



PREVIEW

Have you ever been in a place where you didn't fit in, and you felt as conspicuous as a clown at a funeral? Going against the crowd can be just as awkward.

Draw two lines, making one slightly longer than the other. (Ahead of time: tell everybody, except for one person, to vote for the wrong line. Be sure to choose someone who won't mind being singled out.) Point to each line, one at a time, instructing everyone to raise their hands when you point to the longest line. Did the person who wasn't told how to vote give in to the pressure to follow the crowd?

PRAISE

Listen to Forever Jones's song "He Wants It All." (You can find it on YouTube.) As the song plays, think of things in your life you need to surrender to God.

PARABLE

Nathan Zohner, a fourteen-year-old high school student, made the news with a science fair project titled "How Gullible Are We?" He informed fifty ninth-grade students of the dangers of a chemical called dihydrogen monoxide, which is responsible for thousands of deaths every year. It's colorless, odorless, and tasteless. It's a major component of acid rain, and it causes erosion to our natural landscapes. It has also been found in cancerous tumors.

PARABLE *(continued)*

Forty-three students favored banning this chemical, and six were undecided. Only one recognized the truth: that “dihydrogen monoxide” is just a fancy name for plain old . . . water. Zohner’s experiment illustrated how easy it is for human beings to mindlessly follow a crowd.

PRESENT

In I Peter 2:11 (KJV) we are called “strangers and pilgrims.” This is because the world isn’t really our home; we’ll never completely fit in. Being loyal to God’s truth often makes us stick out in uncomfortable ways. It’s much easier to be swept along with a crowd than to fight against it. As Daniel 3 shows, doing the right thing sometimes requires sticking out and being willing to take the heat.

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, besieged Jerusalem and took captive many of its finest and smartest Hebrew citizens. This group included three youths named Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Even though they had been ripped from their homes, these three young men impressed the king so much that they were eventually given positions of high esteem in the province of Babylon.

One day, Nebuchadnezzar made a huge golden image and called all the leaders of the provinces to come to the image’s dedication. The crowd was told that when music played, they were to fall down and worship the image. If they didn’t, they would be thrown into a red-hot, blazing furnace. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to worship anything or anyone other than the one true God, even in the face of death. When the music played, they did not bow.

PRACTICE

Naturally, there were tattletales watching, and they ran to tell Nebuchadnezzar. The king flew into a rage. "If you don't worship the image," he yelled at the Hebrews, "you will be cast into the fiery furnace! I'd like to see the god that can deliver you out of that!" The three Hebrews didn't hesitate to say, "King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us. But even if He doesn't, we want you to know that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

The Bible never promises that doing the right thing will be easy—or that we will be protected from pain, disappointment, and ridicule. But I Corinthians 16:13 (NIV) says, "Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong." (Check out more promises in I Corinthians 2:9.) Just remember nothing you endure on earth is too high a price to pay for the awesome treasure of spending eternity in the presence of God. (If you want to know how the story ends for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, read Daniel 3:19–30.)

PRAY

God, give us the courage and commitment to live for You in hard times. Let us be willing to take the heat for what we believe and not to be swayed by peer pressure. Thank You for allowing us to be in relationship with You, and for Your promise to never forsake us.

PLUS

Take a few minutes to watch this fun video:
www.fervr.net/videos/i-just-want-to-fit-in