

*Get Ready!***The Power To Choose**

By: Jennifer Wetzel

**Text**

Daniel 3:1-30

**Key Quest Verse**

“Teach me knowledge and good judgment, for I believe in your commands.”

Psalm 119:66 (NIV)

**Bible Background**

In the third year of his reign, approximately 605 B.C., King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon invaded Jerusalem. Exiled in Babylon for 68 years, the people of Judah would not begin to return to their homeland until 538 B.C., one year after King Cyrus of Persia took control of Babylon, as read in Ezra and Nehemiah. During the Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem, three deportations of captives occurred. After the invasion of Jerusalem, King Nebuchadnezzar ordered his chief of court officials to bring in young Israelite men of nobility to learn the language and literature of Babylon in order that they could serve in his court. Four young men from Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, were present during the first deportation in 605 B.C. These young men were re-named Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in Babylon, though Daniel is the only one referred to by his original namesake. Working with their friend Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego distinguished themselves among the king’s men. According to Daniel 1:17, God gave them knowledge and understanding in all kinds of literature and understanding. Furthermore, the king found none equal in wisdom and understanding to the young men. At Daniel’s behest, he appointed the three as administrators over the province in Babylon. When King Nebuchadnezzar erected an image of gold in the plains of Dura, a province of Babylon, he summoned all of the administrative officials in the province to worship the image. Due to their position, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were present for the dedication of the golden image and heard Nebuchadnezzar’s decree that anyone not bowing to the image would be thrown into the fiery furnace. Yet, the three ignored the command in order to remain faithful to the one true God, remaining upright when everyone around them bows to the image. Even when summoned before the king and questioned, the trio remained steadfast in their faith. The difficult circumstance, surrounding peer pressure, and assumed dire outcome did not shake their faith. Instead, they remained unwavering in their dedication to Exodus 20:3-5. Condemned to death and thrown in the fiery furnace, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were delivered from the destructive powers of the fire and heat. Even though it killed the men who threw them into the furnace, the three were saved and emerged from the furnace unscathed. Their deliverance moved the king to acknowledge and awe the miraculous powers of their god. The three young men were knowledgeable of God’s commandments and were able to remain close to Him. We too must remain knowledgeable of God’s Word in order to have a close relationship with Him. Through the lesson of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, we see that remaining faithful to God, even under the most difficult circumstances, is rewarded. God remains faithful to those who remain faithful to Him.

*Get Ready!*



### Lesson Quest

What I want my students to:

**Know:** God will protect us when we choose to remain faithful to Him

**Feel:** Desire to follow God’s will in all aspects of their lives

**Do:** Remain faithful to God’s will in making choices, even in difficult circumstances or when under peer pressure

### Leader’s Devotion

Take a moment to read Psalm 119:1-72. Throughout Psalm 119, the emphasis is on the word of God. The psalmist, speaking directly to God, discusses obedience to God’s commands and the rewards that such a life can bring. In verses 10-11, he pledges to remember God’s words, in order to not sin against God. His words show us that it takes more than just knowing what God’s commands are in order to remain faithful to God. The psalmist not only promises to “*learn your righteous laws*” (verse 7) but also to “*run in the path of your commands*” (verse 32). How many people know what they should do but do not do it? How many of us read God’s word and yet do not apply it to our own lives? We need to learn and *obey* His commands. Remaining faithful to God requires putting His words into action in all elements of our daily lives. The psalmist pleads with God to give Him wisdom and, in verse 66, good judgment. He turns to God when making choices. In our lives, we must also strive to search God’s will in our choices and allow His commands to guide our actions. Unfortunately, making choices has become difficult in our world. Peer pressure surrounds our choices, especially for children. Friends, media, money, jobs, and other factors influence the decisions made in life. It is easier to give into pressure and allow outside influences to direct our lives towards the trends of society. Who does not want to win friends and be popular in the eyes of others? However, there is only one set of eyes in which we should be concerned of our appearance and actions. That is God’s eyes. How does God view us as we struggle with peer pressure? The author of Psalm 119 even addresses this problem. “*The arrogant mock me without restraint, but I do not turn from your law.*” (verse 51) He recognized the ridicule facing him for keeping God’s commands, and yet he continues to walk in the path of God. The psalmist knows that it is more rewarding to stay faithful to God’s commands than to cave into peer pressure. As we seek to teach our students to do the same, let us lead lives that can be shining examples for them. Let’s run our lives in the path of God’s commands.

