

## DANIEL CHOOSES HEALTHY FOOD

All Activity Sheets

### KEY WORDS

CARE HONOR BODY HEALTH

### BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Daniel 1:3-20

### LESSON OBJECTIVE

To help the children learn to honor God by taking care of the body he gave them.

### MEMORY VERSE

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:33, NIV\*).

### PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Most schools begin to teach health issues to first and second grade children. Some have already learned good health habits at home. Good health is truly a reward. For believers, it is even more so, since we want to honor God in all the decisions we make, wherever we are, whatever we are doing. Even simple decisions, such as what we will eat or drink, become matters of faith.

Although we do not know in detail why Daniel and his three friends refused to eat the king’s food and drink his wine, we know that they were considered a threat to their faith. Daniel 1:8 tells us, “But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.”

This lesson will help elementary children understand that by caring for their bodies and deciding not to contaminate themselves with what could harm them, they are honoring God.

Most children are impulsive when choosing what they want to eat. Excessive advertising stimulates their egocentricity, causing them to say, “Let’s eat what we like!” This lesson will teach them that God is the owner of their bodies. They can honor God by making decisions that reflect a good stewardship of their body.

## BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

In Daniel 1:3-20 Daniel and his friends were taken captive to Babylon. Because they were descendants of royal lineage, well educated and wise, they were chosen from many young people to work to serve the Babylonian king in a special way.

In addition, their Hebrew names were changed to Babylonian names. That was very significant, since the Hebrews took special care in choosing names for their children. The Hebrew names honored the one true God and gave testimony of him. Instead, the new names honored pagan gods that the Babylonian people worshiped.

The passage does not explain why these young people did not want the royal food. But it is evident that their rejection of it was motivated by their firm beliefs: eating the royal food would contaminate their bodies. It was a great challenge for these young Hebrews, since, for the descendants of Abraham, participating in food offered to idols meant breaking their communion with the one true God. After all, the law of God was violated by participating in the worship of false gods.

Faced with this challenge, Daniel and his friends spoke with two officers to ask them to give them only vegetables and water, instead of the royal food. The first petition was denied outright. The officer explained to Daniel that if they did not look as healthy as the other young men did, he would be executed for disobeying the king's orders and changing their food.

Daniel, convinced that his decision pleased God, did not give up, and insisted once more. This time he spoke with the guard who took care of them, proposing that he allow them to go through a trial period. Verse 15 shows us the result they got:

"At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food" (Daniel 1:15). At the end of the trial time, the guard saw that he had nothing to worry about, and allowed them to continue with their special diet.

Through this story, we learn that we must honor God by taking care of the body he gave us, because it is a temple of the Holy Spirit.

## INTRODUCE THE LESSON

### My favorite foods

For this lesson, you will need magazines, paper, scissors, glue and colored pencils or markers.

Distribute the materials to your children. Then, ask them to write, "My favorite foods" at the top of the page. Then, give them a few minutes to look for illustrations in old newspapers or magazines of their favorite foods. Ask them to cut and paste them on the paper. If you do not have newspapers or magazines, tell them to draw their favorite foods.

When they are finished, explain that they will use these in the next activity.

## TEACH THE LESSON

### Mysterious character

Give the following clues to your children so they can guess which biblical character is in today's story:

- I am a man of the Old Testament.
- I prayed three times a day.
- They threw me into the lions' den.

Who I am?

Tell them: Our Bible story today tells us about a decision Daniel made when he was young. Listen carefully to find out what happened.

### Daniel chooses healthy foods

"Bring some young Israelites to serve me in the palace," ordered Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon.

The king's chief officer listened carefully to the instructions:

"Choose strong, healthy and good-looking boys," said the king. "They must be intelligent and have the ability to learn quickly. They must eat the food from my own kitchen," the king ordered. "I want them to be strong and healthy so they can serve me

better.”

Daniel and three of his friends -Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah- were part of the group that the Babylonian soldiers had chosen.

The chief officer gave these young Hebrews Babylonian names. Daniel was called Belteshazzar; Hananiah became Shadrach, and Mishael became Meshach; and Azariah was called Abednego.

But when the king’s food was served to them, Daniel told the officer, “I cannot eat the king’s food. God warned my people that we could not eat certain foods. I have to obey God’s commandments.”

“But I cannot disobey the king’s orders,” the officer said. “If you do not eat what the king ordered, you will become weak and thin, and the other boys will be stronger. The king will think that I am not doing my duty, he will be furious, and maybe even order me to be killed!”

Then Daniel spoke with the guard who watched them, “Please,” Daniel asked. “Give us a test. For ten days, give us only vegetables and water. After that time, you can compare us with the other boys who eat the king’s food. Then you will decide who looks healthier and stronger.”

The guard agreed to give the test.

After ten days, he took Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah to where the other boys were.

The guard could not believe what he saw! Daniel and his friends looked much healthier and stronger than the other young people did.

“The king will be happy when he sees how well you look,” the guard said. “From now on, you can choose the foods you want to eat.”

God blessed Daniel and his friends by giving them knowledge and intelligence.

When the training time ended, King Nebuchadnezzar ordered the chief officer to bring the young men before him. After asking them some questions, the king realized that Daniel and his friends were ten times stronger and smarter than all the other people of the kingdom who were at his service.

## CONNECT THE LESSON

### God wants me to take care of my body

Hand out Student Activity Sheet #165-A and #165-B, and read the instructions for your children to do the suggested activities.

Allow time for them, in the blank space on Student Activity Sheet #165-B, to draw or write a list of good decisions that can help them take care of themselves during the week.

## PRACTICE THE MEMORY VERSE

[Download Additional Memory Verse Activities PDF](#)

[Download Suggestions for Bible Memorization PDF](#)

To review the memory verse, ask your children to form a circle. A volunteer must stand in the center of the circle blindfolded. Give a bell to one of the children in the circle. He/she should pass it to the next child, who passes it to the next, and so on.

The blindfolded child should say, “Stop” whenever he/ she wants, and the one with the bell should repeat the verse. The child in the center then tries to guess who said the verse.

Then, blindfold the eyes to the child who said the verse. He/ she then goes to the center of the circle and the exercise is repeated.

Let the group help those who still do not know the verse.

## WRAP-UP

### Pray

Pray before saying goodbye, thanking God for creating us and sustaining us.

**Encourage**

Encourage your children to make the decision to take care of their health and strive to honor God in that way.

**Invite**

Invite them to attend the next meeting, which will be the last of this series of lessons about decisions. Tell them that friends are always welcome.