LESSON 5

CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
AUGUST03 2024

**Scripture Story:** Daniel 1.
**Commentary:** *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty and Ruin*), chapter 39.

# "obedience" is a good word!



Photo by Jacqui Janetzko

## flashlight

"Among the children of Israel who were carried captive to Babylon at the beginning of the seventy years' captivity were Christian patriots, men who were as true as steel to principle, who would not be corrupted by selfishness, but who would honor God at the loss of all things. In the land of their captivity these men were to carry out God's purpose by giving to heathen nations the blessings that come through a knowledge of Jehovah. They were to be His representatives. Never were they to compromise with idolaters; their faith and their name as worshipers of the living God they were to bear as a high honor. And this they did. In prosperity and adversity they honored God, and God honored them" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 479).

## keytext

"In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom."

**(Daniel 1:20, NIV)**

# what do you think?

**What do you think it means to be "obedient" to what God** wants for your life? Put an X by the answer you think it is:

_____ It means that I follow a bunch or rules and regulations to avoid punishment.

_____ It means that I follow rules and regulations to earn salvation.

_____ It means that I live in harmony with the principles of God's law of love in response to the grace and love that God has given us.

This may seem a bit obvious, but when our actions become responses to love as opposed to rules that might obtain us acceptance, the word "obedience" becomes less like a burden and more like a blessing.

# did you know?

**The names Shadrach,** Meshach, and Abednego were given to Daniel's friends. It's true! They even gave Daniel the name Belteshazzar. This was done by the Babylonians in an attempt to integrate these young men into Babylonian society. While they were prisoners, they were not slaves. They were taken from the royal Israelite families in order to help govern those lands conquered by the Babylonians. This was a common practice in antiquity. By the food they were given it is seen that they were treated even better than many Babylonians. This means that their step in faith to refuse the king's bounty was a very serious risk. Obviously, these were young men who were committed to their God and following what He had for them in their lives.

# INTO THE STORY

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

"Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring into the king's service some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility—young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians. The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service.

"Among those who were chosen were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.

"But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way. Now God had caused the official to show favor and compassion to Daniel, but the official told Daniel, 'I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you.'

"Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, 'Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see.' So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.

"At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.

"To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.

"At the end of the time set by the king to bring them into his service, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. In every matter of wisdom and understanding about

which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.

"And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus."

**(Daniel 1:1, 3-21, NIV)**

# OUT OF THE STORY

Are you familiar with the names mentioned in this story?

_____

_____

What significance do they have later on in the Bible?

_____

_____

Do you think it is an accident that these young men were able to be obedient to God's call?

_____

_____

Would you have done what they did in the same circumstance?

_____

_____

What does following God mean in your life?

_____

_____

Were you surprised at how well they were treated by their enemies?

_____

_____

Does this story have any implications for your lifestyle and the way you eat?

_____

_____

_____

# punch lines

**"For just as through** the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the **obedience** of the one man the many will be made righteous" **(Romans 5:19, NIV).**

**"Everyone has heard** about your **obedience,** so I rejoice because of you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil" **(Romans 16:19, NIV).**

**"And this is love:** that we walk in **obedience** to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love" **(2 John 6, NIV).**

# further insight

**"Let none who profess godliness regard with indifference the health of the body, and flatter themselves that intemperance is no sin, and will not affect their spirituality. A close sympathy exists between the physical and the moral nature. Any habit which does not promote health degrades the higher and nobler faculties. Wrong habits of eating and drinking lead to errors in thought and action."**

—Ellen G. White, *The Sanctified Life*, p. 25

## Sabbath

**Read Daniel 1:3-8.**

Complete the exercise in the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson. This week's lesson focuses on four Hebrew young men who were willing to risk a great deal in order to obey what they believed God was calling them to do. It seems that they were not obeying in order to become accepted by anyone—for if they had, they would surely have eaten the food of the king in order to gain his acceptance. Rather, they were obeying God as a response to the love that He had already shown them! This must have changed everything for them. Rather than taking a risk to find out if God loved them, they took a risk because they knew God loved them. This, in all our lives, can be a vast source of strength!

What does obedience mean to you? Have you learned to obey? Explain.

## Sunday

**Read Romans 16:19.**

Read this week's story from Scripture and answer the questions given in the *Out of the Story* section. Put yourself into the circumstances of these young men. Would you have done the same thing? Is there a place in your life in which you find yourself having a hard time being obedient? Why do you think that is? Do you have the assurance that God loves you beyond a shadow of a doubt? Do you think that you must be obedient in order to gain favor? Or do you believe that you are loved and want to do exactly what that source of love wants for you?

These questions all are asking the same question really: "Do you *know* you are loved by God?" Answer this, and everything becomes easier!

## Monday

**Read Daniel 1:20.**

God blesses us in much greater ways than we normally imagine. In our *Key Text* it is said that the king found them to be "ten times better" than the others from his own kingdom. Do you think that Daniel and his friends imagined that they would pass each test with such flying colors? They were obedient to God, to be sure. But what they found out was that God was willing to go beyond their wildest desires for success and prove His goodness to them in the outcome of their tests. How can we be wise stewards of the blessings that God is willing to bestow upon us?

## Tuesday

**Read 2 John 6.**

Read this week's *Flashlight* quote that describes the character of some captives who remained faithful to God regardless of the circumstances. Notice the sentence: "Among the children of Israel who were carried captive to Babylon at the beginning of the seventy years' captivity were Christian patriots, men who were as true as steel to principle, who would not be corrupted by selfishness, but who would honor God at the loss of all things."

The strength that these young men were able to muster came from a "knowledge of Jehovah." They were not guessing that God might be faithful. No, they came into this trial *knowing* that God would honor His promises to them. How did they know?

They were constantly seeking Him and His ways. They knew who God was, they understood His character, they desired His will for their lives. It is hard to follow someone you are not sure you trust. However, it's easy to follow your best friend. The four Hebrew young men had spent the time to understand and experience that God is faithful to His promises.

## Wednesday

**Read Romans 5:19.**

Read the *Punch Lines* in this lesson. How important is obedience? In today's Bible text it says that the world was saved by the obedience of *one man* (Jesus!). Even as the world was lost because of one man's disobedience (Adam). It is plain to see that this concept of obedience makes a world of difference in all of our lives.

"How important is obedience to us?" This is a question that each one of us has to answer for ourselves in light of our relationship with God.

## Thursday

**Read Proverbs 3:5, 6.**

Is it easy to trust God? That really is what obedience is, right? Isn't it just the ability to believe that what God wants for your life is truly what is best for you? Sometimes it's hard to trust, to believe, but the more we do it, the easier it becomes. So the question for you is: Do you trust God? How does your life reflect that trust?

## Friday

**Read John 14:15.**

Obedience takes many shapes and forms. The reality is that God wants you to obey because it is what is best for you, and it truly shows our connection to Him. By being those who trust God we show the world that God is trustworthy. We obey not to gain the acceptance of God, but because we have been accepted. Do you really believe that God loves you? Do you believe that He accepts you?

## this week's reading*

*Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty and Ruin*), chapter 39.

**Royalty and Ruin* is a special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.