**Get Set!****Option A**

**Materials:** A variety of drinks (such as orange juice, water, Coca-Cola, Pepsi, coffee, tea, Kool-Aid, ice tea, etc.—use drinks that the students will both like and dislike), snack-size candy bars, granola bars, fruit, cups, ice, napkins

**Procedures:** Before class, arrange the drinks and snacks on a table. When students arrive, allow them to help themselves to the refreshments. Have them choose their favorite snack from the table and let them eat that. When students are done eating, ask the following questions:

**Did you enjoy your snacks? Why or why not?**

**How did you choose what you were going to eat and drink?**

**Did your friends influence your decision at all?**

**Were some of the items better for you than others were?**

**Was it not cool to take the healthy snacks? Why or why not?**

Have the students assist in cleaning up the refreshments. Then, discuss making choices before moving into the Bible story. **This morning, we have all made choices, such as whether or not to come to Sunday School and which snack to eat. Other people, such as what clothes to wear or how to do our hair, influenced many of our decisions. We want to be popular and follow the styles, right? In life, it's important to make good choices and not let other people to decide what you are going to do. Today, we're going to read about three young men who made the choice to follow God, despite the cost. Let's read about their choice and see what we can learn from it.**

**GO TO THE BIBLE STORY**

## Get Set!

### Option B

**Materials:** 2 round balloons, not inflated, several matches, water

**Procedures:** Inflate one of the balloons and tie it closed. Place  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup water in the second balloon, inflate it, and then tie it shut. Light a match and hold it under the first balloon, allowing the flame to touch it. The balloon will break, perhaps even from just the heat of the flame. Explain to the students that the flame heats the rubber of the balloon. The hot rubber becomes too weak to resist the pressure of air inside the balloon, so it breaks.

Light another match and bring it near the second balloon. This balloon will not break at all. Explain to the students that the water inside the second balloon prevents it from breaking. The water inside the balloon absorbs the heat of the flame, drawing it away from the rubber. Because of this, the rubber does not become hot or weaken, allowing it to withstand the air pressure inside the balloon. “These balloons represent people. The first balloon shows us what we are like without God’s word in our hearts. People who do not know God or His commands cannot withstand the outside pressures of the world. They break under pressure because they weaken under stress and bad influences. However, the second balloon represents Christians. This second balloon contains water, which draws the heat away from the balloon and allows it to stay in one piece. We should hide God’s word in our heart. When we feel pressured to make a bad choice, knowing what God would want us to do draws the heat away from us and allows us to stay faithful to Him. We should be like our second balloon and have “living water” in our lives. Let’s read today’s story to discuss some young men and how they withstand the heat of peer pressure.”

GO TO THE BIBLE STORY



Get Set!



**Bible Story**

**Advanced Preparation:** Provide markers for students to highlight portions of the story in their Bibles.

Read the lesson text aloud to the students. As you read, have them pantomime the following actions whenever they hear the corresponding word or phrase. Write these actions on the chalkboard to help them remember what actions correspond with each phrase.

- King Nebuchadnezzar**..... circle hands over head like a crown
- image of Gold** .....stretch hands to indicate height of the image
- satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials**.....pretend to hold a scepter in hand
- horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music**.....pretend to play one of these instruments
- worshiped**.....bow to ground
- astrologers**.....wag finger in face of others
- blazing furnace**.....wipe forehead as if hot
- rage/furious**.....shake fist
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego**.....hold up three fingers
- God**.....lift head to gaze upward
- praise**.....raise hands in honor

**Go!**

### Prayer Partners

#### CREATIVE WRITING

**Materials:** 3x5 or 4x6 index cards, pens or pencils



### Quest Connection

In the lesson, students learn to remain faithful to God when making choices, no matter what the situation may be. In this activity, students will identify choices that they face in their lives and address decisions that they can make in order to stay faithful to God. They will also learn to pray for others who face tough choices.

**Procedures:** After reading and reviewing the Bible text, discuss making correct choices with the students. Define choices and decision-making for them. Then, discuss the choices made by the characters in the lesson text, factors influencing their decisions, and the final outcome of their actions. After discussing the role of choices in the lesson text, distribute one index card and a writing utensil to each student. Ask the students to face tough choices that they will have to make throughout the upcoming week. For example, students might have to decide which friends to associate with at school, which parent to live with, or how to treat an outsider at school. Each student should write down a list of tough choices that they will face throughout the week. When students are finished writing down their choices, have each child partner with another student. The pair should exchange cards and explain to one another the tough decisions that they face. Then, have the students pray for one another. At the end of class, gather the students together. **Take your partner's card home with you. Each day, pray for their courage and wisdom as they make their decisions. Ask God to lead them in their choices. Remember, God is always with us, no matter what choices we may face.**

### Close

Read Joshua 1:9. Then, ask a student to offer a closing prayer.

