

Daniel in Exile

*Integrity is who you are
when no one is looking!*

Introduction

The Story features a surprising array of people who have amazing integrity, and others who seem to have none at all. Remember the young man Joseph (chapter 3) who was sold as a slave (by his own brothers) and became a prisoner in a foreign land. Far from home, with no family members or friends around to encourage or critique him, Joseph led a life of staggering integrity. He resisted temptation even though no one would have known ... except God.

Here in chapter 18 we encounter four young men from Judah who have been exiled in the capital city of their sworn enemies. They were in a place where "no one was looking." They could compromise and cut corners and no one would ever know ... except God.

Integrity can seem like an antiquated value in our modern world. Every day we have opportunities to make little concessions. Indeed, our culture invites and encourages compromise:

"You won't get caught."

"It's no big deal ... everyone is doing it."

"It's the price of doing business."

"Lighten up; no one else cares about that, why should you?"

"No one will ever know!"

Then we hear the same still small voice that spoke to Joseph in prison and Daniel and his three friends in captivity. "I see. I care. I love you. Stand strong."

Talk About It

All sorts of voices in our culture cry out, inviting us to compromise our faith. What are some of these messages?

DVD Teaching Notes

As you watch the video segment for session 18, use the following outline to record anything that stands out to you.

In the Lower Story Daniel finds himself away from home

King Nebuchadnezzar's demand creates a fiery ordeal

Daniel and the lion's den

In the Upper Story we find ourselves away from home

DVD Discussion

1. When Daniel and his three friends became prisoners of war, they were pressured to change many things as part of their "training" process (Daniel 1; *The Story*, pp. 249–250). What concessions were they willing to make and where did they draw the line and say no? Why do you think they drew the line where they did?

What is an example of an area where you have said, "I draw the line here and I will not cross it"? What has happened as you have made this stand and maintained your integrity?

"Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us." (1 Peter 2:11–12)

2. When Daniel heard of King Nebuchadnezzar's seemingly impossible request (Daniel 2:1–18; *The Story*, pp. 250–252), he asked his three friends to pray and seek the face of God with him. Why is prayer the right response in this critical moment of Daniel's story? What is one situation you are facing right now that needs prayer and how can your group members support you in this way?

3. Once God answered the prayers of Daniel and his friends, Daniel lifted up an amazing prayer of praise (Daniel 2:20–23; *The Story*, p. 252). What do you learn about Daniel's understanding of God in this prayer and how might this shape the way you pray?

4. As Daniel explained the king's dream and its interpretation, he was careful to not take credit but give all the glory to God (Daniel 2:27–30; *The Story*, pp. 252–253). In what ways can we be tempted to take credit for what God does? How can we give him the glory instead?

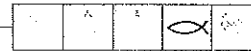
5. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stood face-to-face with King Nebuchadnezzar and told him they would not bow down and commit idolatry, even if it cost them their lives. Where does this kind of strength and integrity come from? Tell about a situation where you faced (or are facing) real pressure to compromise biblical truth.

6. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego ended up in the furnace, they discovered they were not alone (Daniel 3:25; *The Story*, pp. 256). Describe a furnace time in your life when God showed up in a very personal and powerful way.

7. Despite Daniel's Lower Story struggle of persecution and oppression, what were some of the ways God was working in the Upper Story? Why is it so important that we slow down occasionally and take note of how God is working in the Upper Story of our lives?

In the Lower Story the king throws Daniel in the lion's den for not bowing to him; in the Upper Story the King of Kings closes the mouth of the lions for bowing only to him.

8. It is in the dark places that light shines most brightly. What are some ways we can be part of our culture and still not compromise? Why is it valuable and even essential for Christians to understand and function within our culture (without crossing the line of compromise) if we are going to bring Jesus' message and love to this world? Where is one place in your life that God wants his light to shine through you?



9. Read movement 4 of *The Story* (p. 11 of this participant's guide). How has your connection in the local church brought you closer to Jesus and more aware of his plan to reach all people with his love?