



## Week 3 **LEADER** Discussion Questions

Week of 4/30/23

**Text:** Daniel 3

**Icebreaker:** Have you ever felt pressure to go along with the crowd in some way that you knew wasn't right? What happened?

1. Read verses 1-7. What seems to be emphasized in these verses?

The repeated phrases should clue us in on what is most important. We could include, then, that the full entourage of government officials were assembled, that Nebuchadnezzar had set up the image, that all peoples were commanded to participate, and that a full ensemble of musicians was used to accompany the ceremony. Verse 7 also indicates that everyone complied, which we only discover later to be not exactly accurate. In all, the repetition is likely intended to help set the stage for the kind of scale and scope of Nebuchadnezzar's program. This was a big deal...because Nebuchadnezzar was a big deal!

*Application:* Do you think similar practices or initiatives occur in our world today? Explain what you think.

They do, but the question isn't meant to say that contemporary examples are just like Nebuchadnezzar's situation. Think of examples from our day, though, of ceremonies that combine music with images and have expectations of widespread participation. We could add in ceremonies or practices that are meant to help unite people together under a common cause or identity.

2. Read verses 8-15. Why do you think Nebuchadnezzar was in a "furious rage" (v. 13)?

The "certain Chaldeans" had done a good job of pushing Nebuchadnezzar's buttons by saying, "These men, O king, pay no attention to you..." They helped make it sound personal, and because Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were in elevated government positions, it surely felt like an act of insubordination to the king. He felt threatened.

*Application:* Is there a cost to non-compliance in some part of your life? Maybe at work or in a social setting? If so, what kind of costs could you face?

3. Read verses 16-18. What stands out to you about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's response to Nebuchadnezzar's threat?

One thing that may grab attention is the confidence they seem to have. Unlike Nebuchadnezzar, who seems highly emotional and volatile, these three men appear to be relatively composed and confident in their belief that God will deliver them.

*Application:* These three men were likely strengthened by examples of other times God had delivered people in miraculous ways. These examples can help us too, so what other instances can you think of from the Bible of God delivering his people?

There are many examples we could think of. Noah, Abraham sacrificing Isaac, the Exodus, David and Goliath, Esther, Peter in Acts 12, etc. Of course, the greatest "deliverance" for us to consider is Jesus's resurrection.

*Building Christ-centered communities of people fully devoted to loving God and loving others.*

4. Read verses 19-30 and Hebrews 11:32-38. Could we still say that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were delivered by God if they had not survived the furnace?

The passage in Hebrews puts side-by-side examples of people being rescued from death and people going to their death. In either case, God delivered them. We tend to find it most spectacular when God saves someone from death, but why? Isn't it also miraculous that God has made a way for all to be saved through death?

*Application:* God is able to deliver us from death, but he does not always choose to do it. Do you think it's possible for death to be a winsome example to others? Why?

One prominent church figure was a man named Tertullian (2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century AD), who said, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." The faith of believers in the face of death can be one of the most powerful testimonies.

5. *Application:* The presence of the one who is "like a son of the gods" in the furnace vividly displays God's presence with these men. What difference does it make to you that God is with us *in* suffering or trials, even if he does not always keep us *from* them?

We will be very disappointed and disillusioned if we believe following Jesus means an easy, problem-free path. The one who promises to "never leave or forsake" us (Deut 31:6) will always be near, though, even when we find ourselves in places of great difficulty. We do well to remember the suffering of Jesus, who knows what it's like to face death...and overcome it.