**Go!**



### Fiery Furnace

(adapted from: <http://www.rotation.org>)

#### FOOD

**Materials:** Oven, graham crackers, chocolate chips, miniature marshmallows, Teddy Grahams crackers, cookie sheets, oven mitts, napkins

### Quest Connection

**Procedure:** Preheat the oven to 375 degrees before class. When students arrive, read the lesson text to them to review the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Take the students to the church kitchen. Open the oven door to let them feel the heat coming from the oven and see the glow of the oven. **“If I put my hand in and touched this oven, I would get burned. That’s why I wear an oven mitt to pull things in and out of the oven. Yet, the fiery furnace that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were thrown into was much hotter than this. King Nebuchadnezzar was so mad that he had it heated *seven* times more than normal. Do you think that they would have survived in that kind of heat?”** Pass out a graham cracker to each child. Then, sprinkle marshmallows and chocolate chips on each graham cracker. Give each child three Teddy Grahams to stick in their graham cracker. **“This treat represents our story today. The Teddy Grahams are Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego while the chocolate chips and marshmallows are the people who carried them into the furnace. Let’s put them into our furnace to see what happens to them.”** Arrange the treats on cookie sheets and place them in the oven for approximately 5 minutes. As the treats cook, ask the students the following questions to discuss the lesson with them. When the snacks are done, take them out of the oven and show them to the students. Only Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego survived the fiery furnace because God was with them. Allow students to eat the snacks while you continue the discussion of the lesson.

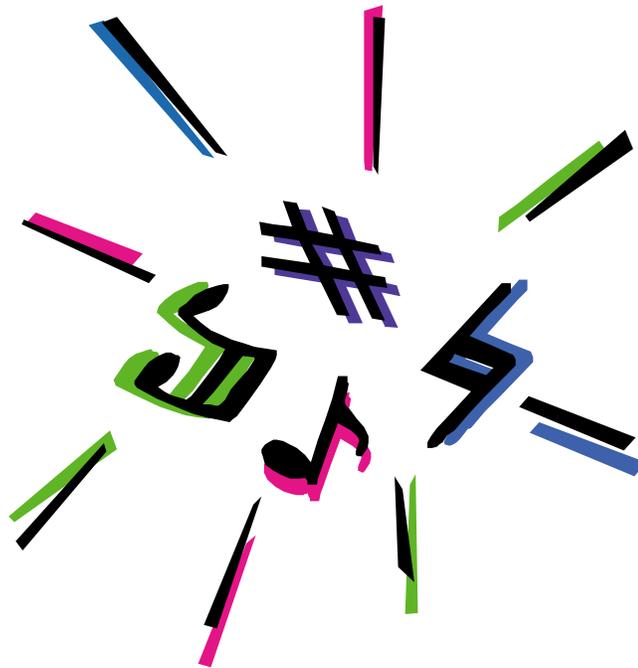
- How would you feel if you were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego?
- Would you have been scared? Why or why not?
- Why didn’t the three men bow before the image of gold?
- What did God’s command tell them about bowing before an image or worshipping another god?
- Did the pressure of everyone around them and Nebuchadnezzar’s rage change their minds? Why or why not?
- Do you think that the three young men were scared for their lives?
- Are people usually able to come out of a fire unharmed
- How does this lesson show that God will take care of us?
- What happens when we remain faithful to God’s commands?

**Go!****Close**

Sing “*Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego*” by Hugh Mitchell. (See words below.) Close with prayer. **“Dear Lord, help us to be like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and always obey your commands. Help us to be strong when we are afraid to do the right thing. We will remember that you will be with us. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”**

***Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego***

Three good men lived very long ago,  
Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.  
To an idol they would never bow,  
Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.  
Into a fiery furnace they were therefore cast,  
Nebuchadnezzar thought they’d never last.  
But God was there, he never let them go,  
Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.



**Go!**



### The Power to Choose

Object Lesson

Material: Outdoor location near a tree, pole, etc

### Quest Connection

Students are learning that they should choose to follow God's command, no matter what the situation. This activity will demonstrate that the power to choose which way to follow resides in them. No one can choose for them.

