a special gathering to honor the statue. During the gathering, a messenger of the king announced a new rule. "Hear ye, hear ye. The king has decreed that beginning immediately, whenever the royal musicians play their royal instruments, you must drop to your knees and worship the gold statue. Those refusing to do so will be thrown into a blazing hot furnace."

As soon as the messenger had finished reading the new rule, the royal musicians blew their trumpets and flutes. Immediately, all of the people dropped to their knees and began worshipping the gold statue. All of the people, that is, except for Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They knew that the one true God was the only one worthy of worship and they refused to kneel before a silly statue.

When King Nebuchadnezzar heard that the three men of Judah had refused to worship his statue, he was furious! The king had Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego brought to him and he told them they had one more chance to kneel down and worship the statue. Let's see how they responded to the king.

Daniel 3:16-18. "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him. They said, 'King Nebuchadnezzar, we don't need to talk about this anymore. We might be thrown into the blazing furnace. But the God we serve is able to bring us out of it alive. He will save us from your power. But we want you to know this, Your Majesty. Even if we knew that our God wouldn't save us, we still wouldn't serve your gods. We wouldn't worship the gold statue you have set up.'"

Now the king was *really* furious! And as the king's temper rose, so did the temperature in the furnace. King Nebuchadnezzar ordered that the furnace be heated seven times hotter than usual. After heating the furnace, the king's strongest soldiers tied up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego with ropes and threw them into the blazing furnace. The furnace was so hot that the flames killed the soldiers who threw the three friends into it. But then the king saw something strange in the furnace. He leaped to his feet. He said, "Didn't we throw *three* men into the fire? Look! I see *four* men walking around in there. They're not even burned up and the fourth man looks like a son of the gods."

The king approached the furnace and called for Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to come out. When the three friends emerged from the fire, not only were they alive, not one hair on their heads was burned. They didn't even smell like smoke! King Nebuchadnezzar couldn't believe it! He said, "From now on there is a new rule. No one can say a word against the one true God, and if they do, they'll be cut to pieces." Then He honored Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego by giving them even higher positions in the city of Babylon.

BIG BIBLE STORY QUESTIONS

For Preschoolers:

- How tall was the statue that King Nebuchadnezzar built?
- What did Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego do when the music played?
- Who saved Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego?

For Elementary:

- What was your favorite part of this story?
- What does this story teach us about God?
- Could you have made the same choice as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego? Why or why not?
- Why do you think Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were willing to stand up for God even if it meant losing their life?

BIG BIBLE STORY ACTIVITIES

Prayer: Write a prayer to God. Ask Him to give you the courage to stand up for Him.

Journal: Tell God about a time that you stood up for Him. What happened? What did you do or say to stand up for Him?

Bible: Read it for yourself: Daniel 3. Draw a picture of the story or write to God your favorite part of the story. Tell Him why you like it.

Art: Think of a way you can stand up for God in your school or neighborhood? Draw a picture of it.