TRACK FOUR

Bible Study & Small Group

A complete session for small groups, classes, and Bible studies, with leader preparation and notes. Plan on 45 to 60 minutes.

Leader Preparation

THE BIG IDEA

God is able to deliver His people. But even if He does not, He alone is worthy of our worship, and He does not abandon His people in the fire.

> *"If it happens, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up."*
>
> DANIEL 3:17-18, WEB

BACKGROUND

- **Setting.** Babylon during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562 BC). Jerusalem's leading young men had been taken into exile (Daniel 1:1-7).
- **The men.** Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are the Babylonian court names of Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (1:6-7). Nebuchadnezzar had appointed them over the affairs of the province of Babylon (2:49).
- **The image.** Sixty cubits high and six wide, roughly 90 by 9 feet (3:1). The text does not say whom it portrayed.
- **The issue.** God's law forbids bowing down to images to worship or serve them (Exodus 20:4-5).

SESSION PLAN

	45 MIN	60 MIN
Welcome and opener	5	8
Watch the film	10	10
Read Daniel 3:13-28	5	5
Discussion (choose 4-5)	17	25
Application and prayer	8	12

BEFORE YOU MEET

Read all of Daniel 3 twice, once straight through and once slowly. Watch the film. Read the leader notes on page 3 and decide which questions you'll prioritize if time is short.

The Session

1 **Open.** Tell us about a time you felt pressure to go along with the crowd. What made it hard to stand?

2 **Watch.** Play *The Fiery Furnace* (youtu.be/tZgN1kBJ1FU, about 9 minutes). Ask the group to notice what the three men said, and what they left unsaid.

3 **Read.** Read Daniel 3:13-28 aloud, changing readers at each paragraph.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What moment in the film stayed with you? Why?
2. The three men were exiles with new names in a foreign land. How is that like following Jesus in our culture today?
3. Read 3:16-18. They said God is able to deliver them, and that He would deliver them out of the king's hand. Then they said, "But if not..." How do you understand both statements together?
4. Why do you think "But if not..." has encouraged believers for so long? Where do you need that kind of faith right now?
5. The men answered the king respectfully, but they would not move. What does faithful, gracious courage look like for you?
6. The flames killed the soldiers who carried the men up, yet the three walked out without even the smell of fire on them (3:22, 27). What does this show about who holds real power?
7. The men were not kept *from* the fire; they were met *in* it (3:25). When life is hard, what helps you seek or remember God's presence, even when you don't feel it? Who has been that reminder for you?
8. Through three people's faithfulness, a king proclaimed their God to every people, nation, and language (3:28-29). How might your faithfulness speak to the people around you?

APPLICATION

- **Name it.** What is one "golden image" the people around you expect you to bow to: approval, money, comfort, success, a screen?
- **Say it.** Finish this sentence and share it if you can: *"God is able to _____. But even if He does not, I will _____."*
- **Do it.** Choose one quiet, concrete way to stand this week, at work, at school, or at home.

PRAYER

Thank God that He is able. Ask Him for courage to stay faithful whatever happens. Pray by name for anyone in the group who is walking through a fire right now.

Leader Notes on the Questions

Q3, "COULD" AND "WOULD." Their confidence rests on God's power and character, not on knowing the outcome in advance. Their faithfulness doesn't depend on being rescued. Compare Jesus in Gethsemane (Luke 22:42).

Q5, RESPECT AND RESISTANCE. They address the king as king (3:16-18), and they don't insult him or plan a revolt. Their refusal is narrow: they will serve in Babylon, but they will not worship its gods. This is a helpful model for believers who live under authorities they cannot always obey (compare Jeremiah 29:7 and Acts 5:29).

Q7, THE FOURTH FIGURE. Nebuchadnezzar says the fourth "is like a son of the gods" (3:25) and later says God "sent his angel" (3:28). Christians have understood the figure in more than one way: as an angel, or as an appearance of the Son of God before His incarnation. Both views affirm the main point. God was present with His servants in the fire. Don't let the group get stuck here (see the Deep Dive track).

IF SOMEONE ASKS, "DOES GOD ALWAYS RESCUE?" No, not always in this life, and the text is honest about that in "but if not." Hebrews 11 lists believers who "quenched the power of fire" (11:34) alongside others who suffered and died (11:35-38). God's presence and final deliverance are promised; escape from every trial is not.

PASTORAL CARE. Some in your group may be facing real loss or persecution. Let the passage comfort, not pressure. The point isn't "be brave enough," but "God is faithful enough."