Daniel and the Lions



Scripture Reference: Daniel 6

Suggested Theme: God loves when we honor him by being trustworthy and hardworking, just like Daniel.

Memory Verse: “In all the work you are doing, work the best you can. Work as if you were working for the Lord, not for men.” Colossians 3:23 ICB

Story Overview:

The Medo-Persian Empire conquered the Babylon Empire. Darius was the new ruler of Babylon. When he saw that Daniel had served Babylon well, he appointed him a government official for Medo-Persia. Soon, he considered putting Daniel in charge of the whole government. Other jealous officials plotted against Daniel and put Darius in a position where he was forced to have Daniel thrown to the lions. God saved Daniel from the lions and caused Darius to show respect toward the Lord.

Background Study:

Although many visual aids depict Daniel as a young man when he was in the lion’s den, he was actually an older man. Sixty-six years had passed since Daniel was a young man in King Nebuchadnezzar’s court.

When the Medes and Persians conquered Babylon (the night of the handwriting on the wall), many things changed for the Jews. The king of the Persians was Cyrus. Cyrus’ policy was to let some of the Jews return to Jerusalem. This fulfilled God’s promise that the Jews would return to their land after 70 years of captivity.

Many Jews returned to Jerusalem, but some, like Daniel, decided to stay in Babylon. Daniel was a well-respected elderly statesman. He had served Nebuchadnezzar and his descendants. Now, he was given a place in the new Medo-Persian government.

As the last verses of Daniel six mention both Darius and Cyrus, the reigns of these kings could have overlapped. If this was so then Darius might have at least been the king over Babylon. The king of the Medes, King Darius, was the king when Daniel was thrown to the lions.

Darius saw that Daniel was intelligent and well-respected, so he gave him an official title and job as one of the three administrators over the 120 satraps that oversaw the country. His work impressed the king, and he was considering appointing him as head of the government. This made the other officials jealous. They searched for ways to ruin Daniel’s reputation before the king.

Daniel not only had a good reputation – he lived up to it. His enemies could not find anything to criticise him for. Since they could not find fault, they focussed on something else – Daniel’s faith. Daniel had been faithful to the Lord his whole life. Using the legal system to catch Daniel seemed logical. If they could make

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his faith illegal, he would surely be a lawbreaker and make the king angry.

A group of administrators and satraps flattered King Darius by suggesting that everybody in Babylon must bring their requests to him alone. Neither man nor god was to be asked for anything for a month. The plotters probably had such a law written out, and with a little persuasion, Darius signed it.

Daniel knew about the new law, but he kept on praying to God just as he had always done. His enemies easily caught him in the act. The plotters said Daniel had broken the new law.

The king saw how he had been tricked. He was about to lose his best helper because of his own foolish law. He spent the day looking for some way to evade the law and save Daniel. But there was no way. Under the law of the Medes and Persians, once a law was made, it could not be repealed (verse 15).

The king finally ordered Daniel be put into the lions' den. Knowing Daniel's devotion to God, Darius hoped that God could and would keep Daniel alive. The official seals were placed on the den's entrance. It would be a crime to break the official royal seal, so no one would dare try to rescue Daniel.

After a sleepless night, the king hurried during the early dawn to check on Daniel. Darius went to the lion's den and called down to Daniel. He shouted his question without waiting for the stone to be moved away. Had Daniel's God saved him?

Daniel was alive! God had chosen this way to let the king know that He was alive and powerful and that Daniel belonged to Him.

Darius ordered everyone in the kingdom to honour Daniel's God (verses 26-27).

Way to Introduce the Story:

Ask younger children what noises various animals make. Then, ask them what sound a lion makes. Once they have given you some good roars, tell them that some lions sound like this: mmmm (hold your lips together and try to roar). That's how the lions in today's story sounded.

The Story:

Cyrus, the king of the great Medo-Persian Empire, conquered the Babylonian Empire. He appointed Darius as the new ruler over the city of Babylon.

King Darius wanted to appoint the best men as his new government leaders. He noticed a Jewish man named Daniel. Daniel was a very hard worker, trustworthy, and never cheated anyone. He always acted responsibly. King Darius appointed Daniel as a special helper to the king.

Daniel worked very hard for the king. He was never lazy. He always tried to do his best. Daniel did a good job because he knew that God would want him to work with all his heart. Soon, Daniel was doing such a good job that King Darius decided to make him ruler over the other helpers in the kingdom.

King Darius liked Daniel, but the king's other helpers did not! They thought the king favoured Daniel over them. They wanted to get Daniel in trouble. They kept trying to find Daniel doing something wrong so they could tell Darius. But they never saw Daniel doing wrong. Daniel always worked hard. He loved God, and he prayed to God.

Finally, the king's helpers devised a plan to get rid of Daniel. If they could get the king to make a law about praying to God, then they could trap Daniel.

The helpers went to King Darius and gave him lots of compliments. They told him that he was so good he was like a god. They said that all of the king's helpers wanted the king to make a law. (That was not true because only a few of the king's helpers wanted the king to make a law.) They said the law should say that no one would be allowed to pray to any god for one month. They could only pray to King Darius. If anyone

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disobeyed the law, they should be thrown into a pit full of lions.

King Darius liked this idea and thought it was very important. He wrote the law down and signed it. Since the king signed it, everyone had to obey it. It was the law of the Medes and Persians that once a king signed a law, it could not be changed. The king could not even change it.

