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- (1) Open with *prayer*
 - (2) Remind folks that Black History School (BHS) is the *winter version of Vacation Bible School (VBS)* with a new twist – privileging our story and its parallels to the biblical text
 - (3) Remind BHS scholars that we’re studying the book of Daniel because:
 - a. There are parallels between Daniel’s story and ours **before exile & beyond enslavement.**
 - b. It equips us with tools to live courageously as Christians.
 - (4) Announce the *lesson title & aim*; read the focal text
 - a. Reiterate that Daniel 1, as the *prologue*, helps us read the book properly. Verse 21 foreshadows the end of the 70 years of captivity that Jeremiah prophesied about and illustrates God’s sovereignty. Daniel thrives during the reign of 4 kings representing 3 different kingdoms
 - b. Read the verses in the *recap* box
 - Under the section headed *Transformers Rather Than Conformers*, point out that much of what happens in the prologue can be summed by Romans 12:1 & 2. When we choose to be transformers – “whatsoever state” we find ourselves in (cf Philippians 4:11 AMP) – God gives us everything we need, (cf Philippians 4:19).
 - Under the section headed *Divinely & Differently Gifted*, though we each have different spiritual gifts and skills, we can use what God has given us to bless others and glorify God cf 1 Peter 4:10.
 - (5) Use the section headed *The Transformative Power of Communal Prayer & Personal Testimony* to discuss what happens in Daniel chapter 2.
 - a. Read the scriptures under the heading *Promises of Prayer* in column on the right and give participants a chance to talk about God answering prayer at key moments in their lives.
 - b. When you read the scripture under the heading *Power of Testimony* observe that the Samaritan woman testified about her personal encounter with Jesus and inform students that we don’t have to be biblical scholars or theologians to share our testimonies. Witnesses simply say what they have seen, heard and/or experienced first-hand.
 - (6) Read Daniel 3:1-7
 - a. Discuss *conceit* as thinking too highly of one’s self, Philippians 2:3-4. Whenever we try to be more than God created us to be, we get ourselves into trouble cf Genesis 3.
 - b. In the polytheistic society of Babylon, where many idol gods were worshipped, people had no problem obeying the king’s order to bow down to the golden statue. Those who bowed were *conformers*. We live in a pluralistic society, where many people – even some Christians – believe any approach to God is a valid one. As Christ’s witnesses, we must lovingly and respectfully tell the world that Jesus is the Way we approach God, (Acts 1:8). Our obedience to Christ’s command to “Go and make disciples” makes us transformers. Anything less makes us conformers.

- c. These three young men (at least age 13) show us that our refusal to bow down to things of this world can attract those around us to worship our God. (Some scholars speculate that they were between the ages of 11-13 when they were carried away to Babylon. It is at least 3 years later at the end of chapter 1 because their time of study is complete.)

(7) Read Daniel 3:8-12

- a. Read Daniel 2:10-19 and highlight that the lives of the magi were spared by Daniel's request for time (v. 16), the four young men's prayer (vv 17 & 18), and God's graciousness (v 19).
- b. Link the New Testament verses about prayer (Matthew 6:6-7 and James 1:5) to this instance. Talk about intercessory prayer in exilic literature, Nehemiah 1:4-11 and Esther 4:16. When the people of God were in exile, they needed the favor of pagan kings. When the people prayed, God turned the king's heart in their favor. As African Americans, we are not living in exile. America is our homeland. However, certain leaders see us as their captors rather than citizens with equal rights. Just as prayer worked in Bible days, prayer works today!
- c. Those who complain to the king about Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abendego) are jealous of the promotions they received in Daniel 2:47-49. It is naïve for us to think that everyone around us is happy for us when we are elevated. Thank God, greater is God in us than the *haters and informers* around us! (1 John 4:4 and Romans 8:31-39)

(8) Read Daniel 3:13-30

- a. The king admires these young men. So, he gives them a chance to defend themselves in verses 13 & 14. He is conceited. So, he defies any god to be able to deliver them in verse 15.
- b. The three Jewish boys are *non-conformers* in verses 16-18. They refuse to bow to any idol god (Exodus 20:1-6). Instead, they take a stand and trust that God will deliver them (Isaiah 41:10-13 & 43:1-13a). They fear God more than Nebuchadnezzar (Psalm 118:6, Matthew 10:28).
- c. In his rage, Nebuchadnezzar has the furnace turned up seven times higher. The flames are so high that they consume the men lifting the boys in verses 19-22.
- d. God does more than deliver Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abendego) from the fiery furnace in verses 23-26! Nebuchadnezzar sees a theophany (a visible manifestation of God). He also sees them unharmed by the fire. So, he calls them out.
- e. Upon inspection, they are not singed nor do they smell like smoke. This causes the king to worship God. Their witness transformed the king's view of God in verses 27-29.
- f. The *non-conforming, transformers* are promoted to even higher positions in verse 30.

(9) There was a courageous boy in the South who was inspired to get involved in the Montgomery Bus Boycott. He became a voting rights champion. With so much at stake for us in this upcoming presidential election, it's time for us to take a stand.¹ (Discuss the *Good Trouble* attachment)

(10) Just as television coverage of Birmingham police attacking children with fire hoses and dogs turned the tide during the Civil Rights Movement in 1963, the televised murder of George Floyd set a wave of worldwide Black Lives Matter protests in 2020. A teenager named Darnella Frazier captured Floyd's murder with her cellphone camera. Frazier is brave, young, gifted and Black. (Discuss the *Worldwide Reckoning* attachment)

¹ National Trends <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/elections/2023/11/15/black-voters-power-2023-president-2024/71495617007/> Democratic Party <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/dec/19/black-voters-democrat-biden-2024> Republican Party <https://www.newsweek.com/trump-black-votes-presidential-election-republicans-1857699>