



Family Reading of Scripture

II Kings 23 - II Kings 25, Psalms 3-4



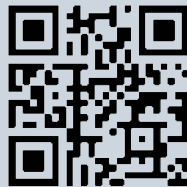
The Character of Daniel: Scene 1 Daniel and His Friends Exiled

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

- King Josiah has the Law of God read to the people.
- Josiah renews the worship of the one true God.
- After Josiah dies, evil kings reign.
- King Zedekiah rebels against Babylon.
- Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, conquers Jerusalem.
- Babylon carries Judeans into captivity, including Daniel.

QUICK SUMMARY

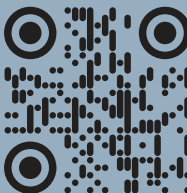
Josiah is sometimes called "the last good king of Judah." He renewed the Law of God and worship of God. Daniel was born during this time, and we will see how his dedication to God, learned as a child, carries him through the rest of his life.



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CONVERSATION STARTERS

As a Family

- What do you think are the differences between the good and evil kings of Judah?
- What did we learn as kids that is still part of our lives today?
- Psalm 3 talks about prayer from an afflicted soul. What would an afflicted soul be like?
- Have you ever felt like your soul was afflicted? Did you openly talk to God about it?

4-8 year olds

- What is your favorite story from the Bible?
- Do you remember where you learned it?

9-12 year olds

- What does it mean for the Bible to be an important part of your life?
- Daniel was taken from his family and home. How do you think he remembered his family and what they taught him?

13+

- There are people who want us to disobey the Word of God. Have you felt the pressure to disobey? How did you deal with it?
- What can you do to know and understand the Bible better?

Family Reading of Scripture

Daniel 1, Psalm 1, Psalm 106, and Proverbs 22

The Character of Daniel: Scene 2 Daniel and His Friends' Obedience



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

- The book of Daniel can be divided into two main parts: history (chapters 1-6) and future (chapters 7-12).
- Daniel 1 provides information regarding events of Daniel's life, including his exile into Babylonian captivity.
- Daniel (Belteshazzar), Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abed-Nego) are teenagers who come from royal families or nobility.
- These young men have been exposed to plenty of opportunities to learn and prepare in all wisdom.
- Daniel had a unique gifting for understanding all visions and dreams.

QUICK SUMMARY

The four youths highlighted in Chapter 1 are Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. These young men patiently continued their education in a foreign land. Daniel managed his fear and showed courage and leadership as he chose to faithfully follow God's principles. God thoroughly prepared Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah for this time. They displayed unity, courage and obedience, and God helped them gain favor from their captors. All four depended on God in the middle of difficulty, which prepared them for even bigger challenges to come.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

As a Family

- Why is it hard to depend on God? When have you seen us do it well as a family?
- What do you think culture today is telling us to do? Do you think we are in some form of captivity now? Why?
- What is self-control? What is humility? How were both important traits in this chapter?
- How do Psalm 1, Psalm 106, and Proverbs 22 relate to what is happening in these young men?

4-8 year olds

- What picture did you get in your mind as you listened to this story?
- What are some of your fears? What helps calm your fears?

9-12 year olds

- What do you think could have helped Daniel and the other teens have humble self-confidence? What would that look like in your life?
- Verse 17 says, "God gave them..." What skills has God given you to serve in His kingdom?
- What do you think it would have felt like to be taken into captivity? What would you have done if you were commanded to eat the king's food?

13+

- When do you feel most insecure?
- What do you think helped Daniel and his friends have humble self-confidence? Where did they get their self-confidence from? What would that look like in your life?

Family Reading of Scripture

Daniel 2, Proverbs 3, Psalm 113

The Character of Daniel: Scene 3 Nebuchadnezzar's Dreams and Daniel's Courage



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

- Nebuchadnezzar has a dream that disturbs him greatly.
- To test his advisors, he wants them to tell him his dream and its interpretation.
- They all fail, but Daniel is given both the dream and the interpretation by God.
- The dream is about a statue made of several materials, each representing an empire.
- Nebuchadnezzar is the head of gold, but his kingdom does not last forever.
- A stone that no human has cut crushes the entire statue and becomes the everlasting kingdom.

QUICK SUMMARY

When Nebuchadnezzar asks for both the dream and its interpretation, it sets up a test that only God and the servants of God can pass. According to Daniel, "there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries" (2:28). The dream and interpretation tell Nebuchadnezzar that even though his empire is powerful, it is not the great, everlasting kingdom. That belongs to the stone that becomes a mountain, the kingdom of God. Nebuchadnezzar will build a statue of gold to commemorate the dream, challenging the truth that God revealed to him. Nebuchadnezzar is not the great, everlasting God.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

As a Family

- Do you remember the last dream that really impacted you? Do you remember waking up sad or scared or excited?
- Why does someone with worldly power need to be reminded that God is the great, eternal King?

4-8 year olds

- Have you ever talked to mom or dad about a dream you had and what it meant?
- How does it make you feel to know that God knows what you dream about?

