

# UNBOUND

## STAND UP | STAND OUT

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, “King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.” Daniel 3:16-18 (NIV)

## What Would It Look Like for Us To Be UNBOUND ?

### Know Your IDENTITY

More than ever before, technology has made it possible to live a double life. We hide behind our profiles and statuses, only showing the world the parts of us that we find acceptable. We can be whoever we want to be online, never needing to reveal who we really are. We allow our value to be determined by what we wear, how unique we can make ourselves, or how many “likes” we receive. But God knows us to be so much more. Because of Christ, we are sons and daughters, victors and friends. Our identity is in One who loves us as we are and who freely forgives us for what we are not. God is calling us to find our identity in Him and to courageously show our true selves to the world, proud of who we are and unafraid of how we may be received.

### Confront the IDOLATRY

Idols today may not be made of gold or sit on our mantels, but continue to be defined as anything in our lives that we put before God, that we dwell on more than Him. God deserves our complete faithfulness, but often we split our devotion among other things. Where our admiration, dedication, and passion are, there our hearts are also, whether it’s the phone in our pocket, winning the championship game, or getting into that prestigious university. When our goals, activities, or desires take priority over our relationship with God, they can become idols in our lives. Modern idolatry may be more sneaky or harder to define, but is just as destructive. God is calling us to give our heart to him, undivided, that we may live freely and rightly. Let’s start by casting aside the things that get in the way of knowing Him more.

### Respond in BRAVERY

It was profound commitment that compelled Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to remain standing, refusing to bow before any other god, no matter the consequences. Their actions were so powerful that the course of an entire nation was changed. Elijah, assured of God’s power and existence, fearlessly challenged hundreds of prophets of Baal. Esther confronted the king of her land on behalf of God’s people. Paul boasted of Christ to whomever would listen. Peter stepped out on water. How is God compelling you to respond? How can you expose injustice, defend the oppressed, or commit to integrity? You may not be facing a fiery furnace, so what does it look like to be brave in the small things, the every day things? Stand up with Christ and you’re sure to stand out - just 20 seconds of bravery can change your life, the lives of those around you, and who knows... maybe even a nation.

## MORE TO EXPLORE

**Peter Steps Out on the Water**  
Matthew 14:22 -33

**Elijah Challenges the Prophets of Baal**  
1 Kings 18-19

**Joshua Leads Them into the Promised Land**  
Deuteronomy 31:1-8

# UNBOUND

STAND UP | STAND OUT

There Are More

# MARTYRS TODAY

Than Ever Before in History

## Many of Our Brothers and Sisters Are Persecuted

Our theme this year is rooted in the biblical record of three young men who were thrown into a fiery furnace because of their belief in God. Miraculously, they were saved.

Their story resonates strongly in our world today because so many believers are being imprisoned, tortured and killed for their faith. Literally thousands of Christians are murdered each year. Countless more are persecuted in subtle and not so subtle ways.

Most likely, your students will have never experienced any sort of real persecution. And most likely they'll be relatively unaware of what's happening in places like Syria and Nigeria and the fifty other restricted and hostile nations where Christians are truly suffering.

Why am I telling you this? Because I think we need to be sensitive. We need to be aware of and acknowledge the real truth about persecution, and not just use this theme as a metaphor. Now don't get me wrong, we believe God wants to use this Unbound theme to help our students understand that they don't have to be trapped by their sin. They don't have to be entangled by poor self-image and encumbered by habitual sin.

But I think it would be disrespectful to those that are suffering to just think of the scriptures in metaphorical terms. Persecution is real. Our brothers and sisters in Christ suffer things we can't even fully imagine.

By the grace of God, I pray that none of our students will ever literally face death for their faith. I hope none will have to bow down or be shot. But let us all recognize that many of our brothers and sisters around the world are having to be brave in the face of the unimaginable. Let's not cheapen their faith. Instead, let's be aware, and as the author of Hebrews writes, let's:

***“Remember those in prison, as if you were there yourself. Remember also those being mistreated, as if you felt their pain in your own bodies.”***  
Hebrews 13:3 (NLT)

So what does this mean for your Mission Adventures ministry? I don't know, exactly. I'm not suggesting that you have to somehow make your students feel something for the persecuted church around the world. I'm not saying that you even have to educate them on the specifics

of what's happening, (although, that might be a great idea). I am saying that we need to treat this theme with respect. And I'm saying it would be good for you to get before the Lord and ask him how he feels about this and what your response can be in the context of *Unbound*.

Peace,

Craig

Here are some resources with more information about persecution around the world:

[persecution.com](http://persecution.com)

[ijm.org](http://ijm.org)