

Daniel In The Lions' Den

Daniel 6:1-28

MEMORY VERSE

DANIEL 6:26

“For He is the living God, and steadfast forever.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Pencils and paper to write or draw on.

Crayons or colored pencils, a “Lion’s Mask” template for each child, scissors, poster board, glue stick, and tongue depressors.

ATTENTION GETTER!

A Den Full of Creative Writing/Drawing Ideas

The children can create a story, skit, or picture (depending on age) about the experience of Daniel in today’s lesson. You will need pencils and paper to write or crayons/markers to draw. You probably want to limit the stories to one paragraph. You may want to display the writing or pictures on the bulletin board in your classroom. Perhaps you can display the children’s work on large paper boulders cut out from construction paper to make a den. Here are some suggestions to get started on the stories:

1. DANIEL’S DIARY – Pretend to be Daniel. Write a diary entry Daniel might have written after finding out about the new law. Write another entry Daniel might have written after spending a night with the lions.
2. A LION’S PRAYER – Write a prayer you think would be appropriate for a lion to pray before meals.
3. DANIEL’S DILEMMA – Write a skit entitled “Daniel’s Dilemma” about Daniel’s experience. Choose some classmates to help you to perform the skit.

4. BIBLICAL LION TAMER – Describe what you imagine the scene was like when God sent an angel to close the mouths of the lions (*good one for drawing).

5. PRAYER SCENE (for drawing) – Draw a picture of Daniel praying to his God with his window open towards Jerusalem.

LESSON TIME!

Have you ever done something wrong, and had to be punished for what you had done? It has happened to all of us. Have you ever been punished for something that you did right? In today's lesson, we will see that Daniel faced the death penalty, not because he did something wrong, but because he did something right in God's sight.

Here's a question to ponder: "If you were arrested for being a Christian would there be enough evidence to convict you?" In Daniel's life there truly was. Today, we are going to see what happens as Daniel stands up for his belief in God. **Let us purpose to do what is right, even in difficult situations.**

DANIEL 6:1-3

It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom one hundred and twenty satraps, to be over the whole kingdom;

and over these, three governors, of whom Daniel was one, that the satraps might give account to them, so that the king would suffer no loss.

Then this Daniel distinguished himself above the governors and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king gave thought to setting him over the whole realm.

After the death of King Belshazzar, Darius ruled the kingdom. Darius appointed 120 princes, or satraps, over the Babylonian kingdom. A satrap was a Persian official who could rule over a large province or over a small group of people. Darius also appointed three men to oversee the satraps so "that the king might not suffer loss" (possible political power and loss of money).

Darius placed Daniel as chief officer over the whole of his realm; by doing so, he caused the other high officers of state to be jealous and hate Daniel. Note in verse 3, "An excellent spirit was in him." Daniel had an excellent attitude. It does not appear that Daniel had any problem with jealousy of the other two overseers. Darius planned to promote Daniel to a position of authority in Babylon second only to his.

What a good example Daniel is for us. His life Daniel's good example causes us to want to examine our own lives. Do we have a good attitude when we are working or serving people? Do we have a good attitude towards those in authority over us? Daniel's good attitude came from his relationship with God, for he loved God with all of his heart, mind, soul, and strength.

DANIEL 6:4-9

So the governors and satraps sought to find some charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find no charge or fault, because he was faithful; nor was there any error or fault found in him.

Then these men said, "We shall not find any charge against this Daniel unless we find it against him concerning the law of his God."

So these governors and satraps thronged before the king, and said thus to him: "King Darius, live forever!"

"All the governors of the kingdom, the administrators and satraps, the counselors and advisors, have consulted together to establish a royal statute and to make a firm decree, that whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions.

"Now, O king, establish the decree and sign the writing, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter."

Therefore King Darius signed the written decree.

