

National Youth Sunday 2023

Romans 12:2, NLT: Stand Up, Even If You Stand Out
Children's Story by Felisha Diamond

**This narration is based on Daniel 3:16 – 28, which is another example of God standing with God's people when we stand up for God.*

Three courageous guys, with incredibly odd names (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego), and a King (called Nebuchadnezzar) are the subjects of this tale. The three men lived in a place called Babylon and did vital tasks for the king. One day, the king decided to create a 90-foot-tall gold statue. To get an idea of how tall this is, imagine 15 guys standing one on top of the other. The thing was huge! Then King Nebuchadnezzar announced something. "I command all people, regardless of language, to kneel and worship this statue when they hear the music. Everyone who does not submit to this command and worship the statue will instantly be thrown into a raging inferno."

God does not want us to worship anything or anyone other than God, which is the issue. He is God, after all, who made us because He loves us so much. Christ came to earth, gave his life for us, and genuinely cares about every detail of our lives.

Why would we want to pray or worship something unreal, unhelpful, and incapable of hearing our prayers? It is foolish to revere a huge mound of

gold, such as the one King Nebuchadnezzar built. The gold has no senses and is unaffected by anything or anyone.

When the music started playing the next time, everyone stopped what they were doing and knelt to worship this idol. All of them stopped and worshipped – except for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. When several of the King's employees - who were envious of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego because they had such excellent jobs - saw that they wouldn't worship the statue, they hurried to the King to report it.

King Nebuchadnezzar was furious when he learned the news. He immediately gave the order to have Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego brought before him to give an account of their deeds.

When the men were shown to the King, Nebuchadnezzar addressed them, “Is it accurate to say that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego won't kneel before and adore the golden sculpture I have created? I'll give you another chance in case I need to correct something. You must be prepared to submit to the vision when the music plays again; otherwise, you risk being flung into a blazing furnace. What God will then be able to save you?”

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego responded to the King by exchanging glances, “We did not do wrong, O Nebuchadnezzar, and we will not apologize for not bowing down. The God we serve will save and deliver us

if cast into the furnace. But even if he doesn't, we want you to know that we won't worship your golden idol or serve your gods."

Nebuchadnezzar became much angrier as a result. He immediately ordered to heat the furnace even higher than average. He ordered some of the strongest soldiers to grab Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and toss them into the fire. The three men, who were fully dressed in clothes that would quickly catch fire, were immediately taken to the furnace by the troops. Because the fire was so intense, it killed the soldiers as they forced the men into the furnace. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego tumbled into the blazing furnace.

King Nebuchadnezzar stood up in shock and said to his counselors, "Weren't only three men thrown into the fire?" "Yes, King," they answered. "Look!" the King exclaimed. Unharmd, four men can be seen moving around in flames!

King Nebuchadnezzar came as close as he could to the furnace and shouted in the doorway, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, follower of the Most High God, come out! Come here!"

The three men walked out of the furnace without any burns, no hairs on their heads burned, all their clothes perfectly fine, and no fire smell on them. King Nebuchadnezzar recognized then that they did not worship a phony statue but a faithful God. And maybe more importantly, God saw that they

genuinely trusted and believed in him because he had sent an angel to guard them against harm. They were prepared to die rather than serve or worship any god other than their own God! The King issued a proclamation declaring that beginning that day, no one might speak ill of the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego without receiving severe punishment. The three men were then given even better positions for the region of Babylon by the king.

Would you pray with me? “Dear God, give us courage and faith like that of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Help us to learn more about Jesus and how he taught us to live. Help us to learn more stories from the Bible. When we have to make hard choices in our lives, help us remember stories of people making faithful choices and showing their love for God. Amen.”