But Even If He Doesn't (Daniel 3) | Series: Living for God | Living in Babylon | 11/1/26 | Geldart

BIG IDEA: Courage isn't the absence of fear — it's choosing God when compliance would be so much easier, so much safer, and so expected.

1. **[1] INTRODUCTION: SIDEKICKS**
    a. Kids: Who is Batman's sidekick?
        i. [Robin!]
    b. Yes! Now one for the grown-ups: Captain Picard, Starship Enterprise. Who's his second in command?
        i. Commander Riker.
        ii. Picard got the speeches. Riker got the beard.
    c. Nobody grows up saying, "I hope I get to be the sidekick."
        i. The hero gets the cape and the theme music, and the sidekick holds the cape.
    d. PERSONAL STORY SPOT: I felt like the sidekick a lot growing up.
        i. A faithful friend who didn't care for the spotlight.
        ii. I tended to befriend others with stronger personalities.
            1. One of them even had a mohawk!
    e. Today, the sidekicks take over.
        i. Daniel, the guy with the dreams and the lions and his name on the whole book, does not show up in this chapter. Not once.
        ii. We get his 3 friends: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.
        iii. These men didn't pick Babylon.
        iv. They were hauled there as teenagers, and Babylon went to work on them:
            1. new names, new schooling, new menu.
        v. Babylon is the Bible's picture of any culture that runs without Jesus as ultimate King.
    f. The question hanging over this whole series is simple: How do you live for God when you live in Babylon?
    g. Kids, I need your help this morning, and parents, you're deputized.
        i. [2] Three things to watch for:
            1. The music.
            2. The fire.
            3. And a mysterious figure, who we'll meet when we get there.
        ii. Each time you hear one, show me the fingers:
            1. one for the music, two for the fire, three for the mysterious figure.
    h. Little ones, this story gets scary in the middle. It has a happy part. Stay with me.

2. When Babylon Demands Your Worship (The Problem)

a. [3] Back up one chapter. Last week in Chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of a giant statue: head of gold, then silver, bronze, iron, and feet of iron and clay.
    i. A rock from heaven smashes the feet, and the whole thing blows away like dust.

b. Daniel told him what it meant: You're the head of gold, king, congratulations.
    i. God made you shiny! And yet you're not forever.
    ii. Someone else will eventually conquer you.
    iii. But God's kingdom outlasts every one.
        1. So orient yourself rightly towards God
    iv. And for a moment, it worked. The king fell on his face and said, "Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings."

c. Now, how long did that last? Chapter 3, verse 1.

d. [4] [Daniel 3:1,4-6] "King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, sixty cubits high and six cubits wide, and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. … Then the herald loudly proclaimed, 'Nations and peoples of every language, this is what you are commanded to do: As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.'

e. Sixty cubits is about ninety feet.
    i. Everybody reach up as high as you can ……. STILL NOT CLOSE
    ii. A 9 story tall building! Huge statue!
    iii. In the dream, just the head was gold. Here, the whole statue is gold.

f. The text never tells us why, but I picture man just told he's not top dog, stamping his foot and saying "Nuh Uh!" I'll show them!

g. Centuries earlier, in this same place, people of Babel built a tower to defy God and make a name for themselves.

h. Here's the problem: Neb took something God says was temporary – his empire, and treated it like God – the most important thing.
    i. We do that too.

i. And Neb's not asking everyone there for a tax or a salute. He wants worship.

j. Two tools Babylon used to control people's worship:
    i. The fiery furnace is the threat.
    ii. Hardly anybody mentions the music.
        1. But the furnace only has to work on the people the music doesn't get.

2. The Music does the heavy lifting!
3. [Kids: one finger for the music]

iii. Let me show you how well the music works. [Invite Antonio up.]
1. Everybody stand up. [Wait.]
2. Here's the deal. When you hear the chord, sit down.
3. Anyone who stays standing, I'm noting your name.

iv. [Keys plays one chord. Prob most of the room sits. Celebrate the kids who stay standing. Let the laugh happen.]
1. Look at that.
2. Nobody threatened you. There's no furnace in here, I checked.
3. You sat because the room sat.
4. Now put a king and a furnace behind that chord!

v. [Slow down. Let people sit.]