Imagine doing a good job, being faithful, kind, diligent, and wise and yet everyone is upset with you. What would you do? Daniel's good attitude and excellent work had brought him favor with King Darius, who sought to set him as second in command over the whole kingdom, but it evoked anger and jealousy in the others. They tried to find reasons to accuse Daniel in regard to government issues. They could not.

Since the men could find no fault with Daniel in his position, they looked at his private life. They discovered no negligence or corruption in him. Not only did Daniel display integrity at work by being faithful, but he also possessed personal integrity and purity. The men concluded that the only way they could find some kind of charge against Daniel was in regard to his God.

It is a good thing to check our lives and see if what we say we believe is what our actions reflect. The Lord desires us to pursue integrity, which will manifest itself in both our public and private lives. James 1:22 tells us, "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."

So the governors and satraps, being very proud themselves, appealed to King Darius' pride. First they lied to him saying that all the governors, princes, counselors, and administrators had agreed to not allow the worship of anyone except the king for thirty days (Daniel was not consulted, of course). They added that being thrown into the Lion's den would punish any violators of this law.

The men purposely deceived the king, concealing from him the intention of the decree; the decree was certainly not made in order to show their allegiance to Darius! In order to be sure their evil intent was secured, they asked the king to put the edict into writing so that it might not be changed in any way according to the law of the Medes and Persians. In those days, when the king signed a law, nothing could change it (the king was thought to be an incarnation of a deity or a god and was honored as such).

The Bible warns against flattery and pride. King Darius, blinded by his own pride, signed the document, without careful thought about it.

Truly, Daniel has been put in an interesting situation. How will he react?

DANIEL 6:10-15

Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his window open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.

Then these men assembled and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God.

And they went before the king, and spoke concerning the king's decree: "Have you not signed a decree that every man who petitions any god or man within thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?" The king answered and said, "The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter."

So they answered and said before the king, "That Daniel, who is one of the captives from Judah, does not show due regard for you, O king, or for the decree that you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day."

And the king, when he heard these words, was greatly displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him; and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him.

Then these men approached the king, and said to the king, "Know, O king, that it is the law of the Medes and Persians that no decree or statute which the king establishes may be changed."

Note verse 10: "Now when Daniel *knew* that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days." The knowledge that his unwavering commitment to God could cost his very life did not stop Daniel.

Note, the satraps knew Daniel well. They knew of His love and commitment to God and that the threat of death would not cause him to stop praying. Now, they had him! Or, so they thought.

His enemies secretly watched him and immediately reported his disrespect of the king's command to the king. They reminded the king of his law, and then pointed out that Daniel, one of the captive Jews, had not regarded the king's command, but had continued to pray to his own God.

King Darius did not get angry with Daniel for praying to his God; rather, he was very sad that he had made the law. The king knew and valued Daniel highly. He was immediately "greatly displeased" and set his mind on delivering Daniel; and even until sunset he kept exerting himself to rescue him (verse 14)."

Darius' governing officials would not give up. They came to the king and said, "Know, O king, that it is the law of the Medes and Persians that no decree or statute which the king establishes may be changed." Both Darius and Daniel knew that they had been legally trapped. Daniel knew the king had to obey the law he made; yet, Daniel would not compromise. **Let us purpose to do what is right, even in difficult situations.**

Take note also in verse 10, prayer was Daniel's custom—a firmly established habit. Consistency in his prayer life was the key to Daniel's strength and commitment to God.

The Lion Game

Choose four children to be lions and one child to be Daniel. The remainder of the children will surround Daniel. Have Daniel stand in the middle of the room. The remaining students (non-lions) will form a circle around Daniel facing out. Their job will be like the angel in our story, to protect Daniel from the lions. The four children chosen to be lions will be outside of the circle. They will try to tag Daniel through the circle of protection.

When you say go the lions can try to get to Daniel any way they can by reaching through the line of protection. They cannot however hit or break through. They can only tag Daniel either over the children in the line or under (legs, feet, etc.).

