

Default Mode – Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego



Daniel 3



When pressure comes, what is your default mode? For Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, obedience to God wasn't a one-off act of bravery; it was their way of life. Faced with the fiery furnace, they stood firm, even though every pressure pushed them to do otherwise. In this session, we'll delve beneath the children's storybook version of the fiery furnace to uncover the deeper message of Daniel 3. We'll also explore what it means for obedience to God to be our default mode today.

You will need:

- Flip chart
- Scenarios handout
- Paper and pens



Beat

Leader's notes:

Ask the group questions about their personalised device settings – this could be a phone, app or gaming system. Discuss the customised aspects of their device that makes it theirs (e.g. the font size, lock screen, game settings or alarm sounds).

Say:

Every phone, app, or game starts with default settings, like language, ringtone, or notifications. They set the foundation but we all customise things so that our device feels like ours: the wallpaper, playlists, apps, or game choices.

Ask:

What are some of the default settings on your devices, the things that are always there and don't really change?

How would you say default settings are different from a default mode?

Say:

There's a difference between default settings and a default mode.

- Default settings are about how something is set up at the start.
- Default mode is about how the operating system underneath works, the way it naturally runs.

As Christians, we are all different, with our own settings, preferences and ways of living for Jesus. However, our default mode, the system that underpins our faith, is the same. It's centred on God's word. Today, we're going to explore what it might mean for obedience to God to be our default mode. That doesn't mean we all operate in exactly the same way, but at the core, we're built to run on the same system: obedience to God.

Ask:

- What's your default when you're stressed or tired?
- Can you think of an example where someone's 'default mode' really shows what matters most to them? Share it with the group.

 Bridge

Ask:

If someone looked at your life for a week, what would they say your default mode is? Would you be happy with that answer?

 Amplify

Say:

In today's Bassline, we continue to explore Bible stories traditionally aimed at children, often presented in a simplified way. Last time, with the story of Samson and Delilah, we saw that when we look closely, these stories are far from simple. Earlier, we thought about the idea of our default mode, the way we naturally respond when pressure comes. Today we've got another 'storybook' tale – Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace. On the face of it, this really shouldn't be a children's story, it's about people being threatened with death in a blazing furnace, but it remains a classic because everything turns out alright in the end. Let's compare the children's version with what we discover in God's word.

Leader's notes:

On a flip chart, create the following table:

	Children's Version	Bible
Who are the main characters? How are they portrayed?		
What's the main message?		
How is the threat and danger presented?		
What role does God play?		
How does the story end?		

Watch the following clip and record the group's responses in the 'Children's Version' column of the table.

Watch:

The Fiery Furnace – Saddleback Kids (3:47)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f7cCV-IELLY>

Say:

We're now going to spend time exploring Daniel 3, to discover how the Bible presents the story and consider what might have been missed in the children's version.

Leader's notes:

Divide the group into three smaller groups and allocate one of the following scripture passages:

Group 1 – Daniel 3:1-12

Group 2 – Daniel 3:13-18

Group 3 – Daniel 3:19-30

Ask each group to consider the same five questions and then provide feedback to the rest of the group. Only group three will be able to comment on the final question, 'How does the story end?'

Bring everyone back together and invite each group to share their findings. As they feed back, complete the 'Bible' column on the flip chart. Use the completed version of the chart (for the leader's use only) as a discussion prompt.

Ask:

What's the biggest shift you notice when we move from the children's version to the Bible passage?

Leader's notes:

Completed Chart for Reference

	Children's Version	Bible
Who are the main characters? How are they portrayed?	Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego – the brave heroes. The king – self-absorbed and petulant. Insisted on being worshipped by his people. Wise men – reported to the King that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to worship the statue.	Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego – ordinary men who obeyed. They don't defend God; instead, they state their refusal to bow. The King – Self-absorbed and in need of affirmation and praise. Daniel 3:1-7 almost mocks the King's need for pomp and ceremony.
What's the main message?	Be brave and trust God. He will rescue you.	Obedience is the sensible choice, even if there is no assurance of rescue. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were not certain of their rescue. Their words 'even if he does not' in Daniel 3:18, demonstrate that obedience was their default mode. Throughout the centuries, many faithful Christians have lost their lives while standing up for what they believe in. When we take a risk for God, rescue is not a guarantee. We are called to be obedient, regardless of the cost.
How is the threat and danger presented?	The furnace is scary but 'cartoonish'. The danger is softened for children. There is always an underlying feeling that everything will be okay.	There was nothing cartoonish about the furnace. In his anger, King Nebuchadnezzar demanded that the fire be seven times hotter. This only served to speed up the potential death of his victims and led to the immediate death of his soldiers.

