At THE MOVIES

Life Group Leaders Guide

Directions

This packet contains the background information, series information, and weekly curriculum you will need to lead a life group during our *At the Movies* series. Everything on the this page is to help you stay connected to the series as a whole. Behind the this page is the individual curriculum to help you point people to Jesus. The *Purpose* and *Move* sections of the curriculum are for the leader to read or paraphrase to the group. The *Notes and Commentary* section is for the leader to get background information and go deeper into the passages before leading the life group. The curriculum was designed with your freedom in mind. Read through the curriculum and decide what will work best for your group. SOAP the passages with the group, use only certain questions, write your own questions, or use the curriculum verbatim. As the leader, you know what will point your people to Jesus.

Series Overview

From thrilling fight scenes that keep us on the edge of our seat to love stories that bring us to the verge of tears, movies have a universal touch that brings all of us together. At The Point, we want to harness that. We want to pair the captivating box office stories with the truth and relevance of scripture to point all people to Jesus. Enter *At the Movies*! Over the next four weeks we will be taking 4 major box office hits, utilizing their theme, and pairing them with scripture. This series will not only be entertaining and relevant but a great starting point for many people to make their way back to God. This series will coincide with some strategic outreaches to help our people invite friends, family, and neighbors to our church. So, grab some popcorn, find a comfy chair, and get ready for the show! This is going to be epic!

Life Group Overview

During the *At the Movies* series our life group curriculum will cover stories in the bible that share the same overarching story as the movie and scripture that was mentioned from stage. Unlike previous studies, we will try our best to keep the study focused around one major story or passage. This not only will allow the story theme of the series to seep into life group but will also make SOAPing the individual passages in group easier for life groups that want to go that direction.

*Church At The Movies* Series Schedule

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| **Week** | **Sermon Date** | **Topic of sermon** | **Topic of life group** |
| Week 1 | 7/16 | *Rogue One*: The book of Esther | Ruth 1:1-18 |
| Week 2 | 7/23 | *The Conjuring*: Luke 8:26-39 | Genesis 3:1-7 & Matthew 4:1-11 |
| Week 3 | 7/30 | *Beauty and The Beast*: 1 Corinthians 13 | Acts 9:10-19 |
| Week 4 | 8/6 | *Hacksaw Ridge*: Daniel 1 | Daniel 3:8-30 |

The Point Church Life Group Curriculum
**At The Movies - Week 4 - Daniel 3:8-30**

Purpose of Study

At some point in their life, every Christian will rub up against opposing viewpoints, morals, people, and belief systems where they will have to make a decision as to whether they are going to stand up for what they believe in or shy away in the face of danger. This week we saw Daniel choose to live a life honoring God even though it flew in the face of the way his culture was leaning. Tonight, we will continue through the book of Daniel and see three of his friends who also decided that living a life honoring God was more important than anything else...even their safety.

Flow of Study

**Optional Icebreaker:** Can you think of a time when you have stood up to someone who was trying to get you to do something wrong?

**Move #1:** Since the sermon series and life groups are covering the same topics, it might be a good idea (both for content and time) to begin the discussion with some unpacking questions from this Sunday’s sermon.

1. Did anything stand out to you from the sermon this weekend?
2. What is one thing from the sermon that you want to apply this week?
3. Why do you think understanding the importance of standing up for your convictions is so important for the believer?

**Move #2:** To begin let’s get some background on the passage we will be studying. Then we will break up the story of chapter 3 into three sections. This will make moving through the story and pointing out details easier.

**Background:** Daniel is a half historical narrative (chapters 1-6) and half revelatory prophecy (chapters 7-12) written by the prophet Daniel. In the beginning of the book, an enemy king named Nebuchadnezzar has recently taken over Jerusalem (Daniel’s home) and brought back some of the brightest and best people of Israel to study in his kingdom (Babylon). Daniel (and the three friends of his we will study tonight) are some of the people that were brought from Jerusalem during this time. In a new culture, these men are shown favor by God in regards to their wisdom, learning, and ability to interpret dreams. Although God shows them favor, their new culture does not and these men are forced to decide between what God is calling them to and what the authority above them says. In the chapter we will study tonight, King Nebuchadnezzar has made a golden image that all people are supposed to worship when they hear a specific sound. If someone refuses to worship that image, it is pronounced that they will be thrown into a furnace as punishment. This puts Daniel and his three friends (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) into a difficult situation because their God has asked them to not worship idols (see Exodus 20:4-6). Will they bow down and worship an idol or will they worship their God at the cost of their life? Let’s dig into Daniel 3 to see how everything works out.

