

LESSON

03

IF GOD LOVES THE WORLD, WHY DOES HE LET BAD STUFF HAPPEN?

TODAY'S

BIBLE BASE

Just for Teachers

Bold Bible Truth

GOD IS ALL-POWERFUL.

(1 Chronicles 29:11)

“I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.”

(John 16:33)

- **Three bold, faithful men trust God in an evil world.**

Daniel 3:1-30

Create a Bold Classroom Environment

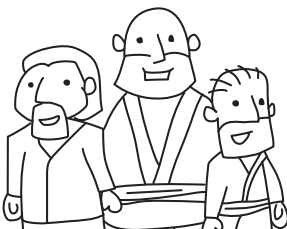
Reading the BE BOLD Values aloud is a reminder that your class is a safe place.

Pray for Your Preteens

Pray for your preteens' safety—physically, emotionally, and especially spiritually. Write your prayer here.



Your preteens live in a world where the threat of school shooters prompts regular lockdown drills. They've also learned that friends watch out for one another. So why would God—who's supposed to be a friend—not stop all school shooters? Today you'll help your preteens discover God's not to blame for evil they see in the world and that, ultimately, everything will turn out all right.



THIS LESSON AT A GLANCE

Section	What Preteens Do	Supplies	Easy Prep
Begin Boldly (about 10 minutes)	Enjoy a snack, review BE BOLD Values, report on Mystery Missions, and add bad-stuff issues to the whiteboard/poster board.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BE BOLD Values poster • snacks • scissors • transparent tape • markers • whiteboard or poster board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tear out pages 7-11 from Bold Action Student Books.
Game (about 10 minutes)	Play King of Hearts and then discuss good and bad choices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deck of cards 	
Question of the Week (about 20 minutes)	Dig into Daniel 3 to explore choices made in that chapter.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bold Action Student Books 	
Bold Action (about 15 minutes)	Make reminders to trust God even when bad stuff happens.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bold Action Student Books • scissors • pencils • transparent tape 	
Bold Blessing (about 5 minutes)	Receive a prayer blessing and a Mystery Mission.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mystery Mission Cards • Mystery Mission Stickers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fold a Mystery Mission Card for each preteen, and use 3 Mystery Mission Stickers to seal each card.



BEGIN BOLDLY (ABOUT 10 MINUTES)

Arrival Activity

Greet preteens warmly as they arrive. Enjoy a snack together.

Provide scissors, transparent tape, and sheets of gold paper from pages 7-8 of the Bold Action Student Books. Encourage kids to use their creativity to each create a gold statue. Drift around, admiring their progress and asking kids if they could win a gold statue for sports, acting, singing, or something else, what they'd pick. You'll get to know them a bit better!

When you're ready to move on, put away the snacks and art supplies.

Welcome Kids

Say: **Thanks for being here today! A couple of things for you to know as we spend time together:**

Point out the BE BOLD Values poster and read it aloud to kids.

You're accepted just as you are.

We respect each other's thoughts and struggles.

We're all in this together.

God is here, ready to be your friend because you matter!

Mystery Mission Reports

Say: **I love hearing what happens on your Mystery Missions, so fill me in! On my last Mystery Mission...**

Share a brief story about your last Mystery Mission; then ask kids to share with the larger group what happened on their last missions.

Question Collection

Say: **Thanks for sharing your stories!**

Today we're talking about this:

Write on the board: Why doesn't God stop bad stuff from happening?

❓ **If God's all-powerful and he's our friend, why doesn't he stop bad things from happening?**

Ask kids to call out bad things they'd like God to stop from happening. Write those concerns on the board. Have enough markers so kids can write their own concerns on the board, too.

Say: **There's a lot of bad stuff I'd like God to keep from happening: cancer and car accidents, for instance. Plus all these things you've mentioned.**

Today we'll explore why God doesn't stop all bad things from happening. Is it because God doesn't love us enough? that God isn't paying attention? Or is there another reason?

It's a big question—and we'll dig into it. But first, let's play a game I call King of Hearts.

GAME (ABOUT 10 MINUTES)

King of Hearts

Have preteens sit on the floor and form a circle. Shuffle a deck of cards and spread out the 52 cards, facedown, within kids' reach in the circle as you give instructions.

Say: **The goal of this game is to pick up and turn over the king of hearts. You'll take turns, around the circle, picking one card at random and turning it over.**

The person who picks up the king of hearts wins and will be called "Your Majesty" the remainder of the hour.

