

8 LESSON EIGHT

*Pick Friends Who Will
Stand Up for What Is Right*

Session Overview

When we take a bold stand for the truth, we bear witness to our faith in Christ. Friends who are also ready to take a stand for what is right can help us stand strong for Jesus Christ.

This week's Bible passage finds Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego threatened with death for not bowing to the idol of Nebuchadnezzar.

Together, they took their stand against the command of the king to bow down to the idol. In our culture today, Christians are often labeled as hypocrites, because too often our behavior doesn't match our beliefs. It's so important to find friends who will help you stand up for what is right and live consistently by God's plan. Friends who are ready to take a stand for what is right can help us live a consistent, uncompromising life.

KEY POINT:
Choose friends who will help you obey God and not compromise.

There is strength in numbers. Ecclesiastes 4:12 says, "A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken" (NLT).

Friends who are ready to take a stand for what is right can help us live a consistent, uncompromising life while following Jesus Christ.

As you prepare for this session, notice how the three friends are portrayed in Scripture as speaking with one voice. As you prepare your students to share Christ more effectively in this course, you'll teach them to share their faith with one voice too. No doubt they'll look different as they stand together against the temptations of their culture. But what a dynamo they can become in God's hands!

Leader's Prep

For this session, you'll need:

- 1 Student Field Manuals (one per student)
- 2 Bibles (one per student)
- 3 A chalkboard with chalk, or a marker board with dry-erase markers
- 4 Pencils and/or pens to distribute to the students
- 5 CD-ROM Reproducibles 8-1 through 8-4
- 6 DVD
- 7 Praise and worship music of your choice
- 8 An uncooked egg, a permanent marker, a piece of tagboard 1 inch by 6 inches, strong tape, paper towels, a 10-lb. plate (or equivalent) from a weight set, an apron, a wet rag for cleanup



Start Here



TIME: 5-10 MINUTES

MATERIALS NEEDED: AN UNCOOKED EGG, A PERMANENT MARKER, A PIECE OF TAGBOARD 1 INCH BY 6 INCHES, STRONG TAPE, PAPER TOWELS, A 10-LB. PLATE (OR EQUIVALENT) FROM A WEIGHT SET, AN APRON, A WET RAG FOR CLEANUP

Let's do an experiment today. I want us to take a look at what pressure can do to us. Does it make a difference to stand up under pressure? Or is it just as fine to bow to pressure?

[NOTE: It would be a good idea to practice this experiment one time at home before you try it in front of the students. The egg *will* splat when it breaks, so be prepared to have a bit of cleanup. This “splatting” will help emphasize the point of what happens when we bow down to idols.]

Before the lesson, prepare the egg holder by curling the tagboard piece into a circle and taping it to size. You'll want the finished tagboard circle to be just smaller than your egg. It will serve as a holder for the egg. Use a permanent marker to make a face on your egg, with the small end of the egg at the top.

In class, lay some paper towels on a table. Cover your clothes with an apron. Place your egg holder on the table and place the egg in it, small end up. Cover your egg so the students don't see it before time.

Uncover your egg, and show it to the class without showing the face you drew on it. **If this egg is under pressure, do you think it will break? Why?** Allow time for answers. **Eggs aren't known for being too strong. If I squeeze this egg—and I wouldn't have to use too much pressure—I could break it easily. In our experiment, our egg represents us. Show the face. I want to show you the difference between standing up under pressure or bowing down to pressure. Our egg-man has graciously offered his life for our learning.**

Place the egg back in the holder, small end up, with the face toward the class. Now carefully place the weight on top of the small end of the egg. If you use a weight plate from a weight set, place the hole in the plate right over the point of the egg, like a hat. You should be able to remove your hands, and the egg should be fine.



See? Our egg-man is able to stand up under this pressure. By standing, he is OK. Let's see what happens if he bows down.

Remove the egg from the holder and lay it on its side on the paper towels, face up. Now gently lay the weight on top of the egg. The egg should hold for a couple of seconds before the shell gives way under the pressure. This is where the “splat” comes in, so allow some time for reaction! Use these moments to wipe up the egg.

Our poor egg-man couldn't hold up under the pressure when he bowed down. As long as he was standing, he was safe. It's like that for us. We might face times in our lives when pressure is put on us to bow to another god. Sitting here now, it might be hard for you to imagine giving in ... but sometimes the false “god of cool” and the “god of doing what's easy” might entice you to bow to them.

