

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Disciples of Christ choose to worship God alone.

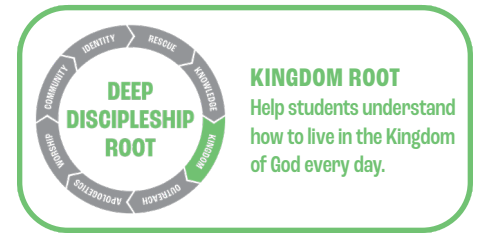
SCRIPTURE

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>



FACILITATOR NOTE: We're giving you a lot of teaching material. Don't feel like you should cover everything here. You know your group better than anyone. Choose the material that will best fit your students and skip over the rest.

OPENING

PRAYER

1-2 minutes

Start your small group by asking the Lord to bless your discussion and time together.

OPTIONAL: Give students an opportunity to lead the prayer.

OPENING QUESTIONS

3-5 minutes

- How was the week? What's the best thing that's happened? Anything major going on?
- 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?



EXPLORE

EXPLORE GOD'S WORD

3-5 minutes

Today we are in the third lesson in the *Different* series. We will study the importance of worshiping God alone. There will be times when you have to choose between worshiping God and worshiping other things or people. Though we may not be asked to bow down to an actual idol, we will face the pressure of trusting, prioritizing, or treasuring other things or people over God alone. We can learn a lot from the example of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and how they stood up to King Nebuchadnezzar. Let's worship God without wavering like they did!

Read Daniel 3:1–17 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- What people or things can we often lift up and worship instead of God in our culture?
Answers will vary and may include: social media, social media influencers, musicians, athletes, actors, popular kids at school, ourselves, our status, our grades, etc. Anything or anyone we elevate above God is an idol!
- 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.
- 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.



ASK INTENTIONAL
QUESTIONS

Say something like: We can often be pulled towards things or people to trust, prioritize, and treasure more than God. Sometimes that pressure may come from our friends or other people we respect.

Read Daniel 3:8–18 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- When have you been in a situation where a friend or authority figure pressured you to do something against your beliefs?
Answers may vary, but make sure to get specific stories without using names or throwing a friend under the bus. Get them to think about school, locker rooms, workplaces, hanging out on the weekend with friends, and other places where the pressure may be on.
- 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.
- Why does having other believers with you in a time of testing help?
Having a Christ-following friend or two around you when you face a trial can help because there is strength in numbers (Ecc. 4:9–12). It's an encouragement to stay faithful to God when you see others staying faithful as well. You have a support system and prayer partners within the family of God.



ASK INTENTIONAL
QUESTIONS

Say something like: We may not be given the ultimatum of bowing down to a statue or being put to death, but worshiping 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.

FACILITATOR NOTE: If you have extra time, go through the next set of questions. If not, skip to the **Connection** section.

Read Daniel 3:19–30 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- 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.
- 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.



ASK INTENTIONAL
QUESTIONS

Say something like: Building a strong and growing connection to God and other believers will strengthen our faith and help us take a stand for Christ.



CONNECT & APPLY

CONNECTION

5-7 minutes

Show your students how Scripture connects to their lives: Use the example below OR share a personal story of how you had to stand up for your faith and it cost you.

Example: In 2020, a native missionary in Laos led a salesman to Christ, who in turn shared his faith with a 52-year-old widow. She accepted Christ, but her daughter and son-in-law strongly opposed her new faith. They threatened to report her to the police, have her jailed, or kick her out of the house, mainly because the son-in-law is a policeman. In June, they forcefully removed her belongings and told her to live with the people who introduced her to Jesus. She was not welcome back. Despite this, the widow remained faithful, trusting that Jesus was all she needed. Her new Christ-centered community encouraged her and helped her find accommodations and other provisions.¹



SHARE PERSONAL
STORIES

- 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, etc.

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

2-3 minutes

Disciples of Christ choose to worship God alone.

Use the Mark of a Disciple to reinforce the lesson and challenge students to apply it to their lives.

APPLY IT

5-10 minutes

Who is someone that has a faith you look up to? How can you get them involved in shaping your faith?

Be specific:

- What are you going to do?
- When are you going to do it?
- Is there someone who can keep you accountable?



MAKE LIFE
APPLICATION



HOLD STUDENTS
ACCOUNTABLE

FACILITATOR NOTE: Allow students who are comfortable to share their plans for application. This may encourage or spark ideas for other students, plus add a level of accountability.



CLOSING**PRAYER**

2–3 minutes

Take a moment to ask for prayer requests. Spend some time praying for the strength to stand firm in your worship to God alone.

Write down any prayer requests mentioned and ask your students about them at your next meeting.

MEMORY VERSE

Send the memory verse graphic included in your download to your students later this week to keep the conversation going.

“And he said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’”

Matthew 22:37 (ESV)

NOTES

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¹ Katey Hearth, “Gospel grows in Laos despite opposition,” *Mission Network News*, December 16, 2021, <https://www.mnnonline.org/news/gospel-grows-in-laos-despite-opposition/>.

