



WEEK TWO: FIERY FURNACE

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In captivity, Daniel and his friends constantly ran up against values and culture that were opposed to God's law. Their "rebel-bedient" responses should teach us how to follow Jesus in this day and age. Do we want to impress or influence? Who are we living for and how are we making that plain?

Where Am I Today?

- 1) We are usually a blend of compliance and defiance, as in rebelling against a parent—while meekly following the popular kids at school. Or, we might enable one co-worker—and simultaneously consider another both lazy and irresponsible. You may be principled, steadfast and thoughtful. But can you see areas of your life where you are a people-pleaser? Are you an enabler or rescuer? Do you try to avoid conflict by acting as the family (or office, or class) clown? Share one example (though with not too many details) of a tough relationship in your life.

Into the Bible

- 2) **Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.** How does it seemingly contradict **Proverbs 29:25** and the admonitions we just heard to please God, not man?



3) There may be some harassment of Christians in the media, in the workplace or at school. But for the most part, "persecution" for the American believer comes as ridicule. *"Do you really believe that?"* What are your responses when confronted, when people disagree with you, or when they publically ridicule you? Look for and discuss the responses in the following passages.

- a) Genesis 20:1-11
- b) Mark 14:66-72
- c) John 18:19-24
- d) Acts 4:1-22

4) If you are living for an audience of One, God will be made famous through your trial. He was visible to all—standing in the furnace with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Even the unbelievers saw Him. He is also made famous through your daily life choices. Your "fiery furnace" may be public opinion, popularity or peer pressure. It may be a personal temptation or hardship. Check out the following scriptures. What can we learn about reacting to trials? Give one personal example of when others saw Jesus because of His work in your darkest times or through your faithful stand.

- a) 1 Thessalonians 3:2-4
- b) Philippians 2:12-15
- c) Matthew 5:14-16
- d) 2 Peter 3:13-14



How Does This Apply?

- 5) If you are living a life of rebel-bedience, people will notice. You will stand out—and not always in a pleasant, popularity-winning way. But we know that Jesus was mocked and ridiculed. In fact, in Matthew 10:24-25, Jesus assures believers that if the Master is mocked and misunderstood, it's obvious that the students will be also. So we must choose to live for Him or for others. We must choose to impress or influence. Are you such a standout that people are insulting or ridiculing you? If Jesus was scorned, why would you expect to avoid it? How can you be prepared and resolved in the midst of it?

Digging Deeper: Going Further on Your Own

- 6) King David wrote in the Psalms of God as “my Rock,” “my Shield,” “my Fortress,” and “my Refuge.” Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego make an incredible statement in Daniel 3:16. “We do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter.” What do the following passages tell about giving a defense?
 - a) Psalm 35:22-24
 - b) 2 Chronicles 20:1-30
 - c) 1 John 2:1-2
 - d) Daniel 3:16-18

On the other hand, Paul repeatedly made a defense (Acts 22:1, 24:10, 25:8, 26:1-2). Peter also encourages believers to be ready to give an answer and a logical defense (1 Peter 3:14-15). What do you think about this tension?