

## **Daniel and the lions.**

Children will enjoy the drama and suspense of this story. Will Daniel keep praying? Will God save him? There's lots of potential for being creative, it's great for acting out and provides wonderful opportunities for discussions on standing up for your beliefs and not succumbing to peer pressure. We have used the story to learn about the Christian practise of prayer and to look at the character of Daniel and consider what we can learn from him.

The broad aims of the sessions are to enable the children to:

- enjoy the story and use it to help them work out Christian beliefs about God.
- Recognise the Christian belief that God saves his people (remembering they previously discovered this in the David and Goliath story).
- Learn about the Christian practice of prayer.
- Begin to understand that Christians believe the Bible tells them how God wants them to live.
- Explore what it means to be trustworthy.

These resources are aimed at first level.

Lessons:

1. Storytelling – learn and explore the story.
2. Daniel prayed – what is prayer?
3. Exploring Daniel's character – how does God want Christians to live?

Other ideas:

1. Drama
2. Feelings
3. Modern day – standing up for what you believe
4. Art and craft
5. Beliefs
6. Quiz

**The Bible Passage: Daniel 6**

Key points from the story:

- Christians believe God saves his people.
- Daniel's character reveals more of what Christians believe. They can trust God to protect them. God is more important than anything else. They should obey God first. God helps Christians in their jobs.

Experiences and Outcomes

**I can recognise that this story is from the Bible which is a special book for Christians.**

**I can use the story to help me understand more about Christians' beliefs about God. (God saves his people. God can be trusted. God should be the most important thing in their life. God helps people in their jobs.)**

**I can explain what prayer is.**

**I can write a prayer as if I was Daniel.**

**I can explore Daniel's character and my understanding of being "trustworthy".**

**Session 1: Storytelling**

**Resources required:** crown, “words” for story characters, words written out for ‘Daniel’ to hold (see below), children’s Bibles, “character speech bubbles” for each group, set of quotes from story for each group. Scissors. Glue.

### **Learning Intentions:**

Daniel and the Lions is a story from the Old Testament in the Bible.

I can remember the story and match quotes from the story with the characters who said them.

This story can teach me more about the Christian belief about God.

### **Outline for the session.**

#### **1. What do we already know?**

Brainstorm together what we know about Christians, the Bible and God. Do we already know the story of Daniel and the Lions? It’s a story from the Bible. It’s in the Old Testament.

#### **2. Tell the story**

*Involve children by choosing one to be King Darius (crown him as King!), some to be the advisers, one to be Daniel, and others to be the lions. Have their words written out for them. Get them to act out the story as you go along.*

Some of God’s people (the Israelites) had been captured and taken to a country called Babylon. The Babylonians didn’t believe in God.

Even though the Israelites were far from home, God had not forgotten about them. He was still looking after them.

King Darius was the new King of Babylon. He soon realised his country was too big for him to look after all by himself. He was a wise King so decided to appoint some helpers.

How proud they were. Chosen by the King. They thought “we are amazing” “we are super important” “we are in charge of the country” “look how great we are”

Daniel was an Israelite. He loved God. King Darius made him one of his helpers. Now God had made Daniel clever, and able to understand difficult things and King Darius quickly realised that Daniel was the best helper. So King Darius made Daniel in charge of the whole Kingdom.

But, there was a problem. The other helpers. They didn’t like this. They wanted the King to like them best. How do you think they felt? (*Ask the children for their thoughts and write them down for the helpers to hold. e.g. annoyed, jealous, fed up*)

They whispered together “let’s get rid of him”. So they spied on Daniel, they wanted to catch him doing something wrong so they could tell the King and get him into trouble. Maybe they would catch him .... But they couldn’t. Daniel was FAITHFUL, RESPONSIBLE, TRUSTWORTHY. (*have these words written out for Daniel to hold.*) They couldn’t find anything at all.

Except there was one thing. Every day. Three times a day – no matter what – Daniel went to his room, closed the door and prayed.