Go around the circle and have each preteen predict how many cards will be turned *before* the king of hearts is found. Have kids say their number



PRETEEN POINTER

Fear is real for preteens. Fear of the future, of being bullied, of embarrassment, even of dying by violence at school. Be gently reassuring as you deal with the emotion in today's topic; you may not know the depth or breadth of the tough stuff your kids face at home or school.



PRETEEN POINTER

Be careful not to shame kids who haven't followed through with Mystery Missions, but do encourage them to give them a try. It's fun!

aloud—1 to 52—so everyone hears it. The preteen whose guess is closest will be referred to as “Master Guesser” the remainder of the hour. It’s your job to keep count of cards turned as the game is played.

Say: **If you pick up a card that’s not the king of hearts, just toss it over your shoulder. You’ll have three seconds to pick up a card and either yell “I win!” or toss your card and then we’re on to the next person. Go too slow and you lose your turn!**

Ready?

Pause and then ask which kids have a birthday in either March or October.

Say: **Sorry—you can’t play. Scoot back, and those of you left tighten up the circle.**

If the game ends after a few card turns, put all cards back in the circle and, after mixing them up, play again with the queen of spades as the target card. This time exclude kids born in February and December.

When you’ve finished playing, gather the cards and ask the entire group:

❓ **How did you like me choosing whether you could play?**

❓ **If I kept you from playing, how did you feel about me at that moment?**

Say: **We usually like to make choices for ourselves, and we *don’t* always like the people making choices for us.**

The problem is that people—including us—don’t always make good choices. I’m sure you can remember times you’ve made not-so-good choices, but you’ve also made *great* choices.

Turn to a neighbor and tell about a time *you* made a good choice. Maybe you chose to help someone, or you chose the right person as a friend.

Allow time for pairs to talk.

Say: **Thanks for sharing your stories. I love that we get to do that here!**

Let’s meet some people in the Bible who made choices and see if *their* choices were good...or not so good.



**IF GOD LOVES
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QUESTION OF THE WEEK (ABOUT 20 MINUTES)

Distribute pages 9-10 from Bold Action Student Books to each preteen.

Say: **Back when God’s people were slaves in Babylon, three Jewish men worked for the king when the king built a golden statue. The king decided everyone had to worship the statue or else they’d be burned alive.**

The men—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—knew it was a bad thing to worship a statue. So they were bold: They decided to worship only God.

But God didn’t take that bad thing away by making the statue fall over or disappear. God didn’t make a choice for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; he left it to them to choose what to do.

There were other people in this story who made choices, too.

Form your kids into pairs, and assign one of the three roles you'll find on pages 9-10 of the Bold Action Student Book to each pair. It's okay to have more than one pair discussing a role.

Tell pairs to read and discuss their passages.

When kids have had time to talk, ask pairs who talked about the king to report back to the larger group, sharing what they talked about. Then ask to hear from pairs who discussed the astrologers, and then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Thank kids for sharing their insights. Your encouragement and affirmation will help them know they're valued and that they can contribute to your class.

Say: **Let me tell you how the story ended.**

The king *did* toss Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into a red-hot furnace. But instead of bursting into flames, they walked around without even getting a blister.

When the king looked into the furnace, the king saw not three but four people inside. Maybe the fourth figure was Jesus or perhaps an angel. We aren't sure.

The king called Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego out of the furnace—and they didn't even smell like smoke!

The king was so impressed that he declared nobody could say anything bad about God, and then he gave better jobs to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

It turned out well—but could have turned out differently. The three men were probably glad God saved them, but they told the king they'd trust God even if it meant getting burned up.

❓ **What do you think of what they said about trusting God—and why?**

Allow several kids to respond.

Say: **God didn't stop the king from making a bad choice to build a statue, pass a bad law, or toss God's three friends into a furnace.**

God didn't stop the astrologers from tattling on Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

God didn't stop anyone from making a good or bad choice.

Ask your whole group to discuss:

❓ **Why do you think God lets us make choices—even bad choices?**

❓ **How does that freedom to choose show God's love for us?**

After you and your kids talk about this, continue.

Say: **God's three friends went through some bad stuff. God's friends *still* go through bad stuff. Maybe you or someone you know is going through a hard time right now.**

Have kids form pairs and then discuss this:



PRETEEN POINTER

Having kids work in pairs or small groups makes for chatter but also for discovery. It's okay if things get a little loud—that's the sound of learning! You're making sure everyone gets to think and participate.



PRETEEN POINTER

Younger preteens might struggle with this question. Honor their responses, but be certain they hear that God gives us the choice whether to love and obey him—or not.