When Daniel heard about the new law, he was very sad. He had always tried his best to serve the king, but Daniel knew he could not pray to King Darius. That would be wrong. He could only ever pray to the one true God. Usually, Daniel prayed to the Lord three times each day. He decided to keep praying like he always did.

But this time, the king's other helpers were ready! They had been watching Daniel, and they knew when he prayed. They went straight to the king and told him about it.

King Darius was very sad. Now he knew that his helpers had tricked him, but he could not change the law. He ordered Daniel to be thrown into a lion's den. Before he put Daniel inside, he said, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!"

Daniel must have been very frightened when he was put with the lions. The lions could eat him up! Then it got very dark because a stone was rolled over the entrance of the den. A seal was put on the stone, and wax melted onto it. The king pressed his ring into the wax to form a seal. Anyone looking at the seal would know that no one was allowed to move the stone and help Daniel.

During the night, the king could not eat or sleep. He kept thinking about his helper, Daniel. Early the next morning, the king rushed to the lion's den. When he got near the entrance, he yelled to Daniel, "Daniel, was your God able to save you?"

Then, the king heard Daniel's voice. He was alive! Daniel said, "During the night, the Lord sent an angel to come and shut the lions' mouths. It is a miracle, and I am alive!"

When Daniel was taken out of the den, there was not one scratch on him. The king was so happy that Daniel was alive. He was not happy, however, with his other helpers. He did not like it because they had tried to trick him. He ordered all the bad helpers to be thrown in the lion's den.

Then King Darius ordered everyone to respect "Daniel's God."

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using various methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible, but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection or other group participation.

Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Click here for visual aids and more storytelling methods.

View this slideshow and download it from the original source:
http://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/daniel-lions/

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Review and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story. Reflection questions encourage them to internalise the meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child's spiritual development and help them connect to God. Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.

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Review:

- Why did King Darius trust Daniel? (Because Daniel was a hard worker and did his best. Daniel never cheated)
- What did Daniel do three times every day? (Prayed to God)
- What kind of law did the king's other helpers get King Darius to write? (If anyone in the kingdom prayed to anyone other than the king for a month, then they would be thrown in a lion's den)
- How did King Darius feel about throwing Daniel in the lion's den? (He was very upset. He did not want to throw Daniel in the lion's den)
- Why couldn't King Darius refuse to throw Daniel in the lion's den? (In this kingdom, once a king made a law, even he could not change it)
- Why did Daniel not die in the lion's den? (God sent an angel to shut the lions' mouths)
- What did King Darius tell everyone to do after Daniel survived the lion's den? (He told everyone to respect 'Daniel's God')
- What did King Darius learn from this event?
- What did you learn about God from this story?

Reflection:

- What question do you have for God about this story?
- What is something you wonder about in this story?
- If you were Daniel, would you have kept praying to God even though it was against the law, and you would be eaten by lions?
- How do you think Daniel felt when he was thrown into the lion's den?
- What do you think the lion's den smelled, looked, or felt like?
- How do you think the lions acted once the angel shut their mouths?
- God is pleased when we are like Daniel- honest, trustworthy and hard-working. Who do you know that is also like this?
- Are you honest, trustworthy and hard-working? Which one of these do you need God's help with? (Suggestion: pray together about this)

Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a life-long friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. A variety of prayer methods are found here.

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Song Suggestions:

- Good Old Daniel Song
- I'm in the Lord's Army Song
- Books of the Old Testament Song
- Refer to the Song Page on this website for more song options.

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Activities and Crafts:

- How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation.
- Visit the activities and songs pages for additional activities and crafts.

Activities:

- Look up facts about lions in Babylon or Palestine (check a bible commentary or encyclopaedia).
- Have a roaring contest to see who has the best lion roar. Before the contest, work out a signal by which everyone stops roaring when God shuts their mouths – something like a peace sign.
- List some adult and children's jobs and responsibilities on the board (teacher, shopkeeper, housecleaner, cleaning your room or washing dishes) Now, divide the board into two columns. Title one column "Just do the job" and the other "work with all your heart, as to God." Let the children describe how each listed job can be done in these two ways.
- Play a game to memorise the verse. Write several choices on cards (Like singing the verse in an opera voice, whispering the verse, or asking another child to say the verse, etc.) Repeat the verses a few times, let the children draw the cards, and follow the instructions. Click here for other ideas to help children memorise scripture.
- Let one of the children retell the story while the other children provide sound effects.

Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable "God's Story" printable reflection page. Free printables for this story.

Crafts:

- Have children draw a simple lion's face on paper and then glue a mane. There are several ways to make the mane: glue cotton wool on it and then paint it brown, cut long, thin strips of brown paper and then "curl" the strips before gluing them onto the lion, or use fake fur.

Print and use these free bookmarks, trading cards or timelines. Free printables for this story.

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Other Online Resources:

- Colouring page with text (Ministry Spark)
- Colouring page (Christian answers)
- Craft: Doorknob hanger (Sunday school crafts)
- Craft: Printable yarn lion craft (Sunday school crafts)
- Craft: Paper plate lion (DLTK)
- Craft: A selection of lion crafts (DLTK)
- Craft: Paper bag lion puppet (First school)
- Craft: Lion mask. (Enchanted learning)
- Various activities and crafts (Church house collection)

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Date
2026/11/18

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