



**DANIEL: UNSHAKEABLE FAITH – WEEK 1**

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## DANIEL: UNSHAKABLE FAITH

### WEEK 1: CHOOSE TO FOLLOW GOD

**BIBLE:** Daniel 1:8 (NLT)

**BOTTOM LINE:** You can choose to follow God even when it's not the popular thing to do.

### SUPPLIES

#### OPENING GAME

- "Attribute" and "describing word" cards sheet (cut out each card)
- *In-Person:* whiteboard, dry erase marker, masking tape
- *Online Version:* Masking tape

#### SERIES PREP

- *Online Version:* Set up breakout rooms in advance.

#### GAME PREP

- If you have a larger group, you may want to cut and paste the describing words and attributes onto full-size pages and blow up the words, so they are easier to see.
- Otherwise, print the "Unshakable Attributes Game Sheet" (on cardstock, if possible) and cut them apart into cards.
- Separate the attribute cards from the describing word cards into two piles.
- Mix up the attribute cards.
- *In-person:* Write the describing words on a whiteboard with a dry erase marker.

### INTRODUCTION

**Say:** To kick off our new series today, I am going to ask you some rhetorical questions (questions you think about but don't answer aloud).

- How do you become the kind of person who chooses to follow God even if it could mean being killed?
- How do you become the kind of person who obeys God even if it will make other people mad?
- How do you become the kind of person who is willing to risk being eaten by a lion rather than not praying to God?

OK... now here's a question you can answer out loud: Based on these questions, can anyone guess who we are going to learn from in this study?

*Allow for an answer.*

Yes! We are going to learn from Daniel in the Bible.

Before we learn what faith really looks like from the example of Daniel, let's play a game!

## **OPENING GAME: UNSHAKABLE ATTRIBUTES**

### **HOW TO PLAY THE GAME**

**Say:** The object of the game is to choose and define attributes that describe someone who does the right thing no matter what others do.

We are going to go through this stack of cards, and you are going to vote whether you think each one describes someone who is unshakable or someone who is easily shaken.

If you think the card describes someone who is easily shaken, I want you to shake your whole body (or at least your hand) like an earthquake.

If you think the card describes someone who is unshakable, I want you to hold out your fists in front of you like two unshakable boulders.

Everyone stand up and get ready to vote!

*In-person: Ask for a volunteer to read the character attribute cards aloud one at a time and wait for the students to vote if it's an unshakable attribute or an attribute of someone who is easily shaken.*

*Online Version: Read the character attribute cards aloud—one at a time—and wait for the students' votes.*

Now we are going to match our unshakable character attributes to words that describe those attributes.

I'll give you the first one "Doesn't let hard times and sadness stop him/her from following God" matches with the describing word "RESILIENCE."

*In-Person: Tape the character attribute next to the word "RESILIENCE" on the whiteboard.*

*Online Version: Tape the two cards side by side on the wall behind you, or show the cards together on the screen.*

*Read each character attribute card and let students guess which word matches each*

*character attribute.*

*The attributes and describing words are numbered on the Leader Sheet so that you can help the preteens guess correctly!*

Great job, preteens! You rocked those big describing words! You can all have a seat as we start our teaching time!

## **TEACH**

**Say:** If a classmate were to choose character attributes for you, which of those attributes and describing words would they use to describe you?

We are going to focus our time together this month talking about a man whose faith in God was unshakable.

Each of those unshakable characteristics could be attributed (or said) about him.

Daniel was an awesome man.

He sinned and made mistakes just like all of us do, but he had faith in God, and that's the main thing he is known for.

## **BIBLE CONNECTION**

The Bible story most people know best about Daniel has to do with him being thrown to which animals?

*Allow for an answer.*

Yes, Daniel was thrown into a lion's den!

Before we jump to the story of Daniel as an 80-year-old man who was thrown into a lion's den for praying, we need to back up a little and talk about who Daniel was as a young man—not much older than you.

Daniel was part of a group of young men who were of noble birth, “strong, healthy, and good-looking” who were chosen to go live at the king's palace, eat the king's food, and be educated in language and literature. **(Daniel 1:4-5)**

When they were ready, those chosen young men would enter the king's service.

It sounds like a charmed and luxurious life, doesn't it?

*Allow for an answer.*

Oh, I forgot to tell you that this king was from another country that had just destroyed Daniel's country and taken these young men captive.

These young men were taken from their families and forced to live and be trained at the palace of a king who defeated Daniel's people in Judah (south of Israel).

The people of Israel and Judah had continued to reject God and His expectations of the right relationship with Him, so He allowed King Nebuchadnezzar to destroy them (after God warned them over and over) and take His people in exile to Babylon.

Daniel was with three of his friends, whom you may have heard of before.

Their names were Hananiah (aka Shadrach), Mishael (aka Meshach), and Azariah (aka Abednego).

Daniel's Babylonian name was Belteshazzar, and he had been raised to eat only the foods that God had approved for His people to eat.

The problem was that King Nebuchadnezzar's food wasn't on God's approved foods list.

