

Story Time - Read the story to the children
Lesson 157: THE FIERY FURNACE
DANIEL 3:1-30

King Nebuchadnezzar had a gold idol made that was 60 cubits high and 6 cubits wide (that's about 90 feet high and 9 feet wide!). Then he set the idol up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. Then he called the satraps, prefects, governors, advisors, treasurers, judges, rulers, and all the other officials in his kingdom to come together. He wanted all of them to come to the dedication ceremony for the idol. So all the men came and stood in front of the idol that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. Then the man who makes announcements for the king spoke in a loud voice, "All you people from many nations and language groups, listen to me. This is what you are commanded to do: You must bow down as soon as you hear the sound of all the musical instruments. When you hear the horns, flutes, lyres, sambucas, harps, bagpipes, and all the other musical instruments, you must worship the gold idol. King Nebuchadnezzar has set this idol up. Whoever does not bow down and worship this gold idol will immediately be thrown into a very hot furnace." So as soon as they heard the sound of the horns, flutes, lyres, sambucas, bagpipes, and all the other musical instruments, they bowed down and worshiped the gold idol. All the peoples, nations, and different language groups there worshiped the gold idol that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. Then some of the Chaldeans came up to the king and began speaking against the people from Judah. They said, "King, may you live forever! King, you gave a command. You said that everyone who hears the sound of the horns, flutes, lyres, sambucas, harps, bagpipes, and all the other musical instruments must bow down and worship the gold idol. And you also said that whoever does not bow down and worship the gold idol will be thrown into a very hot furnace. There are some Judeans who you made important officials in the province of Babylon that ignored your order, King. Their names are Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They don't worship your gods, and they didn't bow down to worship the gold idol you set up." Nebuchadnezzar became very angry. He called for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. So they were brought to him. And Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, is it true that you don't worship my gods? And is it true that

you didn't bow down and worship the gold idol I have set up? Now when you hear the sound of the horns, flutes, lyres, sambucas, harps, bagpipes, and all the other musical instruments, you must bow down and worship the gold idol. If you are ready to worship the idol I have made, that is good. But if you don't worship it, you will be thrown very quickly into the hot furnace. Then no god will be able to save you from my power!" Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king, "Nebuchadnezzar, we don't need to explain these things to you. If you throw us into the hot furnace, the God we serve can save us. And if he wants to, he can save us from your power. But even if God does not save us, we want you to know, King, that we refuse to serve your gods. We will not worship the gold idol you have set up." Then Nebuchadnezzar became very angry with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He gave an order for the oven to be heated seven times hotter than it usually was. Then he commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He told the soldiers to throw them into the hot furnace. So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were tied up and thrown into the hot furnace. They were wearing their robes, pants, cloth caps, and other clothes. The king was very angry when he gave the command, so the soldiers quickly made the furnace very hot. The fire was so hot that the flames killed the strong soldiers. They were killed when they went close to the fire to throw in Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego fell into the fire. They were tied up very tightly. Then King Nebuchadnezzar jumped to his feet. He was very surprised and he asked his advisors, "We tied only three men, and we threw only three men into the fire. Is that right?" His advisors said, "Yes, King." The king said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire. They are not tied up and they are not burned. The fourth man looks like an angel." Then Nebuchadnezzar went to the opening of the hot furnace. He shouted, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, come out! Servants of the Most High God, come here!" So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the fire. When they came out, the satraps, prefects, governors, and royal advisors crowded around them. They could see that the fire had not burned Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Their bodies were not burned at all. Their hair was not burned, and their robes were not burned. They didn't even smell as if they had been near fire, and their clothes did not

smell like smoke! Then Nebuchadnezzar said, "Praise the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Their God has sent his angel and saved his servants from the fire! These three men trusted their God and refused to obey my command. They were willing to die instead of serving or worshiping any other god. So I now make this law: Anyone from any nation or language group who says anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego will be cut into pieces, and their house will be destroyed until it is a pile of dirt and ashes. No other god can save his people like this." Then the king gave Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego more important jobs in the province of Babylon.

157. THE FIERY FURNACE

(DANIEL 3:1-30)



"Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, *and* spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

DANIEL 3:24-25

157. THE FIERY FURNACE

DANIEL 3:1-30

MEMORY VERSE:

"Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him." DANIEL 3:28

TRUE OR FALSE

1. King Nebuchadnezzar had an idol made of himself that was 90 feet high and 9 feet wide. TRUE or FALSE
2. Nebuchadnezzar commanded that whoever hears all kinds of music playing must jump up and down and laugh. TRUE or FALSE
3. The king said that whoever does not fall down and worship the idol will be thrown into the middle of a burning fiery furnace. TRUE or FALSE
4. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego bowed down and worshiped the idol when they heard the music. TRUE or FALSE
5. The king had the furnace heated seven times hotter than normal, then he had Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego thrown into the fiery furnace. TRUE or FALSE

ANSWER THE QUESTIONS

1. When the king told Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that he was going to throw them into the fire, what did they tell him?
2. What did they tell the king they would do even if God didn't save them from the fire?
3. After the king had his servants throw Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego into the furnace, what did they see?
4. When the king called Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and told them to come out of the fire, were they burned? Did their clothes smell like smoke?
5. What did king Nebuchadnezzar say when he saw that God had saved Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego from the fire?
6. What did he say would happen to anyone who said anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego?