k. Kids, you know the oldest reason to do something:
i. "But everybody else is doing it."
ii. [Pause. Let parents react.]
iii. Parents, you've got your answer ready!
1. Something about jumping off cliffs?

l. Peer pressure is real, folks!

m. So what happens when obeying God could cost you?
i. Costs your spot, your name, your friends, your safety?

n. The music plays, again, [ANTONIO PLAYS]
i. and the whole field goes down.
1. Every back bent. Every face in the dirt. Except three.
ii. [Kids: one finger for the music again.]
iii. [Antonio can sit down]

3. But Even If He Doesn't (The Story)

a. Yah, people noticed. They literally STUCK OUT

b. Some of the other officials tattled on them to the King.
i. Kinda like my kids do when they notice a sibling not doing what they're supposed to

c. Well, the king is furious. How dare they defy ME!!!
i. So he hauls the three in front of him and gives them one more chance.
ii. Bow when the music plays, and everything's fine. Don't, and it's the furnace.

d. Then he asks the question the whole chapter hangs on.

i. [Daniel 3:15b] "Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hands?"

e. Nebuchadnezzar thinks he's the top authority.

f. So watch these three. They don't ask for time to think:

g. [6] [Daniel 3:16-18] "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, 'King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.'"

   i. [Kids: 2 fingers for the fiery furnace]
   ii. [Pause.]
   iii. Read the middle again. "But even if he does not…"

h. What's missing in what they say blares the loudest.

   i. No doubt that God is able to save them.
   ii. And no claim that God owes them a rescue.

i. They were certain about who they would worship, but not about what God would do.

j. That is not what a lot of us call faith:

   i. We want a faith that comes with a guarantee: I obey, you protect me from pain.
   ii. But these three skipped the guarantee. They kept the God.

k. [PERSONAL STORY SPOT: I remember during a really difficult season leading at another job

   i. I prayed for God to work everything out so that things got easier,
   ii. relationships mended up, and we could live happily ever after.
   iii. But instead, it got extremely uncomfortable.
      1. The music kept playing,
         a. [Kids: two fingers.]
      2. and I was standing out like a sore thumb
      3. And it cost me.

l. Back to Daniel 3:

   i. The king keeps his word: He orders the furnace heated seven times hotter, so hot the soldiers who toss them in die from the heat.
      1. [7] Kids, hold up 2 fingers on one hand for the fire
      2. Now hold up all 5 on the other hand -- 7 fingers! → SEVEN TIMES!
   ii. The three are tied up and thrown in.

1. [This is the scary part. Stay with me.]

m. But then the king, who is watching, jumps to his feet.

n. **[8] [Daniel 3:24-25]** "Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, 'Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?' They replied, 'Certainly, Your Majesty.' He said, 'Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.'

   i. [9] [Kids: three fingers. Let them have the moment.]

o. Three went in tied up. Four are walking around, and nobody's tied.

   i. Whatever else that fire did, it took the ropes

p. Who's the mysterious fourth person?

   i. The king says he looked like "a son of the gods".

   ii. Later he calls him an angel.

   iii. Clearly supernatural.

      1. Likely shining brightly - glowing like heated gold.

   iv. The text doesn't name him. But plenty of Christians through history have said they think it's Jesus, before Bethlehem.

      1. I think so too.

q. Here's what it does say: God didn't stay on the other side of the fire and wave. He walked in with them.

   i. They were saved in the fire, not from it.

r. **[10] Daniel 3:26b-27:** So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire. … They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them."

s. Kids, ever come home from a campfire?

   i. Your hair, your clothes, your dog. Everything reeks for days.

   ii. These guys came out of a furnace and smelled like nothing at all.

   iii. And everybody who'd been on that field saw it.

t. [11] [Daniel 3:28] "Then Nebuchadnezzar said, 'Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God.'"

   i. He goes on to protect their worship of God by law,

      1. and the three get promoted again.

   ii. We'll see what ultimately happens to Neb next week.

