

READY FOR ANYTHING PART ONE

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Paper and pens
- Copies of the downloadable “Litany” and “Prayers & Thanksgivings” booklets
- Copies of the lesson handout
- Copy of the leader’s notes
- OPTIONAL: Bibles (ESV or similar recommended)
- OPTIONAL: A white board, easel pad, or chalk board with markers/chalk
- OPTIONAL: Have notebooks on hand for teens to take home and use as prayer journals if they wish

ICE BREAKER: TIME CAPSULE

Tell your teens to imagine that a massive natural disaster is about to strike which they cannot escape (or survive). For this activity, they have a chance to pull together imaginary items for a small time capsule (the size of a lunchbox), which can withstand the disaster to be discovered by a future generation. Working together in small groups, have them come up with a natural disaster and a list of items that they would like to include, along with their reasons for selecting those items. Have them present their time capsule scenario to you (and if you have multiple groups, to each other).

THE LITANY: BEGINNING WITH PRAYER

Begin the formal part of the lesson by saying together the Litany, leaving off the Grace (which can be said at the close of the lesson).

AT THIS POINT IN THE LESSON, ASK IF THE TEENS SUCCEEDED IN DOING LAST WEEK’S CHALLENGE, HOW IT WENT, AND WHETHER THEY HAVE ANYTHING TO SHARE.

DISCUSSION: BEYOND OUR CONTROL

As an introduction to the lesson ask the teens to discuss the following questions.

DEPENDING ON THE COMFORT LEVEL FOR SHARING IN YOUR GROUP, IT MAY BE EASIER TO HAVE THEM VOLUNTEER ANSWERS WITH ALL RESPONSES WRITTEN TOGETHER ON A BOARD.

- What are some things you think of as being outside of your control?
What about things that are outside of *all* human control?
- What does it feel like to face situations that will directly impact you and which you have no control over?

A few things worth pointing out (if they don’t otherwise arise during the discussion):

- *As individuals we all face many things that are outside of our control, including other people, and sometimes even ourselves. Most of us will never have the power to effect major changes in our societies (for example, through law), although some will. But no matter how powerful we may become, there will always be some things that are outside of our control – such as those things that are mentioned in today’s petition.*
- *The feeling of being helpless is a terrible one. It can be incredibly frustrating. It can cause us to lash out in anger or it can cause us to shrink into despair and inaction. But there is a third way we can respond...*

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THE LESSON: DANIEL 3

The first part of the lesson (below) can be read aloud. Then the teens are asked to read the Bible text (either silently to themselves or aloud together), followed by some additional questions for discussion.

From lightning and tempest; from earthquake, fire, and flood; from plague, pestilence, and famine; from battle and murder, and from sudden death, Good Lord, deliver us.

Pain, suffering, and death are all products of living in a fallen world. It is natural for us to want to avoid these things, and to pray to God for deliverance from them. In doing so we acknowledge that though these things are beyond our control, *nothing* is beyond his control.

Yet we know that sometimes God's answer is "No". Think of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. He knew that great suffering was imminent and he asked God to spare him the ordeal, but he did so also saying, "Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done" (Luke 22:42). When God says, "No", we do not always understand why, but we believe that though we will struggle and suffer in this world, God will never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5).

Even equipped with this knowledge, there are experiences in life for which we are unprepared; things that can knock us off-track spiritually. So we want to pray that God will give us the grace to navigate whatever may come with faith and faithfulness. We want to be able to say with St. Paul,

"We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed... Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4: 8-9,16-18).

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Remember Nebuchadnezzar? We're going to go back and look at three of the heroes who faced that cruel and idolatrous king (before God changed his heart). These were three young men who'd seen their city conquered and been taken captive to serve a king and a kingdom that were hostile to their faith. Check out what happened.

Refer to Daniel 3:8-30.

(VERSES HAVE BEEN CLIPPED FROM THE READINGS FOR THE SAKE OF BREVITY AND FOCUS, BUT IF YOU HAVE TIME TO EXPLORE THE PASSAGES FULLY, FEEL FREE TO READ THEM IN THEIR ENTIRETY: DANIEL 3)

(THE TEXT IS PROVIDED ON THE BACK OF THE HANDOUTS AND IN THESE LEADERS' NOTES SO THAT EVERYONE CAN MARK IT UP AND MAKE NOTES ON IT IF DESIRED. ALTERNATIVELY, YOU CAN READ OUT OF A BIBLE).

Read through the text. Then ask the teens to respond to what they've just read. Here are some questions to help guide the discussion.

