

Middle/High School Sunday School Lessons by

rfour.org

Year 4: Session 1 – Putting God First

Class 3: Daniel 1:1-21 – Competition Of The Diets

CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

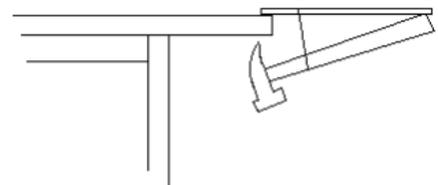
- Set the stage regarding the differences between cultures and their food (how the difference can be disorienting)
- Provide some background about Israelite diet restrictions (and point out that kosher food today isn't healthier than regular food – for example *Coke-a-cola* is kosher. However, kosher WAS healthier in earlier times mostly because of safety reasons)
- Illustrate how Daniel's trust in God (instead of trusting the country that defeated his country) as counter-intuitive – might seem like it won't work, but it did.

Materials needed:

1. Video clip (available on rfour.org where you downloaded this lesson) from *Buzzfeed*
2. Electronics that show the video clip
3. For experiment 1
 - a. A sheet of paper that you will drop
 - b. A book that you will drop – it will help if the book cover has more surface area than the previously listed piece of paper
4. For experiment 2
 - a. A 16 oz carpenter's hammer
 - b. A wooden 12 inch ruler
 - c. About 10 inches of string
 - d. Small piece of tape (any kind)
5. For experiment 3
 - a. two clear plastic disposable tumblers
 - b. have one of the tumblers filled with water

Set up for Experiment #2

- Make a small loop with about 10 inches of string that is strong enough to hold the weight of the hammer.
- Slip this loop around the handle of the hammer (if the handle is polished, you may need to tape the string in place around the handle to prevent sliding).
- Next, slide the ruler through this same loop.
- Put the "head" of the hammer towards the 1" mark end on the ruler.
- Depending on the size of your hammer, the string should rest between the 3" and 5" mark on the ruler.
- The edge of the handle should rest against the wooden ruler.
- The ruler and handle should form an angle of about 30 to 45



degrees.

- It is important that the head of the hammer extends beyond the edge of the ruler... an inch beyond the edge of the ruler should be more than enough.
- Now you should be able to carefully balance the device off the edge of a table.
- The hammerhead should be under the table surface that the ruler is resting on.

THE LESSON

OPENING PRAYER

OPENING QUESTION

- One of the things we do every class is ask and answer the opening question at the beginning of class – because it helps us 1. Learn more about each other and 2. Helps “warm us up” for some of the ideas in the upcoming lesson. So we’re going to do that now.
- So here’s the opening question for today’s class. I [the teacher] will ask the question and then to give you some time to think of an answer, I will answer first.
- Once I answer the question, we’ll go around the circle and each of us will answer.
- When it’s your turn, start with your name and then answer the question to the best of your ability.
- *Here’s this week’s question: What’s a healthy food that you like to eat?*

TRANSITION to VIDEO

- To continue with the theme of food, in today’s Bible story, we’ll read about how the main character, Daniel, has to eat the food of the country that defeated his country, Israel, in battle.
- And maybe that doesn’t sound like such a big deal.
- But just due to taste alone, this is a big deal
- Eating food from another culture or country isn’t always easy
- To help us think about how this isn’t easy, we’re going to watch some people eat food (from another country) that they’ve never tried before
- We’re going to watch some regular Americans try to eat sushi for the first time (sushi is a Japanese food centered around raw fish)
- Let’s see how they do.

WATCH VIDEO

ASK / TELL

- What eating utensils did they use? (some used their fingers, some used chopsticks)
- Why did some people use their fingers? (seemed like they didn’t know how to use them or they weren’t comfortable using the chopsticks)
- Were there different reactions to the same type of foods? (yes)
- Were there also some similar reactions? (yes, most of the people didn’t like the second dish, and most of the people thought the third dish was really spicy)

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- Has anyone here eaten sushi before? What did you think?