4. **Stand When the Music Plays (The Big Idea)**
    a. Here's the thing I want you carrying out of here today:
    b. Those three were afraid – Terrified!
        i. Don't let anybody tell you they weren't.
    c. But here's the good news:
        i. [12] Courage doesn't mean you're not afraid.
        ii. It means you're choosing God anyway, when bowing would be so much easier, so much safer, so expected.
    d. They chose before they knew how it would end.
    e. Faith, for them, was deciding who they belonged to and letting God handle the rest.
    f. We're not promised a life without furnaces.
        i. What this story shows is that when the fire came, He was with them in it, saving them THROUGH it
        ii. And he offers you the same presence today in the midst of whatever you're walking through.
    g. [13] Let's say this together, kids too:
        i. "Our God is able." [Wait.]
        ii. "But even if he doesn't." [Wait.]
        iii. "We will not bow."
    h. [Again, louder.]
    i. **One more time, quietly:** Our God is able. But even if he doesn't, we will not bow.

5. **APPLICATIONS: Living for God Right Here**
    a. [14] Where is the music playing for you?
    b. Our modern "Babylon" almost never comes at us with a ninety-foot statue.
        i. It's subtler. It asks us to follow the crowd and bow to things that look a lot more solid: money, security, being on the winning team.
    c. I'm not telling you to quit your job or run from the world.
        i. These three ran the King's province, and did it well!
        ii. They took his paycheck. They wouldn't take his god.
            1. That's the line we live on too.
    d. So let me get specific:
    e. Kids, this one's for you first.
        i. [15] Cheating
        ii. Somebody's copying off your paper, or you're tempted to copy off theirs.
        iii. The teacher's not looking. Nobody will ever know.

iv. Remember the oldest excuse we talked about earlier? [Pause. Let the kids answer: "Everybody's doing it."]
v. That's the music of Babylon. Whispering sweetly to you.
vi. Just have AI do your paper? The music again.
vii. [PERSONAL CONFESSION: I know this song! And I've obeyed more times than I'd like to admit.]

f. Here's a quieter one, mostly for the parents, though kids get a vote ☺
   i. [16] Look at your family's schedule.
      1. For a lot folks the sports practice, the tournament, and the weekend trip are fixed, and faith commitments -- church, small group, Sabbath rest are what flex.
      2. Of course sports aren't the real problem.
         a. Can be a real gift and place of ministry!
         b. But it's also a key place the music of Babylon plays in our culture.
      3. The question is who gets the first call and who gets the leftovers – in your calendars, and in your hearts.
   ii. Some teams take your time. Some take your loyalty.
      1. [17] Tribalism – an us versus them mentality -- is the Same music, bigger teams.
      2. Whether cultural or political
      3. Every group wants more from you than a vote.
      4. It wants loyalty, the right opinions, the right enemies, and it pays you in belonging.
      5. The furnace is getting cut from the team or cast out of the group.
         a. And that fear is real – and can be really rough!
   iii. Here's a check: When did you last disagree with your own side (team/tribe) because of something Jesus said?
      1. Kids: who's the group at school everyone wants to be in?
   iv. Your team can have your vote, your voice, and your effort.
      1. But it can't have your worship.

g. I'm not asking who else is bowing. I'm asking about the person in your seat:
   i. What's your idol these days?
   ii. Take ten seconds and reflect.
      1. Not sure what's got your worship?
         a. Ask God, and ask yourself:

i. What have I done because of _____ that I wouldn't have chosen?
ii. What am I neglecting that I know I should do?

iii. [Silent ten seconds]

h. Here's the first thing I'd ask you to do. Decide before the music starts again.
   i. Why does your school do fire drills?
      1. Because nobody figures out where the exits are while the building is burning.
      2. Courage at the furnace gets built before the furnace.
   ii. [18] Finish this sentence: God is able to _____, but even if he doesn't, I will stay with him?

i. [19] Second, don't do it alone.
   i. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did it together
   ii. Who knows where your lines are?
   iii. Who would stand next to you when it gets costly?
   iv. That's what a LIFE Group is for.
   v. That's what a discipling relationship is for.
   vi. It's the fire drill, and the people standing in line next to you.
   vii. If you don't have that person, this week take a next step into a small group or sign up for a discipling relationship.

6. CONCLUSION / LANDING THE PLANE: JESUS FREES US

a. Back to the furnace…
b. The king could throw them in. That's all he could do.
   i. He couldn't decide what happened to them once the door shut.
   ii. And the very place he picked to show off his power is the place where God showed up to outshine him.
c. There's a verse that could have been written over that furnace. Speaking of Jesus,
   i. [20] [Hebrews 2:14-15] "… by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death."
      1. Free from the fear of death. Ropes off.
d. Jesus took the fear of death away from every idol that ever used it.
e. Jesus knew a furnace was coming, and he had his own "even if" moment.
   i. In the garden of Gethsemane he prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."

