

JESUS AND THE LIONS' DEN

LESSON PLAN

5-11
year-olds

Session Summary: God's word tells us that Daniel trusted and obeyed God, God rescued Daniel, and the King praised God. The shape of Daniel's story and other Old Testament stories are full of "Jesus moments" that show us that all of the Bible is about him.

Let's pray before we start

Father God, please teach us about Who you are, what you are like and how you have revealed your big rescue plan. Amen. .

Let's get started

How would you feel if someone told you to stop...

- Playing with your favourite toy?
- Sucking your thumb?
- Drinking water?!

You'd probably feel sad not to play with that toy, but you've got other good toys to enjoy. And you might already have stopped sucking your thumb—it can be a tricky habit to break, but it's not impossible. BUT if someone told you to stop drinking any water, you'd have to say, "I'm going to carry on! I have been created to need water!"

Well, in today's true story from the Bible, we're going to hear about a man called Daniel who was told to give up doing something, but he said, "I'm going to carry on! I've been created to do it!" As I read this story...

- Every time you hear the word "pray", put your hands together as if you're praying.
- And every time you hear the word "lion" or "lions", make a roaring face and claws.

Let's listen to the story*

(Read *Jesus and the Lions' Den* up to and including the page that looks like this ONLY—you will look at the remaining pages later as part of an activity.)



* *Jesus and the Lions' Den* by Alison Mitchell and Catalina Echeverri is available from Christian retailers and at www.thegoodbook.com (US) or www.thegoodbook.co.uk (UK).

Let's think

(If you are doing this session with children across the full age range, start by asking questions below to the younger child(ren) before asking the older one(s).)

Questions for younger children

King Darius realised what Daniel had known all along. He knew that his God was the living God and the real King of everyone and that he saves his people.

Because he knew God is the real, living King, did Daniel choose to obey God and pray or to obey the new law and stop praying? (He obeyed God and kept praying)

What did God do for Daniel when he was in the Lions' den? (Protected/Saved him; sent an angel and shut the lions' mouths)

Questions for older children

King Darius realised what Daniel had known all along. Daniel knew God was the real and living God who saves his people.

How did what Daniel knew about God affect what he chose to do when he heard the new law? (Possible answers: he feared God instead of people; he obeyed God instead of the bad law; he trusted in God even though he was at risk...)

Can you think of a situation when doing what God has created us to do – pray to him, love him, tell others about him – might cause difficulty for us? What do we need to remember about God if we feel scared or anxious in those moments?

Let's play a game

(If you have children at the younger end of the age range, you may prefer the lion game below, which simply recaps the story. If you have older children or a mixture of ages, the second game is intended to set up the rest of the session.)

Younger: We are going to play a game like musical statues. As the music plays, you need to stomp about and roar like lions. I am going to hide behind the (chair, curtain, etc). When I stop the music I will appear. I am the "angel" from the story and you all need to freeze and shut your mouth. God saved Daniel from the lions by sending an angel and shutting their mouths.

Older: (Place some common household objects on a tray under a thin cloth/sheet/scarf – the more distinctively shaped the better!)

Let's have a look at this covered tray. As you look at the shape of the objects under the sheet, can you guess what any of them are? ... Now feel their shape. What do you think they are?... (Reveal the items.)

For some/all of those objects, just knowing their shape told us quite a lot about them. We're now going to see how the shape of Daniel's story is also the shape of Jesus' story and tells us a lot about the message of the Bible.

Let's listen to God

When Jesus talked to some of his followers, he explained something important about the part of the Bible this true story about Daniel comes from, called the Old Testament. Let's listen to what he said in Luke chapter 24:

"Jesus began to explain everything that had been written about himself in the Scriptures [the Old Testament]. He started with Moses, and then he talked about what all the prophets had said about him." (Luke 24 v 25b-27)

Let's think

Question for younger children

Who did Jesus say the stories in the Old Testament were actually all about? (Him, Jesus)

Question for older children

What did Jesus say about the different parts of the Old Testament? (They are about him; they all have something to say about him)

Whatever part of the Bible we read, we are reading part of one big story, and all of that story is about Jesus. The Old Testament part of the story is getting the reader ready to understand who Jesus is when we read about him in the New Testament. So even if we are reading about Moses or Noah or Da-



vid or Daniel, we can look out for “Jesus moments”—parts of that story that remind us of Jesus, or tell us something about Jesus. Let’s spot some now...