TRANSITION to Scripture Story

- We've been reading and discussing Bible stories in this first session of stories where the characters put God first: King David danced and Naaman eventually dunked himself in the Jordan river 7 times to be healed.
- So how will Daniel, the character in today's story, put God first?
- Hint: It will probably have something to do with food!
- As we read today's scripture story, keep in mind that the main character, Daniel, is probably somewhere between 16 and 20 years old, his country has been destroyed, and he now has to live in the capital of the country that defeated his country.
- On top of that, Daniel has to eat their food, too.
- This story probably takes place somewhere between 586 BCE and 580 BCE. Or, about 580 years before Jesus lived.
- Let's find out what happens

READ Daniel 1:1-21 (recommend class reads it out loud; one person per verse)

1In the third year of the reign of King Jehoiakim of Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. 2The Lord let King Jehoiakim of Judah fall into his power, as well as some of the vessels of the house of God. These he brought to the land of Shinar, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his gods. 3Then the king commanded his palace master Ashpenaz to bring some of the Israelites of the royal family and of the nobility, 4young men without physical defect and handsome, versed in every branch of wisdom, endowed with knowledge and insight, and competent to serve in the king's palace; they were to be taught the literature and language of the Chaldeans. 5The king assigned them a daily portion of the royal rations of food and wine. They were to be educated for three years, so that at the end of that time they could be stationed in the king's court. 6Among them were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, from the tribe of Judah. 7The palace master gave them other names: Daniel he called Belteshazzar, Hananiah he called Shadrach, Mishael he called Meshach, and Azariah he called Abednego.

8But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the royal rations of food and wine; so he asked the palace master to allow him not to defile himself. 9Now God allowed Daniel to receive favor and compassion from the palace master. 10The palace master said to Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king; he has appointed your food and your drink. If he should see you in poorer condition than the other young men of your own age, you would endanger my head with the king." 11Then Daniel asked the guard whom the palace master had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: 12"Please test your servants for ten days. Let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. 13You can then compare our appearance with the appearance of the young men who eat the royal rations, and deal with your servants according to what you observe." 14So he agreed to this proposal and tested them for ten days. 15At the end of ten days it was observed that they appeared better and fatter than all the young men who had been eating the royal rations. 16So the guard continued to withdraw their royal rations and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.

ASK

- Verses 1 & 2 – Can you tell what's happening here? (the army of Babylon, led by Nebuchadnezzar, have attacked Judah – the southern kingdom of Israel – and won. They destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple, and in the process either destroyed or took the Ark of the Covenant.)
- Verses 3 - 5 – What was "done" to the young men from the royal families that lived in Jerusalem? (they were educated and trained to serve the king of Babylon)

- Verse 5 – “Royal rations of food and wine” – doesn’t sound so bad, does it? (But remember the opening video though – just because food is considered royal in one country doesn’t mean it is going to taste good to someone from another country.)
- Verse 8 – What does Daniel ask of the palace master? (Daniel asks for food that does not defile him – in other words, there are diet rules the Israelites have that the Babylonians aren’t aware of)
- Verse 10 – What is the palace master’s reply to Daniel? (I can’t do it because you’ll look worse than the other servants and I’ll get in trouble)
- Verse 12 – So what does Daniel propose? (An experiment! Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego will eat vegetables and drink water and everyone else will just keep eating what they are eating)
- Verse 15 – Who won the test?
- Verse 16 – So was Daniel and company allowed to keep eating Daniel’s proposed diet? (yes)

