



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

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obedience is a good word!

Scripture Story: Daniel 1.

Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty and Ruin*), chapter 39.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Daniel and his friends were taken into captivity. It is plain that they were from some form of royal Israelite line. They were taken for the express reason of becoming the ruling class in Babylon, and to help integrate Israelites into Babylonian society. To integrate into another culture, three things help to make this process more complete: (1) an ability to communicate in their language, (2) an understanding of their literature and thinking, and (3) an appreciation for their food—since food is such an integral part of social life in any culture. Daniel 1 reveals that King Nebuchadnezzar knew this (see Daniel 1:3-5). As such the king treated the young men with respect and gave them positions of favor within the kingdom. In fact, the king even gave them food from his own table! But herein lay the trouble. The Babylonian society put a high value on idol worship. Even the names given to the young men had a history of idolatry. Whether the boys knew this or not is not known. However, they were committed to honor God with their lives.

It is a story that is well-known. For 10 days they did not partake of the food given to idols; rather they just ate vegetables and water. After 10 days they were tested, and the text tells us that they did “ten times better” than their Babylonian counterparts.

This lesson points us in the direction of obedience. However, it is not an obedience that is born out of fear of rejection. Rather, it is an obedience that comes from a knowledge of who God is, and the fact that He loves us enough to save us. This is an important fact in teaching this lesson. It is an important fact in life. We

obey not to gain favor, but because we respond to the grace given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand the difference between obeying in order to gain acceptance and obeying because they are accepted. (*Know*)
- Sense that God loves them deeply and wishes to bless them. (*Feel*)
- Integrate the knowledge of the love of God into their responses to Him. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE

- Obedience
- Grace
- Healthy lifestyle

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Ask the students which question they marked as the best answer. This exercise was simple in that the correct answer was very clear. They all should have chosen it.

Now lead them in this exercise: Ask them if they would rather climb a mountain with someone they knew or with someone they didn't. Ask them if they

would rather scuba dive with someone that they knew cared about them, or with someone that they were not sure about. Ask them if they would like to skydive with someone who was trained, or with someone of whose background they knew nothing.

The answers are simple. As is the answer to why we are motivated to obey. Do we do it because we hope God *will* love us, or do we do it because we know that God *does* love us?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

There once were two best friends. They went everywhere together and knew each other very well. They shared everything they had and always seemed to know what the other was thinking and feeling. When one would ask the other to do something the other would immediately do it. One day they were apart. One had a test to take, and the other had to go to the beach. Before the first one took his test he asked the second to bring him back some sand.

“Sand?” said the second. “Why?”

“Don’t worry, just do it!” said the first.

So the second friend went to the beach. He played in the water, played on the shore, and generally had a great time. When it came time to leave, he grabbed a handful of sand and stuck it in his pocket.

When he saw the first friend once again, the second immediately said he had the sand in his pocket. He reached into it and found it to be empty! He looked at his friend and apologized profusely, bringing out only a few grains of sand left in his pocket. He hoped his friend would still be his friend after losing all the sand.

The first friend smiled and said, “No problem; it’s not about the sand!”

“What do you mean?” asked the second, puzzled.

“It was never about the sand. It was about whether or not you trusted me!”

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

It is hard to trust sometimes—especially when you are not sure about the object of that trust. In this story, the young men were sure about who God was and is. It is that much easier to trust when you are sure that the object of that trust is trustworthy.

Obedience comes down to a question of trust in

that which we will obey. Daniel and his friends knew this, and they knew beyond a shadow of a doubt who God was.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

- Read the story and have the students play the different parts with different voices. It will help make the story come alive.
- Have the students *underline* where Daniel and his friends took risks and leaps of faith.

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Romans 5:19; Romans 16:19; 2 John 1:6.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

The Israelites were a conquered people. Daniel and his friends were away from their homeland, and even though they were living in luxury, they were still essentially slaves. Yet they chose to believe that God cared for them, and that He was watching out for them.

These young men obviously knew the God they served. They knew that He had desires for them that went beyond what was convenient for them. They were in a city that was the center of the world, and God was allowing them to have an influence over Nebuchadnezzar, arguably the most powerful man of his age. What a huge responsibility was placed on their shoulders!

Babylon, in modern-day Iraq, would have been a city of many wonders and great wealth. The hanging gardens were said to be one of the wonders of the ancient world. This is the opulence and grandeur that these young men would have been becoming accustomed to. It would have been amazing, especially compared to their lives before coming to Babylon. They probably would have lived either in a small village or in the small city of Jerusalem. Either experience would have paled in comparison.

However, these young men were not blinded by the opulence of the Babylonian royal court, but they remained faithful to the God of their fathers with unshakable faith. They were committed to their God

because they knew Him personally and had experienced His faithfulness and love. They found God to be trustworthy again and again. Their responses to Him were coming from a strong understanding that their God loved and accepted them completely.

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Have the students think of five people whom they trust completely. Ask them if they would do what any of those five people asked of them. Then ask them why they would obey. Remind them that the quality of a relationship is often what allows us to obey the requests of others. It is possible, however, that those whom we have trusted sometimes betray us. Yet God will never betray our friendship. We can always come to Him with our joys and our sorrows, with our thanks and with our needs, knowing that we can trust Him who has our best interest at heart (see Isaiah 49:15). Pray with them that they might live their lives in response to a God who loves them completely.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

These young men were put to the test and passed. However, they did not enter into risk because they were seeking to be loved by God. Rather they responded to the love that was already displayed by



Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Sensory Teaching

Anytime that you can give your students the opportunity to use more than one of their senses to learn is a good thing. Some students learn visually, some by hearing, and some by doing. Any activity that you create to give them these sensory experiences will help them learn more quickly and allow that knowledge to lead to enduring understanding.

Even things as simple as standing up and sitting down have a profound effect on the student. When teaching a story that is this well known, it is good to think of ways to help the story come alive for each of the students. The more diverse the activities, the more easily you will reach all learners, engaging them actively in learning, and will help them take away lessons from Sabbath School that they will later apply in their own lives. activities will help a student have a hook to hang their proverbial hat on when it comes to the story you are studying.

God. Their response became their acts of worship. They were able to respond so boldly because they knew who God was and what He would do. They were not fearful of His response to them because He

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**

Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory.

- **Flashlight**

Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book Prophets and Kings. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**

Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.

- **Further Insight**

Ask them how the quote in Further Insight conveys the point of the story in this lesson.

had already proven Himself worthy of their love. It is a really special relationship that we get to have with God. He loves us, we love Him, and He proves to us His love again and again.

The blessing bestowed upon the young Hebrew men was much more than they had in mind. Our

attempts to serve God and our prayers for His intervention are often too humble. Yet the storehouse of His blessings is open for us if we would only ask (see Matthew 7:7), just as when He generously blessed the four Hebrew youth who remained faithful to Him.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty and Ruin*), chapter 39.

*A special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings* has been created by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.