(If you have children across the age range, encourage your older child(ren) to do their activity independently in a different room while you look at the book with the younger child(ren). If you don’t have Bibles to hand and you are happy for them to use a device, they could look up the passages on bible-gateway.com. I recommend directing them to find the ICB version.)

For younger children:

Read the storybook from where you got to earlier, *apart from the last page*. As you read each page spread, cover the bottom half or right-hand half as necessary to hide the “answer”. Having read the top/left half, ask “Can you think of a way that’s like Jesus?” before uncovering the explanation to look at together. Then read the final page of the book.

For older children:

Look up/read these four New Testament passages. In what ways is the shape of Daniel’s story like the shape of Jesus’ story?

Mark 14 v 55: “The leading priests and all the Jewish council tried to find something that Jesus had done wrong so they could kill him. But the council could find no proof against him.”

Mark 14 v 56-59: “Many people came and told false things about him. But all said different things—none of them agreed. Then some men stood up and lied about Jesus. They said, ‘We heard this man say, “I will destroy this Temple that men made. And three days later, I will build another Temple—a Temple not made by men.”’ But even the things these men said did not agree.”

Mark 14 v 34-36: “He said to them, ‘I am full of sorrow. My heart is breaking with sadness. Stay here and watch.’ Jesus walked a little farther away from them. Then he fell on the ground and prayed. He prayed that, if possible, he would not have this time of suffering. He prayed, ‘Abba, Father! You can do all things. Let me not have this cup of suffering. But do what you want, not what I want.’”

Acts 2 v 24: “God raised Jesus from death. God set him free from the pain of death. Death could not hold him.”

(Invite older children to share their thoughts. If you want to, you could read the rest of book all together at this point to recap the ways in which those New Testament verses are foreshadowed in Daniel: the plot to falsely charge Jesus; false testimony against him; his prayerful response; God set Jesus free from death.)

Let’s think again

Can you think of any other “Jesus moments” from any other Old Testament stories you know? (Examples children might be familiar with include Abraham and Isaac or the Passover lamb—stories containing substitutes; David and Goliath, where God’s chosen King rescues his people from their enemies; Jonah and the fish, where the prophet is in the fish for three days before being “resurrected”.)

What would you say to someone who said that the Bible is just a collection of random stories?

Like Daniel, we can talk to God every day by praying and hear what he has to say to us by reading his big Bible story. How could we help you to do that as a family and/or on your own?

Let’s pray together

I’m going to read out some lines to help us pray. Let’s think together about how we can fill in the gaps in those lines based on what we’ve learned today from God’s Word.

Father God, we praise you because you are the _____ God.

Thank you that you _____ Daniel. Thank you for Daniel’s example of _____.

Thank you for Jesus, who _____.

Please teach us to trust you and do the right thing even if _____.

When we read the Bible, please teach us _____.

Now let’s use our ideas to pray together...



CRAFT/ACTIVITY IDEAS

Using minimal resources... Draw round one hand (your thumb tucked in) to be a lion's body. Turn your hand round 180 degrees and draw round it again such that the palm outlines overlap but the fingers on the second hand shape stick up as the mane. Colour in the body, face and mane and add facial details.

Using things you may have around...

- you'll need a paper plate, glue, coloured paper/tissue paper/pasta: draw a lion's face on the plate, use glue to attach any of the materials to make a mane.
- you'll need paper, fork, paint: draw a circular lion's face and use the fork prongs dipped in paint to add a printed mane.
- you'll need a pizza or pancake with toppings of choice: use fruit, olives and/or crudités to make a lion's face, and add a mane around the edge using pepperoni pieces or segments of orange.

More of a project: <http://www.biblesongsandmore.com/2012/11/01/lion-origami/>
<https://ministryark.com/craft/lion-origami-bible-craft/>

Both of these websites give instructions on how to make a chatterbox (also known as a Cootie Catcher) into a roaring lion's face. Your child might like to work out how to add verses or ideas from the session under the flaps as children do when they make these toys as "fortune tellers".

If you have a printer: enjoy the art and activity sheets from the *Jesus and the Lions' Den Art and Activity Book* on the next three pages.

IN THE WEEK

Start calming down for bed by playing sleeping lions! Who rescued Daniel by shutting the lions' mouths? What else can they remember?