The problem is, if you allow the pressures of this world to overtake you, you might lose the opportunity to tell others about God. Your faithfulness—or lack of it—speaks volumes both to the people you want to reach and to God Himself. Will you stand, or will you give in?

Daniel's friends had to make a choice whether or not to bow to another god. Today we'll take a look at their story and how they stood up under that pressure.

Draw Near



TIME: 5 MINUTES

MATERIALS NEEDED: PRAISE AND WORSHIP MUSIC OF YOUR CHOICE

Praise and Worship—The theme of today's lesson is learning to live a consistent life so that our witness is not compromised. Worship is a wonderful way to help kids focus on God and learn that life is not about them and their needs but it's about serving God and pleasing Him. Use your worship time to stir up passion and zeal for serving God.

Pray and Reflect—Last time, we talked about the importance of having godly friends. Some in your group may want to pray specifically that God would give them a close Christian friend. Others may want to share their thankfulness for having a Christian friend. Challenge your youth to reach out and be a friend who doesn't compromise when they leave the safety of church.

Share and Celebrate—Take time to celebrate with those who did their "Mission Possible" challenge this week. Ask: **Did you connect with your Daniel Network partners at least three times this week? How hard or easy was that to do? Did you begin to build a bridge to a new friend? What did you do to make that happen?**

Bible Study



TIME: 15-20 MINUTES

MATERIALS NEEDED: BIBLES, OR PAGES 68-69 OF STUDENT FIELD MANUAL OR REPRODUCIBLE 8-1 FROM YOUR CD-ROM

Distribute Reproducible 8-1 (Today's Scripture) to each student who doesn't have a Field Manual. Ask for volunteer readers to read Daniel 3:1-18 aloud by paragraphs to the group.



Daniel 3:1-18

¹King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, ninety feet high and nine feet wide, and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. ²He then summoned the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials to come to the dedication of the image he had set up. ³So the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials assembled for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and they stood before it.

⁴Then the herald loudly proclaimed, "This is what you are commanded to do, O peoples, nations and men of every language: ⁵As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. ⁶Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace."

⁷Therefore, as soon as they heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations and men of every language fell down and

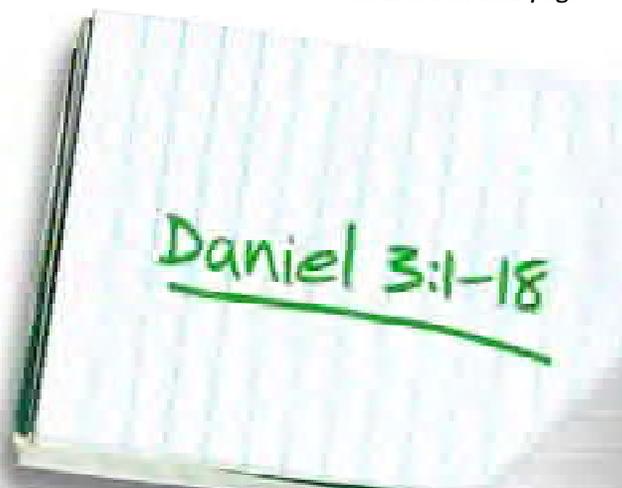
worshiped the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

⁸At this time some astrologers came forward and denounced the Jews. ⁹They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! ¹⁰You have issued a decree, O king, that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music

must fall down and worship the image of gold, ¹¹and that whoever does not fall down and worship will be thrown into a blazing furnace. ¹²But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who pay no attention to you, O king. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up."

¹³Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, ¹⁴and Nebuchadnezzar said to

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Bible Study (cont.)

them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? ¹⁵Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?”

¹⁶Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. ¹⁷If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. ¹⁸But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”

You may recall that King Nebuchadnezzar had granted Daniel’s request that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be appointed administrators over the province of Babylon. The three friends were probably enjoying their new positions as the story begins. We also saw that they were still honoring God in spite of their afflictions.

In today’s Scripture, we covered the details about the golden image Nebuchadnezzar had put up on the plain of Dura. We also reviewed the command about worshiping that idol and the consequences if you didn’t.

