

“WILL IT BURN?”

(Shadrach/Hananiah, Meshach/Michael, Abednego/Azariah)

For The Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta

By Sally Ulrey

Key verses: Daniel 3:7-30

“The God we serve is able to save us...but even if He does not, we will not bow...”

Objective: To remind us that when we are in the “fiery furnace,” God is there and God is able, and to let those experiences refine our faith

The Set up: Moderate

The Plan:

- **Hook:** Will it Burn? (20 mins)
 - Using a bonfire, play a game where the group guesses if something will burn if put in a fire pit or not
 - (Bonus option: make s’mores; this will add time to your lesson)
- **Book:** Fourth Man in the Fire (10 mins)
 - Go over the main points of the Scripture:
 - Faithful to God regardless of the outcome
 - 4th man in the fire (with them in their scariest moment)
 - Faith was refined by the fire
- **Look:** What’s Your Fiery Furnace? (10 mins)
 - Small Discussion about our scariest moments, and God’s presence in them
- **Took:** Refiner’s Fire (5 mins)
 - Read Zech. 13:9, using ashes from bonfire

The Supplies:

- Copy of lesson
- Bibles (or Scripture printed)
- Copies of verses printed on cardstock
- Notecards and Pens
- Bonfire stuff: wood, lighter fluid, lighter
- (Optional) S’more stuff: graham crackers, chocolate, marshmallows
- All/Some of the following kitchen/household supplies: sugar, salt, flour, Epsom salt, powdered coffee creamer, alum powder (can find in spice aisle), steel wool, plastic cup full of water
- Coat hanger (at least one)
- Fire tongs
- WATER (hose, big bucket), fire extinguisher, safety supplies just in case

*“Will it Burn?”(Shadrach...) by Sally Ulrey
for the Diocese of Atlanta*

Will it Burn? (Hook, 20-30 mins)

In this section, youth will play a game where they will have to guess if something will burn or not in a bonfire. The point is that basically everything is affected by the fire, and even they, who aren't IN the fire, still smell like smoke. This will come into play later, because the Scripture talks about how Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego weren't singed or affected at all and didn't even smell like smoke.

Set-up: You'll need some volunteers to help set up a bonfire and get it going in advance. Obviously, take safety precautions and have water/hose/fire extinguishers/buckets full of water on hand. If time permits, you can have the kids make s'mores first, and then begin the game.

Play the Game (15 mins): For the game, you'll be using household items and asking them to guess if it will burn in the fire. For added cheesy-ness and kicks, you can do it like a game show host. Hold up the item, and have the group guess if they think it will burn in the fire. Once they've made their guess, put it in. I like to have them sing "Will it Burn" to the tune of the Veggie Tales theme song while we're burning it.

What to Burn: Here's what will happen if you burn the things on the list (Note: you can burn other things, but you might want to research if it's ok to burn them. You are usually allowed to burn natural things like wood and leaves and stuff you would cook; plastics are generally a bad idea). Basically, everything burns (or melts, or is somehow affected by the fire...that's the point)

- Leaves—smokey
- Salt—orangish flame
- Epsom salt—white flame
- Sugar—little sparks
- Powdered coffee creamer—little flashes
- Flour—Flash flame
- Steel wool—just looks cool, burns in little lines/tracks
- Alum powder—green flame
- Coat hanger—doesn't burn...does get really hot (if you have coat hangers that have gooey marshmallows stuck to it, you could burn that off, talk about how the fire can clean it; that can tie in later when we talk about fiery furnaces refine our faith)
- Plastic cup filled with water—(use tongs to place in fire), cup doesn't melt with water in it (there is a whole object lesson here about how being filled with Living Water on the inside helps us deal with crazy circumstances on the outside)

Clean up: BEFORE YOU GO INSIDE, make sure the fire is safe to leave (or have someone stay while it burns out). Later, they are going to do something with the ashes, so you'll want to make sure the fire is out. It's ok if you have to pour some water on it; wet ashes will still work.

Debrief Questions (5 mins):

1. The fire affected every item in some way. Were you surprised at what burned and what didn't?
2. Have you ever been burned? Tell a partner a story about it quickly.
3. How do you feel about that smoky smell you'll be taking home with you after this (love it, hate it)?

Transition: The fire had an effect on every item that was placed in it. It even had an effect on you who were around it (you smell like smoke). That's to be expected. But we're going to look at a story where fire did NOT behave as expected....

*"Will it Burn?"(Shadrach...) by Sally Ulrey
for the Diocese of Atlanta*

“Fourth Man in the Fire” (Book, 10 mins)

In this section, we'll tell the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Reading the story will take about 5 mins, and the mini-lecture will take about 5 minutes. The main point is that God is with them in their fiery furnaces, and when they face fiery furnaces, their faith is refined.

- Give some backstory: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were Israelites who had been deported to Babylon when their kingdom was conquered by the Babylonians. They were faithful believers (whose names are actually Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah...but they were renamed Babylonian names), and they remained faithful to God even in a foreign culture where they stood out in a bad way for continuing to practice their beliefs.
- Read the story (next page for your reference, slightly abridged), found in Daniel ch. 3
- Call attention to three main points (below).