“That’s it” they thought. They had a plan to get rid of Daniel. They went to the King and said “Let’s make a new law – no-one is allowed to pray to anyone except the King.”

Anyone who does must be thrown into the lion pit”. The King liked their idea. If everyone prayed only to him it would make him even more important. He didn’t know they were tricking him. So he made the new law.

Daniel heard about the law. He knew it was wrong to pray to anyone except God. He had to do what God said, even if it meant he would die. So Daniel went to his room, closed the door and prayed.

The other helpers were watching. They spotted Daniel praying and rushed off to tell the King.

The King was sad, he had been tricked. He didn't want to hurt Daniel. He liked him. He was his best helper. But the King couldn't change the law, and so he let the soldiers throw Daniel to the lions. "**May your God, who you love so much, rescue you!**" the King said.

The King went back to his palace but didn't sleep a wink. He was so worried. He tossed and turned, got up and down and up and down, and as soon as it was morning he ran to the lions pit.

What had happened there? Well God had rescued Daniel. He had sent an angel to close the lions mouths. Purring. So when the king shouted "**Daniel, has your God saved you?**" He heard a big "**Yes!**" coming out of the pit.

The King brought Daniel out of the pit. And threw the other helpers in. What do you think happened to them? And then the King made a new law "Daniel's God is the living God, the true God, the real God. He is the God who rescues. Pray to him instead."

3. Brainstorm together; what was God like in this story? What did he do?
4. Read the story for yourself in the Bible
5. Who said what – match the quotes to the character. In groups children should (cut out and) stick the quotes to the correct speech bubble.

#### **Other options:**

- Play "corners". Ask the children to identify the characters in the story. (King Darius, Daniel, Lions, Other advisors) Place a picture of each character around the room. Read out statements about the characters. Things they did or said or their characteristics. They have to run (point) to the picture they think is correct. This would work well instead of the "who said what" activity if the children would struggle with the reading involved.
- Follow on with "one character we've not thought about is God". What is he like in the story? What did he do?
- You could have a yes/no quiz about what we learn about God in this story. e.g. Does God save Daniel? Does God ignore Daniel's prayers? Did God help Daniel in his job? Does Daniel think God isn't very important? Etc. Then reinforce the Christian belief we've learnt from the story.
- Outside we could create a scene from the story (or inside using collage materials). Can they create a den for lions? Can they make lions to take to the den?

## **Session 2: Daniel prayed – what is prayer?**

**Resources required:** Two sets of pieces to make a paper lion (mane, face, two eyes, two ears, nose, whiskers), quiz questions on the story, paper, pencils. Or whiteboard and pens. Individual whiteboards and pens.

### **Learning Intentions:**

I can remember the story.

I understand what Christians believe prayer is.

I can empathise with Daniel and think about what he might have said to God.

### **Outline for the session:**

1. Quick quiz on the story. Split the class into two. Ask a question, the children should stand up if they know the answer, choose the child who stood up first to answer. If they get it right they can add a “part” to their team’s paper lion. Whichever team completes their lion first is the winner. (or draw a part of the lion onto whiteboard) Remember together that Daniel prayed to God, that was what got him into trouble.
2. What do they know about prayer already? In pairs brainstorm what they currently understand by prayer. Ask some questions to help them start their thinking. What is it? Where do Christians pray? What do they say?
3. Feedback their ideas. Enjoy a discussion on prayer. Gently correct any misunderstandings. You may need to help them differentiate between different religions – who they pray to, how they pray. Try and cover these points:  
“What is prayer?” (Talking and listening to God) “Where do Christians pray?” (Anywhere) “When do they pray?” (anytime, every day,) “How do you pray?” (out loud or in your head, you can write prayers or draw prayers or as one boy told me – you can sing prayers, sometimes walking, sometimes sitting quietly, you don’t have to have your eyes shut and hands together) “What do Christians talk about when they pray?” (Anything! I usually suggest an outline of saying thank you, saying sorry and asking for help). And “why do Christians pray?” (Because they know God can help them, because that’s how they get to know God better).
4. Now let’s imagine we’re Daniel, what would he have said when he was praying to God? Again in pairs, write a prayer as if you were Daniel. Older ones could be given a different part of the story to consider, can they empathise with Daniel at this point in the story?

