

RI.C5. Tolerance and Conformity

Daniel 3:1-29 and Daniel 6:1-28

Learning Objectives

1. The children will recognize that we are to treat others with tolerance and accept all people as being loved by God.
2. The children explore possible limitations with regards to tolerance and conformity.

Memory Verse: *"...live together in peace. Be understanding. Love one another like members of the same family. Be kind and tender." --1 Peter 3:8 (NIRV)*

Getting Started

(Choose One Activity)

"Find out more about each other"

Place your children in groups of two (recruit a volunteer if needed). Ask them to talk to their partners to find out three things that they have in common or are similar. Then ask them to find three things that are different about each other.

"Revealing Colors"

See: www.teensundayschool.com → Activities → "Revealing Colors"

You will need a small bag of M&M's for this activity. Each color M&M will have a different meaning, according to the color key. Please see the above website for detailed instructions.

As you enjoy the treat, discuss how everyone had different answers. Ask the children if they have ever treated someone poorly that was different from them? Maybe they had a different opinion, or liked different clothes, or lived life a little differently, or even had different tastes in music. How do we treat others that are different? (Discuss together.)

No matter which intro you chose above, do the following:

Make a list:

Give each child a blank piece of paper. Have them fold the paper in half and then open it up again. Draw a line down the crease of the paper to form two (2) columns:

<u>Tolerant People</u>	<u>Intolerant People</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Have empathy and understanding for others- Are humble- Are charitable (give to others)- Know very well the difference between good and bad, and right and wrong.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Do not accept anything or anyone who is different from themselves.

Getting Started – Continued

Give the children a chance to write down their own characteristics for each column above first. Then talk about the points and let them correct or fill in their charts with more as the conversation continues.

Ask the children: **Where does someone learn to be “intolerant” from today? (TV, music lyrics, sees it at school, someone else has been intolerant towards us, etc. Discuss together.)**

Tell the children: *“Today we will examine tolerance more closely through the stories of the fiery furnace and the lion’s den, both of which are found in the book of Daniel.”*

Bible Lesson with Discussion Questions

Message: *Respect the differences of others.*

NOTE: Review the story briefly. The children should use their Bibles as needed for reminders.

REVIEW: Daniel 3 ~ Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego

¹ King Nebuchadnezzar made a statue that was covered with gold. It was 90 feet tall and 9 feet wide. He set it up on the flatlands of Dura near the city of Babylon. ² Then the king sent for the royal rulers, high officials and governors. He sent for the advisers, treasurers, judges and court officers. And he sent for all of the other officials of Babylon. He asked them to come to a special gathering to honor the statue he had set up.

³ So the royal rulers, high officials and governors came together. So did the advisers, treasurers, judges and court officers. All of the other officials joined them. They came to honor the statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. They stood in front of it.

⁴ Then a messenger called out loudly, "Listen, you people who come from every nation! Pay attention, you who speak other languages! Here is what the king commands you to do. ⁵ You will soon hear the sound of horns and flutes. You will hear zithers, lyres, harps and pipes. In fact, you will hear all kinds of music. When you do, you must fall down and worship the gold statue that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. ⁶ If you don't, you will be thrown into a blazing furnace right away."

⁷ All of the people heard the sound of the horns and flutes. They heard the zithers, lyres, harps and other musical instruments. As soon as they did, they fell down and worshiped Nebuchadnezzar's gold statue. They had come from every nation and language.

⁸ At that time some people who studied the heavens came forward. They spoke against the Jews. ⁹ They said, "King Nebuchadnezzar, may you live forever! ¹⁰ You commanded everyone to fall down and worship the gold statue. You told them to do it when they heard the horns, flutes, zithers, lyres, harps, pipes and other musical instruments. ¹¹ If they didn't, they would be thrown into a blazing furnace. ¹² But you have appointed some Jews to help Daniel govern Babylon and the towns around it. Their names are Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They don't pay any attention to you, King Nebuchadnezzar. They don't serve your gods. And they refuse to worship the gold statue you have set up."

¹³ Nebuchadnezzar burned with anger. He sent for Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So they were brought to him.

¹⁴ The king said to them, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, is what I heard about you true? Don't you serve my gods? Don't you worship the gold statue I set up? ¹⁵ You will hear the horns, flutes, zithers, lyres, harps, pipes and other musical instruments. When you do, fall down and worship the statue I made. If you will, that's very good. But if you won't, you will be thrown at once into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to save you from my powerful hand?"