9-12 year olds

- Daniel is promoted because of what he does. How do you think God will take care of you if you do the right thing?
- Can you share a time when you prayed and God answered your prayers?

13+

- After reading Daniel 3, how would you explain the meaning of Proverbs 3:5-7?
- Psalm 113 says that the Lord is above all nations and His glory is above the heavens. How is the kingdom of God greater than human nations and empires?

Family Reading of Scripture

Daniel 3, Psalm 34, Psalm 92

The Character of Daniel: Scene 4 Nebuchadnezzar's laws and the Fiery Furnace



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

- King Nebuchadnezzar has the large (90 feet tall by 9 feet 9 inches wide) gold statue from his dream created and wrote a law stating that everyone must fall down and worship the statue at the sound of a horn, flute, harp, and lyre.
- Daniel's friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, refuse to bow down to the statue, so King Nebuchadnezzar was angry and had the furnace turned up seven times hotter than usual (estimated to be more than 3000 degrees Fahrenheit) as he sentenced them to death.
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego are thrown into the fiery furnace and survive the furnace unharmed in any way, but the king's "mighty men of valor" who threw them into the fire were killed by the fire.
- King Nebuchadnezzar noticed someone "like the Son of God" in the furnace with the three men.
- Nebuchadnezzar formed a new law protecting anyone who would worship the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who is the God almighty.
- Nebuchadnezzar promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon.

QUICK SUMMARY

King Nebuchadnezzar began this scene confident and defiant in opposition to God. However, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego's courageous, faithful, and steadfast obedience to God provided witness to God's incredible and mighty power. As a result, King Nebuchadnezzar's soul and worldview were impacted by God's miraculous provision and trustworthy care for these young men. God is good all the time and is more powerful than any person, king, or god.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

As a Family

- What do you see we do as a family to show our trust and faith in God? Do you wish we did some other things to strengthen our faith in God?
- Do you believe God is with you WHEREVER you go? What does that look like? Do you see mom and dad believing God is with them all the time?

4-8 year olds

- Pretend you're watching what happened in this scene. What would you have felt watching 3 young men being punished by an angry king? Have you felt those feelings in your life before? Tell us about a time when you felt scared or sad. How did God help you?

9-12 year olds

- Do you ever do things to avoid being punished? Would you have worshipped the golden statue to avoid a brutal punishment or would you have defied the king's laws like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego?
- Psalm 34:13-18 provides some great truths to consider. How do you think these truths apply to your life?

13+

- What do you think you would do if you are told you cannot worship God and have to show physical acts of worship to another god? What would that look like in our culture today?
- What reassurances does Psalm 34 give you and how would this psalm relate to what happened in Daniel 3?

Family Reading of Scripture

Daniel 4, Psalm 39, Proverbs 28



The Character of Daniel: Scene 5 God Glorified Through Daniel's Trust and Obedience

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

- This chapter is unique in the Bible because it is written by a Babylonian king.
- God gives Nebuchadnezzar another dream, this time of a large and fruitful tree that is cut down.
- Daniel interprets this dream and warns Nebuchadnezzar about his pride.
- The king grows prideful anyway and is struck by God. He thinks he is an animal for seven years.
- When Nebuchadnezzar comes out of it, he praises God and recognizes Him as the eternal king.

QUICK SUMMARY

This is the last thing we read about Nebuchadnezzar in the book of Daniel. As king of a great empire, he is tempted by his pride to think that he is greater than God himself. But this time, when God brings him out of his sickness, he writes a wonderful psalm of praise to the one true God. In it, he recognizes that God's "kingdom endures from generation to generation" (4:34). We do not know for sure, but it would be wonderful to think that Nebuchadnezzar died believing in the one true God.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

As a Family

- Where do you think there are areas of pride in your life?
- Read Psalm 39:4-5 and talk with each other about what it means to make the most of your life for God.

4-8 year olds

- What do you think it would be like to really live like an animal for seven years?
- What do you think it means to love God more than I love myself?

9-12 year olds

- What do you think about whether or not Nebuchadnezzar has finally learned the lessons God is trying to teach him?
- If you were put in Daniel's place, do you think you would be able to warn a friend about their sin? Why or why not?

13+

- If you were to write a letter to someone about what God has done for you, what would it be about?
- Thinking about Nebuchadnezzar's pride, why do you think Proverbs 28:6 is true?

Family Reading of Scripture

Daniel 5, Psalm 83, Psalm 115, Proverbs 2

The Character of Daniel: Scene 6 Daniel and Belshazzar



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

- Belshazzar hosted a big feast and praised the gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone using some of the cups from the house of God.
- A hand appeared at the big feast and wrote words on the wall, and Belshazzar was “troubled.”
- Daniel is the only one that can read it and is brought in to provide an interpretation.
- He tells Belshazzar that he has not humbled his heart and has gone against the mighty God.
- Daniel was appointed the 3rd ruler (possibly meaning 3rd ranking) in the kingdom.
- Belshazzar died the night of the feast and 62-year-old Darius became ruler over the kingdom.