### **Other options:**

- The class could decorate their prayers – extend learning by looking at Christian symbols or decorated prayers.
- after discussing what prayer is, teach them TSP prayers. Use teaspoons with either a T, an S or a P on them. Explain it stands for Thank you, sorry and please. Take it in turns to choose one – can they think of something Daniel might have said “thank you” “sorry” or “please” for?
- Or make prayer plates – paper plates split into 4. Wow prayers (God you’re great because), Thank you, sorry and please. Decorate/write as if we were Daniel. What would he say to God.
- Don’t forget to talk about how we start/end prayers.
- Encourage the children to think about what they’re thankful for in different situations. When life is fun but also when hard things happen. Christians try and say thank you to God in the difficult times, the good times and the everyday normal times. Could your class have a challenge to think of

something they're thankful for everyday for a week? Could you write them down and create a thankfulness banner? Could you challenge them to think of 100 things they're thankful for?

- Daniel asked God for help when times were hard. Encourage the children to think – who do they ask for help at different times? Who do they have to support them?

## **Session 3: Exploring Daniel's character – how does God want Christians to live?**

**Resources required:** List of characteristics (laminated, to hide around playground). Pencils. Clipboards.

### **Learning Intentions:**

I can identify which characteristic applies to which character in the story.

I understand what “Trustworthy” means.

I have considered if it is a good or bad thing to be trustworthy.

### **Outline for Session.**

1. Introduction. Who can remember what story from the Bible we are learning about? Is it from the Old Testament or New Testament? People who believe the Bible to be true are called Christians. We discovered more about God as we read it. The Bible also tells Christians how God wants them to live. What he wants them to be like. That's what we're going to learn today.
2. Who are the characters in the story? Which character do you think shows Christians how God wants them to live.
3. A hunt! In pairs hunt round your school playground for words which describe characters in the story. Only write down which ones apply to Daniel. (if children finished fast, have them go back and write down the other ones in a separate list)
4. Come back together. Look at the words which describe Daniel. Talk about it with your partner and then circle the one you think is most important. Think about why it is important. Underline any you don't understand. Feedback answers and make sure everyone understands all the words.
5. Focus on trustworthy. In small groups do a drama which shows somebody either being trustworthy or not trustworthy. See scenarios.
6. Christians believe God wants them to be like Daniel. To be trustworthy. Do you think people who aren't Christians should be trustworthy? Why?

### **Other options:**

- Younger children, talk about who the characters are and get the children to draw them in chalk on the playground. Discuss the list of characteristics, which character do they apply to?
- If it's two wet to be outside, use collage materials in groups to create pictures of the characters. Finish with making Daniel. Place the ‘characteristic words’ around the classroom. They go and find them all and write on a whiteboard the ones they think apply to Daniel.
- Use dictionaries to make sure we understand the meaning of the ‘character words’

## **Extra cross curricular ideas.**

### **Drama**

- write scripts themselves
- make puppets
- make masks

### **Feelings**

Use the story to consider feelings and characteristics e.g.

- Advisors – jealous, malicious,
- Daniel – capable, faithful, innocent, responsible, trustworthy, trusting, scared?
- King Darius – initially wise, easily convinced, changes his mind

Can the children make a modern day version?

### **Art and craft**

- make a mural of the story
- of course there's lots of ideas for lion crafts.
- Think about the darkness of the pit. 3D model?

### **Beliefs**

- Belief – what makes people believe in a God or religion? Why did Daniel believe in God? Why did King Darius (at the end of the story) start believing in God? What makes you believe in God (a God) or not believe? What would make you change your mind?
- Differing beliefs – how does it/would it feel to believe something different from everyone else? Do you think it would have been easy for Daniel to keep praying to God when no-one else was? Think about people who are persecuted for their faith.