What role does God play?	God sends someone into the fire ('looks like a god') and rescues them. God's main purpose in the story is as the rescuer to his faithful followers.	God's presence is in the fire, but rescue is not assumed. The key is his nearness, not just his power to deliver. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego walk into the fire knowing that they will probably die. A fourth person appears in the fire, often believed to be Jesus but certainly representing God's presence with the men.
How does the story end?	The King has a change of heart and praises God. He made a new rule that anyone who spoke against the one true God would be punished. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego got a promotion. Happy ending all round!	The King initially recognises the power of the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and calls on his people to show respect. He then commands that anyone who does not show respect must be cut into pieces and have their houses destroyed! King Nebuchadnezzar has no concept of what it means to worship the one true God.

Bridge

Leader's notes:

If the young people would like to explore another perspective on Daniel 3, then watch and discuss the following clip.

Watch:

Laughing with the Bible – Daniel 3:3-5 – N.T. Wright Online

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOtdkk-XAl8>



Sound Check

Say:

For Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, obeying God was not just an act of bravery. Their faith in God was so strong that obedience was simply their default mode. We don't face golden statues today, but we do face pressures to 'bow down', to fit in, to stay quiet, or to go along with things that don't match what God calls us to. Today we'll explore some of those pressures and think about what it might mean to keep obedience as our default mode.

Leader's notes:

In today's Sound Check activity, the young people will have the chance to explore the kinds of pressures we face to 'bow down' in everyday life and think about what it might look like to choose obedience instead.

For this activity, you will need to cut up the 'Scenarios handout' prior to the session.

Split the group into smaller groups of 3-4. Give each group a scenario card and ask them to briefly discuss the following questions (you may want to display these on a flipchart):

- What's the pressure in this scenario?
- What might 'bowing down' look like?
- What might obedience to God look like, even if it costs something?

Depending on the age and maturity of the groups, you may want to allocate the scenarios accordingly.

Say:

These scenarios are not straightforward, and there are no easy answers. The aim is to get you thinking about what it might mean to 'bow down' in our modern society.

Scenarios

1. In class, your RE teacher presents Christianity as outdated and irrelevant. Everyone nods along. You want to say more but worry about how your classmates will react.
2. In your form group at school, someone asks if anyone has ways of coping with stress. You want to say that prayer helps you, but you're concerned that people will laugh.
3. At a Uni Fresher's fair, the Christian Union invites people to an event. As you start to move towards the stand, your friend asks, 'You don't believe in that stuff, do you?'
4. During a TV debate, a politician quotes a Bible verse to justify a policy on immigration that directly contradicts the words of Jesus. A family member enthusiastically praises the politician for speaking the truth.
5. A song that everyone loves has lyrics that disrespect Jesus. People sing it loudly in the school corridor and look at you to join in.

6. In a WhatsApp group, people start gossiping and making cruel jokes about someone. They expect you to join in.

Allow five minutes for discussion and then bring the group back together. Invite each group to briefly share what they have discussed.

Ask:

- Which of these pressures feels the most real in your own life right now?
- What makes it difficult to resist?
- How can we encourage each other to make obedience to God our default mode?

Bridge

Ask:

What faith dilemmas are you currently facing that tempt you to 'bow down' instead of obeying?

Leader's notes:

This could be an opportunity for the young people to discuss possible ways to handle the situation and share their experiences.

Selah

Say:

We've thought a lot today about what it means for obedience to God to be our default mode, not something we switch on and off, but the foundation of how we live, even under pressure. That can sound daunting, but at the heart of it, it's about love. When we know Jesus obedience isn't just duty, it's devotion.

Leader's notes:

Invite the group to take this time to reflect on what they've heard today as they listen to the music. You may want to provide paper and pens so that they can write down or sketch what comes to mind. They may want to reflect on the following:

- As you listen, think about your own default mode. Is it obedience to God?
- What would it look like for your life to run on love and faithfulness to Jesus?

Watch:

Even Unto Death – Audrey Assad

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uAfp8vg4Jz8>

Coda

Say:

In a piece of music, the coda brings the different aspects of the melody, harmonies and bassline to a conclusion. It pulls together the different themes and often, but not always, brings resolution to a piece of music.

Ask:

As you reflect on everything you have learned today, what is your coda?

What is the one thing you will take away from this session that helps you think about obedience to God as your default mode?

Leader's notes:

Give the young people a moment to think about your question and briefly share their coda with the group before the session comes to an end.





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During a TV debate, a politician quotes a Bible verse to justify a policy on immigration that directly contradicts the words of Jesus. A family member enthusiastically praises the politician for speaking the truth.

A song that everyone loves has lyrics that disrespect Jesus. People sing it loudly in the school corridor and look at you to join in.

In a WhatsApp group, people start gossiping and making cruel jokes about someone. They expect you to join in.