

DEFEND YOUR BELIEFS

All Activity Sheets

KEY WORDS

WITNESSES DIFFICULT DEFEND FAITH PERSEVERANCE RACE RUN

BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Daniel 1.

LESSON OBJECTIVE

To help students decide to defend their faith difficult situations.

MEMORY VERSE

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us" (Hebrews 12:1, NIV*).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

As your students grow up, they face greater pressure from their friends to participate in inappropriate activities. Therefore, they need to know how to face the pressure and defend their beliefs.

Since they still do not fully understand the results of their actions, they do not take into account that their decisions will affect their relationship with God and their Christian witness. Through these lessons, help them understand the difference between Christian values and those of the world, and what it means to live correctly in the midst of a world full of sin.

This lesson will motivate them to stand firm in their faith in God, even if that does not make them popular and, in some cases, is risky. Explain to your students that Daniel and his three friends were teenagers when they went through this experience. This will help them to identify with them, and to understand how important it is to remain steadfast in the Christian life.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Read Daniel chapter 1. Jehoiakim, king of Judah, was an evil man who led his people to the worship of idols. Because of that sin, God allowed Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, to conquer them and take thousands of Jews captive.

Daniel and his three friends were taken to Babylon around 605 B.C. Then there was a second deportation, in 597 B.C. And, the last one was in 586 B.C., when the Babylonians destroyed the temple and the holy city.

Nebuchadnezzar sought among the exiles people who held important positions in the defeated kingdom. He needed men to administer matters related to the Jews. The chief of the eunuchs chose Daniel and his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah to receive special training.

The four young people were intelligent, healthy and good looking. It was the custom of the king to choose young people or teenagers to indoctrinate them and teach them the Babylonian customs.

That process included changing the names of Daniel and his friends. Their Jewish names reminded them of their faith in God. Nevertheless, the new Babylonian names honored false gods. Daniel (God is my judge) became Belteshazzar (may Baal protect my life); Hananiah (God shows grace) was transformed into Shadrach (Aku's command); Mishael (who is like God?) became Meshach (who is like Aku?); Azariah (God helps me) was transformed into Abednego (servant of Nego or Nebo).

The Mosaic Law forbade the Hebrews from eating unclean meat or food offered to idols. Daniel refused to follow the Babylonian customs that violated that law, and requested a different diet that did not compromise his convictions.

Daniel and his friends spoke with the chief of the eunuchs in a humble and friendly manner, and he agreed. God honored the courage and faithfulness of these young Hebrews, and blessed them by giving them better health, and greater knowledge and wisdom.

INTRODUCE THE LESSON

Persecution

For this activity, you will need a world map and colored pens or pencils. Compose a list of countries in the Middle East, Africa and Asia where Christians are persecuted today. Ask your students to locate these countries on the map. If you are not living in one of those countries, instruct the students to color each country with a different color. While doing so, explain that in these countries Christians are persecuted because of their faith. Search Christian magazines or the internet for stories about this topic to tell your students. Hang up the map in a visible place, and urge your class to commit themselves to pray daily for the persecuted brothers and sisters. If you are living in one of the countries where Christians are persecuted because of their faith, ask the students to discuss how and why they may be persecuted.

No, never ever!

Ask your students, do you think there is something a Christian should never do? Listen to their answers.

Then distribute Student Activity Sheet #358-A for this activity. Tell to write their answer in the rectangle at the top.

Next, instruct them to respond to the statements below using one of three alternatives: most, some, none. When finished, they should score 10 points for each time they marked the answer "none". Ask them to mention their total score. Maybe the scores are not that high, but it will help them understand how often we adapt to what others do.

Talk about what it means to conform, and ask them in what area they think young Christians have more problems: With money? The pressure of friends? Any secret? The style of clothes? Music?

In today's story, Daniel and his friends faced a difficult situation when the king's officers pressed them to do something that went against their beliefs.

Should I eat it?

A couple of weeks in advance, ask that some families to bring a variety food to share in class, or get cookies of a variety of different shapes and flavors.

Put the food on the table, and invite your students to choose the ones they want. While they are eating, ask them why they chose that particular food. Talk about your favorite foods, and ask them:

Is there any food that their parents or dentist told them to avoid?

Do you think it is a sin to eat certain foods?

After listening to their answers, conclude by telling them that although there are healthier foods than others, there are no laws that prohibit us from eating foods without nutritional value. In the Old Testament times, God commanded his people not to eat

certain foods. In Leviticus 11, we find some of those prohibitions that God established, because the Israelites were surrounded by the Canaanites. For example, he forbade them from eating baby goat meat, because the Canaanites prepared that meat to offer it to their idols. God did not want his people to relate to idolatrous cults.

In today's story, we will learn what some young Hebrews did when the king of Babylon commanded them to eat those forbidden foods.

TEACH THE LESSON

Ask your students to help you read Daniel 1. Have each one read a verse until the chapter ends.

Then, tell Daniel's story in your own words. Use this short introduction to start the story:

A long time ago, the people of God decided to disobey God's commandments and worship the pagan idols of neighboring peoples. As punishment, God allowed an enemy army to invade them.

Listen carefully to what I am going to tell you, so that you know what happened to a brave young man and three of his friends. Continue with the story of Daniel chapter 1.

When telling the story, make sure your students do not think that Daniel and his friends were vegetarians. Meat was not the problem. Some scholars affirm that the evil was that the meat had been dedicated to the idols. Others consider that participating in the meal represented an act of committed companionship. That is, by accepting the food of the king of Babylon, the young people would have made a commitment to him.

CONNECT THE LESSON

Did Daniel conform?

Direct your students' attention to Student Activity Sheet #358-B, and give them time to read Daniel 1 and answer the five questions. They can work in groups or individually. When finished, ask them to read their answers.

PRACTICE THE MEMORY VERSE

[Download Additional Memory Verse Activities PDF](#)

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Put the words of the verse (Hebrews 12:1) on small cards, including the reference, and mix them up on the table or the floor. Help students put them in the right order, then practice reading the verse. Take away one card at a time and keep repeating it until the whole verse and reference are memorized. Give each student a small card with the verse on it so they may carry it or post it for review. Ask them to think of a way they can apply the verse this week and be ready to share next time.

WRAP-UP

Pray

Form a circle and lead them in prayer. Ask the Lord to give them courage and wisdom to overcome temptations and love the people who mistreat them because of their faith. Intercede for the Christians of the countries where they are persecuted.

Encourage

If you live in one of the countries where Christians are persecuted for their faith, encourage the group to face the persecution courageously.

Invite

Say something interesting about the next session so they will want to attend the next lesson to continue learning about Daniel. Remind them to welcome visitors.