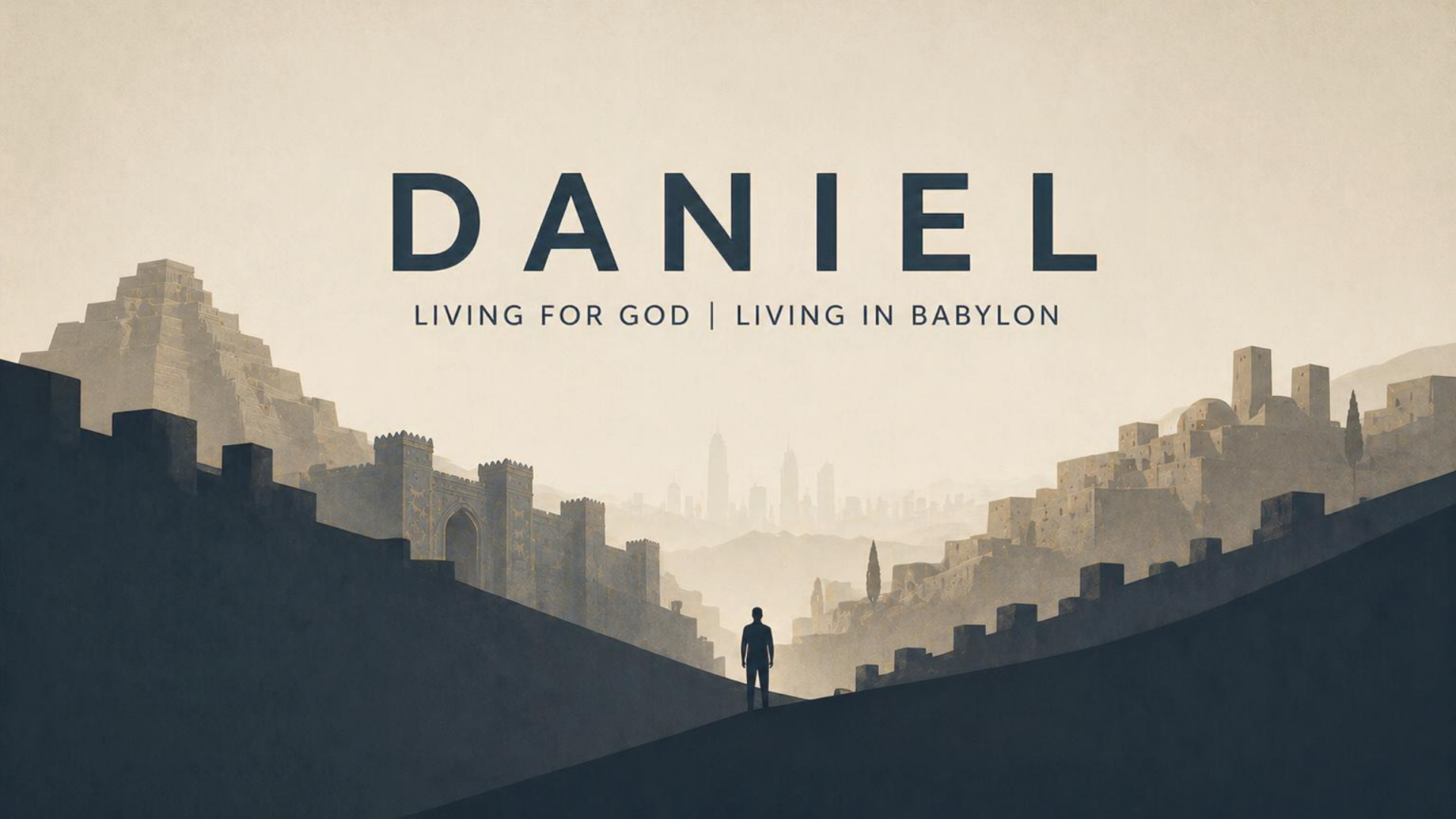
ii. Then he walked into the worst of it on a cross, the full sentence of death that belonged to us, and he didn't walk out that day.
iii. He died. Was buried.
iv. Three days later, he walked out of the grave on his own, alive, never to die again.

f. So when the music plays and the cost is real, we aren't following a God who watches the fire from a safe distance.
i. We follow one who has been all the way through it, and who promises to be with us in ours.
ii. We don't control how.
iii. We do get to decide whom we will worship. Who we will trust.