TELL

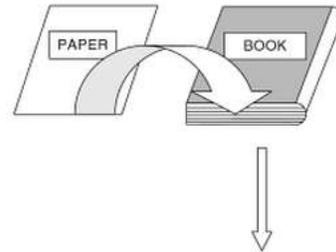
- **First**, let’s review some of the dietary rules / laws that Daniel is referring to.
- When Daniel talks about being defiled by the food, he is referring to dietary laws that came from Moses, who lived about 800 years before Daniel
- These dietary laws are included with other rules/laws that can be found in the books of Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus and Deuteronomy.
- These laws are referred to as Mosaic law (as in: law from Moses’ time) or more commonly as the Torah (which is Hebrew for The Law).
- Some of the dietary rules are about not eating certain animals (like pigs, rabbits, reptiles) and birds of prey (like hawks, owls, etc.). These animals were considered “unclean” food.
- So -- why did God give the Israelites these food rules?
- Well, we’re never really told why. But here are two reasons to consider.
- One, it made the Israelites a unique people.
 - Food wasn’t as easy to obtain as it (mostly) is for us. So most people, most countries didn’t have rules about NOT eating something. You ate whatever you could get your hands on. To be choosy about your food was very rare. In other words, you are what you eat.
- Two, when we take what we know TODAY about food and cooking and diets and then apply that knowledge to the dietary guidelines that God gave to the Israelites, we see that...
 - ...God’s diet is much safer than other cultures’ diets at that time (for instance, cooking technology at that time could not reliably and consistently cook pork hot enough to kill the trichinosis parasite often found in pork that is deadly to humans)
 - ...God’s diet was also healthier – as we see in today’s story, although that’s not the main point of today’s story
 - Note that the healthiness aspect is no longer true – just because food is called “kosher” today doesn’t mean it is healthier – just about all soda pop, for instance, is kosher.
- **Second**, what Daniel is doing here is very difficult and brave.
- He’s in his enemy’s country, in the king’s court, the king of the enemy that defeated his country – and Daniel is able to say, “I’m not going to eat what you are eating” -- this is like telling pro athletes: “I’m not going to eat what you eat, even though your diet seems to be working very well for you.”
- That’s a very scary thing to do and say – especially when you might get in big time trouble for saying it.

- But also notice that Daniel was clever about bringing it up – he didn't boast about how his diet was better, he just asked if they could do an experiment.
- **Third**, the experiment part is very clever because the experiment helps to illustrate a counter-intuitive concept to the palace master and gives the palace master a chance to say yes to a small thing rather than yes to a big thing.
- A counter-intuitive concept is when a person initially thinks they know how something works, but then discovers that the thing works quite differently than they thought.
- So in today's story, the palace master thinks that because he works for the king of the most powerful country in the world, then they must have the best food / diet.
- Daniel illustrates to the palace master that this is not 100% correct.
- To help us think some more about counter-intuitive concepts, let's do a few of our own experiments.

DO Counter-Intuitive Experiments

Experiment 1

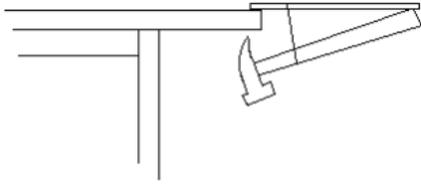
- We'll start with a simple one
- We have a piece of paper and a book
- I'm going to drop them at the same time – one from each hand.
- Which item do you think will fall faster? (everyone should say book)
- *[drop them – book will fall faster]*
- Well done – now I'm going to put the paper on top of the book and drop it again.
- Do you think the book will still fall faster? (let the class discuss)
- *[drop book with paper on top of it. Note: No edges of the paper should extend past the book's edges. Book and paper will drop at same speed]*
- This one may not have been too counter-intuitive since most of us know that the pull of gravity is equal upon all objects (at this distance and size), but air pressure/friction is what interferes with the paper falling at the same speed as the book.
- We reduced the friction of air pressure by putting the paper behind the book



Experiment 2

- [Show the hammer and ruler set-up as described at beginning of lesson]
- [Hold the ruler with both hands, one hand on each end of the ruler while you talk]
- We're going to find the balance point of this ruler
- We're going to balance the ruler off the edge of this table
- How far off the table do you think we can place this end of the ruler?
- In just a moment, I want everyone to put their hand up.
- Then, I'm going to start at the middle of the ruler at 6 inches, and count up (or down) to the end of the stick where the head of the hammer is.
- Once I say the number where you think the ruler will balance, lower your hand, and remember the number you lowered it on.
- Any questions?
- OK – everyone put your hands up and I'll call out the numbers *[take the poll]*
- Now that everyone has voted, let's see where the balance point of the ruler is.

