

Small Leader Guide:

Daniel 3 – Even If

Before Group

- Read: Daniel 3 and the memory verse (Daniel 3:17–18).
- Pray: Ask the Spirit to:
 - Expose “altars” where people are pressured to bow.
 - Give courage to those already in a “furnace.”
 - Keep conversation honest and gracious.

Leader Tips:

- Skim this guide and highlight the questions you most want to use; you don’t have to use all of them.
- Plan roughly: 10–15 min opening, 45–60 min discussion, 10–15 min application/prayer.
- Decide ahead of time: Will you pray for people in pairs, as a whole group, or both?



Warm Up

Opening Prayer

Ask one person to open with a brief prayer asking God to speak through His Word.

Icebreaker

Share about a time when you had to make a difficult choice between doing what was popular/safe versus doing what you knew was right. What helped you make that decision?

Leader Tips:

- Go first with a short, real example (not your most intense life story). Model honesty.
- If someone starts going long, gently affirm them and move on:
- “Thanks for sharing that. Let’s hear from a few others too.”
- Keep it light enough to warm people up but allow a little seriousness if it comes naturally.

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Know It

Summarize for the group:

- Daniel 3: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refuse to bow to Nebuchadnezzar's golden image, even at risk of being thrown into a fiery furnace.
- The sermon highlighted three truths:
 - Even when the battle looks lost, God is still at work for His people and His glory.
 - Even when under fire, the faithful do not bow.
 - Even if you are already in the fire, it is never too late for the Lord to act.

Then read Daniel 3:17–18 aloud together.

Leader Tips:

- Ask someone else to read to get more voices involved.
- Keep the summary under 2–3 minutes so there is plenty of time for discussion.

Truth #1 – When the Battle Looks Lost

Scripture Focus: Daniel 3:1–7 (Have someone read vv. 1–7 aloud.)

Remind the group: Nebuchadnezzar has already destroyed Jerusalem and the temple. It looks like evil has won—but God is still at work.

Discussion

Perception of “Defeat”

- When have you felt like God was absent or that evil had ‘won’ in a situation?
- Looking back, did you see any signs of God working, even if it wasn't obvious then?”

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Leader Tips:

- Say, “Share as much or as little as you’re comfortable with.”
- If someone is still in the middle of it and sees no good yet, don’t force a “silver lining.” Validate: “It makes sense that this still feels heavy and unresolved.”

God’s Purposes in Hard Events

- The sermon said God allows things to happen to reveal hearts and display His glory.
- How does that perspective change (or challenge) how you view:
 - Current world events?
 - A personal struggle you’re facing?”

Leader Tips:

- If the group drifts into angry political debate, gently redirect:
 - Those are important issues; for this moment, let’s focus on how these truths shape our own hearts and responses.”

The Danger of Favor & Pride

- Recall Pastor Chris’s gas-pump story (feeling proud after being recognized, then ripping off the gas hose).
 - Why is receiving God’s favor or other people’s praise often spiritually dangerous?
 - What helps you stay humble when you’re being recognized or successful?”

Leader Tips:

- If no one answers at first, share one thing that helps you fight pride (e.g., confession, gratitude, accountability).
- Affirm answers that emphasize dependence on God, not self-hatred.

Transition:

As we move on, the pressure becomes extremely personal and costly for these three men—just like it can for us.

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Truth #2 – When We’re Under Fire

Scripture Focus: Daniel 3:8–18 (Have someone read vv. 8–18 aloud.)

Discussion

Pressure from “Your People”

- The Chaldeans—Abraham’s people originally—are the ones accusing Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.
- Who in your life most challenges your decision to live differently as a Christian (family, coworkers, old friends, online communities)? How do they do that?”

Leader Tips:

- This can get personal. Thank people for sharing and avoid diagnosing their friends/family.
- If someone begins to bash a particular person, gently reframe:
 - “It sounds like their response is really painful. How has that challenged your faith?”

Outward Compliance vs. Inward Belief

- Revisit: “We do not have a license to obey outwardly while secretly disagreeing in our hearts.”
- “Where are Christians today tempted to ‘go along’ outwardly, while saying in their hearts, ‘I don’t really mean this’ (e.g., at work, school, social media, extended family)?
 - Why is that route so attractive?”

Leader Tips:

- Emphasize you are talking about patterns and pressures, not attacking specific people in the room.
- If shame rises (“I’ve done that”), remind them: “We’re naming this so we can grow, not so we can condemn each other.”

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Faith vs. Employment

- Read Daniel 3:17–18 again.
- “What does it mean that their obedience wasn’t based on expecting God to move a certain way?
 - How is that different from treating obedience like ‘employment’—I perform, God pays me?”

Follow-up:

- Where do you find yourself thinking, ‘God, I did my part, now You owe me this outcome’?

Leader Tips:

- Normalize this struggle: “Most of us have thought that way at some point.”
- If someone expresses anger at God, don’t shut them down. Acknowledge: “That’s an honest place to be. God can handle that conversation.”

Modern Altars

- “The sermon mentioned things like abortion participation and lawsuits around conscience.
- What are some ‘altars’ our culture is asking us to bow to today? (Think about sexuality, money, success, politics, social media image, entertainment, etc.)”
- If we stay faithful to Jesus in those specific areas, what might it realistically cost us?

Leader Tips:

- Let the group generate examples rather than you listing a bunch contentious issues.
- Keep the emphasis on our own discipleship choices, not on attacking non-Christians.

Truth #3 – When You’re Already in the Fire

Scripture Focus: Daniel 3:19–30 (Have someone read vv. 19–27; then summarize vv. 28–30.)