7. COMMUNION:

a. Jesus took bread and a cup with his friends, the night before his own furnace.
i. He asked us to keep doing this.
ii. Every time we eat and drink at this table, we're saying out loud what those three said in the field. We belong to him. We will not bow.
b. This table is open.
c. If you're a follower of Jesus, young or old, come.
d. If you're not sure where you stand and you want to say, "I'm his," this is a place to start.
i. The only thing we're asking is allegiance to Jesus.
e. As the music plays, drawing you now to the true King Jesus, come and take the bread and the cup back to your seats before we take them together.
f. [INVITE PEOPLE TO COME]
g. Paul, wrote in 1 Corinthians 11 [23-26] "For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.'
h. [All eat in worship]
i. “In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."
j. [All drink in worship]

8. PRAY: Jesus, you walked into the fire for us and you walked out alive. …


DANIEL
LIVING FOR GOD | LIVING IN BABYLON

DANIEL

LIVING FOR GOD | LIVING IN BABYLON



MUSIC **FIRE** **MYSTERIOUS FIGURE**

DANIEL 2





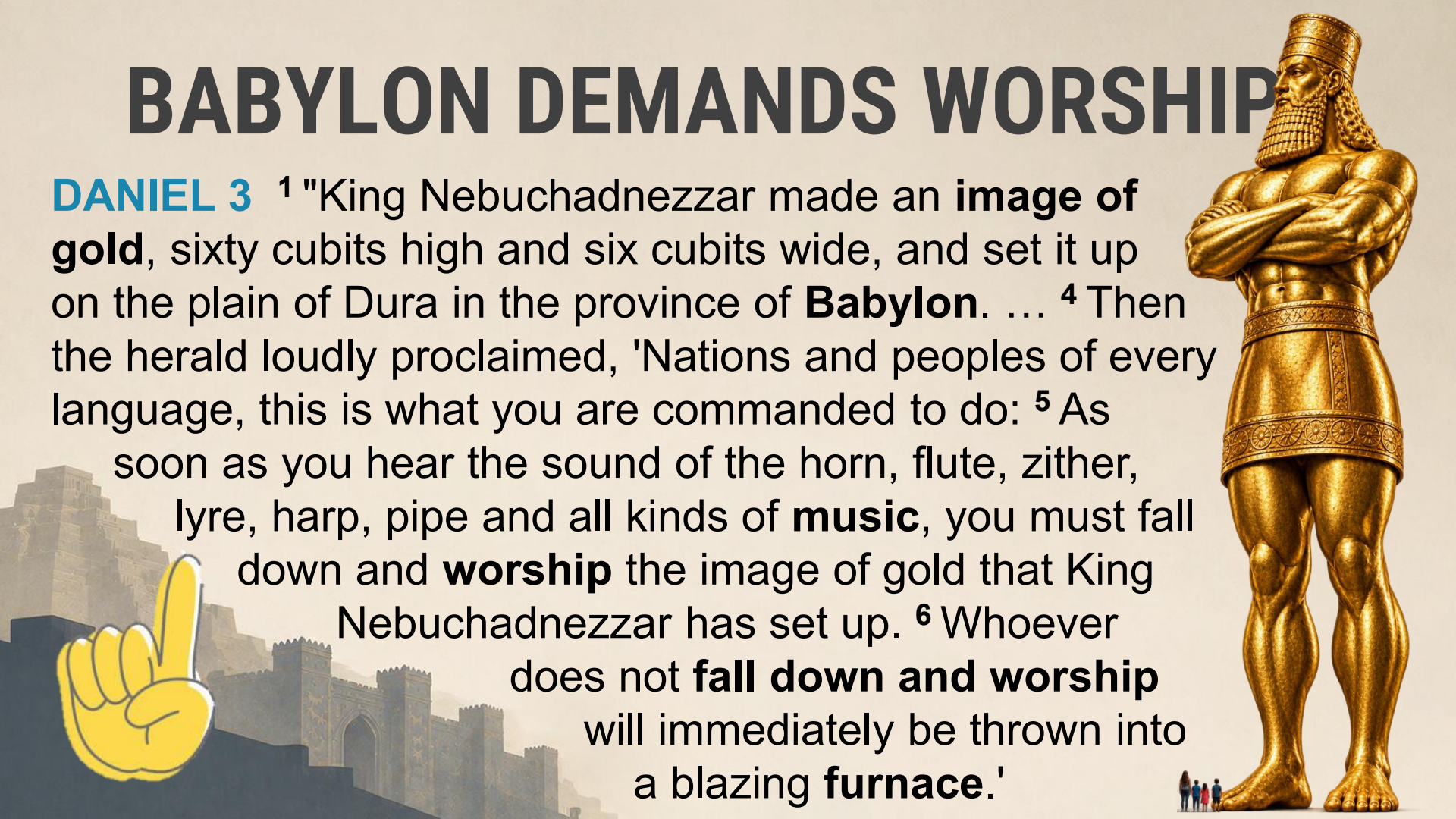
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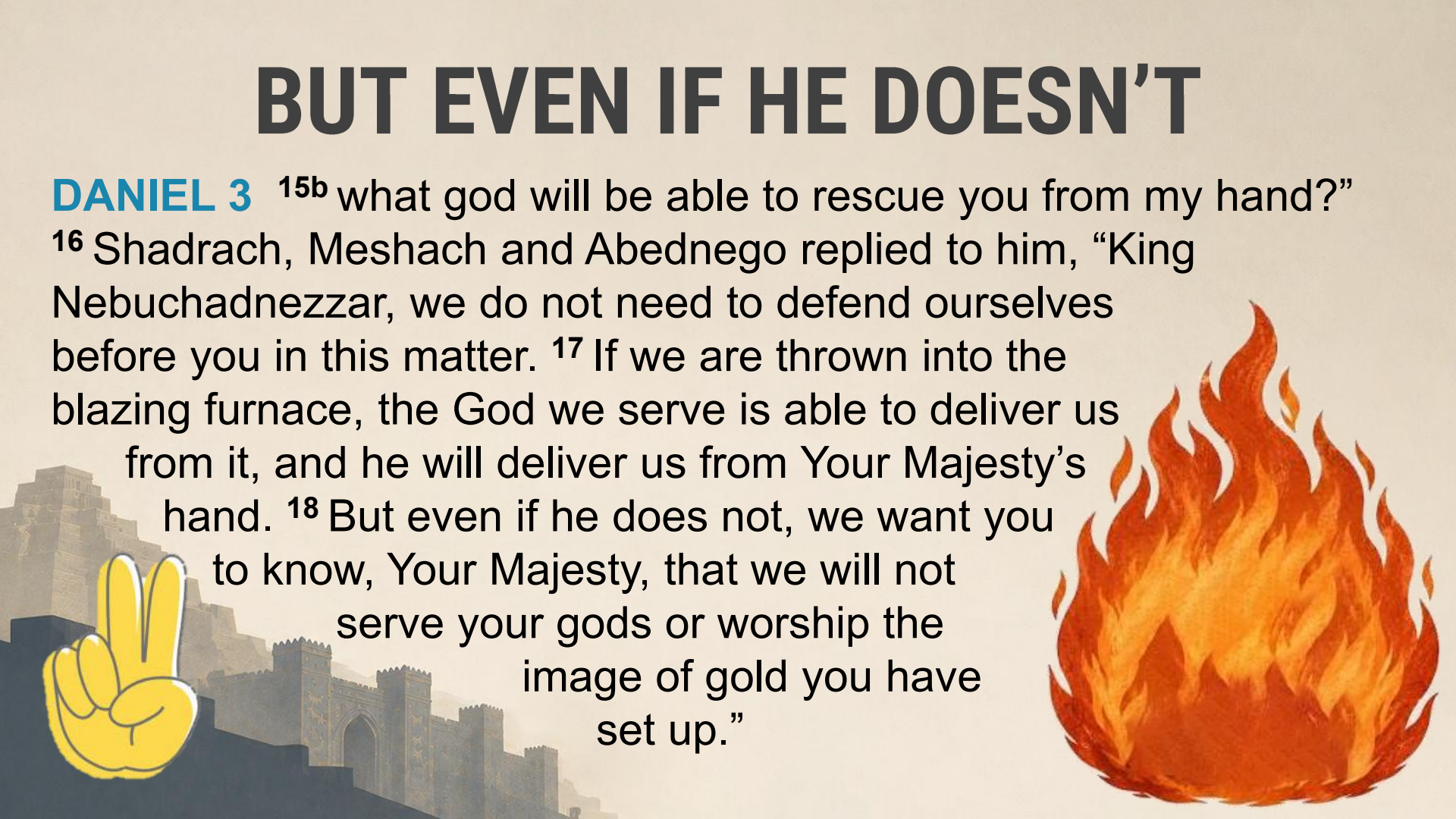
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STAND WHEN THE MUSIC PLAYS

