How to Stand Against the Odds (Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego)

Statement of Purpose: It is so easy to give up in our Christian walk because of Satan's effective traps. These three men show by their lifestyles how to stick to your faith against all odds.

Introduction: Cheating on an exam, reading and looking at pornographic magazines and websites, practical jokes (that sometimes hurt) are some of the things Christians face privately. Experimenting with drugs, participating in dirty jokes, and pressure to conform are some things Christians face from friends. Both result in misery, if you fall to the pressure. Happiness, freedom, and security are what you experience when you learn how to stand against the pressure and face it head on with God's help. It may be a tough tunnel to crawl through, but the other side is fantastic.

Opening Activity:

Most of your students know the basic facts of this story, so try one of these:

1. Pick out some key kids to mime (act the story without words). Let the rest guess what Bible story is being portrayed.

2. If you don't have enough students to act it out, play "charades." Either you, or a student you've chosen can use the rules of charades and have the others guess the story.

Bible Study:

(The reason for going over the story in advance is because the story is simple, and most of your students basically know it.) What we want to look at in the text are five steps to take in working through trials--five steps to standing successfully against the odds.

Step 1 -- Recognize the Trap (Daniel 3:1-12)

In the days of Daniel and his three friends, kings often thought of themselves as gods. It was not uncommon for the people to literally worship their king as a god. Nebuchadnezzar decided he would be a god and have the people worship him. Satan knew he could use this as a trap for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. (A little history ... Israel was conquered by Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar was its king. These Israelites knew that if they were to survive they had to obey the rules of the land and this rule was one with deadly consequences. 3:6)

Very often, Step 1 is the most significant step to standing. You must recognize the trap to avoid it. If a fish knew a hook was inside that worm, he wouldn't bite. If a mouse knew biting that cheese would snap the trap, he wouldn't bite. We often rationalize a situation and don't see the trap...until it's too late! If you want to learn how to stand, don't rationalize. To rationalize is to talk yourself into believing it's OK and that it really won't hurt you.

Step 2 -- Expect To Be Tested (Daniel 3:13-15)
The king gave Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego a chance to repent (change their minds). It reminds me of the pressure of friends like ... "Come on, just one sip," or "What's the matter, scaredy-cat," or "If you love me, you will." Satan knows your pressure points, so you might as well admit them too. Don't fool yourself into thinking that if you ignore a situation, it will go away. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego expected to be tested, and they were. So will you!

**Step 3 -- Stand** (Daniel 3:16-18)

How did these three guys respond to the king?  "My church doesn't allow me to do this." NO.  "My parents won't let me ..." NO.  "I just don't think this is right." NO.  This is the tough part. But if you expect God to do His part, you have to do your part. Discuss with students how they can take a response like verses 17 and 18 and apply it to their situations.

Again, you don't rationalize. Stand for the Lord and watch what happens next.

**Step 4 -- Expect To Prove Your Faith** (Daniel 3:19-27)

OH! You thought I was going to say something easier. No, in fact, you may have to go through the fire. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did go through the fire, literally. Most often, you will have to endure ridicule, laughter, verbal abuse, and sometimes worse. But, realize as you go down in the fire, the Spirit of the Lord God is with you. Just like our three friends, keep this in the back of your mind. "When you go into the fire, you're in good company." You may have to quote verses to stay encouraged, you may have to find a Christian friend, or you may even have to get your parents support; but if none of these human supports are available, remember your three friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego -- they made it through, you will too!

**Step 5 -- Watch God's Great Rescue** (Daniel 3:28-30)

You've never lived an exciting life 'til you stand for the Lord and hang in there until God rescues you. You remember Peter? He gave up half way out to Jesus on the water and sank. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego hung in there and God helped them the whole way through. THE WHOLE WAY! The result was, our three friends came out without even the hint of smoke--and God was glorified before the king and all his people.

**Application:**
In this present society, as a student, you can be sure you will be tested, tempted, and mistreated if you give even a hint of standing for Jesus. God guarantees if you rationalize your way out, you'll get burned anyhow. If you learn to stand for Him, you'll come out not only unburned, but smelling like a rose. God will do His part if you do yours. Don't give up at Step 1, 2, 3, or 4 though. Stick to the Lord, follow His principles (steps) and you'll do fine ... make that, great! Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did. Daniel did the same thing in chapter 6. God took care of them, He'll take good care of you!