Lesson 157 Discussion

Standing Up for Jesus Today

Sometimes trials are in the form of persecution—subjection to cruel or unfair treatment because of one's faith. In this country, the persecution we face may only be being mocked or laughed at for loving the Lord Jesus; in other countries Christians are beaten, thrown in jail, or their churches or homes may be destroyed. Take this opportunity to share with the children about the reality and needs of the persecuted church. Excellent resources are found through Voice of the Martyrs

(www.persecution.com), Open Doors (www.opendoorsusa.org), and Gospel for Asia (www.gfa.org). Through these websites or other sources, find a story to share with the children concerning modern day persecution of the church. Voice of the Martyrs distributes a great map showing the countries in the world where persecution exists. Ask the children what they think it would be like for them if they weren't free to worship the Lord. How would that change their lives or their family's lives? Choose a country that is currently lacking freedom to worship. Give the children some background and ask them to pray together with you for that country--that the Lord would soften the leader's hearts towards His people and allow them to worship freely.

Perhaps, you can give each child a blank sheet of paper and markers and ask them to draw the shape of the country and color it in (you can trace the country from the printout). Write the name of the country below the drawing. At the bottom of the sheet, write Hebrews 13:3, "Remember the prisoners as if chained with them—and those who are mistreated—since you yourselves are in the body also." Encourage them to post their picture somewhere at home and remember to pray for the people of that country.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to only worship the one true God and, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, to have confidence in Him through fiery trials. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity.



COUNTRY Afghanistan
DESCRIPTION

Afghanistan is plagued by criminality, insecurity and the recently elected government's inability to control all parts of the country. One of its most serious challenges is the growing illegal opium trade.

Category: **Restricted Nation**

Religion: Muslim 97.89%, Christian 0.02%

Ideology: Islam

Head of State: President Hamid Karzai

Anyone who acknowledges faith in Christ experiences intense persecution, including death. Persecution normally comes from family members and neighbors, while police and government officials turn a blind eye. A young man became a Christian and was banned from his family's house. Radicals beat another man severely when they found he was sharing Christ with others. Both of these two men remain firm in their faith. An evangelist who was formerly Muslim was attacked by al Qaeda assassins, but they were unable to kill him. The attackers were later arrested by police. This same brother is still receiving death threats, but he boldly continues to evangelize. Another believer led several friends to Christ, and two of them were killed for their conversion shortly afterward.



COUNTRY Saudi Arabia

DESCRIPTION Saudi Arabia is an Islamic state committed to its role as custodian of Islam and its holiest sites. The country's enormous oil wealth has financed global Islamic expansion. Billions of dollars are spent every year to propagate Islam. Most Saudis are Wahhabi Sunnis. Wahhabi extremists are known for their harsh dislike of non-Muslims.

Category: **Restricted Nation**

Religion: Muslim 92.83%, Christian 4.54%

Ideology: Islam

Head of State: King/Prime Minister Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud

Saudi Arabia is the second most repressive nation in the world for Christians. Converts from Islam to Christianity are rare in this nation. Barriers to spreading the gospel are severe. Leaving Islam is punishable by death. Anyone who does mission work or converts a Muslim faces jail, being thrown out of the country, lashing, torture or execution. Public non-Muslim worship, even for foreign Christians, is against the law. Christians are regularly imprisoned or deported, and Christian churches are banned. Saudi Arabia is a main source of funding for madrassas (Islamic religious schools) worldwide, where extremism can breed. In a positive sign, Saudi Arabian Christian Hamoud Bin Saleh was released from prison on March 28, 2009. Hamoud was arrested

three months earlier for writing about his conversion from Islam on his blog. Hamoud attributed his release to the actions of human rights groups who fought on his behalf.



COUNTRY Algeria

DESCRIPTION

Algeria has suffered from both internal and external war for nearly half a century. Ethnic minority Berbers have long been trying to gain their own independence, even so, activity by extremist militants continue.

Category: **Restricted Nation**

Religion: Muslim 96.68%, Christian 0.29%

Ideology: Islam

Head of State: President Abdelaziz Bouteflika

There was a time when it was okay to practice Christianity, but that ended in 2006. A new law was passed stating that house churches were not permitted. The law, ordered by the nation's court, tries to stop evangelism and church growth in Algeria. Even churches with licenses had to stop meeting. One person reported their church stopped meeting for a short time, seeking God's desire for their church. But they decided to continue meeting and face any consequences that might happen. The police came

many times to threaten the church, but the believer reported that gathering together melted their fear and renewed their courage.



COUNTRY Libya

DESCRIPTION

Libya was ruled by Muammar al-Qadhafi, who was perhaps best known for his association with other radical regimes and terrorist groups. Qadhafi expanded Islamic law. Currently the country is under militia rule.

Category: **Restricted Nation**

Religion: Muslim 96.50%, Christian 3.00%

Ideology: Islam/Military dictatorship

Head of State: None at this time.

Libyans are off limits for evangelism. No one is allowed to preach the gospel to a Libyan. A number of ex-Muslims are trying to reach Libyans, but they are slowed down by the country's secret police. Christian books and letters may enter only through secret ways. There are very few Libyan believers; almost all Christians there are foreign workers, and the government strictly monitors and watches them. There is a limit of one church per denomination per city. A non-Libyan Christian man who tried to share the gospel in Libya was beaten and held for 45 days before he was deported (kicked out of Libya) back to his own country.