Bible Lesson with Discussion Questions – Continued

¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king. They said, "King Nebuchadnezzar, we don't need to talk about this anymore.

Discussion Questions:

1. What were all the people commanded to do in this passage, and what was the punishment for refusing? (Worship the golden idol that King Nebuchadnezzar had constructed or be thrown into a blazing furnace)
2. What did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego do? (*They refused to bow down to his idol.*)
3. Did they conform to the rules of the King? (*No*) Why or Why not? (*Discuss.*)

¹⁷ We might be thrown into the blazing furnace. But the God we serve is able to bring us out of it alive. He will save us from your powerful hand.

¹⁸ "But we want you to know this. Even if we knew that our God wouldn't save us, we still wouldn't serve your gods. We wouldn't worship the gold statue you set up."

¹⁹ Then Nebuchadnezzar's anger burned against Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. The look on his face changed. And he ordered that the furnace be heated seven times hotter than usual. ²⁰ He also gave some of the strongest soldiers in his army a command. He ordered them to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Then he told his men to throw them into the blazing furnace. ²¹ So they were tied up. Then they were thrown into the furnace. They were wearing their robes, pants, turbans and other clothes.

²² The king's command was carried out quickly. The furnace was so hot that its flames killed the soldiers who threw Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego into it. ²³ So the three men were firmly tied up. And they fell into the blazing furnace.

²⁴ Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet. He was so amazed he asked his advisers, "Didn't we tie three men up? Didn't we throw three men into the fire?"

"Yes, we did," they replied.

²⁵ The king said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire. They aren't tied up. And the fire hasn't even harmed them. The fourth man looks like a son of the gods."

²⁶ Then the king approached the opening of the blazing furnace. He shouted, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, come out! You who serve the Most High God, come here!"

So they came out of the fire. ²⁷ The royal rulers, high officials, governors and advisers crowded around them. They saw that the fire hadn't harmed their bodies. Not one hair on their heads was burned. Their robes weren't burned either. And they didn't even smell like smoke.

²⁸ Then Nebuchadnezzar said, "May the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be praised! He has sent His angel and saved His servants. They trusted in Him. They refused to obey my command. They were willing to give up their lives. They would rather die than serve or worship any god except their own God.

²⁹ "No other god can save people that way. So I'm giving an order. No one from any nation or language can say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. ³⁰ Then the king honored Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. He gave them higher positions in the city of Babylon and the towns around it.

Bible Lesson with Discussion Questions – Continued

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the response of these men in verses 16-18? (*They didn't need to defend themselves, they weren't going to betray God.*)
2. In verse 19, what do we learn about the King's attitude toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? (*"It changed".*)
3. Out of rage, he ordered the furnace to be heated how many times hotter? (Seven times). The men were fastened tightly by the strongest soldiers and dropped into the furnace. The furnace was so hot, the soldiers died from the flames.
4. When the king looked, what did he see? (*Four men, walking around, not bound, and the fourth like "a son of the gods".*)
5. What did Nebuchadnezzar do next? (*Called them out of the furnace.*)
6. What were some observations about the men who came out of the furnace in verse 27? (*They were unburned, not a single hair was singed, their robes were not scorched, and they didn't even smell like smoke.*)

The response of the pagan Babylonians is praise. In verse 30, the King promotes the three men within his government. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to conform to the rules of the King because they had a strong faith and trust in God. The King however had no tolerance for the three men and their beliefs, and so he punished them by sending them into that burning furnace.

REVIEW: Daniel 6 ~ The Den of Lions

¹ It pleased Darius to appoint 120 royal rulers over his entire kingdom. ² He placed three leaders over them. One of the leaders was Daniel. The royal rulers were made accountable to the three leaders. Then the king wouldn't lose any of his wealth. ³ Daniel did a better job than the other two leaders or any of the royal rulers. He was an unusually good and able man. So the king planned to put him in charge of the whole kingdom.

⁴ But the other two leaders and the royal rulers heard about it. So they looked for a reason to bring charges against Daniel. They tried to find something wrong with the way he ran the government. But they weren't able to. They couldn't find any fault with his work. He could always be trusted. He never did anything wrong. And he always did what he was supposed to.