PRETEEN POINTER

Pairing up helps preteens develop positive, powerful life skills as they practice listening to and supporting one another.

Say: **Tell about something hard you or a friend is going through. You'll each have just a minute or two to talk. I'll let you know when half the time is up so, if the second person in your pair hasn't shared, he or she gets a turn, too.**

Allow time for kids to talk; then ask them to silently pray for one another. Close the prayer time by praying:

Pray: **Thank you for hearing us, God. Thanks for caring. In Jesus' name, amen.**

Say: **Thanks for praying for your partner. Here are a couple of questions for us to tackle as a whole group:**

- ❓ **Why do you think God doesn't take away bad stuff in our lives?**
- ❓ **What good came out of the bad stuff that happened to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego?**

After you and your kids talk, continue.

Say: **Thanks for your thoughts.**

The bad stuff Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego went through gave them the chance to choose to trust God. It helped a lot of people hear about God. It helped our three friends become even better friends with God.

Many years later, Jesus told his followers they'd go through bad stuff, too. He said, "I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."

Bad stuff like what's on our board shouldn't be a surprise. It happens—and like our three friends, we can choose to trust God anyway. Like them, we can keep what's most important in focus: our friendship with God. It's that friendship that can give us eternal life. It's that friendship that gives us hope and comfort. It's God who overcomes the world—who's bigger than any fiery furnace we may face.

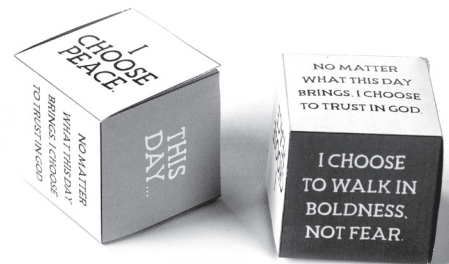
God is more powerful than tough stuff. GOD IS ALL-POWERFUL, more powerful than any bad thing that can happen!



BOLD ACTION (ABOUT 15 MINUTES)

Your preteens will create reminders that they—and everyone at their homes and in your church—can choose to trust God when bad stuff happens.

You'll guide kids in creating a cube they can use when they're leaving home in the morning. When they see and touch it, they'll be reminded that while they may face bad stuff, they're not alone. They don't have to be afraid. God is more powerful than any bad thing that can happen!



They'll use page 11 of their Bold Action Student Books to make two cubes, one to take home and one to place on a table or shelf at church.

Decide if you and any adult volunteers you recruit will accompany kids around the building as they distribute cubes. Check with your ministry leader to determine how to best distribute cubes; be sure you're working within your ministry's safety guidelines.

After kids have made and placed cubes and everyone is back together, ask this question:

? **What's your take-away from today's session? What do you think you'll remember?**

Say: **Jesus tells us bad stuff happens sometimes. But we can do what our three friends did: We can trust God when bad stuff happens.**

When we trust God, we don't have to be afraid of what might happen. We know we won't be alone and that everything will turn out okay because no matter what happens, GOD IS ALL-POWERFUL, more powerful than any bad thing that can happen. His love is forever, and when we're friends of God we have a home with him in heaven. We can be bold!



BOLD BLESSING (ABOUT 5 MINUTES)

Pray

Have kids stand, face away from you, and close their eyes.

Pray: **God, sometimes it's hard to make good choices. And sometimes it's hard to trust you when bad stuff is happening in our lives.**

Help us be like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Help us choose to trust you no matter what.

With your eyes still closed, please turn around so you're facing me. Keep your eyes closed but turn toward the sound of my voice. (Pause.)

Help us always turn toward you, God.

Help us hear your voice and always choose...you.

In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Send-Off Cheer

Have kids stand in a circle with their hands in the center, like a sports team. Let kids know that, when you finish the Bold Blessing, they'll raise their hands and shout "Let's be bold!"

Say the Bold Blessing: **Receive this Bold Blessing: May you trust God—always. May you feel his hand on your shoulder—always. May bad things that happen remind you that, because of Jesus, you have a home with God in heaven—always.**

Now say it with me...Let's be bold!



Mystery Mission

Say: **Keep trusting in God, no matter what happens, good or bad. The cube you've made to place near the door you use to leave home in the morning will remind you of that. Touch it as you pass by.**

Many Jewish people attach a mezuzah by their doors for much the same reason—it's a reminder of who they are and who they trust.

Take home a Mystery Mission Card. You can open it as soon as you get home—and then complete your mission!

We'll talk about what happened next time you come.

Distribute a Mystery Mission Card to each child. Take your own card home and complete the challenge, too!