

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Disciples of Christ choose to worship God alone.

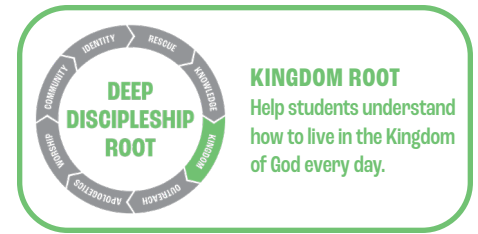
SCRIPTURE

DANIEL 3

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were actually Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Cool names, regardless of how you choose to break it down. They were three men of Israel who had been captured by Babylon and forced to wear Babylonian names and learn Babylonian culture (Dan. 1:1–7). Despite their circumstances and the new kingdom they found themselves in, these three men knew there was only one King worthy of worship, and it wasn't Nebuchadnezzar.

Check out the *Teacher Prep Video* for this lesson: <https://vimeo.com/933474362>



OPENING

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

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MEDIA AS STUDENTS ARRIVE

1. Play background music (optional)
2. Display **SERIES TITLE Slide** and announcement slides in a loop or customize the provided **PowerPoint**.
3. Play a 5-minute Countdown Timer 5:00 minutes before you start.

GAME or ICE BREAKER

Based on your group's size, choose a **Game** from **Deep Discipleship Games** OR use the **Ice Breaker** prompt.

- **Game**—We recommend Inverted Charades (Thanksgiving edition) or choose another screen game from **Deep Discipleship Games**
- **Ice Breaker**— When have you had to make a tough choice to say no to something you love because you realized it was more important to you than God?

DEEP DISCIPLESHIP GAMES

Find free games in **Deep Discipleship Games**. It's already included with your Deep Discipleship subscription. View the game in advance in case you need supplies or slides.

WORSHIP

Craft a time of worship with a live band or sing along to a playlist.

- Check out our curated Spotify list. We understand that every church has a different theological view of worship. These songs are suggestions, please pick what works best for your church.
- <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/2xmeIKGUjkEE7bJYScbRwe?si=d254ec715a4749e5>

SLIDES (optional)

Use **SERIES Background & Blank Slides** or **PowerPoint** to create lyric slides.

TRANSITION TO MESSAGE

Include a brief element that transitions students from worship to teaching time, like a prayer or video. This will keep students focused and prepared for the message while the band leaves the stage.

VIDEO (optional)

Show **SERIES Promo Video** or **LESSON Intro Video** after the last worship song.

MESSAGE

Use the following teaching points and suggested illustrations as a starting point to build your message.

POINT 1: We are made to worship

Read or have someone in your group read Daniel 3:1–7

King Nebuchadnezzar ordered everyone to worship the golden statue he built. This statue represented his authority and demanded absolute devotion from his subjects. It may feel weird for us to think about literally bowing down to an idol when music plays today, but there are cultures where this happens all the time! In our culture and context, it is less obvious. We may, instead, be tempted to believe what a social media influencer says or what a musician sings about over what God has said in his Word. That's an example of the kind of misdirected worship we need to look out for!

SLIDES (optional)

Use the **SERIES PowerPoint OR the Background & Blank Slides** to create these slides to support your message:

- Daniel 3:1–7
- Point 1

POINT 2: We should make a faithful stand for worshipping God only

Read or have someone in your group read Daniel 3:8–18

The unwavering faith of these three young men was clear. They refused to compromise their faith and worship anyone other than the one true God, regardless of the consequences. We may not be given the ultimatum of bowing down to a statue or being put to death, but worshipping God might cost us a friendship, a spot on the team, or the social standing we cling to in our friend group. These are possible consequences we may face when we choose to worship God above all else.

SLIDES (optional)

- Daniel 3:8–18
- Point 2

ILLUSTRATION: Share a story or personal experience when you had to make a difficult choice to stay true to your faith, even when it was challenging.

Following God will undoubtedly come at a cost in this life, but, as Paul said, nothing compares to knowing Jesus (Phil. 3:7–11).

POINT 3: God is always faithful

Read or have someone in your group read Daniel 3:19–30

God's incredible intervention is evident in this passage. He protected Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego when they were thrown into the fiery furnace, and they emerged unharmed. God was also willing to step into the furnace with his followers, proving he was there when they needed him most (v. 25). This miracle revealed God's power and demonstrated that he honors those who worship him alone. The three men demonstrate their commitment by telling the king that even if God doesn't save them, they will still refuse to worship this idol. If God had not saved them, their

SLIDES (optional)

- Daniel 3:19–30
- Point 3



faith would still be admirable, and God would still be faithful!

ILLUSTRATION: Discuss how God has protected or guided you in challenging situations, showcasing his faithfulness in your life.

God loves us more than we can understand and refuses to be anything but faithful to his people.

CLOSING

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Disciples of Christ choose to worship God alone.

SLIDES (optional)

- Mark of a Disciple

FACILITATOR NOTE: DO YOU HAVE SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION RIGHT AWAY?

- If YES, then **STOP HERE**, divide into groups, and provide Small Group Leaders with the **Small Group Breakout Questions** on the next page.
- If NO, then end your gathering with the **Reflect & Respond** questions and **Prayer** prompt below.

REFLECT & RESPOND

Give the students time to silently think through what they have heard and contemplate these questions:

- When have you prioritized something else over your relationship with God? How did you come to realize that?
- What practical steps can you take to ensure that your worship and devotion to God remain uncompromised?

SLIDES (optional)

Use the **SERIES PowerPoint** OR the **Background & Blank Slides** to display the **Reflect & Respond** questions.

FACILITATOR NOTE: Don't rush this part. Give the students a few minutes to really consider their choices and commitment to worshipping God alone.

PRAYER

Take time to pray, thanking God for the example of faith in Daniel, and ask for the strength to stand firm in your worship.



SMALL GROUP BREAKOUT (OPTIONAL)

Pick a few questions from each section to discuss. Close with prayer.

BREAKOUT QUESTIONS

Build Meaningful Relationships

- Share one characteristic of God that is the most precious to you. Why?
Answers will vary. Come prepared to share your answer to help start the conversation.
- How can our group encourage and support one another in staying committed to worshipping God alone?
We can remind each other of the importance of putting God first, especially when we face tough choices. We can pray for each other, hold each other accountable, remind each other of God's faithfulness and goodness, etc.

Share Personal Stories & Ask Intentional Questions

- When have you or someone you know gotten into trouble or faced criticism because of their faith?
Answers will vary but may include: being made fun of, not being included in a friend group, being told you can't pray in the locker room or school hallways, etc.
- Think about a time when you had to make a tough choice that tested your commitment to God. What happened, and how did you handle it?
Answers will vary. Come prepared to share a personal example to help guide the conversation.
- How can we practically deepen our connection with God in our everyday lives?
Setting aside time daily to pray and read our Bible, talking about our faith with friends who believe in Jesus, etc.
- How can having a spiritual mentor help us stay true to our commitment to God?
We have someone to go to with questions and for advice; we have a visible example of what a more mature Christ follower looks like; we have someone to encourage us and pray for us when we need it, etc.

Make Life Application & Hold Students Accountable

- What are some situations where you might be more tempted to prioritize something else over God?
Answers will vary. Share an example from your life to help start the conversation.
- What step can you take this week to practice worshipping God alone?
Answers will vary. You could pray each morning for help from God or listen to worship music more often or cut back on other things you tend to "worship" like social media, video games, etc.

PRAYER

Take time to pray, thanking God for the example of faith in Daniel, and ask for the strength to stand firm in your worship.

Use this space to keep track of any prayer requests.

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