Ask:

- **What’s an idol?** Allow for several responses. **For our purposes, let’s say an idol is anything that distracts you from Jesus Christ.** If you choose, write the definition on a chalkboard. **Tell me again. What’s an idol?** Encourage students to say this with you: **Anything that distracts you from Jesus Christ.**
- **Do you think Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had a second thought about their decision not to worship Nebuchadnezzar’s image? Why or why not?**

(It doesn’t seem like they struggled with this choice. That is likely due to the fact that they spent time in fellowship with God and one another.)

- **What do you think would have happened if they had bowed down?** (They would have lost their credibility as witnesses for God.)
- **What are some of the areas where you feel pressured to compromise?** Allow students to respond.
- **How do you think your being inconsistent hurts your witness to others?** (May cause others to question whether what you believe is really true.)
- **Do you think it was easier for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to take a stand as a group of friends instead of taking a stand as individuals? Explain your response.** (It was probably easier for them to take a stand as a group of friends. They could encourage each other to stay strong that way.)
- **How can Christian friends help each other avoid being trapped by idols and compromising their witness?** (Encourage each other not to sin. Figure out positive things to do together that don’t tempt you to compromise. Pray and get into the Word together.)

Just like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, we need to stand our ground against idols and honor God with lives of faithful obedience—including obedience to Jesus’ command that we share the Gospel.



Daniel Log:

Encourage your students to log on to daretobeadaniel.com/danielog. The pass code for this activity is STANDS.

Take a Stand



TIME: 5 MINUTES

MATERIALS NEEDED: PAGE 75 OF STUDENT FIELD MANUAL



When the ancient Greeks went to the theater, they often saw actors put on masks. The masks represented the characters the actors were playing at the moment. It was not unusual for actors to play more than one character in some plays. So, in the course of a performance, the actor could put on several masks and play several parts. We get our word *hypocrite* from the word the Greeks used for *actor*. Sometimes Christians are called hypocrites when we say one thing and act in ways that aren't consistent with our words. It's like putting on a mask to act a part when we really don't intend to live the way we should. When we share our faith, people will evaluate how sincere we are by the way we really live, not by any act we put on for public performance. Keep that in mind as you strive to be an effective witness for Jesus Christ.

Back-It-Up!



TIME: 5-10 MINUTES

MATERIALS NEEDED: BIBLES OR PAGE 71 OF STUDENT FIELD MANUAL

Let's take a look at a few bonus Scriptures. Open your Bibles, and let's see what else is in the Word about getting into God's training program for life! Choose one or more of the verses below to read and discuss:

Job 16:20-21: My intercessor is my friend as my eyes pour out tears to God; on behalf of a man he pleads with God as a man pleads for his friend.

Psalms 119:63: I am a friend to all who fear you, to all who follow your precepts.

Ecclesiastes 4:10-12: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

John 15:12-13, NKJV: This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

Sometimes people are ready to toss away their idols. Other times, people hang on to their idols even if it costs them the chance to really know Jesus. One thing for sure is that we need to take a stand, without compromise, for Jesus—and friends with the same commitment can stand together in strength.

Consider this story from centuries ago.

Read this week's "Heroes of the Faith" article aloud to the group.

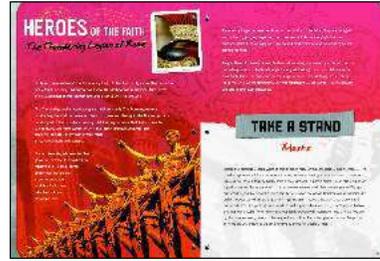


Heroes of the Faith

THE THUNDERING LEGION OF ROME



TIME: 5-8 MINUTES
MATERIALS NEEDED: PAGES 74-75 OF STUDENT FIELD MANUAL



Forty soldiers made up “The Thundering Legion” that had nobly served Rome in the early fourth century. But somehow, these 40 had become Christians. That made them suspicious to the Roman emperor Licinius and his officials.

The Thundering Legion was brought to trial as a unit. The Roman governor conducting the trial commanded them to make an offering to the Roman gods or be stripped of their military ranking. But the Legion knew that faithfulness to Christ alone was what mattered and took their stand accordingly. The governor tempted them with bribes, then threatened them with torture.