**Procedure:** Take the students outside to a location near a large tree, pole, or other item that students can easily grip. Have a volunteer stand in front of the class. Instruct them to stay in that spot, no matter what. Then, have another volunteer pull that person off his or her spot. **Why couldn't you stay on your spot? That's the only thing that I asked you to do. Staying in that spot is like making decisions in our lives. We decide to do one thing, such as staying in that spot, but others can easily change our decision. Others pressure us to change our position, whether we like it or not. Sometimes, this peer pressure is too strong to fight. What do we need to make us strong? What would help us not move from our spot?** Now, have the first volunteer wrap his or her arms around the tree, pole, or other item and instruct them to hold on tightly. Have the second volunteer try to move the first student again. This time, they will not be able to move the other student. **We needed something to hold on to. When you had something to hold tightly too, the other student was not able to budge you from your position! In life, we need to hold onto something when making choices. Does anyone know what that is? That's right, we need to hold onto God's commands. If we hold tightly to those, God will help us and we won't lose our position. His word helps us to withstand bad pressures. Remember, you have the power to choose! Choose to hold tightly to God's word so that you can resist peer pressure.** Have students choose a partner and allow all of the students to demonstrate the activity.

### Close

Summarize the activity for the students and point out that the power to choose is in them. Only they can decide what to do in their situation. And, following God's commands leads to a faithful and rewarding life. Read Jeremiah 29:11.

**Go!**

### Close to Thee

(adapted from: <http://www.kissundayschool.com/Activity/activity02.html>)

#### OBJECT LESSON

**Materials:** Popcorn, open area, chalk, chalkboard



### Quest Connection

Students have learned that in all situations, they need to choose to walk in God’s commands. To walk in God’s commands, they must know what those commands are. This activity will demonstrate the importance of having a close relationship with God, in order to remain faithful to Him.

**Procedure:** Discuss with the students the importance of choosing God’s way in all situations, despite the pressure. **We have been learning that in all situations, no matter how difficult, we need to choose God’s way and follow His commands. But, how do we know which way is God’s way? What are some ways we can know God? That’s right, we can read our Bibles to discover what God’s commands are. And, we can pray to discover what He wants us to do. The more we seek God’s wisdom in prayer and in studying His word, the closer our relationship will be to Him. And, with a closer relationship, we will be more apt to choose His way over the ways of the world. Let’s see how easy it is to do things when we are closer to God.** Divide the students into two equal groups. Have them stand in two lines facing each other about 10 feet apart. Call one row “God” and the other row “Us.” Give each child standing in the “Us” row a piece of popcorn. Tell the students that on your signal, they should toss their piece of popcorn to the person directly across from them in the “God” row. The “God” row should try to catch the piece of popcorn. Give the signal and have the children toss the popcorn, though not many catches will be made. Count the number of pieces caught and write that on the chalkboard. Have the row of “Us” students move one step towards the “God” row and repeat the popcorn toss. Again, record the number of pieces of popcorn caught. Continue moving the “Us” row towards the “God” row and continue with the popcorn tosses until the students are standing directly in front of one another. Be sure to record the number of successful catches. When finished, have the students return to their seats. Point out the records to them. The farther apart the students are, the fewer the number of pieces of popcorn caught. The numbers increase as they grow closer together. **It was hard to catch that popcorn when we were far apart. But the closer we got to each other, the easier it was to catch the popcorn. That’s like our relationship with God. The closer we are to Him, the easier it is to do the right thing. When we know His commands and have a relationship with Him, we will have an easier time choosing to do the right thing.**

### Close

Read Psalm 119:11 and then the key quest verse. Then, ask a student to close with prayer.

**Go!****Helping Headlines****CREATIVE WRITING**

**Materials:** Several copies of recent newspaper issues, paper, pens and pencils

**Quest Connection**

Throughout the lesson, students have learned that they need to choose to follow God’s way, despite the circumstances. This activity will give them an opportunity to examine bad decisions and brainstorm better alternatives to a situation.

**Procedure:** Have the students break into small groups of 3-4. Then, give each group a copy of the newspaper. Explain to the students that they will be rewriting one of the headline stories. Reading this newspaper has made me sad. It seems as if all the headlines deal with bad decisions. I feel sorry that these people did not choose to follow God’s way. Today, I want each group to read through the headlines and choose one news story to rewrite. Read through the news article and think about the decisions that the key people made. Did they choose God’s way or the world’s way? After reading through the news article, write down other choices that the people could have made. Make sure that those choices are ones that God would want us to make. Then, choose one choice to rewrite the original story. Have the person make your choice and describe a new outcome to the story. Allow the students to work on this project for the majority of the class. Assist them in identifying a good article to rewrite, brainstorming new choices, and rewriting the article. When students are finished, have each group read the original story and their new version to their classmates.

**Close**

Summarize the importance of making choices that follow God’s way. Have the students recite the key quest verse.



**Go!****Choose God's Way****GAME**

**Materials:** Plenty of room to move around, blindfold

**Quest Connection**

Students have been learning to follow God's commands as they make choices. In this kinesthetic activity, they will seek to hear God's voice and ignore the calls of pressure from others.

