

## SESSION TWO

SMALL-GROUP SESSION

IGNITE  
Refining and Purifying Your Faith

# Great Walls of Fire ... Finding Confidence in Adversity (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego)

## Daniel 3:1-30

People in our society learn about fire and fire safety at a very young age. We give our toddlers toy fire trucks. School children tour fire stations with their classes. In elementary school, we hold fire drills. We purchase fire extinguishers and smoke alarms. In any hotel, the back of the door has a sign that reads, "What To Do In Case Of A Fire."

Today we are going to think about fire. We're not talking about fires that destroy homes or forests, but spiritual fires that we face. The personal crises we encounter are like fire to our souls. When these great walls of fire surround us and they seem to be closing in around us, what can we do? Who do we turn to?

## START IT UP

We humans have conflicting feelings about fire: we need it and fear it at the same time. Fire in the fireplace is cheering and comforting; fire out of control consumes and destroys.

1. **Have you ever had dreams about fires? If so, what key details do you remember about them?**

2. **Today, how do you feel about fire? Does it fascinate or frighten you? What might have influenced your attitude toward fire?**

## TALK IT UP

The Bible tells us the story of three men who experienced literal “great walls of fire.” Through their experience, we can glean five “fireproof formulas” for dealing with the frightening, and soul-searing problems that attack us.

To set the stage, we need to go back in history. In 605 B.C., King Nebuchadnezzar took the reins of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar was a proud man, and a powerful one. One of his conquests was the land of Israel. He subdued the nation and carried off its treasures. He also picked out the brightest, most intelligent young men from the best families in Judah. He took them back to Babylon, educated them in the Babylonian culture, and put them into top positions in his administration. Three of those young men were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. King Nebuchadnezzar eventually gave these young men administrative responsibility over the province of Babylon.

### **Read Daniel 3:1-12**

We all cheer when we see how the three young men refused to bow to Nebuchadnezzar’s statue. You might assume these heroes would get away with disobeying the king because they were obeying God. But something happened that still happens today. Some verbal flamethrowers came onto the scene. They went to the king and accused the Jews of refusing to bow to Nebuchadnezzar’s image. (Verbal arsonists always work behind your back.) They didn’t come face to face with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Instead, they crept around and set a fire by tattletaling. If you are in any position of leadership, get ready for the verbal arsonists because they are lurking everywhere.

### **Read Daniel 3:13-18**

#### ***Fireproof Formula 1: Rise Above the Verbal Flamethrowers.***

If we want to put out the fires in our lives, we have to rise above the verbal flamethrowers. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were able to rise above them because they had proper priorities. When your top priority is God’s approval, you are confident. You don’t need everyone else’s approval. Every

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time you return fire with fire you will be disappointed. You slide down to the flamethrower's level. It's human nature to want revenge for those who hurt us, but if our priorities are straight, we can be confident, serene, and secure. We can leave revenge in God's hands and trust that even being hit by the flamethrowers will be used for good in God's grand scheme.

### ***Fireproof Formula 2: Walk Through "Fiery Furnaces" with Confidence.***

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego knew the cost of their obedience. They knew that refusing to bow to the statue would cost them their careers and probably their lives. Yet, they were confident that obeying God was the right thing to do and they need not worry about the future. They obeyed God and left their welfare in God's hands. It's important to notice that they reflected confidence, not cockiness. They were not exhibiting bravado, nor were they sassing Nebuchadnezzar to cover up their fear of punishment. Their confidence came directly from their knowledge of God. They didn't say, "Israel's God," or "a God," or just "God." They said, "Our God can save us." They could say "Our God" with confidence because they knew Him personally. Confidence in God comes from a personal relationship with Him.

- 3. What are some examples of real-life crises that we could identify as "fiery furnaces"? How would personal knowledge of God's character help a person deal with these things?**

### ***Fireproof Formula 3: Don't Compromise When the Fire Flares Up.***

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were confident of God's power and His commands. They were tranquil because they were obedient—not because they knew how it would turn out. They didn't know whether God would rescue them or not. They were in a fearful place and if anyone ever had an excuse to compromise, they did. They could easily have said, "Well, true worship comes from the heart, right? So if we bow down, but we're not worshipping in our hearts, then it doesn't count. We can do this; it isn't such a big deal." They could easily have saved their own lives. But they didn't allow circumstances to compromise their worship. Instead they said, "Yeah, we might die. But that doesn't really matter. I've got to do what God says, no matter what."

