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Those of us who learned Bible stories growing up are familiar with two inspiring records of men who stood for the true God—the record of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace and the record of Daniel in the lion’s den. Who can forget Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego’s stirring response to the pagan king Nebuchadnezzar, who wanted them to bow down to a golden image he had set up (Daniel 3:13-15)? They boldly declared, “...our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver *us* out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up” (Daniel 3:17,18). Or what about Daniel? In spite of the threat of being thrown into the lion’s den if he asked a petition of any god or man except King Darius, Daniel went into his house with his windows open, knelt down, and prayed before his God as he always had (Daniel 6:1-10)!

How could they be so strong in the Lord? Where did their confidence come from? To answer these questions, let’s look at them when they were young men. We will see that their love for God and their stand on the Word, which they were taught early in life, made them strong in the Lord.

Daniel, chapter 1, gives us some background of their lives.

Daniel 1:1,3,4:

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it.

And the king [Nebuchadnezzar] spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king’s seed, and of the princes;

Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king’s palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.

Nebuchadnezzar, the pagan king of Babylon who had conquered Judah, ordered that certain of the youth be carried away from their homeland to Babylon. These children were taken away from their families—left without the guidance and protection of their parents. But it became obvious that their parents had taught them about the one true God.

Nebuchadnezzar had these youths from Judah trained in the Babylonian culture. His objective was that they would think and act like Babylonians. He even changed their names to Babylonian ones. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah became Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They had been raised to love and serve the Lord God and not to worship any other gods. Those godly beliefs would have been a part of the fabric of their being.

When these young people were carried away into Babylon, their whole life changed abruptly. Yet this did not cause them to abandon their core trust in God. They had been taught to love and to stand for Him, and that is what they did!

Part of their training in Babylonian culture was to eat a daily provision of the king's meat.

Daniel 1:8:

But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

Daniel did not want to eat or drink what the king offered because the meat was prepared contrary to Biblical dietary laws and also was offered to idols. So Daniel asked that he, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be allowed to eat “pulse,” a vegetable and grain diet, for ten days (Daniel 1:12-14). At the end of the ten days, their countenances were fairer and fatter than the countenances of those who were eating what the king had provided (Daniel 1:15). These youths remembered what they had been taught in Judah. They stood together on the will of God, and God honored their united commitment. The result was that they were given food that benefited them healthwise. But more importantly, it kept them in a position to do the will of God. They chose to make God's way their way.

Daniel 1:17-20:

As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in,

then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king.

And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.

From a young age, they were taught to love God and to stand for Him. They were young people who were strong in the Lord. This is why they were able to stand so boldly later in life in the face of opposition. Where did their confidence come from? It came from making God's way their way. Their love for God and their stand for Him endured as they grew into adulthood.

Like them, we can love God and stand for Him in every decision we make. At any age, we can make God's way our way. We can choose to do the Word no matter what circumstances surround us. Let's love God and His Word and stand for God every day of our lives.

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