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Key details from the sermon:

- Furnace heated “seven times” – as hot as possible.
- The soldiers die; the three Hebrews are safe.
- A fourth man appears with them in the fire.
- They emerge with no burns, no smell of smoke, and their bonds gone. Their dignity is preserved.

Discussion

Why Stay in the Fire?

- Why do you think God sometimes allows us to stay in difficult situations ‘a little long’ rather than delivering us immediately?
- Have you ever seen God’s glory or your own heart more clearly because a hardship lasted longer than you wanted? If you’re comfortable, share briefly.

Leader Tips:

- Clarify: “We’re not saying God enjoys our pain; we’re exploring how He uses it.”
- If someone is in intense suffering, avoid clichés. You can say, “We may not fully know the ‘why’ yet, but we know He’s with you in it.”

Binds That Need Burning Off

- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego walked out with their bonds burned off.
- What ‘binds’ or chains in your life do you need God to remove right now? (e.g., fear, addiction, bitterness, pornography, people-pleasing, shame, anger).”

Leader Tips:

- Make this optional: “You can keep this between you and God if you’d rather.”
- If someone shares a serious bondage (self-harm, addiction, abuse), thank them for trusting the group. After group, consider following up privately and, if needed, encouraging pastoral or professional help.

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Dignity in Trial

- They didn't even smell like smoke; their clothes weren't burned. The sermon said God preserves our dignity.
- How have you seen God preserve or restore your dignity after sin, failure, or suffering?"

Leader Tips:

- If people struggle to answer, give an example:
 - For some, God has given new relationships where they're respected, or a new sense of identity in Christ after shame."

Hope for Current Situations

- How does this story encourage you in a situation you're currently facing that feels hopeless or stuck?
- What would trusting Jesus in that specific situation look like for you this week (one small step)?"

Leader Tips:

- Ask for concrete, small steps (e.g., making a phone call, confessing something, praying daily), rather than vague statements.
- You might ask, "Would anyone like us to pray specifically for that situation tonight?"



Live It

Practical Application

Explain: "We don't just want to talk; we want to respond. Choose ONE of these options to focus on this week."

Read each slowly:

Option 1: Identify Your Altars

- Write down areas where you feel pressure to bow to cultural expectations that conflict with Scripture.

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- Pray about one area where you need courage to stand firm.
- Share that area with one trusted person who can pray for you.

Option 2: Examine Your Obedience

- Reflect on: “Am I obeying God mainly because I expect Him to reward me, or because He is worthy no matter what?”
 - Journal about one area where it’s hard for you to trust God without seeing the outcome.
 - Practice “even if He doesn’t” prayers this week.

Option 3: Encourage Someone in the Fire

- Think of someone you know who is “in the furnace.”
 - Reach out to them with a text, call, or visit, and encourage them with Daniel 3.
 - Remind them it’s never too late for God to act.

Leader Tips:

- Ask “Which option are you choosing?” Give people 20–30 seconds to think, then share (if they’re willing).
- You can offer to pair people up who chose similar options to check in with each other during the week.



Prayer

Closing Reflection & Prayer

Remind them of the closing illustration:

A broken rope bridge across a deep chasm. The little girl steps onto it because “my daddy built this bridge, and he’s on the other side waiting for us.”

Ask one or both:

- Where are you standing at the edge of a ‘broken bridge’ right now—an area where you’re afraid to step out in faith?

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- What would it practically look like this week to trust ‘the one who created it all and the one who is waiting for us on the other side’ in that area?

Give a brief silence (30–60 seconds) for people to reflect before anyone shares.

Leader Tips:

- It’s okay if only a few share openly at this stage; some will process privately.
- You might say, “You don’t have to share details; you can just say, ‘Work’ or ‘Family’ if that’s where the bridge is.”

Group Prayer Focus

Close in prayer focusing on:

- Courage to stand firm when the world demands we bow.
- Strength and comfort for those facing “furnaces.”
- Faith to say, “Even if He does not…” and still cling to God.
- The lost and hurting—that they would call on the name of the Lord (Romans 10:13).

Leader Tips:

- You can have people pray popcorn-style (short prayers) or you can pray on behalf of the group.
- Consider asking: “If you feel like you’re in a furnace right now and would like prayer, would you just raise your hand?” Pray specifically for those who indicate that.

Leader Notes & Pastoral Care

Be sensitive:

- Some in your group may be facing:
 - Real job risk for following Christ.
 - Deep family conflict.
 - Legal or relational fallout from past sin.
- Avoid minimizing their pain with quick answers.

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Create a safe space:

- Remind the group: “What’s shared here stays here, unless someone is in danger.”
- Never share someone’s story outside the group without permission (except in cases of abuse/safety where you must involve appropriate help).

Guard against judgment:

- When discussing cultural “altars,” focus on our need to be faithful rather than condemning outsiders.
- If someone shares a struggle (e.g., with sexuality, addiction, or compromise), respond with gratitude and compassion, not shock.

Follow up:

- Make a mental note of anyone who:
 - Admitted serious bondage or dangerous situations.
 - Is clearly overwhelmed or hopeless.
- Check in with them during the week (text/call). Offer to pray or help them connect with a pastor or counselor if needed.

Keep the gospel central:

- Remind the group:
 - We are not saved because we stand perfectly in every fire.
 - We are saved because Jesus entered the ultimate furnace of judgment on the cross for us.
 - Now He stands with us in every lesser furnace, and He will bring us safely to the other side.

Use what you learn to add color and clarity, but keep group time focused on Scripture, heart application, and caring for people well.