

January 14, 2018

A Bold Faith

Daniel 3:19-23, 26-28

Four-year-olds Jia Sarnicola and Zuri Copeland believe they are twins. Jia's mother says, "They have a long list of reasons why to back it up." For example, they are the same age, and their birthdays are close together. Because they believe they are twins, they "insist on matching outfits whenever possible," which their mothers indulge. At a recent birthday party, however, an older child said they could not be twins because "they don't have the same skin color." With tears in her eyes, Jia replied, "You don't know what you're talking about. . . . We're twins because we share the same soul."¹ When confronted with societal pressure to view themselves a certain way, the young girls stand up for what they believe in.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego demonstrated great courage and boldness in standing up against Nebuchadnezzar's declaration that all people bow down to a man-made statue. In this week's lesson, our author writes, "We will face challenges to our faith and those who try to pressure us to compromise our worship and faith."² While we will likely never face the choice between faith and a fiery furnace, we do face certain societal pressures to deny what we believe and why we believe it, especially when living out our faith means speaking up for people who are oppressed and ostracized in our society.

Jia and Zuri teach us that we learn many discriminations as we grow up. They remind us that we are more alike in our souls than our skin reveals. All of us are children of a loving Creator, and we need to work harder to see that in one another.

1. Have you had a friend who was closer to you than a sister or a brother? In what ways does society discourage us to seek and build relationships with people who are different from us?
2. When have you faced societal pressure to deny what you believe? When have you faced pressure to stop serving or loving a neighbor in need? Why does our faith call us to speak up for those who are silenced by society?
3. In what ways are we more alike inside than our outsides reveal? How can we capitalize on our similarities to make a more loving and caring world?

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¹From "Bonded by Friendship, Preschool 'Twins' Swear They 'Share the Same Soul,'" by Steve Hartman at CBS News ([cbsnews.com/news/preschool-twins-jia-sarnicola-zuri-copeland-on-the-road/](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/preschool-twins-jia-sarnicola-zuri-copeland-on-the-road/)).

²From *Adult Bible Studies*, Winter 2017-2018, by Chuck Aaron (Cokesbury, 2017); pages 53-54.