- How do you think you would have felt in the place of these three, being threatened with a fiery furnace?
- Take a look at their response to Nebuchadnezzar (v16-18). What stands out to you?
- What do you think about the fourth person seen in the furnace?
- What happened because they were obedient? Do you think they knew how things would turn out?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *These young men had already been through great difficulty. However, this is not the first time God has shown himself to be faithful to them in the book of Daniel. So even though they had experienced real calamity, they had also witnessed God's goodness and they had total trust in him. Most of us would really struggle to trust God and to obey him when facing such a threat.*

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- Note how these young men manage to address the king with total civility while standing their ground. The words, “we have no need to answer you in this matter” can be understood to convey that in giving their response they are not trying to negotiate or play games with words. They are telling it straight, in spite of the consequences. Their confidence that God is able to deliver them from such a powerful king is remarkable, but even more than this, their resolution to obey their God, even if he doesn’t deliver them in the way they hope he will.
- There is some debate among scholars as to whether this fourth person was an angel or a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ. It’s an interesting question, but ultimately what we know is that this is a very tangible sign that God had not abandoned these faithful heroes, but was present with them in the midst of their ordeal.
- Because they obeyed, those involved saw the power of God displayed! Nebuchadnezzar’s heart is beginning to be open to hearing God’s voice (although further interventions will be needed). The king promotes these three young men and makes a decree that will act as protection for them to worship God during his reign.

DURING EACH LESSON, IF THE TEENS RAISE THEOLOGICAL OR BIBLICAL QUESTIONS THAT YOU DON’T FEEL CONFIDENT ABOUT ANSWERING, SAY SO, BUT LET THEM KNOW THAT YOU’LL FIND THE ANSWER AND RESPOND AT THE NEXT MEETING.

PREVIEW: AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Take a brief moment to look at the at-home challenge together.

THE WEEKLY “AT-HOME CHALLENGE” IS TYPICALLY A SIMPLE ASSIGNMENT TO SPEND SOME QUIET TIME IN PRIVATE PRAYER. ENCOURAGE THE TEENS TO GET NOTEBOOKS THAT CAN BE USED AS PRAYER JOURNALS. ASSURE THEM THAT THEY WILL NOT BE REQUIRED TO SHOW THEIR JOURNAL OR THEIR PRIVATE PRAYERS TO ANYONE.

Each morning and evening, follow your own rule of prayer.

(IF YOU DON’T HAVE ONE, TRY SAYING THE MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS FROM THE “FORMS OF PRAYER TO BE USED IN FAMILIES”, WHICH BEGINS ON PAGE 728 OF THE BCP. IF YOU DON’T HAVE A COPY, YOU CAN LOOK IT UP HERE: [HTTP://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER.](http://prayerbook.ca/resources/bcponline/family-prayer))

Psalm 119:11 says, “I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you”. The At-Home Challenge during this unit is to commit a short passage of scripture to memory each week. If the suggested passage is too long, try picking out one verse or phrase that speaks to you particularly and commit it to memory. You will be amazed at how the words of scripture, stored in the heart, will return to you in the moments when you most need them.

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7: ⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this collect.

Almighty and everlasting God, mercifully look upon our infirmities, and in all our dangers and necessities stretch forth thy right hand to help and defend us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(THE COLLECT FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY, BCP PAGE 126)

CLOSING PRAYERS

Close with any prayers that might be appropriate in the context of the discussion of the day.

AT THE END OF EACH LESSON, IF YOU FIND THAT YOU STILL HAVE LOTS OF TIME REMAINING, YOU MIGHT CHOOSE TO TAKE SOME TIME TO EXPLORE THE “PRAYERS AND THANKSGIVINGS” SECTION IN THE BCP (PAGES 39-62, OR YOU CAN USE THE DOWNLOADABLE BOOKLET). AS YOUR GROUP MEMBERS COME ACROSS PRAYERS THAT THEY FIND RELEVANT, PAUSE AND PRAY THEM TOGETHER. IF YOU’RE PRESSED FOR TIME, YOU MIGHT CLOSE WITH THE THEMED PRAYER FROM THE AT-HOME CHALLENGE.

Then finish with the “Grace”, printed at the end of the Litany booklet.

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DANIEL 3: **WITH THEM IN THE FURNACE**

⁸Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews. ⁹ They declared to King Nebuchadnezzar, “O king, live for ever! ¹⁰You, 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.

¹¹And whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace. ¹²There 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.”

¹³Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the king. ¹⁴Nebuchadnezzar 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? ¹⁵Now 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?”

¹⁶Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷If 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. ¹⁸But 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.”

¹⁹Then 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. ²⁰And 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. ²¹Then these men were bound in their cloaks, their tunics, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the burning fiery furnace. ²²Because 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.

²³And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace.

²⁴Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counsellors, “Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?” They answered and said to the king, “True, O king.” ²⁵He 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.”

²⁶Then 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. ²⁷And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king’s counsellors 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.

²⁸Nebuchadnezzar 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. ²⁹Therefore 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.”

³⁰Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.