⁵ Finally those men said, "It's almost impossible for us to come up with a reason to bring charges against this man Daniel. If we do, it will have to be in connection with the law of his God."

⁶ So the two leaders and the royal rulers went as a group to the king. They said, "King Darius, may you live forever!" ⁷ All of the royal leaders, high officials, royal rulers, advisers and governors want to make a suggestion. We've agreed that you should give an order. And you should make sure it's obeyed. Here is the command you should give. King Darius, during the next 30 days don't let any of your people pray to any god or man except to you. If they do, throw them into the lions' den.

⁸ "Now give the order. Write it down in the laws of the Medes and Persians. Then it can't be changed." ⁹ So King Darius put the order in writing.

¹⁰ Daniel found out that the king had signed the order. In spite of that, he did just as he had always done before. He went home to his upstairs room. Its windows opened toward Jerusalem. He went to his room three times a day to pray. He got down on his knees and gave thanks to his God.

¹¹ Some of the other royal officials went to where Daniel was staying. They saw him praying and asking God for help. ¹² So they went to the king. They spoke to him about his royal order. They said, "King Darius, didn't you sign an official order? It said that for the next 30 days none of your people could pray to any god or man except to you. If they did, they would be thrown into the lions' den."

Bible Lesson with Discussion Questions – Continued

The king answered, "The order must still be obeyed. It's one of the laws of the Medes and Persians. So it can't be changed."

¹³ Then they spoke to the king again. They said, "Daniel is one of the prisoners from Judah. He doesn't pay any attention to you, King Darius. He doesn't obey the order you put in writing. He still prays to his God three times a day."

¹⁴ When the king heard that, he was very upset. He didn't want Daniel to be harmed in any way. Until sunset, he did everything he could to save him.

¹⁵ Then the men went as a group to the king. They said to him, "King Darius, remember that no order or law you make can be changed. That's what the laws of the Medes and Persians require."

¹⁶ So the king gave the order. Daniel was brought out and thrown into the lions' den. The king said to him, "You always serve your God faithfully. So may he save you!"

¹⁷ A stone was brought and placed over the opening of the den. The king sealed it with his own special ring. He also sealed it with the rings of his nobles. Then nothing could be done to help Daniel.

¹⁸ The king returned to his palace. He didn't eat anything that night. He didn't ask for anything to be brought to him for his enjoyment. And he couldn't sleep.

¹⁹ As soon as the sun began to rise, the king got up. He hurried to the lions' den. ²⁰ When he got near it, he called out to Daniel. His voice was filled with great concern. He said, "Daniel! You serve the living God. You always serve him faithfully. So has he been able to save you from the lions?"

²¹ Daniel answered, "My king, may you live forever! ²² My God sent his angel. And his angel shut the mouths of the lions. They haven't hurt me at all. That's because I haven't done anything wrong in God's sight. I've never done anything wrong to you either, my king."

²³ The king was filled with joy. He ordered his servants to lift Daniel out of the den. So they did. They didn't see any wounds on him. That's because he had trusted in his God.

²⁴ Then the king gave another order. The men who had said bad things about Daniel were brought in. They were thrown into the lions' den. So were their wives and children. Before they hit the bottom of the den, the lions attacked them. And the lions crushed all of their bones.

²⁵ Then King Darius wrote to the people from every nation and language in the whole world. He said, "May you have great success!

²⁶ "I order people in every part of my kingdom to respect and honor Daniel's God. He is the living God. He will live forever. His kingdom will not be destroyed. His rule will never end. ²⁷ He sets people free and saves them. He does miraculous signs and wonders. He does them in the heavens and on the earth. He has saved Daniel from the power of the lions."

²⁸ So Daniel had success while Darius was king. Things went well with him during the rule of Cyrus, the Persian.

Discussion Questions:

1. What decree does Darius issue, and what was the punishment for refusing to obey? (*That only he should be prayed to, or be thrown into a lion's den.*)
2. What does Daniel do in response? (*Prays to the One True God, not Darius*)
3. Darius didn't want to punish Daniel, but he realized he had been tricked. What happens to Daniel anyway? (*He is thrown in a lions den.*)

Again, this is a story you've likely heard. Perhaps you didn't realize that King Darius had been tricked.