**Procedure:** Clear some space in the room so that a student may walk around without running into tables, chairs, etc. Ask for two volunteers from the students. **Today, we are going to learn to listen for God's voice. Student 1 will be a person in the world, not sure which way to go. Student 2 will be God. "God" will direct the student to him. Student 1 must learn to pick out God's voice and follow his directions in order to make it through the world safely.** Blindfold student one and guide them to the other side of the room. Station student two, who is "God," on the other side of the room. Have the remaining students scatter between the two and be the "world." **Okay, now God will give directions to student one on how to cross the room to him. But, the world is trying to give the student other directions on how to live. The world is trying to drown out God's voice. The student must listen for God's voice and follow only his commands in order to live the Christian life and make it to Him safely.** While "God" directs the blindfolded student to him, the other "world" students must also shout out commands and directions to try to drown out God's voice. God must try to speak over everyone else to get the student safely to him. Play until the student crosses the room safely. If time allows, give each student an opportunity to be the blindfolded person trying to cross the room with God's help. Then, gather students together to discuss this scenario. Give them time to make observations of the scenario and what their opinions of it were. Then, show them the connection between the game and making choices. **"Was it hard to hear God's voice in this game? Why? Do you think that is like our lives? Why or why not? Sometimes, it is hard for us to listen to God's rules and obey them even when we know what they are. We like to give in to the pressures of the world and we get off track when making decisions. We must always keep God's commands when making choices. Today, we had a choice to listen to God or listen to others. God was the one who helped us cross the room safely. He'll do the same for our lives if we listen carefully to His commands when we make decisions. Don't give in to peer pressure or the call of the world. Instead, listen only for God's commands."**

**Close**

Have students recite the key quest verse. Close with prayer. **Heavenly Father, please help us to ignore the pressures of this world. Let us make good judgments so that we can always follow your commands even in difficult situations. Amen.**

# Confused Choices

**Directions:** The following people are confused on what choice they should make. Read each person's situation and help them make the right decision. Circle the answer that would be the right choice for each person.

Sally's best friend did not know how to do their math homework. Now, her friend wants to copy Sally's answers before class. Sally does not want to disappoint or anger her friend but she does not want her to get a bad grade in math class either. What should she do?

- a.) let her friend copy all of the answers
- b.) teach her friend how to work the math problems and help her finish the assignment
- c.) avoid her friend all day

Bob and his friends are hanging out in a store after school. A few of the other boys dare Bob to take a candy bar from the store. When he hesitates, the other boys begin to call him a "wimp." What should Bob do?

- a.) leave the store without taking anything
- b.) steal one candy bar
- c.) steal a candy bar and put it back later when no one is watching

Anna and her friends are going to the movies. Her friends want to see a movie that has bad words in it. Anna knows that her mom would not let her watch this movie but she wants her friends to think that she's cool. What should she do?

- a.) go the movie with her friends
- b.) tell her mother that she saw a different movie
- c.) leave the movie theatre

Alex's parents are gone for the afternoon. Some friends who are at his house want to smoke cigarettes. Alex's parents have taught him not to smoke but he wants to be friends with these boys. What should he do?

- a.) smoke in the house with the boys
- b.) let them smoke the cigarettes outside
- c.) ask the boys to get rid of the cigarettes or leave his house

Susie's older sister asks her to lie to their parents so that she can sneak out of the house to see her boyfriend. Susie wants her older sister to include her in things in the future but feels uncomfortable lying to their parents. What should she do?

- a.) cover for her sister
- b.) tell her parents what her sister is doing
- c.) hint to her parents that her sister snuck out

??

## **My Journal Page**

**Think about a time when you knew what the right thing to do was, but you chose not to do it because you were afraid of what others would think of you.**

**Describe this situation and how it made you feel.**

**Ask God to forgive you for not doing what His commandments told you to do.**

**Now, write down better choices that you could have made in that same situation.**

# Wise Words

**Directions:** Read Daniel 3:17-18 to see how Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego responded to King Nebuchadnezzar's rage. Fill in the blanks below with their words.

Then, unscramble the circled letters to the spaces at the bottom of page to discover what kind of choices these young men made.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to \_\_\_\_\_ ourselves before you in this matter. If we are \_\_\_\_\_ into the \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, the God we \_\_\_\_\_ is able to \_\_\_\_\_ us from it, and he will \_\_\_\_\_ us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or \_\_\_\_\_ the image of \_\_\_\_\_ you have set up."

**When making choices, how did Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego behave?**

They remained \_\_\_\_\_ towards God.