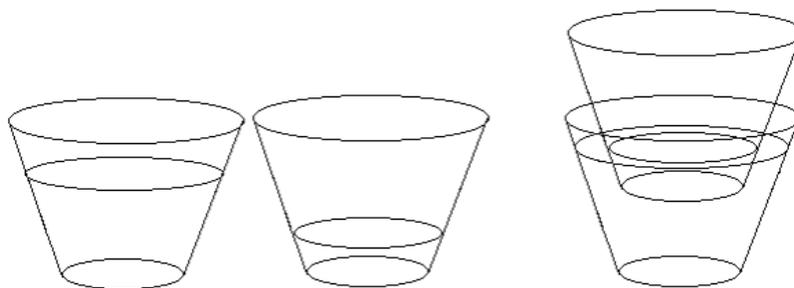
- [Balance the ruler from the side of the table. If you placed the hammer correctly, practiced some ahead of time, you should be able to balance the ruler at about the 1/16th mark]



- Who guessed that!?
- This works because the center of mass (somewhere near the hammerhead) is under the supporting end of the ruler on the tabletop. It looks deceiving because much of the size of the ruler and handle is suspended off the edge of the table, but most of its mass is just in one spot way on the far end

Experiment 3

- OK, last one!
- [Show the two tumblers – one empty and one almost filled to the top with water.]
- What do you think will happen if I gently place this empty cup into the cup with water? (take guesses)
- [Place empty cup in cup with water. Empty cup will float]
- Good guesses!
- Now, I'm going to pour about 1/3rd of the water from this cup to the empty cup. [do that]
- What do you think will happen if I gently place this cup with 1/3rd water in the cup that's 2/3rds full of water? [take guesses]
- [Place 1/3rd-full cup in the 2/3rd-full cup with water]
- Well, did you expect that?
- Ok, let's reverse it – what do you think will happen if I place the cup with 2/3rds water into the cup with 1/3rd water? [take guesses]
- [Then place the 2/3rd-full cup with water in the 1/3rd-full cup]
- And...did you expect that?



Explanation of why the cups worked together to set the “water line” to where it started when just the one cup was full (note, it's a little technical and maybe not needed): *This is a vivid example that floating objects are buoyed up with a force equal to the weight of the water that they displace. Since the disposable tumblers are nearly weightless compared to the water that we are working with, the weight of the floating object is equal to the weight of water it contains. Therefore, it always floats so that the water level inside is equal to the water level outside. Since the volume of water that has been removed from the first cup is the difference between the present water level and the original mark, the water will always rise to its original level when the other glass is floated on top.*

TELL

- So ends our session of characters in the Bible who put God first.
- We saw that these characters put God first for different reasons: Joy (King David), a desire to be healed (Naaman and his servants), and trust (Daniel).
- We then saw that because they put God first, they (or the people around them) experienced God's better way of life.
- And like we saw with today's story, putting God first is something we can do experiments with.
- Consider trying one of the following for 10 days
 - One way to practice putting God first is by making time each day to be still for five minutes, and during that time of silence give thanks to God in that time for whatever comes to mind.
 - Read one Bible story a day.
- Instead of thinking about doing these things as big lifetime changes that you are making – just turn it into a 10 day experiment, follow through with it and see what happens, how you feel, etc.
- There might be some other 10 day experiments that we talk about during this year, but I hope you give this one a try. We might even talk about it in our next class.
- See you next week!

CLOSING PRAYER