

GOD'S BIG PLAN

Captivity!

Daniel 1, 6

Supporting Scriptures: 2 Kings 20:17-18, 24, 25; 1 Chronicles 9:1; 2 Chronicles 36; Jeremiah 21-52; Daniel 2-5; Acts 7:43

Lesson Goals: To see that God punishes disobedience.
To see that God is loving and faithful, even in His discipline.
To see that obedience is possible even when others are disobedient.

Scripture Memory

How can a young person live a pure life? He can do it by obeying your word.
Psalm 119:9 (ICB)

NOTE: Familiarize yourself with this story. Tell it as a STORY, not as "He said. . . She said" or read. To reinforce that these ideas are not your own, hold your Bible as you tell the story.

The Lesson:

Let's review what we have learned so far about God's Big Plan. (Review the previous stories, encouraging more and more students to share.)

Do you remember when God created the first man and the first woman? What were their names? (Adam and Eve.) God walked with them in the garden but Adam and Eve chose to disobey God. What did they do? (They ate from the tree that God told them not to eat from.) What happened? (God punished them and made them leave the garden.) Why? (Because God is perfect and disobedience deserves punishment.)

Do you remember when God called Abraham to leave home? Where did God want Abraham to go? (To a new place. A place God would show him.) When Abraham arrived, what did God have in mind for Abraham? Was it just a few acres of land for him and his family? (No.) God wasn't just thinking about Abraham and Sarah or even Isaac and Rebekah. God had a big plan for a big people. God told Abraham to look to the north and the south, to the east and the west. All that he could see was his and the descendants God would give him. And God did just that.

God kept his promise to the people of Israel. He made the land theirs by getting rid of the other people who lived there. God reminded them that in this new land, they were to remember and obey His word. Joshua even promised before them, "All of you, choose right now who you are going to serve. My family and I choose to serve the Lord." And all of Israel together promised to serve God. And by keeping their promise, God would allow them to stay in this beautiful, wonderful new place He had given them. But they didn't keep their promise. The people of God worshipped other gods and they did whatever they wanted to. Let's see what God decided to do.

READ: 2 Chronicles 36:15-16 (Hold your Bible open throughout the story.)

God shared His Word with the people over and over again. God sent prophets like Elijah and Isaiah to remind the people what God wanted them to do, who He wanted them to be. God told them through a prophet named Jeremiah that if they would turn away from the bad things they were doing and the other gods, like Baal, they were worshipping that they could stay in this wonderful land He had given them. But they didn't listen and just as Adam and Eve were sent away from the garden because of their disobedience, God's people were to be sent away from the land God had promised to them. This happened because they refused to obey God. God had warned them and given them many chances because he loved them and cared for them. But sin must be punished and that is exactly what God was now ready to do.

God sent the army of a big, strong country to take Israel away from its wonderful land. They came to Israel and tore down its walls. They burned the house of God, the temple, and they carried off its people. One of those prisoners was a young man named Daniel. He was handsome and smart. Daniel and some of his friends were taken by the king and trained to be leaders. The training lasted three years. They lived in the palace, ate the king's own food, and drank his wine. But Daniel decided not to disobey God by eating the kind of food and drinking the wine that the king offered. So Daniel, and his three friends, asked permission to eat only vegetables and drink only water. God had already made the official like Daniel, but he was too afraid of the king to agree. So Daniel asked to be given the vegetables and water for ten days. After that, Daniel and his friends would be compared to all the other young men. "After that, if we don't look healthy," Daniel said, "do what you want to." But after ten days, Daniel and his three friends looked healthier than all the others, so they were allowed to continue eating only vegetables and drinking water. After the three years, no one could be found who equaled these four young men. They were ten times smarter than anyone in the whole kingdom. God blessed them with this understanding.

Daniel served the king faithfully for many years. Daniel was a very important man in the kingdom, but he was also a very important man to God. Daniel spent time with God and He prayed three times a day. Like the prophet Isaiah, God let Daniel know some of the things that would happen in the future. Daniel served God faithfully, even in this land of captivity. Daniel's importance made some of the other leaders very jealous. They tried to find something wrong in his work, but they weren't able to. Daniel could always be trusted. He never did anything wrong. And he always did what he was supposed to. These jealous men finally said, "We will never find anything wrong with Daniel. We'll have to find something that affects his faithfulness to God." So they ran to the king and said, "Oh, king, live forever. We have all decided that you should command the entire kingdom to pray to no one but you for a whole month. Anyone who disobeys should be thrown to the lions." This sounded like a good idea to the king, so he made it happen. And when the king made something happen, not even he could undo it.

