

In the Lions' Den

(Daniel 6)

Introduction

Have you ever needed courage to be faithful to God? When is it hard to obey God? When is it tempting to disobey Him? [Teacher, discuss things like when a friend asks you to lie about something or do something you know is wrong. Or, when you are home alone and are tempted to do something your parents told you not to do. Or, if you are in the lunch room at school and you know you should pray before you eat but you may feel self-conscience about it.]

God wants you to be faithful to Him; that is, to do what you know is the right thing to do—even when doing right might get you into trouble. If you honor God, He will honor and bless you.

Today we'll learn how Daniel determined in his heart to be faithful to God, no matter what happened. And God will give you the courage to be faithful to Him even when you are tempted to disobey Him.

Opening Prayer

Father, we want to learn how to be loyal to You, no matter what people say or do. Teach us this morning how important it is for us to remain faithful to You. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

Stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord... (1 Corinthians 15:58a NIV)

Lesson

Daniel was over 80 years old. He had lived in Babylon since God's people had been brought there as captives by King Nebuchadnezzar when Daniel was about 14 years old. He'd been in captivity for sixty-six years. Darius was now the king of that land.

One day Darius chose one hundred twenty men to help him rule his kingdom. One of the men he chose was Daniel.

Daniel soon proved to be wiser, braver and more honest than all the other leaders.

Daniel 6:3

Daniel soon proved himself more capable than all the other administrators and high officers. Because of Daniel's great ability, the king made plans to place him over the entire empire.

The king liked Daniel so much, that he planned to make him the leader of the whole kingdom. And, that made some of the other leaders very jealous of Daniel. Jealousy is sin; it puts murder in your heart. They tried hard to catch him doing something wrong so they could report that to the king and get him in trouble.

Daniel 6:4

Then the other administrators and high officers began searching for some fault in the way Daniel was handling government affairs, but they couldn't find anything to criticize or condemn. He was faithful, always responsible, and completely trustworthy.

It was no use! They couldn't find anything Daniel did that was wrong. Daniel faithfully prayed to God three times every day. He always asked God to show him what to do each day.

So the leaders decided to trap him. They knew there was only one way they could trap him into doing something wrong...

Daniel 6:5

So they concluded, "Our only chance of finding grounds for accusing Daniel will be in connection with the rules of his religion."

Some of these men went to see King Darius to make a proposal.

Daniel 6:7-9

We are all in agreement—we administrators, officials, high officers, advisers, and governors—that the king should make a law that will be strictly enforced. Give orders that for the next thirty days any person who

prays to anyone, divine or human—except to you, Your Majesty—will be thrown into the den of lions. (8) And now, Your Majesty, issue and sign this law so it cannot be changed, an official law of the Medes and Persians that cannot be revoked.” (9) So King Darius signed the law.

Since the officers had said that *all* the leaders liked this law, King Darius probably figured Daniel approved of it, too. And since this law seemed like a good way to honor himself, King Darius wrote it and signed it, just as the leaders suggested he should do.

In those days a king often thought himself to be like a god. He would have been pleased to think of others bowing down only to him. Pride kept Darius from seeing the true reason for the decree. It led him to accept worship that belonged to God, and it put his friend, Daniel, in a difficult situation. The penalty for disobedience was death by being thrown into the lions' den.

When Daniel heard about the law, did he quit praying? No! Daniel would never disappoint God. He chose to keep praying as he always had—even though it could mean death. He trusted that God would help him to remain faithful to Him.

God will help you to be faithful to Him, too. Being faithful means standing firm in your heart and mind to please God, no matter what anyone else is doing or saying. Don't let anyone lead you off the track. Sometimes when you are faithful to God, others may not understand or may even make fun of you, but remember our memory verse this week. [Teacher, review the verse with class.]

Don't let others stop you from doing what is right. God will help you be faithful, just like He helped Daniel.

Now, some people in Daniel's place might have chosen to pray secretly, maybe in a closet where no one would see them. After all, God doesn't care where you are when you pray. And He can hear you when you pray silently because He knows every thought that you think. But, not Daniel! What do you think Daniel did when he heard about the new law? Lions or no lions, Daniel knew what he had to do. And, Daniel's enemies were ready and waiting outside Daniel's house. Would he open his shutters and pray, as he always did?

Daniel 6:10

But when Daniel learned that the law had been signed, he went home and knelt down as usual in his upstairs room, with its windows open toward Jerusalem. He prayed three times a day, just as he had always done, giving thanks to his God.

Daniel knew that disobeying the law meant he would be thrown into a lion's den. But, he walked up the stairs to his room, opened the window facing Jerusalem and prayed to God in the morning, at noon, and in the evening.

Daniel 6:11

Then the officials went together to Daniel's house and found him praying and asking for God's help.

Yes! Daniel's enemies saw him kneeling down, praying to God! So, they ran just as fast as they could—straight to King Darius.

Daniel 6:12

So they went straight to the king and reminded him about his law. “Did you not sign a law that for the next thirty days any person who prays to anyone, divine or human—except to you, Your Majesty—will be thrown into the den of lions?” “Yes,” the king replied, “that decision stands; it is an official law of the Medes and Persians that cannot be revoked.”