4. Darius is troubled. How does he respond that night? (*Goes home and doesn't eat, could not sleep.*)
Then, at the first light of dawn the next day, Darius rushes to the lion's den to see if Daniel's god saved him.

Bible Lesson with Discussion Questions – Continued

5. What does Daniel say about his condition? (*“My God sent his angel...he shut the mouths of the lions, they have not hurt me”.*)
6. What is Darius’s response? (*He’s overjoyed and has the people who tricked him thrown in the lion’s den, and they died there.*)

The stories are incredible examples of God’s deliverance. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego remained faithful and, as a result, are saved by God, even though they were being judged by intolerant people and punished for being different.

Application to Real Life

Talk together about things we are required to conform to in our lives (for example: rules at school, follow the laws of the government, etc.). No matter what, we all have situations where we are required to “obey” or follow rule of some sort. Sometimes it can be difficult to know when to conform or “obey”, and when to stand firm in our beliefs.

We’ve all gotten lost, and we’ve all used a map. But you probably didn’t realize that life is sort of like that, too. Obeying is kind of like a map to be consulted in life. Life is a journey, and we need directions to follow so we don’t feel lost.

Questions to Discuss Together:

1. There are lots of people and situations that will call for your obedience, and be sure about one thing - you’re always obeying SOMEONE. Why is it better to obey God rather than anyone else?
2. What are some things that we might face today that we do NOT want to conform to in our lives? Name some. (Make a list. For example: alcohol, drugs, stealing, hurting others physically, rude or inappropriate language, etc.)
3. How can obeying other influences, whether they are friends at school, stuff online, rumors and gossip, etc. bring you down?
4. How can obeying other voices in your life lead you to being lost?

If you find yourself getting lost in life, try obedience. But the only way you can obey is by knowing the map. In the life of a Christian, the Bible is a guiding force. In the Bible we can find the Ten Commandments God gave us, along with the 2 that Jesus said were the greatest of them. (Encourage the children to pull out their pinwheel folders or have them posted already on the wall in your class so they can read and compare.) A good rule of thumb when you don’t know what to do is, take a look at the commandments. If what you are thinking of doing, or following, or obeying breaks one of the commandments, then you shouldn’t go along with what others want. Stand your ground. Stand firm in your beliefs.

Remind the children that we want to treat people who are different from us with tolerance, and see that they too are loved by God. Whether their appearance or opinions or religion is different, we want to have tolerance. We expect others to respect our religious beliefs and our faith, and how we choose to practice our faith, and therefore we must do the same to them. We must respect the views of other people. We need to respect the differences of others. (Message Statement)

Memory Work Suggestions

5 minutes

1. Recite the memory verse.
2. Practice finding the memory verse and/or Bible text in their Bible!
3. What Holy Sacrament is most related to today's lesson? Why?
4. What is forgiveness? How does it relate to celebrating Holy Communion? Discuss.
5. Play a game to review an article of faith (toss the bean bag/stuffed animal, the person who catches it says the next word...try to go faster and faster).
6. Allow a volunteer (child) to lead the class in an opening/closing prayer.

Activity Ideas

"EGG" Discussion

See: www.daniellesplace.com → search the resource room for "Martin Luther" → locate the file "wordsmartinpre.cfm" → see "crafts and activities - #4"

You will need to bring in a brown egg and a white egg to class, along with a bowl and some paper towels. You will use the eggs to discuss people are different. Please see the above website for a guide to the discussion.

Remind the children that this is just like people, we look different and we may even think differently, but we all experience the same feeling of love, hate, jealousy, and fear. Jesus doesn't care how we might appear on the outside; He only cares how we are on the inside. We should never judge people because they are different than us, even if they have a different religion than we do.

Journal Reflection Questions

- Which of God's laws do you think are pretty easy to follow? Which are hard? Write about it.
- What can you do if you find yourself in a situation in which you are being pressured to do something you know is not right? Who can you turn to? Write about it.

Homework Ideas

- Read the lesson titled: **Community and Fellowship** as well as 1 Corinthians 12:12-27.
- Learn the memory verse: "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."
--1 Corinthians 12:27 (NIRV)
- Work on memorizing Article of Faith #_____.
- What is a community? Write about it or illustrate what you think it is. Bring it to class to share.