LESSON 5

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
AUGUST 01, 2020

obedience is a good word!

Scripture Story: Daniel 1.
Commentary: Prophets and Kings (or Royalty and Ruin), chapter 39.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Daniel and his friends were taken into captivity. It is plain that they were from some form of royal Israelite line. They were taken for the express reason of becoming the ruling class in Babylon, and to help integrate Israelites into Babylonian society. To integrate into another culture, three things help to make this process more complete: (1) an ability to communicate in their language, (2) an understanding of their literature and thinking, and (3) an appreciation for their food—since food is such an integral part of social life in any culture. Daniel 1 reveals that King Nebuchadnezzar knew this (see Daniel 1:3-5). As such the king treated the young men with respect and gave them positions of favor within the kingdom. In fact, the king even gave them food from his own table! But herein lay the trouble. The Babylonian society put a high value on idol worship. Even the names given to the young men had a history of idolatry. Whether the boys knew this or not is not known. However, they were committed to honor God with their lives.

It is a story that is well-known. For 10 days they did not partake of the food given to idols; rather they just ate vegetables and water. After 10 days they were tested, and the text tells us that they did “ten times better” than their Babylonian counterparts.

This lesson points us in the direction of obedience. However, it is not an obedience that is born out of fear of rejection. Rather, it is an obedience that comes from a knowledge of who God is, and the fact that He loves us enough to save us. This is an important fact in teaching this lesson. It is an important fact in life. We obey not to gain favor, but because we respond to the grace given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand the difference between obeying in order to gain acceptance and obeying because they are accepted. (Know)
- Sense that God loves them deeply and wishes to bless them. (Feel)
- Integrate the knowledge of the love of God into their responses to Him. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Obedience
- Grace
- Healthy lifestyle

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Ask the students which question they marked as the best answer. This exercise was simple in that the correct answer was very clear. They all should have chosen it.

Now lead them in this exercise: Ask them if they would rather climb a mountain with someone they knew or with someone they didn’t. Ask them if they

www.cornerstoneconnections.net
that which we will obey. Daniel and his friends knew this, and they knew beyond a shadow of a doubt who God was.

**Out of the Story for Teachers**

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

- Read the story and have the students play the different parts with different voices. It will help make the story come alive.
- Have the students underline where Daniel and his friends took risks and leaps of faith.

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Romans 5:19; Romans 16:19; 2 John 1:6.

**Sharing Context and Background**

It is hard to trust sometimes—especially when you are not sure about the object of that trust. In this story, the young men were sure about who God was and is. It is much easier to trust when you are sure that the object of that trust is trustworthy.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

**Bridge to the Story**

Share the following in your own words:

It is hard to trust sometimes—especially when you are not sure about the object of that trust. In this story, the young men were sure about who God was and is. It is that much easier to trust when you are sure that the object of that trust is trustworthy.

Obedience comes down to a question of trust in
because they knew Him personally and had experienced His faithfulness and love. They found God to be trustworthy again and again. Their responses to Him were coming from a strong understanding that their God loved and accepted them completely.

III. CLOSING

Activity
Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Have the students think of five people whom they trust completely. Ask them if they would do what any of those five people asked of them. Then ask them why they would obey. Remind them that the quality of a relationship is often what allows us to obey the requests of others. It is possible, however, that those whom we have trusted sometimes betray us. Yet God will never betray our friendship. We can always come to Him with our joys and our sorrows, with our thanks and with our needs, knowing that we can trust Him who has our best interest at heart (see Isaiah 49:15). Pray with them that they might live their lives in response to a God who loves them completely.

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:
These young men were put to the test and passed. However, they did not enter into risk because they were seeking to be loved by God. Rather they responded to the love that was already displayed by God. Their response became their acts of worship. They were able to respond so boldly because they knew who God was and what He would do. They were not fearful of His response to them because He

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Sensory Teaching
Anytime that you can give your students the opportunity to use more than one of their senses to learn is a good thing. Some students learn visually, some by hearing, and some by doing. Any activity that you create to give them these sensory experiences will help them learn more quickly and allow that knowledge to lead to enduring understanding.

Even things as simple as standing up and sitting down have a profound effect on the student. When teaching a story that is well known, it is good to think of ways to help the story come alive for each of the students. The more diverse the activities, the more easily you will reach all learners, engaging them actively in learning, and will help them take away lessons from Sabbath School that they will later apply in their own lives. activities will help a student have a hook to hang their proverbial hat on when it comes to the story you are studying.
had already proven Himself worthy of their love. It is a really special relationship that we get to have with God. He loves us, we love Him, and He proves to us His love again and again.

The blessing bestowed upon the young Hebrew men was much more than they had in mind. Our attempts to serve God and our prayers for His intervention are often too humble. Yet the storehouse of His blessings is open for us if we would only ask (see Matthew 7:7), just as when He generously blessed the four Hebrew youth who remained faithful to Him.
Among the children of Israel who were carried captive to Babylon at the beginning of the seventy years’ captivity were Christian patriots, men who were as true as steel to principle, who would not be corrupted by selfishness, but who would honor God at the loss of all things. In the land of their captivity these men were to carry out God’s purpose by giving to heathen nations the blessings that come through a knowledge of Jehovah. They were to be His representatives. Never were they to compromise with idolaters; their faith and their name as worshipers of the living God they were to bear as a high honor. And this they did. In prosperity and adversity they honored God, and God honored them” (Prophets and Kings, p. 479).

“In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.”

(Daniel 1:20, NIV)
**what do you think?**

What do you think it means to be “obedient” to what God wants for your life? Put an X by the answer you think it is:
- ___ It means that I follow a bunch of rules and regulations to avoid punishment.
- ___ It means that I follow rules and regulations to earn salvation.
- ___ It means that I live in harmony with the principles of God’s law of love in response to the grace and love that God has given us.