Learn a memory verse. As a family, choose one of the verses below to learn over the course of the week. You could write up the memory verse somewhere and cover words with post-it notes or write out the initial letters only, or try setting it to a familiar tune for instance as you learn it...

- For younger children:
"God rescues and saves people. God does mighty miracles in heaven and on earth. God saved Daniel from the power of the lions." (Daniel 6 v 27)
- For older children
"All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." (Acts 10 v 43, NIV)

Enjoy singing about Daniel's story. "In a Foreign Land" from *The King, the Snake and the Promise*. You could also enjoy a song about the fact that all Scripture is about Christ: "Big Bible Story" (Colin Buchanan, *Colin's New Testament Big Bible Story Songs*) and/or two songs about God's Old Testament promises ultimately fulfilled in Christ: "God's People in God's Place" and "A Long Long Long Long Time Ago" (Awesome Cutlery, *This is Awesome Cutlery*).



Wordsearch

r	k	i	g	b	h	s	a	g	s	l	e	e	d	u
e	d	e	n	r	l	y	t	p	l	a	e	p	r	y
m	i	i	c	o	f	t	r	h	l	r	p	o	f	d
e	s	r	d	o	g	z	u	r	o	a	y	l	o	v
m	s	r	y	e	r	e	s	l	h	a	n	d	r	t
b	a	o	b	e	y	r	t	a	d	a	i	i	e	b
t	v	l	t	o	m	b	p	h	u	n	g	r	y	k
n	e	i	r	i	s	h	e	y	e	y	h	r	e	s
l	e	l	u	d	s	y	t	l	i	r	t	t	r	g
a	s	x	r	a	b	k	k	i	o	r	s	t	b	u
z	j	h	j	r	r	u	g	o	d	e	d	m	e	a
s	a	o	o	k	p	a	l	n	v	e	a	s	r	r
e	j	o	u	r	n	e	y	s	l	e	e	p	i	d
g	g	t	e	t	h	e	r	u	i	e	f	g	i	s
s	f	o	c	a	u	g	h	t	d	s	a	b	f	b

