



# abcLinks

connecting personal and small group studies with this week's sermon

For the sermon on **June 20-21, 2009**

## this week's coreverse

*If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from our hand, O king. But 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.*

**Daniel 3:17-18**

## usingabcLinks

### Personal Bible Studies (inside pages)

- Personal studies that explore Scripture passages related to this week's sermon. They are broken down into three or four days. Some days you will simply read, meditate or think about a passage of scripture. Other days you will be asked to dig into a passage through reading, studying, answering questions.

### Small Group Discussion (back page)

- Small group questions that connect with the sermon and your personal Bible study. This series of questions act as a funnel to help your group discussion flow in a purposeful point.
- If you are not in a small group, contact one of our small group staff members to get more information on ABC Small Groups or go to [adabile.org>smallgroups](http://adabile.org>smallgroups).

See [adabile.org>message](http://adabile.org>message) recaps & Links for *ABCLinks* archives.



## Part Two of a Three Part Sermon Series

### "Into the Fire"

My ears detected a faint rustle. Then I saw a blur. Leaping from my bed I frantically groped along the wall in an attempt to find the light switch. Finally the warm light flooded my room. My eyes scanned each corner, but there was no intruder. Heart still racing, I wondered, where do these panic attacks come from? As I lay in bed, now with the desk lamp on, I began to regret a decision I had made earlier that night. I watched the movie *I Am Legend*. Don't get me wrong, I thought it was a great movie ... while I was watching it.

At night, however, sleep did not come as easily as usual. Being a visual person did not aid the situation. I was desperate to forget what I had seen hours earlier, but the images kept circulating in my brain throughout the wee hours of the morning. As I snapped out of another nightmare, I was struck by the words of a new song drifting from the radio. It was titled "Slow Fade" by Casting Crowns. The lyrics warned, "Be careful little eyes what you see." I felt God whispering that the solution to this occasional problem was actually quite simple.

Later that day as I reflected on scripture, a passage leapt from my Bible. In Philippians 4:8, Paul exhorts the Church of Philippi, saying "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things." I was convicted by my choices. These long, difficult nights were not only harmful to me, but were also dishonoring my Heavenly Father. God desired that I understand this message clearly. I knew what was necessary in order to solve my dilemma. From that point on, I committed to refrain from watching films with elements of horror. My experience with reading an occasional thriller novel or watching several frightening films had culminated. I wanted to be done with these near sleepless nights. More than simply wanting peaceful sleep, I wanted to honor God with my entertainment selections. For me, these decisions were heightening my anxiety and drawing me away from the peace of God. I was sick of making the same mistake and paying the consequences.

The nation of Israel similarly endured cycles of sin and consequences. For generations, Israel had fallen victim to the same snare: idol worship. Time and time again they faced punishment for their poor choices. This dilemma needed to be brought to a close; it was due time for someone to take a stand of obedience toward God. Israel's plunge into idol worship had a huge consequence: exile. When Babylon captured Israel and each item was removed from the Temple, God's reputation was trashed. However, training in Babylon at that time were the brightest of Jerusalem's men. This week, we dive into the account of the obedience of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.



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# personal bible studies

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## Never Go Back, Stand Your Ground

### Read Daniel 3:1-12

Despite the looming consequences, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to bow to King golden statue. It is important to recognize the boldness of this action, but it is even more important to grasp exactly why these men remained standing. God had explicitly warned his children against bowing to idols - this mandate seems simple enough.

What are the first two of the Ten Commandments? (Hint: Exodus 20:3-5) How do you think this influenced the men's actions?

### Read 2 Chronicles 36:14-21.

Summarize the main reasons that Israel was taken captive. How had the Israelites done with following the Lord's commands?

Although the warning to steer clear of worshipping other gods appears simple, it was obviously not easy to put into action. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego undoubtedly understood the consequences of idol worship; they were in a foreign nation as a penalty for their ancestors' sins. Unlike their ancestors, however, these men did not cave under pressure. Instead they took extreme measures of obedience that said, *"I'm never going back to that."*

Looking at the "nations around you" (friends, family, or society) when have you given way to the pressure?

Take a few minutes to pray that you will have the strength to walk away from past areas of sin. Pray for determination to boldly say, "I'm never going back to that!"

**Bonus:** Listen to the song "Solution" by the Paul Coleman Trio. Pay close attention to the lyrics, "You know this is serious; we're repeating things we've done. Do you want to be a part of the solution?"

## Even If He Doesn't

### Read Daniel 3:13-18

After being accused of disobedience to the King's orders, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego faced a severe penalty: the infamous fiery furnace. King Nebuchadnezzar reminded the three Hebrews of the dire consequences if they refused to bow. What was their response?

Is there a circumstance in your life that has provoked apprehension? You know what is right, but you don't know how you will make it if God doesn't take radical action. Are you confident in God's ability to rescue you from what you face? Are you willing to remain faithful... even if God does not step in or fix the problem? Spend some time prayerfully meditating on these questions with your unique circumstances in mind.

## God's Power Displayed

Read Daniel 3:19-30

Try to create a catchy headline for the *Babylon Chronicle* the day following Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego's miraculous rescue. (If your headline sounds similar to "Three Men Survive the Scorch" or "Furnace Tamed by Three Hebrews," you are not on the right track.)

In Daniel 1, we learned that when one nation defeated another in battle, it was proof of their god's superiority. God's reputation looked like it was in shambles after the Temple in Jerusalem was ravaged and valuable articles of the Temple were hauled off to Babylon as battle plunder. How did God's rescue of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego work to revive God's reputation?

Considering this, how would you revise your headline? (Hint: Rather than highlighting the bravery of the Hebrews, the focal point should be God and his power.)

How have you seen God work powerfully to redeem his reputation at your workplace, school, or home? Is there a way in which your faithfulness could contribute to restoring God's reputation rather than tarnishing it? Describe.

## Willing to Die

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were willing to lose their lives in order to remain faithful to God. Though we may not be called to physically die in obedience to God, there is a different type of death we will certainly have to face in order to follow Christ completely.

Read Luke 9:23.

What kind of death is involved for the Jesus follower? Is there an area where God has called you that requires death to a certain desire or habit?

What is inhibiting your complete surrender, or "death to self"?

Take time today to listen to God's will for your life. Be prepared for death to yourself, your pride, and even your agenda.



# small group discussion

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## leanin

What was the biggest or hottest fire you've ever experienced? Was this a good fire or bad fire? Tell the story.

## lookdown

Read 2 Chronicles 36:14-31 together.

What was the constant sin that the nation of Israel had been contending with? What was the ultimate consequence of this sin?

How does this passage shed light on Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's willingness to die instead of bowing to Nebuchadnezzar's golden statue?

Have someone tell the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the Meshach's vantage point. How would he describe what happened?

## lookout

Where in our world does God's reputation need to be redeemed? How was his reputation smeared?

What are the risks in refusing to follow the rest of the world?

## lookin

Discuss these verses, especially the words in bold.

*If 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. **But 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.*** Daniel 3:17-18

In what areas or situations in your life would you struggle to say that? How can God be good and not rescue?

How much are you willing to give up for God? Would you be willing to give your life?

What area of your life needs to be put to death in order to follow Christ completely?

After targeting a specific area to "put to death" in your life, ask God to strengthen you and provide endurance. Thank him for being a God of grace and mercy as you learn to stand for him.