Preschool–Grade 6

The Fiery Furnace

Sunday School Lesson for 3rd to 5th Grade, 45–60 minutes

Main point: Stand firm for God and worship only Him, even when everyone else goes along and it costs you something. God is able to deliver, and He is with us in the fire.
Bible passage: Daniel 3:1–30. Read it before class.
Memory verse: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." *Isaiah 43:2 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), a whiteboard or large paper, a marker, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the board. Before kids arrive, quietly choose three kids for the opening game and tell them their secret job.

1. Opening game: Three Still Standing (5–10 minutes)

Before class, tell three kids: "When I clap three times, stay standing, no matter what." Everyone else doesn't know. Have the whole class stand. Say: "When I clap three times, everyone sit down on the floor." Clap. Most of the class sits; your three stay standing. Ask the class: *How did it look when three people didn't sit down?* Ask the three: *How did it feel to be the only ones standing?* Say: "Three young men in the Bible once stayed standing when a whole crowd fell down, and it could have cost them their lives."

2. Bible story: Our God Is Able (15 minutes)

Kids open their Bibles to Daniel 3. When you reach a **Look up** line, a child finds the verse and reads it out loud. Tell the rest in your own words.

Far from home. Years before, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem, and young men from Judah were taken to Babylon (Daniel 1:1–6). Four of them were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. In Babylon they were given new names: Hananiah became **Shadrach**, Mishael became **Meshach**, and Azariah became **Abed-nego** (1:7). The king set Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego over the **affairs** (the business) of the province of Babylon (2:49).

The gold image. Look up Daniel 3:1. Nebuchadnezzar made an **image** of gold, a statue, **threescore** (60) **cubits** high and six cubits wide. A cubit was about the length from your elbow to your fingertips, so the image stood about 90 feet tall. He set it up in the plain of Dura. He gathered all his princes, governors, captains, judges and rulers to the **dedication**, the big ceremony to show off the image (3:2–3).

The order. A **herald**, a man who called out the king's messages, cried aloud: when you hear the cornet, flute, harp, **sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer** (old instruments) and all kinds of music, fall down and worship the golden image. Whoever did not would be cast that same hour into a burning fiery furnace (3:4–6). When the music played, all the people fell down and worshiped (3:7).

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Accused. Certain **Chaldeans**, men of Babylon, came to the king and accused the Jews. **Look up Daniel 3:12.** They said Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego "have not regarded thee," which means they didn't obey the king: they would not serve his gods or worship the golden image.

One more chance. In **rage and fury** the king had them brought in (3:13). He offered them another chance to bow when the music played. If not, they would be cast into the furnace, "and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" (3:14–15).

Their answer. Look up Daniel 3:16. "We are not careful to answer thee" means "We don't need to worry about how to answer you." **Look up Daniel 3:17–18.** Our God is able to **deliver** (rescue) us, and He will. "But if not," we still will not serve your gods or worship the golden image.

Into the fire. Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the form of his **visage** (his face) changed. He commanded that the furnace be heated seven times more than it was **wont** (used) to be heated (3:19). The most mighty men in his army bound the three friends in their coats, their **hosen** (leg coverings), their hats and their other garments, and they fell down bound into the middle of the burning fiery furnace (3:20–23).

Four men in the fire. Look up Daniel 3:24. The king was **astonied** (astonished) and rose up in haste: "Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" "True, O king." **Look up Daniel 3:25.** "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." **Loose** means untied.

Come forth! The king came near the mouth of the furnace and called, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth" (3:26). **Look up Daniel 3:27.** The leaders gathered and saw that the fire had no power on their bodies. Not a hair was **singed** (burned at all), their coats were not changed, and not even the smell of fire was on them.

The king praises God. Look up Daniel 3:28. The king said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him." They had **yielded their bodies**, which means they were ready to give up their lives rather than worship any god but their own God. The king made a decree that no one could speak against their God, "because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort," which means like this (3:29). Then he **promoted** them, gave them higher jobs, in Babylon (3:30).

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3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

Thinking questions (no single right answer; let kids talk)

1. All the people fell down when the music played (3:7). Why is it hard to be different?
2. The friends said God was able, "but if not," they still wouldn't bow (3:17–18). How can we trust God when we don't know how it will end?
3. They answered respectfully but didn't change their answer (3:16–18). How can we stand firm and stay kind?
4. The king saw them loose and walking in the fire (3:25). What does that tell you about God in hard times?
5. Because three friends stood firm, a king praised God (3:28–29). Who might be watching how you live for God?

Recall questions

1. How tall was the gold image? *(Threescore cubits, which is 60 cubits, about 90 feet, Daniel 3:1)*
2. How much hotter did the king make the furnace? *(Seven times more than usual, 3:19)*
3. What did the fire not change? *(Not a hair singed, coats not changed, no smell of fire, 3:27)*

4. Memory verse: Water and Fire (5 minutes)

Old words: **thou** and **thee** = you, **passest** = pass through, **overflow** = flood over, **walkest** = walk, **shalt not** = will not, **kindle upon thee** = catch fire on you. Read it together. Split the class: the "water" side says the first half (up to "overflow thee") and the "fire" side says the second half. Then switch sides. Erase a few words each round until the board is empty and the class can say it alone.

5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "God was with Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego in the fire, and He wants to save us from sin. God loves you. The Bible says: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means all of us have done wrong, and none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, which means God came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). How do we obey the gospel? 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means to turn away from sin; our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are **buried with Jesus in baptism**, all the way under the water, in Jesus' name. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we come up to live a new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives the words (Acts 2:4). The Bible calls this being born again (John 3:5)."

Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

This week: pick one place where it's hard to do right, and decide now to stand firm for God there.

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6. Activity: Bible Look-Up Race (10–15 minutes)

Kids work in pairs with one Bible. Read a reference and a question. The first pair to find the verse and read the answer out loud wins the point.

1. Daniel 1:7: What was Azariah's new name? *(Abed-nego)*
2. Daniel 3:1: Where did the king set up the gold image? *(In the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon)*
3. Daniel 3:6: What would happen to anyone who did not bow? *(Cast into a burning fiery furnace that same hour)*
4. Daniel 3:8: Who came near and accused the Jews? *(Certain Chaldeans)*
5. Daniel 3:15: What question did the king ask about God? *(Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?)*
6. Daniel 3:21: What were the friends wearing when they were bound? *(Their coats, their hosen, their hats and their other garments)*
7. Daniel 3:26: What did the king call them? *(Servants of the most high God)*
8. Daniel 3:30: What did the king do for them at the end? *(He promoted them in the province of Babylon)*

7. Prayer

"Dear God, You are the only God, and You are able to deliver. Help us stand firm for You when everyone else goes along, and help us stay kind and respectful while we do. Thank You for being with us in every hard time, and for loving us and coming to save us in Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

Left out on purpose: Daniel 3:22 says the flame killed the men who carried the three friends to the furnace, and 3:29 names the harsh punishment in the king's decree. This lesson leaves both out. Read them yourself before class. If a child asks, answer simply: the fire was so hot that the king's own soldiers died near it, but God kept His three servants safe.
If a child asks who the fourth man was: tell them what the Bible says. The king said the fourth looked "like the Son of God" (Daniel 3:25), and afterward he said God "hath sent his angel" (3:28). The Bible doesn't tell us more, so we don't add to it. What we know for sure is that God was with them in the fire.
If a child asks whether God always rescues people who obey Him: be honest and gentle. God is always with us, but He doesn't always take hard things away right away. That is why the friends said "but if not" (Daniel 3:18). God is always good, and we can always trust Him.

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