DANIEL 6:16-22

So the king gave the command, and they brought Daniel and cast him into the den of lions. But the king spoke, saying to Daniel, "Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you."

Then a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signets of his lords, that the purpose concerning Daniel might not be changed.

Now the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; and no musicians were brought before him. Also his sleep went from him.

Then the king arose very early in the morning and went in haste to the den of lions.

And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to Daniel. The king spoke, saying to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?"

Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever!

"My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you."

King Darius did everything possible to spare Daniel from execution, but Daniel was found guilty. The law the king signed was clear; for thirty days, anyone who made a petition to any god or man other than Darius would be punished by death in the lions' den. The king could not change the law once it was decreed, so he could do nothing but carry out the punishment. Thus, soon after sunset, Darius commanded that Daniel be cast into the lions' den.

An Old Testament scholar, C. F. Keil, describes what archaeologists have discovered about lions' dens in ancient Morocco, giving us a good idea of their design during Darius's reign. The lions' den "consists of a large square cavern under the earth, having a partition-wall in the middle of it, which is furnished with a door, which the keeper can open and close from above. By throwing in food they can entice the lions from the one chamber into the other, and then having shut the door, they enter the vacant space for the purpose of cleaning it. The cavern is open above, its mouth being surrounded by a wall of a yard and a half high, over which one can look down into the den."

The testimony of Daniel, and perhaps, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, no doubt had left its imprint on the heart of King Darius. For after Daniel is thrown into the den of lions, for he cries, "Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you!" The king knew that he could not deliver Daniel, but he knew that Daniel's God could.

The king was distressed and could not sleep or eat because of Daniel. He went to the lions' den first thing in the morning and with a very heartbreaking voice called to Daniel, hoping that his God had indeed delivered Daniel. Imagine how happy the king was when he heard Daniel say, "O king, live forever! My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you."

It does not seem that Daniel was worried or afraid of being in the lions' den. Although he was still standing in the den with the lions, Daniel carried on a calm conversation with Darius, who was looking down on him from a position of safety. The king could not save Daniel from the lions' den, but Daniel's God could and did save him. **Let us purpose to do what is right, even in difficult situations.**

Consider Daniel—his love and commitment to God, his strength of character. But more importantly, consider Daniel's God! For Daniel's dependency on God was clearly evident in his life. Knowing where his strength came from, he was consistent and faithful in his devotional life. Daniel's commitment to pray three times daily was a pattern that even his enemies recognized. Daniel sought God's wisdom and words as he stood before kings or found himself in difficult situations. Daniel allowed God's law to be seeded deeply within his heart. Thus he "purposed in his heart" as a young man he would obey God and not eat the king's meat. He was not afraid to speak God's Word boldly to kings. He refused to compromise in his devotion to God, even if it cost his life.

Daniel's faith was a testimony to Darius and all those around him. Do our lives testify to others of the greatness and goodness of God? When tough times come, and they will, will you remain steadfast like Daniel? Allow God's law to be seeded deeply in your heart—read your Bible! Recognize God is your source of strength—pray every day and in every situation! Purpose in your heart to obey God, not to compromise when the world seems to offer an easy way out. Allow God to accomplish His plans through you. **Let us purpose to do what is right, even in difficult situations.**

Lion Mask

For this craft you will need crayons or colored pencils, a template for each child (provided in the curriculum), scissors, poster board, glue stick, and tongue depressors.

Give each child a template. Allow them to color and decorate their lion any way they wish.

After decorating, have them cut out their lion. Next they should paste the lion onto poster board (NOTE – as an option you can copy the templates onto white cardstock and avoid this step).

Cut out the lion design from the poster board.

Next cut out holes where the eyes are. Glue a tongue depressor to the bottom of the lion. You now have a lion mask.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to rely on God to help them purpose to do what is right even in difficult situations. Pray they will read the Bible, allowing God's Word to be seeded deep within their heart, and develop a consistent prayer life. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity.