We all love stories with happy endings, but many times God doesn't miraculously save His obedient servants. Perhaps obeying God could mean sacrificing your career. You may lose friends or reputation if you follow God's commands and you may never be justified. Fire might consume your "success" as this world defines it. Sometimes Christians even die because of their refusal to compromise.

4. **Where are you most tempted to compromise? Can you behave differently with different groups of people without compromising? How far can you go without being disobedient?**
  
5. **Why doesn't God always rescue His people from the fiery furnaces of life? Is it still worth following Him without a guarantee that He will rescue you? Why?**

### **Read Daniel 3:19-30**

#### ***Fireproof Formula 4: Grasp God's Hand as You Walk Through the Fire.***

Nebuchadnezzar was watching for his rebellious servants to burn. As he watched, he witnessed something incredible! The three young men were walking around in a furnace so hot that the guards who threw them in had been killed. Incredibly, He also saw a fourth person walking through the fire with them. Many scholars believe this fourth person was Jesus Himself making an appearance before He came to earth as the God-man in Bethlehem.

We are on life's stage when we are going through a fire. Our audience may be someone who wants to see us burn. Or it might be someone desperately hoping for a glimpse of God, hoping to see Him rescue us from the flames. If we respond by reaching for God's hand, the spectators will see what Nebuchadnezzar saw. They will see Jesus walking through the flames with us. They will see that we do not burn, and some of them will say, "That person has something I want."

Just like the fire in the furnace burnt off the ropes that bound Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, God sometimes allows fires in our lives in order to burn away things that hold us captive. God is not "out to get us;" He wants to free us for His purposes. Scripture promises us that God will be with us when we pass through fiery trials. No one likes the fiery times but God is present with us teaching us invaluable lessons. Afterwards, we will be able to say: "I've learned more in the fire than anywhere else. It was tough, but I wouldn't trade it. I know Him in such a different, deeper way now."

God works on us like a master goldsmith. A goldsmith heats his metal to the melting point. As it melts, the heavy gold sinks to the bottom and the scum of dirt and impurities rise to the top. Then the goldsmith carefully skims the dross off the top, leaving the pure gold in the crucible. He knows that the gold is pure when he can see his own reflection in its molten surface. The Lord uses a similar

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process in our lives. As the heat increases in our fiery trials, the impurities and dirt rise to the top, and He skims them off. And as He works with us melting, refining, and cleansing, God is looking for one thing. He is looking to see His own reflection in our lives.

- 6. What character qualities are produced by “fire” in our lives? Why do you think these particular qualities come out of “fiery” experiences?**
  
- 7. When have you been in the furnace with God? What did you learn through the experience? Do you think it brought you closer to reflecting His image?**

### ***Fireproof Formula 5: Recognize a Promotion Awaits You Beyond the Fire.***

After Nebuchadnezzar saw the three young men pass through the fire unharmed, he was impressed both by their character and by the power of the God they served. His immediate reaction was not only to restore their positions, but also to promote them. This is also a picture of what happens when we successfully pass through fires in our lives. God is waiting to promote us. This word “promote” is not a promise of prosperity. God doesn’t promise to make us rich or famous; He promises to make us more and more like Him. You may not hear anything more about your promotion until you get to heaven. But think about it this way: If you hear the God of all creation say to you, personally, “Well done! You have been a faithful servant, and I am pleased with you,” won’t that be amazing?

- 8. What is this world’s definition of success? What do you think God’s definition of success is? Which definition do you really live by?**
  
- 9. Read Daniel 3:28 again. Do you think anyone would be able to say this about you? What things in our lives might come under the category of “serving” or “worshiping” another god?**

# LIFT IT UP

Every one of us will walk through a “fiery furnace” of some kind—an experience that will test our faith and either burn out impurities or burn us up. Sometimes it will seem like we can’t make it through without being wounded forever. But remember this: even if you lose your career, your home, your friends, or your life but you keep your grip on God’s hand, you will be victorious. The question to ask is not, “Will I win? Will people realize that I’m right? Will those verbal arsonists have to eat dirt?” but “Am I obeying God? Am I doing the job He gave me to do?” Ultimately, we have to leave the consequences of our obedience in God’s hands.

**10. How can this group pray for you as you are walking through the fires of life?**

**11. What results of previous fires can you thank God for?**

Take time to pray together for each other and the fires that each one currently faces

My Prayer Needs:

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My Group’s Prayer Needs:

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