

**(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)** During the *BHS Overview* section, remind BHS scholars that we're studying the book of Daniel because:

- Even in the face of trauma, there's much more to the stories of God's people.
- It equips us with tools to live courageously as Christians.

**(4)** Quickly move through the *Lesson 1 & 2 Reviews* and spend a little more time on the *Lesson 3 Review*

- Discuss what it means to live in a pluralistic society, where people believe there are many truths – many approaches to God and all are valid.
- Talk about *ekklēsia* (ĕk -lay-see-ah), the Greek word for church meaning "the called out ones" & how we are called to be come out from the world – to be different... to be consecrated/set apart for God's use... (cf. Matthew 16:18, where Jesus states that church (*ekklēsia*) is built upon Peter's confession of faith)
- Reference Acts 1:8 and explain that witnesses say what they have experienced first-hand, what they have seen or heard. The character of a witness either lends credibility to the testimony or detracts from it.
- Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abendego) refused to blend in. They chose to stand out... to be set apart for God's sacred use.
- If we demonstrate our love for Christ by obeying His commandments to love God and neighbor (cf Matthew 22:35-40 & 1 John 5:3), and join Him in The Great Co-mission© to "go and make disciples," (cf Matthew 28:19 & 20) people around us will become curious about Christ because of our lifestyles and our testimonies (cf 2 Corinthians 5:20).

**(5)** Announce the *lesson title & aims*, read the focal text

- Point out that we are coming full circle. This entire *Taken Treasure* series tracks what happens to God's consecrated objects and people. Nebuchadnezzar treated Daniel and his companions with respect. He stored the sacred vessels from the temple in Jerusalem in his sacred treasury. Belshazzar defiles God's treasure. The events in chapter 5 show us what can happen when we carelessly mishandle people and things that are valuable to God.

**(6)** Use the section headed *A Strong Deliver* to discuss the events that led Nebuchadnezzar to worship God

- Read the scripture in the *Recap* box and discuss Nebuchadnezzar's arrogant charge in verse 15. He defies any god to deliver Shadrach, Meshach, and Abendego from his death sentence.
- In verses 16 – 18, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah refuse to bow. The three young men decided that this is a time to stand for God.
- Reference the MLK quote on the bottom and page 1 and instruct participants to ask themselves what they're willing to die for.
- Have participants turn to Romans 8:33-39. God is always with us – no matter what we go through. Even when it feels like we are alone, we are never separated from God.

e. Move through the bullet points and the scripture references.

- (7)** Use the section headed *The King's Heart is Turned Toward God & His Kingdom Worships God* to continue discussing Nebuchadnezzar's transformation as a result of Daniel (Belteshazzar), Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abendego) being non-conformers
- a. Read Daniel 4:1-3. Point out that this final account of Nebuchadnezzar's transformation is in the first-person. The king is giving his testimony. He is sharing his experience with God.
  - b. Recap the bulleted non-conforming deeds in chapters 1-3 that turned the king's heart toward God
    - After reading the verses in Daniel 1, cf Ephesians 4:22-24 for Christians. When our **f**riends, **r**elatives, **a**ssociates and **n**eighbors see our transformations, we have an opportunity to be Christ's witness... to share our testimonies. This is FRAngelism – evangelism to those in our sphere of influence.
    - After reading the verses in Daniel 2, cf 2 Corinthians 4:7 for Christians. If we give glory to God when the Holy Spirit enables us to do great things, others are drawn to God.
    - After reading the verse in Daniel 3, cf 2 Corinthians 4:7-10 & Matthew 26:37-39 for Christians. No matter what we go through, we can't afford to compromise our character. Often, those things that threaten to destroy us actually develop us and draw us closer to God, giving us a platform to draw others to God.
    - After reading the verses in Daniel 4, cf Matthew 23:12 for Christians. Whenever we become prideful, we make ourselves vulnerable to God's resistance. When Nebuchadnezzar humbled himself, God restored "his majesty and splendor."
- (8)** Read Daniel 5 in small passages as outlined in the *Call to Consciousness* box
- a. v 1 – Baal or Bel was unable to protect the king from God's judgment. Who can protect you from you? We make foolish mistakes when we're trying to impress others.
  - b. vv 1-4 cf Proverbs 16:18
  - c. vv 5 – 12
    - The promises offered in verse 7 were: (1) purple clothes as a sign of nobility and wealth; (2) a gold necklace indicating wealth and prestige; and (3) a promotion to serve as the third ruler of the kingdom after the co-regents
    - V 10-The queen is Nebuchadnezzar's daughter, Nabonidus' wife and Belshazzar's mother.
  - d. vv 13-28 cf *The Parable of the Rich Fool* in Luke 12:13-21
  - e. vv 29-31 the Medes and the Persians are the second and third kingdoms in Nebuchadnezzar's dream cf Daniel 2:39. In fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophesy, Cyrus allowed the Jewish exiles to return to Jerusalem at the end of 70 years of captivity cf Ezra 1:1-3ff
- (9)** America touts the peaceful transfer of power. Prior to the attempted insurrection on January 6, 2023, when voted out of office, Presidents simply packed up and left without fanfare.
- a. In 45's opinion, this country's problems started 59 years ago when Fannie Lou Hamer showed us that "ordinary people can organize and build coalitions that can create momentous, perhaps even lasting change."<sup>1</sup> Refer to the *Sick and Tired* handout.
  - b. The passage of the 1964 Voting Rights Act brought 337 Black delegates and alternates to the 1968 Democratic National Convention. Congressman John Conyers of Michigan chaired the first Black Caucus. Fast forward to two-term President Barack Obama and sitting Vice President Kamala Harris.

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<sup>1</sup> Kate Clifford Larson, *Walk with Me: A Biography of Fannie Lou Hamer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 234.