This may seem a bit obvious, but when our actions become responses to love as opposed to rules that might obtain us acceptance, the word “obedience” becomes less like a burden and more like a blessing.

---

**did you know?**

The names Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were given to Daniel’s friends.

It’s true! They even gave Daniel the name Belteshazzar. This was done by the Babylonians in an attempt to integrate these young men into Babylonian society. While they were prisoners, they were not slaves. They were taken from the royal Israelite families in order to help govern those lands conquered by the Babylonians. This was a common practice in antiquity. By the food they were given it is seen that they were treated even better than many Babylonians.

This means that their step in faith to refuse the king’s bounty was a very serious risk. Obviously, these were young men who were committed to their God and following what He had for them in their lives.

Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.

“But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way. Now God had caused the official to show favor and compassion to Daniel, but the official told Daniel, ‘I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you.’

Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, ‘Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see.’ So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.

“At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead. To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.

“At the end of the time set by the king to bring them into his service, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king’s service. In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole world.
punch lines

“For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous” (Romans 5:19, NIV).

“Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I rejoice because of you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil” (Romans 16:19, NIV).

“And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love” (2 John 6, NIV).

OUT OF THE STORY

Are you familiar with the names mentioned in this story?

What significance do they have later on in the Bible?

Do you think it is an accident that these young men were able to be obedient to God’s call?

Would you have done what they did in the same circumstance?

What does following God mean in your life?

Were you surprised at how well they were treated by their enemies?

Does this story have any implications for your lifestyle and the way you eat?

further insight

“Let none who profess godliness regard with indifference the health of the body, and flatter themselves that intemperance is no sin, and will not affect their spirituality. A close sympathy exists between the physical and the moral nature. Any habit which does not promote health degrades the higher and nobler faculties. Wrong habits of eating and drinking lead to errors in thought and action.”

—Ellen G. White, The Sanctified Life, p. 25
Sabbath
Read Daniel 1:3-8.

Complete the exercise in the What Do You Think? section of this week’s lesson. This week’s lesson focuses on four Hebrew young men who were willing to risk a great deal in order to obey what they believed God was calling them to do. It seems that they were not obeying in order to become accepted by anyone—for if they had, they would surely have eaten the food of the king in order to gain his acceptance. Rather, they were obeying God as a response to the love that He had already shown them! This must have changed everything for them. Rather than taking a risk to find out if God loved them, they took a risk because they knew God loved them. This, in all our lives, can be a vast source of strength!

What does obedience mean to you? Have you learned to obey? Explain.

Sunday
Read Romans 16:19.

Read this week’s story from Scripture and answer the questions given in the Out of the Story section. Put yourself into the circumstances of these young men. Would you have done the same thing? Is there a place in your life in which you find yourself having a hard time being obedient? Why do you think that is? Do you have the assurance that God loves you beyond a shadow of a doubt? Do you think that you must be obedient in order to gain favor? Or do you believe that you are loved and want to do exactly what that source of love wants for you?

These questions all are asking the same question really: “Do you know you are loved by God?” Answer this, and everything becomes easier!

Monday
Read Daniel 1:20.

God blesses us in much greater ways than we normally imagine. In our Key Text it is said that the king found them to be “ten times better” than the others from his own kingdom. Do you think that Daniel and his friends imagined that they would pass each test with such flying colors? They were obedient to God, to be sure. But what they found out was that God was willing to go beyond their wildest desires for success and prove His goodness to them in the outcome of their tests. How can we be wise stewards of the blessings that God is willing to bestow upon us?

Tuesday
Read 2 John 6.

Read this week’s Flashlight quote that describes the character of some captives who remained faithful to God regardless of the circumstances. Notice the sentence: “Among the children of Israel who were carried captive to Babylon at the beginning of the seventy years’ captivity were Christian patriots, men who were as true as steel to principle, who would not be corrupted by selfishness, but who would honor God at the loss of all things.”

The strength that these young men were able to muster came from a “knowledge of Jehovah.” They were not guessing that God might be faithful. No, they came into this trial knowing that God would honor His promises to them. How did they know?

They were constantly seeking Him and His ways. They knew who God was, they understood His character, they desired His will for their lives. It is hard to follow someone you are not sure you trust. However, it’s easy to follow your best friend. The four Hebrew young men had spent the time to understand and experience that God is faithful to His promises.

Wednesday
Read Romans 5:19.

Read the Punch Lines in this lesson. How important is obedience? In today’s Bible text it says that the world was saved by the obedience of one man (Jesus!). Even as the world was lost because of one man’s disobedience (Adam), it is plain to see that this concept of obedience makes a world of difference in all of our lives.

“How important is obedience to us?” This is a question that each one of us has to answer for ourselves in light of our relationship with God.

Thursday
Read Proverbs 3:5, 6.

Is it easy to trust God? That really is what obedience is, right? Isn’t it just the ability to believe that what God wants for your life is truly what is best for you? Sometimes it’s hard to trust, to believe, but the more we do it, the easier it becomes. So the question for you is: Do you trust God? How does your life reflect that trust?

Friday
Read John 14:15.

Obedience takes many shapes and forms. The reality is that God wants you to obey because it is what is best for you, and it truly shows our connection to Him. By being those who trust God we show the world that God is trustworthy. We obey not to gain the acceptance of God, but because we have been accepted. Do you really believe that God loves you? Do you believe that He accepts you?

this week’s reading*

Prophets and Kings (or Royalty and Ruin), chapter 39.

*Royalty and Ruin is a special adaptation of Prophets and Kings, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1f1BO9. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.