**Daniel and the Royal Diet (Daniel 1)**

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon attacked Jerusalem and took the people to Babylon as slaves. The king told the head of the palace staff to get some Israelites from the royal family and nobility - young men who were healthy and handsome, intelligent and well-educated, good prospects for leadership positions in the government - and indoctrinate them in the Babylonian language and the practice of magic. He ordered that they be served from the same menu as the royal table - the best food and the finest wine. After three years of training they would be given positions in the king’s court. Daniel and his four friends were among those selected but Daniel decided that he would not defile himself by eating the king’s food or drinking his wine, so he asked the head of the palace staff to exempt him from the royal diet. The head of the palace staff liked Daniel, but he warned him, “I’m afraid of what my master the king will do. He is the one who assigned this diet and if he sees that you are not as healthy as the rest, he’ll have my head!” Daniel said: “Try us out for ten days on a simple diet of vegetables and water. Then compare us with the young men who eat from the royal menu. Make your decision on the basis of what you see.” The steward agreed to do it and fed them vegetables and water for ten days. At the end of the ten days they looked better and more robust than all the others who had been eating from the royal menu. So the steward continued to exempt them from the royal menu of food and drink and served them only vegetables. God gave these four young men knowledge and skill in both books and life. At the end of the time set by the king for their training, the head of the royal staff brought them in to Nebuchadnezzar. When the king interviewed them, he found them far superior to all the other young men. None were a match for Daniel and his friends. And so they took their place in the king’s service. Whenever the king consulted them on anything, on books or on life, he found them ten times better than all the magicians in his kingdom put together.

1. What did Daniel and his friends do to be a positive influence?

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2. Why did they risk their lives by doing it?

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3. What was the result of their actions?

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4. How could this story help you to be a person of positive influence?

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**Daniel’s Friends and the Fiery Furnace (Daniel 3)**

King Nebuchadnezzar built a gold statue, 30 meters high and 3 meters thick. He commanded everyone to kneel down and worship the gold statue when the music played or they would be thrown into a fiery furnace. When the band started to play everyone fell to their knees and worshiped the gold. But some Babylonian fortunetellers saw that Daniel’s three friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to worship the statue so they told the kind about it. The King asked them why they refused to bow down and offered them a second chance. They answered the king: “If you throw us in the fire, our God can rescue us from your fiery furnace, O king. But even if he doesn’t, it wouldn’t make a bit of difference, we still wouldn’t serve your gods or worship the gold statue you set up.” The king lost his temper and ordered the furnace to be made seven times hotter than usual. He had their hands and feet tied up and throw them into the fiery furnace. Flames from the furnace killed the men who carried them. Suddenly the King jumped up in alarm and said, “Didn’t we throw three men, bound hand and foot, into the fire? But I see four men, walking around freely in the fire, completely unharmed! And the fourth man looks like a son of the gods!” The king went to the door and called them out and they walked out of the fire. When the leaders examined the men they discovered that not even burned one of their hairs, nor scorched their clothes – nor was there any smell of fire on them! The king said: “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! He sent his angel and rescued his servants who trusted in him! They ignored the king’s orders and laid their bodies on the line rather than serve or worship any god but their own. “Therefore I issue this decree: Anyone anywhere, of any race, color, or creed, who says anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego will be ripped to pieces, limb from limb, and their houses torn down. There has never been a god who can pull off a rescue like this.” Then the king promoted them in the province of Babylon.

1. What did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego do to be a positive influence?

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2. Why did they risk their lives by doing it?

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3. What the result of their actions?

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4. How could this story help you to be a person of positive influence?

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**Daniel and the Lion’s Den (Daniel 6)**

Daniel so completely outclassed the other governors that the king decided to put him in charge of the whole kingdom. The governors tried to find something to use against Daniel but gave up because he was so exemplary and trustworthy. So they came up with a plan and got the kind to issue a decree that for the next thirty days no one was allowed to pray to any god or mortal except the king. Anyone who disobeyed would be thrown into the lions’ den. When Daniel learned that the decree had been signed and posted, he continued to pray just as he had always done. His house had windows in the upstairs that opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he knelt there in prayer, thanking and praising his God. The conspirators came and found him praying, asking God for help. They went straight to the king and reminded him of the royal decree that he had signed and told him that Daniel was disobeying the decree and praying to his God once a day. The king was forced to have Daniel thrown into the lions’ den. At daybreak the king got up and went to the lions’ den. As he approached the den, he called out anxiously, “Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve so loyally, saved you from the lions?” Daniel called out “O king, live forever! My God sent his angel, who closed the mouths of the lions so that they would not hurt me. I’ve been found innocent before God and also before you, O king. I’ve done nothing to harm you.” When the king heard these words, he was happy. He ordered Daniel taken up out of the den. When he was hauled up, there wasn’t a scratch on him. He had trusted his God. Then the king commanded that the conspirators who had informed on Daniel be thrown into the lions’ den, along with their wives and children. Before they hit the floor, the lions had them in their jaws, tearing them to pieces. King Darius published a new decree that everyone had to worship Daniel’s God because he was the living God and his kingdom never fails and because he had saved Daniel from the power of the lions. From then on Daniel was treated well.

1. What did Daniel do to be a positive influence?

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2. Why did Daniel risk his life by doing it?

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3. What the result of his actions?

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4. How could this story help you to be a person of positive influence?

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