

Aim of lesson

To learn from Daniel, who, though away from home and the religious environment of his own land, chose to keep God's standards.

Bible background

Daniel 1; Colossians 3:1-17.

Outline of lesson

Taken to Babylon

Turn with the class to the time chart at the beginning of the workbook and read together Daniel 1:1-7. They should be able to label the figure of Daniel on the chart from the date given at the beginning of the book – the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim. Ask the class to note how long Daniel is prophesying. At the end of his life he sees the downfall of the Babylonians and the return of some of the Jews with Zerubbabel.

How did Daniel feel?

The class could use the workbook to write some ideas of how Daniel might have felt on being taken captive from his own country and brought into Babylon. Daniel had been part of the royal family, or the family of one of the nobles in Judah, but now he was given a new name and was to be taught the language and literature of the Babylonians. He was now away from the Temple in Jerusalem and the worship of God. It would be easy for him to decide that to get on in life he should do as the Babylonians did and forget his previous life.

Daniel's stand

Daniel did not forget his laws. There was very little he could do to show his allegiance to God, but when the issue came up of eating what was forbidden, he and his friends stood firm. The food was possibly offered to the Babylonian gods before being eaten. Daniel 1:8-21 could be read and discussed here. Ask the class to note that Daniel does not complain, protest, shout or insult his captors. He is polite and requests permission. He understands the difficulty of the guard.

Our stand

The next part of the workbook is to encourage the class to think of the dangers that face them when they are away from home or Sunday School. When they are with friends at school or on holiday, or if they go away to study at college or to stay at a friend's house, do they face similar temptations to those of Daniel and his friends? Are they faced with the temptation to abandon God's standards and do what seems to be the norm around them?

Colossians 3:1-17 provides a useful background to a discussion of what standards the class should keep and which they should reject. The things which should be taken and declared e.g. 'compassion, kindness' in v12 etc. can be written on the items in the suitcase. The things which should not be taken on board e.g. 'sexual immorality', v5 and 'anger', v8 can be written on the notice board on the right. Use this opportunity to discuss what is meant by the words in this chapter in Colossians.

Digging deeper

Where were Daniel and Ezekiel?

This section looks at the history and geography of Daniel's exile and that of Ezekiel. It also suggests looking at the occasion of the fiery furnace.

Relevance to our lives

The class could consider during the week, and discuss with you at the beginning of the next lesson, which situations they consider the most difficult for holding clearly to God's standards.

Prayer

'Lord, help me to choose to go to the right places to keep your standards.'

What do the class think Daniel might have prayed before approaching the guard?

Other suggestions for activities

- The class could write a Babylonian news report about the success of their armies and the arrival of captives from Judah. This could be in the form of a newspaper report or a television news broadcast.
- The class could plan an imaginary telephone link up between Daniel in the court of Babylon, Ezekiel with the other exiles elsewhere in Babylonia, and Jeremiah still in Jerusalem. A class of six or more could split into groups to prepare the conversation.