Everybody knew that once the king had made a law it could not be changed.

Daniel 6:13-14

Then they told the king, “That man Daniel, one of the captives from Judah, is ignoring you and your law. He still prays to his God three times a day.” (14) Hearing this, the king was deeply troubled, and he tried to think of a way to save Daniel. He spent the rest of the day looking for a way to get Daniel out of this predicament.

The king agreed to the law because those who wanted him to make it appealed to his pride. Pride is a treacherous thing. Now, King Darius

realized he had been tricked. He realized that the leaders had urged him to make this law so that Daniel would be killed! What a foolish law he had made! But not even he, the king, could change the law!

Daniel 6:15-16

In the evening the men went together to the king and said, "Your Majesty, you know that according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, no law that the king signs can be changed." (16) So at last the king gave orders for Daniel to be arrested and thrown into the den of lions. The king said to him, "May your God, whom you serve so faithfully, rescue you."

King Darius was very sad; he tried to find a way to change the law and rescue his friend, Daniel. But even the king had to obey his own law. With a heavy heart, he gave the order. And then he watched as Daniel was thrown into the den full of lions and a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den.

Darius could not help Daniel, but God could. God had helped Daniel be faithful; now God would help him face the fearful things others were doing in anger.

If you know the Lord Jesus as your Savior, God will help you stand firm and remain faithful to Him, no matter what others are doing or saying.

Daniel remained faithful to God even in this desperate situation. And, God honored Daniel's faithfulness, and protected him from the lions.

Daniel 6:19-20

Very early the next morning, the king got up and hurried out to the lions' den. (20) When he got there, he called out in anguish, "Daniel, servant of the living God! Was your God, whom you serve so faithfully, able to rescue you from the lions?"

Very early the next morning he hurried to the lion's den and called out for Daniel.

Daniel 6:21-22

Daniel answered, "Long live the king! (22) My God sent his angel to shut the lions' mouths so that they would not hurt me, for I have been found innocent in his sight. And I have not wronged you, Your Majesty."

The king was beside himself with joy. God had protected Daniel!

Daniel 6:23

The king was overjoyed and ordered that Daniel be lifted from the den. Not a scratch was found on him, for he had trusted in his God.

Once Daniel was safely out of the den, the king remembered the leaders who had tricked him into writing the law and commanded that those who had plotted to kill Daniel be thrown into the lions' den.

Daniel 6:24

Then the king gave orders to arrest the men who had maliciously accused Daniel. He had them thrown into the lions' den, along with their wives and children. The lions leaped on them and tore them apart before they even hit the floor of the den.

Then the king made a decree to all the people in the kingdom to respect and worship Daniel's God.

Daniel's life should be an example for us to follow. We need to be careful not to let anything keep us from living our lives to please God every day.

Sometimes you may find it hard to be faithful. Remember this week's memory verse and thank God for His help. Will you this week choose to stand firm and remain faithful to Him, no matter what others are doing or saying?

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You that You always hear us when we pray. Thank You for giving us the courage we need to obey You in all situations. Help us to stand firm and remain faithful to You, no matter what others are doing or saying. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Game Center

Human Spinner

Have students stand in a circle. Choose one child to be "It". "It" stands in the middle of the circle blindfolded. "It" spins around several times, stops and points straight out. Whoever "It" points to must answer a question and then gets to become the new "It."

Or, use the following questions in a game of your choice:

1. Why was King Darius going to put Daniel in charge over his entire kingdom? (Because Daniel was a great leader.)
2. What happened when King Darius wanted to make Daniel ruler over the whole kingdom? (Other men got jealous of him.)
3. What does jealousy do in people's hearts? (It puts murder in your heart.)
4. What did the jealous men do to try to get Daniel into trouble? (They talked King Darius into making a law that no one could pray to anybody or anything, beside King Darius.)
5. What made King Darius agree to signing this law? (His own pride.)
6. Did Daniel obey the new Law that forbid praying to anybody besides King Darius? (No!)
7. What did Daniel do that got him in trouble in today's lesson? (Prayed to God.)
8. What happened to Daniel when he refused to obey their evil law and continued to pray to God? (He was thrown into the lion's den.)
9. Disobeying the king meant certain death. What gave Daniel the courage to disobey King Darius? (His faith in God.)
10. When King Darius went to check on Daniel the next morning what did he find? (Daniel was alive!)
11. How did Daniel survive all night without getting eaten by the hungry lions? (God sent an angel to close the mouths of the lions.)
12. What happened to the evil men that tried to kill Daniel? (They were thrown into the lion's den.)
13. What are some situations in which kids your age need God's help and courage to obey Him? (When a friend asks you to lie about something or do something you know is wrong. Or, when you are home alone and are tempted to do something your parents told you not to do. Or, if you are in the lunch room at school and you know you should pray before you eat but you may feel self-conscience about it.)
14. What are some ways God helps us have courage to do what is right? (He gives us strength. He listens when we pray. He helps us calm down. He promises to never leave us. He protects us.)

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