When Daniel found out about the king's command, he went to his home, like he always did, and prayed to God, the creator of heaven and earth. Daniel knew that God is the only one to pray to. No man or woman has the power that God has. Only He is all-powerful, or omnipotent!

When Daniel went home to pray, as he always did, the jealous leaders were waiting to catch him. They knew he would be faithful to his God. Then they ran to the king. When the king heard the news, he was very upset. The king didn't want anything bad to happen to Daniel, but even he couldn't change his own law. So Daniel was brought out and thrown to the lions. The king said, "Daniel, you have served God faithfully. He can save you." The king went away, but he didn't eat or sleep all night. The king was concerned about Daniel, and as soon as the sun came up in the morning, the king ran to check on Daniel. When he got there, he called out to Daniel saying, "You have served God so faithfully. Was God able to save you?" "Long live the king," Daniel called out. "God has saved me! He sent an angel to close the lions' mouths." The king had Daniel pulled out of the pit and Daniel didn't even have a scratch on him. What an awesome God he served! Daniel had trusted God and was saved.

Review:

Let's review what you have learned. Who would like to retell the story? (Ask your group if anything was left out or told inaccurately.) Would anyone else like to retell the story?

How about you? Do you trust God and serve Him faithfully the way Daniel did? Even when things are difficult? Even when everyone else around you is doing wrong? God, and God alone, can be trusted in whatever situation faces us. If you haven't trusted Him, believing that He sent His One and Only Son to save you from the death you deserve because of your disobedience, will you trust Him today? He is faithful and true. He can be trusted with your life.

**Planning for Next Week
Lesson 24 - Queen Esther
Esther**

PRESCHOOL LESSON

SING: "Dare to Be a Daniel"

SHARE: When a big, strong country took the people of Israel away from their wonderful land, a young man named Daniel was taken, too. He was handsome and smart. Daniel lived in the palace. Daniel learned new things. Daniel served the king well for many years. Daniel was a very important man in the kingdom. Daniel was also a very important man to God. Daniel spent time with God. He prayed three times a day. Daniel served God, even as a prisoner in a strange land.

Daniel's importance made some of the other leaders very jealous. They tried to find something wrong with his work. They couldn't find anything wrong with his work. Daniel could always be trusted. He never did anything wrong and he always did what he was supposed to. These jealous men finally said, "We will never find anything wrong with Daniel. Let's make something up." So they ran to the king and said, "Oh, king, live forever. We have all decided that you should command everyone to pray only to you for a whole month. Anyone who disobeys should be thrown to the lions." This sounded like a good idea to the king, so he made it happen. And when the king made something happen, not even he could undo it.

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PRAY: Thank you, God, for saving Daniel. Thank you for taking care of me.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Memory Verse Activity - Make a memory verse mobile. Print one word from the memory verse on various vegetable or lion patterns. Hang with yarn from an inverted paper plate.
- Make a paper plate lion. Use yellow, brown and orange construction paper triangles to form the mane around the outside of the paper plate. Decorate the inside as the lion's face.
- Encourage your students to act out the story.
- After Daniel was saved from the lions, King Darius wrote a poem praising God. What do you have to praise God for? Write Him a poem saying "thank you" and telling God just how amazing He is. Use King Darius' poem for guidance.
- Babylon was known for its hanging gardens. Using small plastic containers, yarn, potting soil and seeds, make a hanging garden to be enjoyed at home.
- Make lion cupcakes. On iced, vanilla cupcakes add a popcorn mane and chocolate chip facial features. Enjoy!
- For adults or older students: Talk about name meanings again. Daniel means "God is my judge." When Daniel was brought into Babylon, his name was changed to Belteshazzar, which means, "Beltis protects the king." Beltis was a female goddess comparable to the male god Baal. Along with the name change, Daniel and his friends were subjected to Babylonian training and different foods that weren't pleasing to God. Daniel, and his friends, were found faithful. Ask, "How can you choose the right thing, even when it is difficult. Review the memory verse, talking about what your students can do to guard their hearts and minds as Daniel did.