



THE FIERY FURNACE

“Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up (Daniel 3:17-18).

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon wanted to compel everyone to worship a golden image that he had set up, but Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego refused. Their punishment was being thrown into the fiery furnace, but the Lord protected them so that they were not hurt by the flames. Nebuchadnezzar represents being proud of our own intelligence rather than looking to the Lord, and Babylon symbolizes a love of dominion—wanting everyone to do our will. The three men picture those who look to the Lord alone, obeying the first commandment to have no other gods before Him. Through this powerful story we can see how the Lord helps those who love Him and who refuse to idolize wealth, power over others, and other false gods that we may be tempted to serve.

READ: “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego” by the Rt. Rev. Alfred Acton

Imagine a king thinking that he was the Lord, and expecting people to worship him! These three men would not do what the king wanted. They believed that if they kept doing what was right the Lord would be with them and protect them.

FAMILY WORSHIP: The Fiery Furnace

Read the story from Daniel 3.

Ideas for discussion:

- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego had been taken to Babylon when the kingdom of Judah was conquered. King Nebuchadnezzar wanted Daniel and these three men to help him run his kingdom.
- What did Nebuchadnezzar want everyone to worship? (a golden image or statue)
- Why did the three men refuse? (They wanted to worship and serve the Lord alone.)
- The Heavenly Doctrine teaches us that whatever we love above all else is our god. Those who love themselves or the world more than anyone or anything else, make these their gods. They do not worship the Lord God Jesus Christ.
- While we may not make golden images to worship, it is all too easy to let other things interfere with serving the Lord our God. Examples include times when we blindly follow what others tell us to do or focus our attention on things that distract us from following the Lord. (For further discussion of false gods, see later sections of this overview.)

PROJECT: Fiery Furnace Diorama (ages 6-8)

Use an oatmeal box and clay figures to make a diorama of the fiery furnace.

PROJECT: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego (ages 3-6)

When this project from *Level 1 of the Family Lesson* on the Fiery Furnace is completed, you will be able to open the doors of the furnace to see the three men inside. Then hold the picture up to the light to see the fourth man—the angel sent from the Lord.

SING: The Fiery Furnace by Lori Odhner

PROJECT: Four Men: Finger Puppets and Stage (ages 6-9)

Level 2 of the Family Lesson provides pattern pieces to make four finger puppets and instructions for turning a shoebox into a stage with flames. Then act out the story while someone reads it aloud.

PROJECT: What the King Saw (ages 9-12)

Level 3 of the Family Lesson offers another way to illustrate the miracle of the fiery furnace. Tape the shapes of four men to the back of a piece of paper. As you draw the flames with orange and red crayons, you will reveal the four men in the fiery furnace.

RELIGION PROJECT: The Fiery Furnace

Use crayons or oil pastels to make a picture of the four men in the furnace, then use fire-colored watercolor paint to make the flames around them. By using white crayon for the angel, the fourth “man” will not be seen until the child has added the flames.

COLORING PAGE: The Fiery Furnace by Robert Glenn

TRUE WORSHIP

*Worship does not consist in prayers and external devotion, but in a life of charity.
The essential of worship is the life of charity (see *Apocalypse Explained* 325:3).*

Going to church, praying to the Lord, and reading or hearing His Word are important. But unless we also serve our neighbors, community, and country with a loving heart, we are not truly worshipping the Lord. For we worship the Lord with heart and mind when we obey His commandments by living a life of charity to the neighbor.

READ: “The Activity of Love” by the Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith

Deep within us we have an urging, a dictate, which says that there is a God and that we have an ongoing relationship with Him. The affections we feel for the Lord, for His good and truth, for His providence, are in themselves worship! Worship is the activity of love.

READ: “Living, Joyous Worship” by the Rev. Morley D. Rich

What is this genuine, living and joyous worship? How does a person attain and acquire it? How can we aspire to the loving worship that gives life its true significance?

ACTIVITY: The Two Great Commandments with Hand Motions (for ages 3-8)

Teach little ones hand motions to use while reciting the two great commandments.

PROJECT: Banner or Firebrand?

When a person worships the Lord without charity in his heart, the angels see him as an actor with a firebrand in his hand. But when a person worships the Lord with charity in his heart, he appears to be a standard bearer carrying a banner (see *Doctrine of Charity* 177). Can you dramatize this idea? First make a “firebrand” and a beautiful banner as props.

