



GAME

Vegetable soup. (Use this game as an introduction to the lesson. Alternatively, you could play the game halfway through the lesson to break it up—especially if you have younger children—or at another appropriate time in your programme.) Have children stand in a circle. Give each child the name of a different vegetable. Choose one child to stand in the centre of the circle. Call out the names of two vegetables and those children swap places. The child in the middle tries to get to one of the vacant spots before one of the other children. The child left in the centre of the circle tries to take one of the vacant spots when you call the names of the next two vegetables. Repeat several times. To finish, call, “Vegetable soup!” All the children swap places.



LESSON

(Since this lesson is focused on Christian growth, the message of salvation is condensed. Reinforce the presentation of the Gospel at another point in the club, e.g., by explaining a Gospel song before you sing it together.)

INTRODUCTION

Put your hand up if you like to eat broccoli or spinach or carrots. (Allow response.) The young men in today’s lesson asked if they could just eat vegetables! (Look puzzled.) Let’s listen carefully to find out why.

PROGRESSION OF EVENTS

Many years before the young men were born, God had brought the Jews into the land of Israel. (Show on the Bible Timeline.) The Jews were God’s chosen people and God promised them that, as long as they obeyed Him, they would live in the land of Israel. For a long time they did honour God and obey His commandments, but then they turned away from the only true God. They started to worship idols instead. They were breaking the first commandment which says, “You shall have no other gods before Me” (Exodus 20:3).

CT

It is important to remember that God made us to bring honour to Him. That means we should obey God and respect Him. (You could write “honour = obey and respect” on a whiteboard/large sheet of card or show the wordstrip (page 3 in the Resource Pack).) He is powerful, holy and mighty. Can you think of any other words that describe our great God? (Allow the children to respond with a few suggestions. You might want to draw a circle on the whiteboard/large sheet of card and write the words inside.) We have such an amazing God! We should want to tell everyone about Him. Yes, God deserves to be honoured by you and me—and the Jews.

But they weren’t honouring God. Can you remember why? (Allow response.) God sent the prophet Jeremiah to warn the Jews that He would punish them

if they didn't stop worshipping idols. Jeremiah said, "The king of Babylon will come to Judah. He will destroy your cities and take you captive to his country" (from Jeremiah 20:4). Do you think they listened? **No!** *(Everyone shakes his head and says, "No!")* Do you think God kept His word? **Yes**, of course He did. *(Everyone nods his head and says, "Yes!")* If God says He will do something, you can trust Him to do it.

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon sent his soldiers to take over the city of Jerusalem. Let's say, "Nebuchadnezzar," together. *(Write the name on a whiteboard/large sheet of card or show the wordstrip (page 3 in the Resource Pack).)* The soldiers brought back special items taken from the temple, for example, the vessels that were used in worshipping the one true and living God.

Flashcard 1-1

The king also ordered his commanders to capture handsome, strong, healthy and intelligent young men from royal families and bring them to Babylon. They would eat the king's food and wine and receive training in the language and literature of the kingdom. After three years, the best ones would be chosen to serve the king.

Among those captured were four young men, probably about fifteen or sixteen years old. Their names were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. *(As you say the names, write them on a whiteboard/large sheet of card or hold up wordstrips (page 4 in the Resource Pack).)* Let's say their names together. Their names all had a special meaning about God. I wonder, do you know the meaning of your name? *(Allow response. Share what your name means if applicable or give a few examples.)* Daniel's name meant "God is my judge"; Hananiah's meant "The Lord is gracious"; Mishael's meant "Who is like God?" and Azariah's meant "The Lord has helped."

Guards led the captives into Babylon through one of the massive arched gates in the huge double walls surrounding the city. Behind the walls stood tall buildings, including a temple to the Babylonian gods, decorated with colourful pictures of lions, bulls and dragons. You can still see the remains of these pictures and walls today. *(If possible, show a picture of some ancient Babylonian architecture, such as the remains of the Ishtar gate.)* How do you think the young men felt, being so far away from their families and friends? *(Allow response.)*

Flashcard 1-2

The young men met Ashpenaz, the king's chief official. One of the first things he did was to give them new names. He changed Daniel's name to Belteshazzar, Hananiah's name to Shadrach, Mishael's name to Meshach and Azariah's name to Abed-Nego. *(You could write the new names beside the names you wrote earlier on the white board or add the wordstrips (page 3 in the Resource Pack).)* Their new names meant things about the false gods of Babylon. Why do you think the official gave them these new names? *(Allow the children to respond.)*

He wanted them to forget about their God! Would they forget? **No!** *(Everyone shakes his head and says, "No!")* Changing their names didn't change the sort of people they were. Most of the people of Judah did not honour the one true God anymore, so God had punished them by allowing Nebuchadnezzar to defeat them and bring them as captives back to Babylon. These four young men were different. They loved God and honoured Him and they would continue to honour God, even in Babylon. They were determined to trust Him and obey Him no matter where they were.

CTU

Do you honour God? You cannot truly honour God until you have trusted in Jesus to be your Lord and Saviour. Do you realise that when you disobey God's commands—like not honouring your parents or not loving God with all your heart—you are dishonouring Him and you deserve to be punished? God loves you so much, He sent His only Son to take your punishment when He died on the cross. Today Jesus is alive and will forgive you for all your sin. Honour God today by trusting in Jesus to be your Lord and Saviour.

CTS

If Jesus is your Saviour, honour God no matter where you are—in school, at home or with your friends. Be determined to obey God. **God gives His children strength to honour Him.** *(Show the central truth visual and have the children say it with you.)*

Flashcard 1-3

The young men were to live in the king's palace and eat the same food the king was eating. That was really special! The food was probably the very best in Babylon. Look at them sitting at the table. Imagine the smell from the delicious food as it wafted past their noses when the servants brought it in on the grand platters and set it on the table in front of them. *(Pretend to smell the air with the children and say, "Mmmm!")*

But the four young men probably looked at each other with concern. *(Show a puzzled face.)* You see, God had given the Jews special laws about foods they should not eat, some of which were probably being served on the platters. Also they knew that the custom in Babylon was to dedicate meat and wine to idols before serving it. Eating this food would not honour the true and living God because they would be disobeying God's commands. What would Daniel and his friends do? Listen as I read from Daniel 1:8 and tell me what Daniel did. *(Read Daniel 1:8a from your Bible.)* "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank ..." *(Allow response.)* Daniel was determined he would not defile himself by eating the king's food. "To defile" means "to make unclean or impure". The most important thing to Daniel and his friends was to keep their lives clean and pure before God, so they honoured God by obeying His laws about the food they ate. *(Background information: see Leviticus 11:41-47 and Leviticus 17:10-14. The Babylonians did not properly drain the blood from carcasses when preparing meat, which violated God's restrictions for His people. Deuteronomy 32:37-38 refers to the heathen practice of offering food to idols.)*