**Read Daniel 3:8-12 (NIV)**

8 At this time some astrologers came forward and denounced the Jews.9 They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “May the king live forever! 10 Your Majesty has issued a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music must fall down and worship the image of gold, 11 and that whoever does not fall down and worship will be thrown into a blazing furnace. 12 But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up.”

1. What stands out to you from this passage?
2. We can tell from this passage that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were not overly public with their decision to not bow down to the image, however, it did not stop people from putting them in a tough spot. Have you ever experienced a moment like this where you stood up for what you believed in and other people were not happy with it?

**Read Daniel 3:13-18 (NIV)**

13 Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, 14 and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? 15 Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?” 16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, “King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. 17 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. 18 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.”

1. What stands out to you from this passage?
2. Reread the response from the three friends in verses 16-18. What does this tell you about the faith of the three friends?
3. What stands out to you from their dialogue and attitude with Nebuchadnezzar? How is the way they handle themselves in the situation Christ-like? What can we learn from this regarding our interactions with people while standing on our convictions?
4. Do you think the three friends being together helped spur on their faith? What does this tell us about our friendships and faith?

**Read Daniel 3:19-30 (NIV)**

19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual 20 and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. 21 So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. 22 The king’s command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, 23 and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.

24 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.” 25 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.” 26 Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, “Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!” So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, 27 and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them.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. 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. 29 Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way.” 30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

1. What stands out to you from this passage?
2. Did you notice how the only thing that was consumed by fire was the bonds that held them captive...and nothing else? Do you think there is significance to that?
3. Look at all the people who were affected by the friends faithfulness (verses 27 and 29) outside of just Nebuchadnezzar. What does this tell us about how God can use our faithfulness?
4. Reread verse 28. What has this event done to Nebuchadnezzar?
5. Obviously, all worked out well in the story but we cannot lose fact of the idea that the three friends had no idea that they were going to be rescued (reread verses 16-18 for proof) instead they viewed faithfulness to God as more important than their life. How does this idea sit with you?

**Move #3:** Now that we have dissected the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Let’s ask some closing questions to see how the story applies to our life and culture today.

1. What is something that stood out to you tonight that you are going to take with you?
2. This story, and all the others in Daniel, can be traced back to the very beginning of the book (Daniel 1:1-2a seen below). All of the issues began when the Lord delivered Jerusalem over to the evil king. Is this surprising to you? Is this encouraging to you? How can this be applied to all the difficult situations we experience in life?

1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.2 And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand…

1. It can be said that the overarching theme of the whole book of Daniel is that “in spite of present appearances, God is in control.” Did you see that in the passage we studied tonight? Why is understanding God’s control necessary for the Christian and their faithfulness?
2. I highly doubt you will be asked to bow down to an image tomorrow, however, what are some potential issues that the 21st century American Christian might face in their lifetime?
3. How should we face those potential future issues? How has the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego given us a great blueprint?
4. How will planning ahead and friendships help us remain faithful to God alone in the potential issues mentioned in question 4?

**Prayer:** End your study with a time of prayer where people can share prayer requests and be prayed for before they leave. If possible, please steer some prayer towards what your group talked about during this study.

Notes and Commentary

The following are pieces of commentary, facts, and links based on the passages of this study in order. Use them to help supplement your group time or for your personal preparation.