The soldiers stayed resolute. The governor ordered the soldiers to remove their cloaks, armor, and shoes. He ordered them to go to the middle of a frozen lake to die from exposure. The Thundering Legion obeyed and *ran* to the middle of the lake. They encouraged each other by praying together, “Lord, we are 40 who are engaged in this combat; grant that we may be 40 crowned, and that not one be wanting to this sacred number.”

They suffered for many hours. As death drew near, the governor ordered that hot baths be placed on the lake’s edge for any of the Legion who would renounce their faith. Only one did—and to the surprise of all, one of the guards took off his armor and warm clothing to join the remaining 39 in death. The Thundering Legion’s prayer was answered.

Every one of us needs to know that we may suffer for our faith. Like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego said, we need to take our stand for God and stick with it even if God does not deliver us from persecution. God will be with us all the way, even in the flames—or in the cold, as the heroes of the Thundering Legion discovered.

Friends can help each other withstand tough times. They can also keep each other faithful to the tasks that God has called them to fulfill. Keep encouraging each other to memorize the Scriptures we’re working on. They’ll be very important as we seek to witness to others in the coming weeks.



Sources:
Jesus Freaks, by dc Talk and The Voice of the Martyrs, Albury Publishing, Tulsa
 “Bravest Soldiers in the Army,” by Ken Curtis and others, *Glimpses*, Issue No. 146



Memory Banking

TIME: 5-7 MINUTES
MATERIALS NEEDED: COPIES OF REPRODUCIBLE 8-2 FROM YOUR CD-ROM FOR EACH STUDENT; PENCILS

Pass out copies of Reproducible 8-2 from your CD-ROM. Make sure each student has a pencil.

This week, in order to learn your memory verse, you'll have to decipher the word picture that will give you the verse to learn. If you want to work with a friend or two, go ahead. You'll have five minutes to decipher the rebus. Go!

Let the students work for about five minutes. Check to see how they're doing during the time. When time is up, see how many finished the rebus. Allow them to help each other along the way. If there are some students who completed the whole verse correctly, let them stand up and say the verse, which is reprinted here for your convenience.

Give the students one minute to work together in groups of two to four to learn the verse. After a minute, call time. Have the groups turn over their papers and say the verse together twice from memory. If you think they need more practice, have them take turns in their groups saying the verse to each other.

Often in New Testament times, the Roman government would demand that people say, "Caesar is Lord" as an

Romans 10:9

"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

expression of worship. Christians would really stand out from the crowd by saying, "Jesus is Lord" instead!

Ask:

- **Why do you think it's so important to "confess with your mouth" that Jesus is Lord in order to be saved?** (It means you're not hiding your belief in Christ. It means you're taking a stand.)
- **Why do you think it's so important to believe that God raised Jesus from the dead in order to be saved?** (It means you understand that Jesus is alive. It means you acknowledge that Jesus is your living Lord. It means Jesus has power over death and so can save you from eternal death.)
- **What's so important about understanding this verse as you share the Gospel?** (The verse is a short and sweet answer to the question, "What does someone have to do to be saved?" It covers some important basics about receiving Christ as your Savior. It has good points for leading someone in a prayer to receive Christ.)

Apply This: Idol Chatter

TIME: 10 MINUTES
MATERIALS NEEDED: PAGES 72-73 OF STUDENT FIELD MANUAL OR REPRODUCIBLE 8-3 FROM YOUR CD-ROM; PENCILS OR PENS; CHALKBOARD AND CHALK, OR MARKER BOARD AND MARKERS

Have the students turn to page 72 in their student Field Manuals. Make pencils and pens available to them. Divide the group into groups of four or five.

The idol that King Nebuchadnezzar asked Daniel and his friends to worship was a statue made of gold. There are still idols we are asked to worship today that aren't the one true God.

In your groups, take three to five minutes to talk over some things you think might be an idol that kids your age are challenged to worship. Keep in mind that you

don't have to bow down to something to worship it.

Something that becomes the object of all your attention or affection, something that becomes one of the most important things in the world to you, would be considered something that you worship. Write down the top answers your group comes up with.

Give your students five to seven minutes to go through their group discussions. Give them



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Apply This: Idol Chatter (cont.)

cues on how much time is left for them to complete the discussions as you go. When time is up, call for the discussions to end, then record their answers to the following questions on the chalkboard or marker board as they respond. (If the students seem to be stuck in coming up with a response, feel free to suggest the possible answers in the parentheses below.)

