

**LEADERTREKS** **SERMON SERIES****MARK OF A DISCIPLE**

Disciples of Christ obey God and trust in his power to save.

**SCRIPTURE**

DANIEL 3:8–30

**SERMON OVERVIEW**

It's easy to follow the crowd in wrongdoing, and it's almost natural for people to worship anything or anyone else other than God. Students will study a biblical example of three men choosing to worship and follow only God even though their lives were at stake. They'll reflect on how we always have a choice to obey and worship God alone—and when we do, we can trust God in his choice to save his children, whether it's physical salvation or not.

**OPENING****WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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**ICE BREAKER QUESTION**

- Share about a time you needed rescuing.

**MESSAGE**

*Use the following teaching points and suggested illustrations as a starting point to build your message.*

**READ DANIEL 3:8–30****POINT 1: Our lives are full of potential idols**

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego knew what God commanded of his people: not to make or bow down to any idols. Physically bowing down to statues seems odd to us, but there are other kinds of idols we symbolically bow down to. Maybe your idol is your appearance (clothes, social media presence, being popular, etc.), getting good grades no matter what, or being the best at your sport or instrument. It's common to prioritize family, food, or money over God. The point is that we have a choice: either bow down to the God of the universe or to other things that wrongfully take his place.

**POINT 2: God deserves our trust and obedience**

Obeying God can come at a high price, even the threat of death. As Christ-followers, we're commanded to worship God alone (see Ex. 20:4–5). The three men in this passage knew bowing down to the statue would steal worship and glory that is due only to God. They didn't hesitate or follow the crowd. Instead, they decided to be faithful worshipers of the one true God. They knew God had the power to save them, so they gave God

their trust and obedience, no matter the consequences. We, too, must choose to trust and obey God alone. He deserves it!

*ILLUSTRATION:* Imagine you're at a friend's birthday party. It's late at night, and someone brings out a Ouija board. As a believer, you know demons exist, and this "game" is messing with some dark stuff, which goes against what God says to dwell on (see Phil. 4:8). You feel uncomfortable, but everyone else around you seems to be excited to try it out. You have a choice: you can participate or bow out. Choosing the latter would come at a cost to your reputation, as your "friends" will most likely belittle, tease, and shame you in front of everyone. But you have an opportunity to obey and worship only God, even though he might not save you from ridicule.

God alone is worthy of our trust and obedience. We will all undoubtedly face situations where we must choose whether or not we will rely on God and follow what he commands. But when you truly trust God, you can obey him even when it's difficult or might cost you something.

## POINT 3: Unshakeable security

The three men didn't know if God was going to let them burn or if he was going to rescue them, based on what they said in verse 18. But they did know that God cared for and loved them. He was able and had the power to miraculously save them from death. Either way, those men trusted God's ultimate decision and chose to obey God no matter the outcome. What faith!

*ILLUSTRATION:* "P.S. Honestly, I want to live completely for God. It's hard and scary, but totally worth it." This was part of a note written by Cassie Bernall the night before she was shot and killed in April 1999 at Columbine High School in Colorado.<sup>1</sup>

Seventeen-year-old Cassie was not perfect nor a superhero Christ-follower. But she was convinced that God deserved her obedience and worship, no matter what the cost. On that deadly day, it is reported that as a gunman held a gun to her head and asked her if she believed in God, she said yes.<sup>2</sup> Her answer cost her life.

Even though God chose not to save Cassie's physical life that day, she has spiritual, eternal life through Christ. In addition, God has used Cassie's story of trust and obedience to impact many people, ultimately bringing glory to himself. When we put our trust in God, we trust that he knows what is best, even if that looks different from what we expect. And the best news is this: no matter if or how God saves his children physically, they are always miraculously saved spiritually because of Jesus. The future for Christ-followers is eternity in heaven with God!

## CLOSING REFLECTION

*Use this prompt to wrap up your message and leave your students with a challenge to apply.*

- How well do you trust God? Are you willing to obey him even if it costs you something big?

## GROUP DISCUSSION

*Pick a few questions from below to discuss. Close with prayer.*

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- When have you had to choose between obeying God and something else? What happened?
- In what areas of your life is it difficult to choose to obey God?
- What do you find yourself “worshiping” besides God?
- How can you worship God by trusting him?
- How is saying no to something displeasing to God a form of worship?
- When have you been shamed because of your obedience to God?
- Why do you think God desires our full trust and obedience?
- How does it encourage you to remember that God always *spiritually* saves his children?
- How will you respond next time you face a cost of obeying God? Be specific.

### PRAYER

Close by praying or invite someone to pray for your group.

*Use this space to keep track of any prayer requests.*

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<sup>1</sup> Misty Bernall, *She Said Yes: The Unlikely Martyrdom of Cassie Bernall* (New York: Pocket Books, 1999), cover page.

<sup>2</sup> “She Said Yes: The Unlikely Martyrdom of Cassie Bernall,” *Publisher’s Weekly Review*, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://www.publishersweekly.com/978-0-87486-987-3>.