**Daniel 3**

* In chapter 2, God made known his great wisdom. Here, he will reveal his power. The story in this way will again support the overarching theme of the book of Daniel: In spite of present appearances, God is in control. The specific focus of this chapter is that God’s power transcends even death. This stirring story intends to bolster the courage of God’s people as they face was seems to be overwhelming odds. (Longman)
* **On verses 1-7:** Daniel 3 suggests that the king determined to solidify his dominion by unifying the many races and nations under his rule with a common religion and object of worship. This posed a serious threat to the Jews. Other nations, who believed in more than one god, simply added this idol to their list of deities to be worshipped. The Jews, however, worshipped God alone. They could not be faithful to their God and worship anyone or anything else. Humanly speaking, if the king’s command stood, it could mean the end of the Jewish faith. (Deffinbaugh)
* **On verses 1-7:** Nebuchadnezzar not only built the statue; he demanded a public demonstration of adoration. For this purpose, he issues a call for “the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials” to attend its dedication. With this rather imposing list of officials, we encounter a lengthy list that is repeated a number of times in the chapter. These lists appear ponderous to us, but their literary effect is to heighten the tension and the feeling of danger toward the three friends, who will soon be singled out of the group. As Fewell states it, “through repetition, the narrator creates a scenario in which conformity is normative, disobedience is unthinkable. (Longman)
* **On verses 8-12:** The counselors of the king, which would include the Chaldeans, may have been the next to bow in worship. The Chaldeans would have noted the failure of the three to fall down rather than the king or the other political leaders. They, after all, were on their faces before the idol. How could they look about for those who did not bow down? (Deffinbaugh)
* **On verses 8-12:** The Chaldeans were men who owed their lives to Daniel and his friends. Had Daniel not revealed the king’s dream and its meaning to Nebuchadnezzar, all of the wise men of the land would have been put to death. Now, they show their gratitude by pointing out the disobedience of the three Hebrews to the king. The Chaldeans’ opposition is not difficult to understand, given the goal of Nebuchadnezzar to use foreigners as a part of his administration. The Chaldeans were the “natives” of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar himself was a Chaldean. Daniel and his three friends were outsiders, yet they had higher positions in Nebuchadnezzar’s administration than the Chaldeans. The attack on the three Hebrews was an attack “against the Jews.” (Deffinbaugh)
* **On verses 9-12:** The text indicates that the three friends of Daniel could have gotten away with their nonconformance if it were not for certain enemies who turned them in. These informers are identified as “some astrologers” and probably were professional colleagues who hated to see the gifted foreigners rise so quickly and so high in the Babylonian government. They thought they had the perfect plan to do away with them...This account may be the first record of specifically religious persecution, but unfortunately, not the last. (Longman)
* **On verses 13-18:** There is a strong note of irony here. The Jewish captives of Babylon are in bondage because of their idolatry (see Isaiah 2; 30:19-22; 31:7; Jeremiah 8:19; Ezekiel 5:1-12; 6:1-10; 14:1-5; 16:15-23; 20:39-40; 22:1-4; 23). Israel was commanded not to make or worship idols, on penalty of death. Until their Babylonian captivity, they persisted in their idolatry. Idolatry was one of the reasons for their being in Babylon. (Deffinbaugh)
* **On verses 16-18:** The response of the Hebrew young men was respectful, but at the same time, heroic and theologically sound. They made no attempt to rationalize to themselves compliance to the king’s edict. Six aspects of their response are worthy of note. First, the young men refused to apologize for their action. “We do not need to give you an answer concerning this.” They were not being reckless. They realized that the king could snuff out their lives by one command; yet they were not afraid. These men had such a reverent awe for God that there was no room in their mind for fear of man. Second, the Hebrews confessed their allegiance to God. They referred to him as “our God whom we serve.” If ever there was a time to compromise their commitment to the Lord, this was it. Yet they stood fast, unashamed of their years of faithful service to their Creator. Third, they testified to God’s power. “Our God is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire.” The Hebrew conveys the strongest possible assurance. The thought might be paraphrased: “He is infinitely able to rescue us.” Fourth, the three also acknowledged the sovereignty of God. They said, “if it be so,” i.e., if he wills it; if it is part of his purpose for our lives. Fifth, they expressed confidence in the grace of God. “He will deliver us out of your hand.” If our deliverance is within his will he will bring it about. Finally, the Hebrews declared unwavering fidelity to God. “But even if he does not, let it be known to you that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.” The faith of these three youths was unconditional. Theirs was not a quid pro quo relationship with God. (Smith)
* **On verses 19-20:** Though the reply had been framed in a courteous manner, Nebuchadnezzar was “filled with wrath.” His fury was manifested in his face. He ordered that the furnace be heated “seven times more than it was usually heated.” The phrase “seven times” is a judicial expression indicating “to the legal maximum.”Certain valiant warriors were commanded to tie up the offenders and cast them into the furnace. The king knew that these soldiers would be sacrificed in the process of carrying out their orders. (Smith)
* **On verse 21:** Some scholars have suggested that this is a furnace near the plain of Dura that was used to make the great golden image in the first place. (Longman)
* **On verses 24-26:** The king, sitting at ground level, apparently could peer through an opening in the furnace. What he saw astonished him. He verified with his advisors the number of young men who had been bound and cast into the furnace. He declared that he saw four men walking about within the furnace. The ropes had burned off the prisoners, yet the flames had not harmed them. The king likened the fourth man to “a son of the gods,” i.e., a supernatural being ([3:24f.](https://biblia.com/reference/Da3.24f)). Jews identify the fourth man in the fire as an angel; Christians usually regard him as a Christophany, i.e., a manifestation of Christ. What a blessed thought this text suggests: The furnace of adversity provides an opportunity for the Lord to be close to his servants. (Smith)
* **On verse 28:** Nebuchadnezzar’s praise should not be regarded as the utterance of a truly converted soul. The king was impressed with the manifestation of the power, rather than the source of it. (Smith)