Ask:

- **What are some of the idols you came up with in your groups?** (Answers will vary but might include friends, things they want to own, drugs and alcohol, other religions, wrong relationships, how they use their time, etc.)
- **Why do you think these things can be idols for us today?** (Anytime we do something that dishonors God, we're saying that thing is more important to us than God. Even things that can be good can become an idol if we love them more than we love God.)
- **Do we as Christians sometimes get caught up in worshipping these same idols?** (Encourage your students to be honest and share where perhaps they are living like everyone else around them and not living for God.)
- **Do you think it can be confusing to others around us when we say that we are Christians and worship God but then in our actions it looks like we worship some of these same idols of our culture?** (Talk about how, in being an effective witness for God, it is extremely important to make sure that how we act matches up with what we say.)
- **What do you think it would look like for someone to stand up to these idols?** (It could make you look very different compared to other people. You could be looked at as a leader by some people. Others might think you're just being strange.)

After recording several answers, thank the students for their responses and continue the session with the next section.

Video Connection



TIME: 5-10 MINUTES

MATERIALS NEEDED: LESSON 8

VIDEO SEGMENT FROM YOUR DVD

Today's video segment illustrates the importance of having friends who will help us be consistent in our talk and actions. Three friends demonstrate honest and healthy accountability based on God's Word regarding the sin in each other's lives.

After watching the video, ask your students:

- **Why is it important to keep our word in all things—not just the big things?**
- **Do you think that people notice when Christians are phony or when their actions and words don't match? Do you think they notice more with Christians than non-Christians?**
- **How do you find the balance between holding your friends accountable and loving them even when they fall short?**
- **What does the following Scripture mean? "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12, NKJV).**

Closing Prayer and Challenge



TIME: 5 MINUTES

MATERIALS NEEDED: PAGES 72 AND 76 OF STUDENT FIELD MANUAL OR REPRODUCIBLES 8-3 AND 8-4 FROM YOUR CD-ROM; PENCILS OR PENS



Your actions speak louder than words. Your “Mission Possible” this week is to look at your life and see if anything you’re doing—like cheating or disobeying your parents—is getting in the way of your witness. You’ll also have the task of talking with your Daniel Network partners about your friends and how they can influence you, for better or worse. Be ready to talk about this week’s mission the next time we get together.

Ask the students to take a look at page 72 of the student Field Manual with you.

Look back to the first “Idol Chatter” page on which you put things that try to distract you from your true worship of God. Pick one or two of the idols that seem to have the most attraction to you. Then create a plan to take a stand this week against these idols.

Use the following questions to help you:

- How can you resist each of these idols this week?
- How can your Daniel Network partner be a help to you in resisting this idol?
- In what way can God’s presence help you?
- Do you have friends who do the wrong things or are a negative influence on your faith? What will you do about them as you try to resist these idols?
- What good things can you foresee happening if you resist these idols?
- How do you think it will help other people if you resist these idols this week? (Remind your students that the questions are written in their Field Manual.)

If your students didn’t take very good notes, encourage them to refer to the list you made on the chalkboard or marker board. Give the group three minutes to work on their plan. If they do not finish in that time, encourage them to complete it at home.

Emphasize the importance of finishing and following through.

There is strength in numbers. Daniel’s three friends knew this. Their ability to stand against pressure to bow before the idol was greater because they helped each other. So let’s help each other by praying for each other. We’ll pray now, and we’ll commit to pray for each other through the week. We’ll need the strength that will come from praying for each other because, ultimately, the final decision to not bow is each individual’s. It will be up to you this week to make your choice—perhaps over and over again—to stand and not bow.

Instruct your students to get with their Daniel Network partner and one other pair of partners. Have all the students stand and grab wrists around the group. Lead them in the following words of commitment before you close in prayer. Say a phrase, and allow the group to repeat it after you:

I commit to pray for you this week.

I commit to ask God to give you the strength to take a stand.

I do this because I know that you will be praying for me too.

Together we will stand and not bow.

Dear Jesus, we love You and want to take a stand for You like Daniel’s friends did. We know we can’t do this on our own. Give us the strength this week to stand against the things that tempt us to worship them—things that aren’t the living God. Help us to remember to hold each other up in prayer all through the week. Let our lives demonstrate You so clearly—because we stand and don’t bow—that others will want to know You. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.