lions

night

obey

hungry

save

trust

den

sleep

guards

caught

dark

God

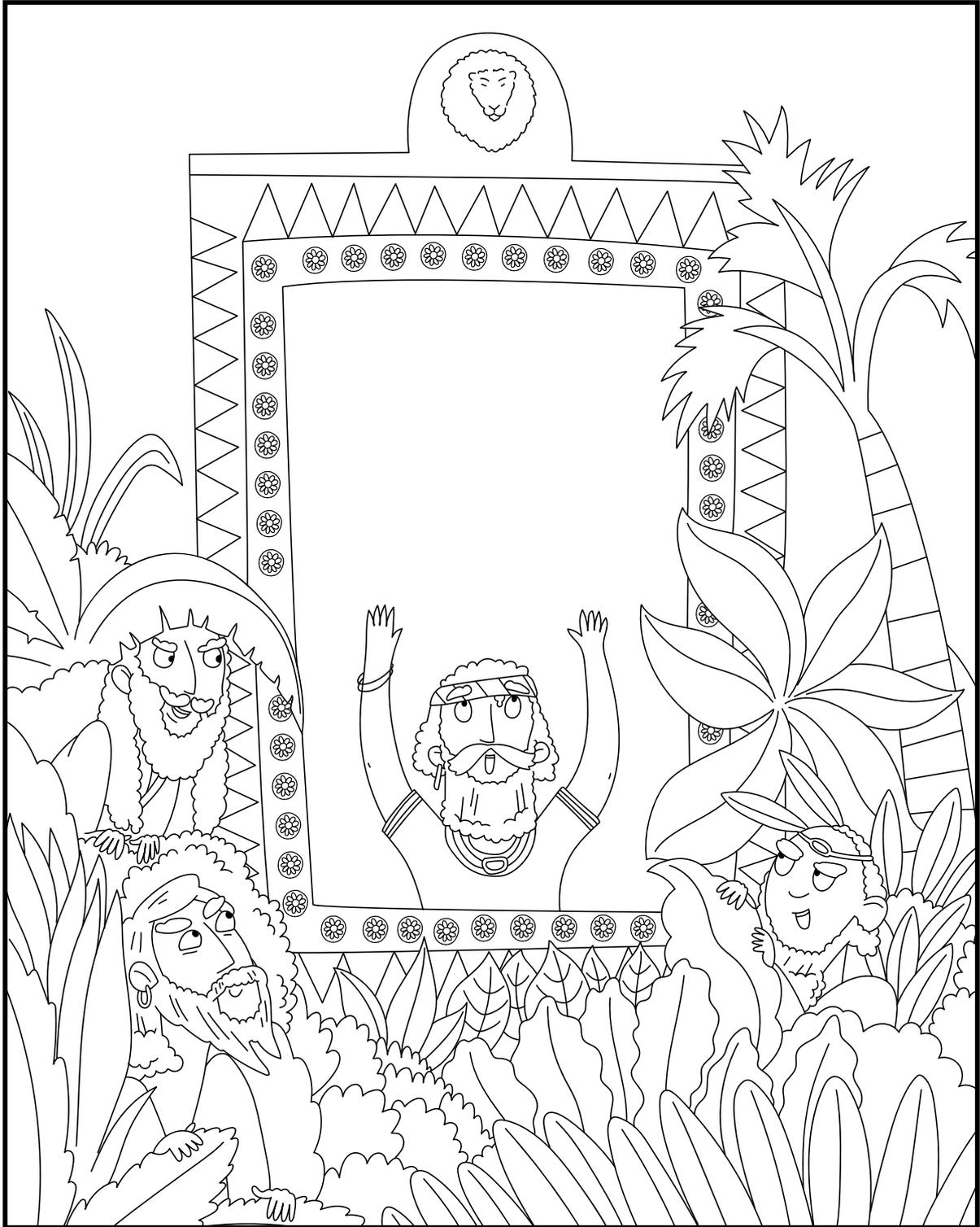


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Spot the difference

Can you spot the eight differences between these two pictures?



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TALES THAT TELL THE TRUTH LESSONS INTRODUCTION

You can use these suggested lesson plans to give you a quick-to-prepare way of engaging with a story in the *Tales That Tell the Truth* Bible storybook series, and with the Scripture that underpins it, helping children see what it means for them.

Each session includes:

- A “Session Summary” to help the adult leading the session know where it’s going.
- A suggested session for pre-school age children (3-4 years).
- A differentiated lesson plan for children from 5-11, with different activities signalled as being for “Younger” (approximately 5-7 year-old) and “Older” (approximately 8-11 year-old) children. In some instances, there are also possible further questions/activities you can use for older children in a family.

Use what you judge appropriate for your children’s experience, understanding and concentration. (You may find the “younger” questions more helpful for an older child who is unfamiliar with the Bible or the gospel message.) But try to include something from the “Let’s listen to God”, “Let’s think” and “Let’s pray together” sections, as well as the story-telling. Feel free to cover the material in more than one sitting!

Each lesson is put together so that it can be read out directly as it is written, with any explanatory notes for adults included in brackets. It is as light on necessary materials as possible but includes many of the elements your children might be used to from Sunday church:

- An introductory activity that establishes a key concept the children will need to help understand the passage.
- Activities to help them engage as they listen to or read the Bible story.
- A story-telling segment that seeks to tell the Bible story in a memorable and visually engaging way. (This involves using part of a book from the *Tales That Tell The Truth* series. In some of the sessions, the book is deliberately read in two parts so that you can look at the Bible before reinforcing the message using the remaining pages of the book.)
- An opportunity to think about a passage of Scripture and what it means using appropriate questions.
- An activity or discussion that encourages the children to understand what the passage means for us today.
- Encouragement to children to pray in light of what they’ve learnt about Jesus in the lesson.
- Games that reinforce the learning, but that also provide a concentration break and a chance to move around!
- Craft activities, ranging from those requiring minimal resources to more complicated projects.

Each session ends with specific suggestions for ways you can revisit what you have been thinking about over the course of the week. Here are some other ideas for ways to recap what you have learnt:

- Show your craft proudly over Zoom/Skype/Facetime etc... to a family member or friend!
- Replay the game. Can your children remember what it reminds us about Jesus?
- Encourage children to have a go at re-teaching the lesson to their dolls/playmobil/Sylvanian families.
- Read the storybook at bedtime.

As far as is currently allowed, why not try to get together with another family with children of a similar age? You can share around the “leading” and enjoy precious time together!

We pray that these resources will give families and churches a way of engaging their children with Scripture at a time when normal church family life has been disrupted and grow all of us in love for our powerful, loving, saving Lord!