SING: Worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness

FREEDOM OF WORSHIP

Worship offered in freedom is pleasing to the Lord, but not worship offered under compulsion. Worship offered in freedom is worship coming from the heart; for all freedom goes together with love (*Arcana Coelestia* 9588).

In the story of the fiery furnace, Nebuchadnezzar tried to force Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego to worship a golden statue instead of the Lord. The Heavenly Doctrine teaches that worship offered in freedom is pleasing to the Lord, but not worship offered under compulsion.

For Reflection and Discussion

With children of all ages an atmosphere of compulsion can bring negativity to the worship experience. This can often be avoided if adults plan well and take delight in going to church or setting up family worship. Still, it can take time to settle into any good habit and worship is no different in this regard. Perseverance through initially resistant attitudes may be necessary with oneself and one’s children. As children develop more rationality they can see more clearly what the Lord teaches for themselves and be encouraged to take responsibility for worshipping the Lord. Healthy spiritual habits started in childhood, can be life-long aids in helping all of us communicate with our Heavenly Father.

Here are some teachings from the Word which relate to this topic:

- People should participate in external worship because it can prepare us to receive spiritual gifts from the Lord (see *Arcana Coelestia* 1618).
- Worship offered in freedom is worship coming from the heart (*Arcana Coelestia* 9588).
- When a person obeys the Lord consistently, it forms a habit that contains both affection and freedom (*Arcana Coelestia* 4884:2).
- While a person is being regenerated, he exercises self-compulsion, from the freedom with which he is gifted by the Lord. In compelling oneself there is freedom (*Arcana Coelestia* 1947:1, 2).
- Worship of the Lord is from free choice but not compulsion (see *Heaven and Hell* 603).

COLORING PAGE: Family Praying

READ: “Why Do We Have Worship Services?” by the Rev. Ormond Odhner

If true worship is internal, why do we need worship services? Does external worship matter?

READ: “Worshipping in Spirit and Truth” by the Rev. Fred Chapin

Being a true worshiper of the Lord goes far beyond the formalities of ritual. What does it mean to worship the Lord “in spirit and in truth”?

WORSHIPING ONE GOD

The idea of God is the primary of all ideas. For this idea determines a person's communication with heaven, his conjunction with the Lord, his enlightenment, his affection of truth and good, his perception, intelligence, and wisdom. These are not from a person but from the Lord according to conjunction with Him. The idea of God is the idea of the Lord and His Divine (*Apocalypse Explained* 957:3).

As we read the Word, talk to the Lord in prayer, and worship Him, we are developing a personal relationship with Him. We learn to focus on His goals and gain a better perspective on our lives.

READ: "Worshipping the One True God" by the Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith

The very first commandment declares that there is but one God, and this is the key concept upon which all the rest of the commandments hang. Without a definition of God, everything else falls apart, for how we conceive of God affects us eternally.

PROJECT: A Family Looking to the Lord

READ: "Worshipping the Lord Alone" from a family talk by the Rt. Rev. George de Charms

Think of the Lord as the One who loves us, who made the world for us to live in, and who gives us wonderful things every day to make us happy. Keep that living picture of Him in your mind as you pray, to thank Him for all that He has done.

SPIRITUAL TASK: The First Commandment

PROJECT: "This is our God..."

Draw a picture of the Lord within this beautiful border.

YOU SHALL HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME

The first commandment of the Decalogue, "You shall not worship other gods besides Me," means that nothing else nor anyone else is to be worshiped as Divine (*Apocalypse Explained* 1025:2, 3).

If we can turn away from the false gods of our selfish desires, we will be able to worship the Lord more fully in our lives—with all our heart, all our soul, and all our minds (Mark 12:30).

READ: "No Other Gods" adapted from a sermon by Rev. Kurt Horigan Asplundh

An explanation of the inner meaning of the first commandment and its importance to all of us.

SPIRITUAL TASK: Identify and Name False Gods by Rev. Ray and Star Silverman

For more on identifying false gods and improving your relationship with the Lord, see the first chapter on "One True God" in the Silvermans' book *Rise Above It!*

PROJECT: False Gods (for teens and up)

COLORING PAGE: The Worship of Idols by Donald Moorhead