QUICK SUMMARY

What happened? Belshazzar was defiant and disobedient toward God. Interestingly, Nebuchadnezzar ends with “and those who walk in pride He is able to put down.” We see this through Belshazzar’s prideful and defiant actions as a leader. He was measured and judged which caused his life to end. The final word of the four inscribed words was “PERES”, which means the kingdom has been divided. Darius the Mede is now appointed the new ruler of the kingdom as the Medes and Persians took over the kingdom. Daniel is appointed the 3rd highest ranking official in the kingdom as a result of his obedience, courage, and faithfulness.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

As a Family

- What do you think of God’s judgment?
- Why is pridefulness so dangerous?

4-8 year olds

- What would you do if you saw a hand all of a sudden writing on the wall?
- What picture did you get in your mind as you listened to this story?

9-12 year olds

- What are some of the possible idols of today? What about for you?
- What does it mean to trust in the Lord and that He is your help and shield? (Psalm 115:9)

13+

- What would you have done if you would’ve gotten an invitation to this feast?
- How do you think Daniel prepared himself for these invitations/moments that God placed him into?
- Proverbs 2 talks about the value of wisdom. How do these verses apply to your life today as you live with courage and wisdom?

Family Reading of Scripture

Daniel 6, Proverbs 15 and 16

The Character of Daniel: Scene 7 Daniel's Steadfast Obedience and the Lion's Den



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

- Daniel rises to a position of influence in a second nation, the Medo-Persian empire.
- The king approves of Daniel, so the other political leaders plot to get rid of him.
- The political leaders devise a plan to trick the king into killing Daniel, based on Daniel's habit of praying to God.
- When Daniel learns that the king signed the decree, he goes to his balcony and prays to God.
- As a result, the king is forced against his will to throw Daniel into the lion's den.
- God saves Daniel, and the king in his anger throws his advisors into the den.

QUICK SUMMARY

Daniel has outlasted several kings and the destruction of Babylon, and is now an influential figure in a second empire. He has become an incredible example of steadfast faithfulness to God in the middle of the most difficult circumstances imaginable. He has remained faithful to God, and God has used him powerfully in many ways. In this story, Daniel's faithfulness has become a matter of habit for him, and he is able to worship God even when it means he may be executed.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

As a Family

- Describe a time when it was hard for you to act like a Christian or let someone know that you are a Christian.
- Talk about the faithfulness of someone you know who is older than you, someone like a grandparent or an elder at church.

4-8 year olds

- What would it feel like for God to save you from hungry lions?
- How can you show bravery if someone wanted you to do something wrong?

9-12 year olds

- How would you feel if you learned someone went behind your back to get you in trouble?
- Talk about someone you want to be like when you grow up, and then talk about what you can do right now to become like them.

13+

- How does Proverbs 15:28-29 apply to Daniel and king Darius's advisors?
- Talk about how you can create a habit for your time of prayer and Bible reading, and then make a plan about how to stick to it every day.

Family Reading of Scripture

Daniel 9, Psalm 8, Psalm 45, Proverbs 12

The Character of Daniel: Scene 8 Daniel Prays for the People



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

- Daniel prays a prayer of repentance in the first year of King Darius' reign.
- Daniel fasts and wears sackcloth and ashes as an expression of grief.
- Daniel asks for his prayer to be heard and for God's wrath to be turned away from Jerusalem. He asks God to hear, listen, forgive, and act on their behalf.
- Daniel was visited by the angel Gabriel, and was told how much he is beloved and was given a vision.
- The vision contains a command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. It also has a set of numbers prophesying Jesus' triumphal entry and His death and resurrection.

QUICK SUMMARY

Daniel diligently and faithfully prayed for God's people. He prayed out of a humble and contrite heart of repentance seeking God's mercy and steadfast love. The angel Gabriel spoke with him and gave him a powerful vision of what was to come in about 500 years. We get a peek into God's incredible storyline and attention to detail. He has a plan and, as His children, we get to be a part of His incredible and perfect plan. God is shaping us as He gives us gifts, talents, and His Word to lovingly share with those around us.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

As a Family

- What do you need forgiveness for? What does it mean to have a heart of repentance? What does it mean to have a contrite heart?
- Do you think God actually listens to your prayers? How do you know?

4-8 year olds

- What do you think we need to pray for as a family?
- What did you see as you heard this story? What would it be like to see an angel?

9-12 year olds

- What gets in the way of you being able to be obedient?
- When you ask for forgiveness, what do you feel when you are actually forgiven? Why do you think we tend to do things we're not supposed to do?

13+

- How do you interpret the vision that starts in verse 24?
- What self-destructive things (or things you know are not healthy or good) tend to be the most tempting for you? Why do you think that is?
- What do you think of Daniel's prayer on behalf of the people even though he had been righteous and faithful?