Mini-Lecture (5 mins)

Three main principles come out of this Scripture:

1. **They remain faithful to God regardless of the outcome.** Their statement of faith is powerful. “The God we serve is able to save us from it...but even if He does not, we will not bow...” They know God CAN rescue them, and they will remain faithful no matter what God chooses to do; either way, they trust God and put themselves in God’s hands, whether God choose to save them or not. Wow.
2. **The Fourth Man in the Fire.** We generally understand this to be theophany (when God appears in some form and makes Himself known in a tangible way). Neb sees 4 men in the fire, and the 4th is godlike. In their scariest moment, in the midst of their fiery furnace, God made himself known to them in a way that was unmistakable. When they needed God the most, God showed up in a profound way, in a way that was more real than they had yet experienced God.
3. **Faith was refined by the fire.** After this experience, they were unharmed. Their clothes were not even singed, and they didn’t even smell like smoke! (If you’re smelling yourselves right now, you know that is saying something)... The only thing that burned up was their bonds. The result was that their faith was refined/made stronger, and the thing that was an obstacle/holding them back, was burned. Another result was that an unbeliever came to see something about who God truly is. God used a scary, hard experience to free them from what might have been holding them back (one thing that may have been holding them back was that they were living in a culture that did not value their faith). Through this, their faith was refined, made stronger, more pure. Good came out of it.

STORY OF SHADRACH, MESHACH, and ABEDNEGO

Daniel 3 (NIV, slightly abridged)

3 King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold...and set it up in Babylon. ²He then summoned ALL the provincial officials to come to the dedication of the image he had set up. ³So they all assembled for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and they stood before it.

⁴Then the herald loudly proclaimed, “Nations and peoples of every language, this is what you are commanded to do: ⁵As soon as you hear the music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. ⁶Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.”

⁷Therefore, as soon as they heard the music, all the nations and peoples of every language fell down and worshiped the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

⁸At this time some came forward and denounced the Jews.⁹They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “¹⁰Your Majesty has issued a decree that... ¹¹whoever does not fall down and worship [the statue] will be thrown into a blazing furnace. ¹²But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up.”

¹³Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego... ¹⁴and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? ¹⁵...if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. **Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?**”

¹⁶Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, “King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. ¹⁷If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, **the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us^l from Your Majesty’s hand.** ¹⁸**But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.**”

¹⁹Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual ²⁰and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. ²¹So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. ²²The king’s command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, ²³and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.

*“Will it Burn?”(Shadrach...) by Sally Ulrey
for the Diocese of Atlanta*

²⁴ Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, “Weren’t there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?”

They replied, “Certainly, Your Majesty.”

²⁵ He said, “**Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.**”

²⁶ Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, “Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!”

So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, ²⁷ and the officials crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and **there was no smell of fire on them.**

²⁸ Then Nebuchadnezzar said, “Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! **They trusted in him and defied the king’s command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God.** ²⁹ Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way.”

³⁰ Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

What's Your Fiery Furnace? (Look, 10 mins)

In this part, we'll introduce a small group discussion about what "fiery furnaces" (hard, scary circumstances) the youth are facing in their own lives. They'll have an opportunity to share what's going on currently, and also to share past fiery furnaces they've faced, how God was with them, and what good came out of it.

These can either be done with the entire group while you facilitate, or the questions can be printed up ahead of time as handouts or projected, and they can do this in small groups.

Discussion Questions (10 mins)

1. Tell a story about a fiery furnace (scary, hard circumstance) you've been through in the past.
 - a. How did God make His presence known to you?
 - b. How was your faith refined/what good came out of it?
2. What fiery furnace are you facing right now?
3. Think about the plastic cup filled with water that didn't melt...it was filled with water. When we are filled with Living Water (faith in Jesus) on the inside, we can weather the crazy circumstances on the outside. So, how full is your cup (full, ready to face crazy circumstances? Feeling empty? In between?)
4. What are some of the things that could hold you back in your faith? How can God help you overcome those?

Refiner's Fire (Took, 5 mins)

This is the take-home reminder. On a notecard/cardstock, print Zechariah 13:9. On the other side, you'll have them write ways they have seen God's presence and faithfulness through fiery furnaces. On the way out, go by the fire pit, and have them take the ashes to make a cross on their notecards to remind them that fiery furnaces (hard, scary circumstances) refine their faith.

- Pass out the cards with Zech. 13:9
- Tell them to write the ways they have (1) experienced God's presence in fiery furnaces (hard, scary circumstances) and/or (2) had their faith refined/made stronger because of fiery furnaces.
- Instruct them to stop by the fire pit on the way out and take some ashes and make a cross over their notecards.
- Explain that the ashes will serve as a reminder that with God, fiery furnaces hold the promise of refined faith.

Close in prayer, thanking God that He is always with us, even in the hardest, scariest circumstances, and asking that God would reveal Himself in our hard times, and would refine our faith and make it stronger, and burn away the obstacles to our faith.

<p>These I will put into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.' ~Zech 13:9</p>	<p>These I will put into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.' ~Zech 13:9</p>
<p>These I will put into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.' ~Zech 13:9</p>	<p>These I will put into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.' ~Zech 13:9</p>
<p>These I will put into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.' ~Zech 13:9</p>	<p>These I will put into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.' ~Zech 13:9</p>
<p>These I will put into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.' ~Zech 13:9</p>	<p>These I will put into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.' ~Zech 13:9</p>
<p>These I will put into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.' ~Zech 13:9</p>	<p>These I will put into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.' ~Zech 13:9</p>