

6

Courage

Daniel 3

In children's worship I asked the kids to tell about a time when they had experienced fear in facing a situation—when they had said “I can't do that”—and then gotten past their fear. For Bethany it was taking a big leap on the jungle gym. (She demonstrated with chairs, her dress swirling in the air.) For Amanda it was the first day of school and anxiety about whether the other kids would like her.

The times in your life when you are likely to say “No, God, I can't” may be surprisingly similar. It might be an act of physical endurance (giving birth, for example!). It might be a big job interview. Or it might be standing up to an unethical client.

GROUP DISCUSSION. Describe an “I can't” you have conquered.

PERSONAL REFLECTION. Why are you fearful in certain situations?

The courageous choice that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego made—not to bow down to a secular idol, despite the fact that it could cost them their prestigious jobs in the king’s house or even their lives—is strikingly contemporary. *Read Daniel 3.*

1. Describe the characters who play key roles in this story.

2. Who do you identify with and why?

3. What seems to be the motivation behind the actions of each character or group of characters?

4. Consider how the actions of each character or group of characters may have changed the outcome. What could have been different results depending on their responses?

5. How might Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego have rationalized bowing down to the idol?

6. When have you felt pressure to bow to the idols of the world?

7. In verses 16-18 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego speak with theological depth. How do they describe the relationship between our will and God's?

8. What thoughts and feelings do you experience when you read of the fourth person in the furnace (v. 25)?

9. In what ways have you experienced God's comfort in times when you took a step of courage?

10. What has the king learned about God (vv. 25-30)?

11. The courage of the three Hebrew men led to greater honor in God's eyes and in the world (v. 30). Have you seen this result in the lives of Christians you know? Explain.

12. What would be an act of courage that—with God's support—you could take today?

Ask God to make you ready for risk, so that the next time he wants you to exercise courage you will do so.

Now or Later

Praying together can help us sense God's encouraging presence. Ask someone to pray with you about your need for courage.