COURAGE doesn't mean you’re not afraid.

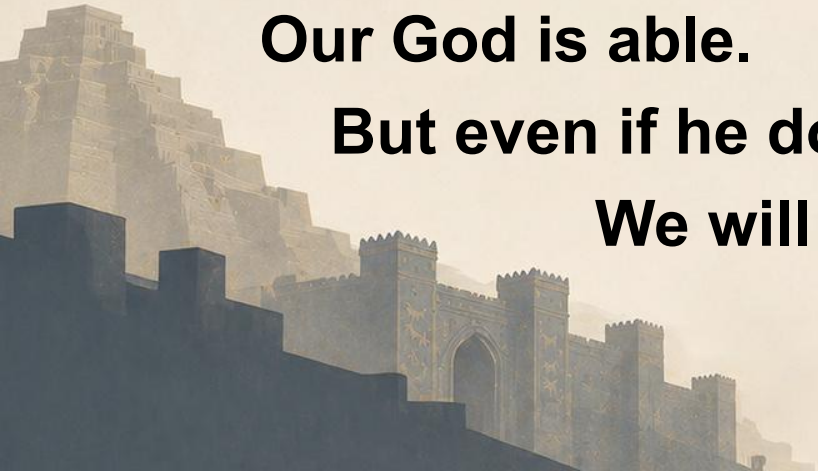
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LIVING FOR GOD RIGHT HERE

WHERE IS THE MUSIC PLAYING FOR YOU?



LIVING FOR GOD RIGHT HERE

WHERE IS THE MUSIC PLAYING FOR YOU?

- Cheating



LIVING FOR GOD RIGHT HERE

WHERE IS THE MUSIC PLAYING FOR YOU?

- Cheating
- Family Schedule



LIVING FOR GOD RIGHT HERE

WHERE IS THE MUSIC PLAYING FOR YOU?

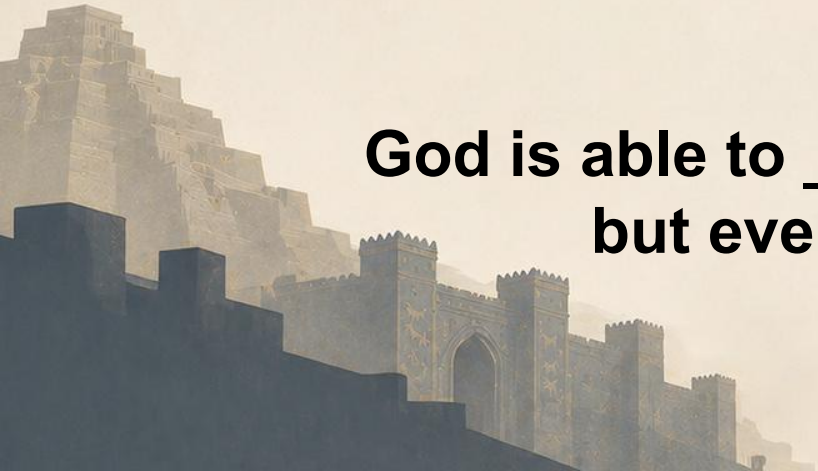
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LIVING FOR GOD RIGHT HERE

WHERE IS THE MUSIC PLAYING FOR YOU?

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God is able to _____,
but even if he doesn't, I will stay with him.

LIVING FOR GOD RIGHT HERE

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DON'T DO IT ALONE



JESUS FREES US

HEBREWS 2 **14**… by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—**15** and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.



COMMUNION