**Daniel 1:8** says, "...*Daniel was determined not to defile himself by eating the food and wine given to them by the king. He asked the chief of staff for permission not to eat these unacceptable foods.*"

So, the chief of staff had a big problem. What could have happened to the chief of staff if Daniel and his friends had gotten sick and died from malnutrition?

*Allow for answers.*

**Daniel 1:10** says that the chief of staff was afraid the king would behead him if the young men appeared even pale and thin!

But Daniel persisted because he wanted to be obedient to God.

He said, "*Please test us for ten days on a diet of vegetables and water,*" Daniel said. "*At the end of the ten days, see how we look compared to the other young men who are eating the king's food. Then make your decision in light of what you see.*" The attendant agreed to Daniel's suggestion and tested them for ten days." **Daniel 1:12-14**

What do you think happened after the 10-day test?

*Allow for answers.*

**Daniel 1:15-20** tells us what happened after 10 days and the days after that:

*At the end of the ten days, Daniel and his three friends looked healthier and better nourished than the young men who had been eating the food assigned by the king. So after that, the attendant fed them only vegetables instead of the food and wine provided for the others.*

*God gave these four young men an unusual aptitude for understanding every aspect of literature and wisdom. And God gave Daniel the special ability to interpret the meanings of visions and dreams.*

*When the training period ordered by the king was completed, the chief of staff brought all the young men to King Nebuchadnezzar. The king talked with them, and no one impressed him as much as Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. So, they entered the royal service. Whenever the king consulted them in any matter requiring wisdom and balanced judgment, he found them ten times more capable than any of the magicians and enchanters in his entire kingdom.*

God was with Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and protected them.

Daniel showed his unshakable faith by asking for vegetables and water instead of accepting the food that God had told His people not to eat.

What was the result of Daniel's courage and faith?

*Allow for answers.*

What kind of an example was Daniel to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego?

*Allow for answers.*

It must have been really hard for Daniel to ask for special permission to go against the king's orders.

It must have been really hard for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to go along with Daniel's request when none of the other young men were asking for special provisions.

Everyone else who had been "chosen" was going along with the king's food requirements, even though it was against God's instructions.

There will be times when you are faced with difficult decisions that make you choose between following God and His expectations and following someone else and his/her expectations.

You may have already had to face something like that.

Let's answer those questions I asked at the beginning of our time together.

How do you become the kind of person who chooses to follow God even if it could mean being killed, obeys God even if it will make other people mad, and is willing to risk being eaten by a lion rather than not praying to God?

You start by putting your faith in God at a young age... this age... and trust Him to provide ways for you to obey Him no matter what anyone else is doing or expecting.

This is a great time for us to split into our small groups, talk through the things we learned today, and learn how we can have unshakable faith like Daniel.

*Close in prayer and dismiss to small groups (or Zoom breakout rooms).*

### **SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY: WILL YOU BEND?**

**Say:** We are going to play a quick game.

The object of the game is for us to realize the importance of standing strong even when we are tempted to bend.

I want everyone to stand up.

Shake your wiggles out from sitting so long, then stand up strong and tall like a soldier.

I am going to read you a list of things many people are tempted with.

If you have ever been tempted with or given in to any of these things, I want you to bend one of your joints (fingers, wrist, elbow, knees, neck).

If you have ever been tempted to:

- Eat something even when your parent told you not to, bend a joint.
- Steal a piece of candy from a store, bend a joint.
- Say a curse word to look cool or impress your friends, bend a joint.
- Watch something you knew you weren't supposed to watch, bend a joint.
- Say something to one of your parents that was disrespectful or in a disrespectful tone, bend a joint.
- Tell a lie so you wouldn't get in trouble for something you did, bend a joint.

If you are still standing tall, you are superhuman.

Most of us have bent at least one joint, so everyone can sit down again.

**Romans 3:23** says, *“For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard.”*

We all are tempted to sin and bend in ways God doesn't want us to.

We can be like Daniel and his friends and take a stand for God by obeying Him.

We can only do this because God gives us the strength to have unshakable faith even when things are hard, and we are tempted to do the wrong things.

### **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What is something that stood out to you from this lesson?
2. What is something you learned that was new today or something you were reminded of about Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego?
3. What is a describing word from our game earlier that you would like to be said about you?
4. Why is it hard to stand strong and be unshakable when you are around people who are bending and easily shaken?
5. What is something you would like God to help you stand strong in this week?
6. If you were in this story, would you be more like Daniel who was the leader who spoke up and asked for the special provisions, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who followed Daniel's lead and obeyed God, or like the other young men who went along with King Nebuchadnezzar's commands?
7. Why is it easier to bend and go along with others who are doing the wrong thing than to stand and do what is right even when others are doing the wrong thing?
8. Who is someone you respect for taking a stand to follow God? What can you do to be like that person?
9. What does it look like to be resilient and unshakable in your life right now?
10. How can we pray for you today?

That's all we have for today, but I'll see you next week as we continue our study on Daniel's unshakable faith.

Let's look at our prayer point and close in prayer.

**PRAYER POINT:** Choose to follow God.

Let's pray for each other and thank God for giving us the strength to follow Him no matter what.

*Close in prayer.*