

Daniel in the Lions' Den

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: Stay faithful to God openly, even when it costs you, because the living God is able to deliver.

Bible passage: Daniel 6:1–28. Students read Daniel 6:1–10 and 6:16–23 out loud themselves.

Memory verse: "My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt." *Daniel 6:22 (KJV)* and "Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions," *Hebrews 11:33 (KJV)*

You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.

Before class: read Daniel 6 and Hebrews 11:32–34. Write both memory verses on the board. Decide who reads which verses, or go around the room a few verses each.

1. Opening game: Easy or Hard? (5–10 minutes)

Name one side of the room "easy" and the other side "hard." Read each situation. Students walk to the side that shows how hard it would be to stay faithful to God. 1) You bow your head to pray before lunch, and the kids at your table are watching. 2) A friend asks you to tell a teacher a lie to cover for them. 3) Your friends want you to skip church on Sunday to go somewhere with them. 4) Someone makes fun of you for reading your Bible. Ask: *What makes it harder when other people are watching or when it might cost you something?* Say: "Daniel faced a choice like that, and the cost was a den of lions."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Read out loud: Daniel 6:1–10. Students take turns, a few verses each. Old words in this passage:

- **presidents** (6:2): the top leaders over the princes; **should have no damage**: the king would not be cheated or lose anything
- **preferred** (6:3): honored above the others; **an excellent spirit**: something excellent inside him that everyone could see
- **sought to find occasion** (6:4): looked for a reason to blame him
- **royal statute** and **firm decree** (6:7): a law signed by the king; **ask a petition**: ask for something, pray; **save of thee**: except you
- **altereth not** (6:8): can never be changed
- **chamber** (6:10): room; **aforetime**: before, as he always had



Tell the middle part in your own words: The men found Daniel praying and making supplication, asking God for help (6:11). They reminded the king of his decree and said that Daniel, one of the captives from Judah, did not regard the king or his law, but prayed three times a day (6:12–13). The king was very upset with himself and worked until sundown to rescue Daniel (6:14), but the men pressed him: the law could not be changed (6:15).

Read out loud: Daniel 6:16–23. Old words in this passage:

- **continually** (6:16): all the time; **deliver**: rescue
- **signet** (6:17): the king's own seal, his official mark, so no one could move the stone without the king knowing
- **passed the night fasting** (6:18): went all night without eating; **instruments of musick**: music played to entertain the king
- **lamentable voice** (6:20): a sad, crying voice
- **innocency** (6:22): being innocent, doing no wrong; **forasmuch as**: because
- **exceeding glad** (6:23): very happy; **no manner of hurt**: not hurt in any way

Finish the story: King Darius wrote to all people, nations and languages, and made a decree that in every part of his kingdom people should tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, "for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever" (6:25–26). **Stedfast** means never changing. God "delivereth and rescueth" (6:27). Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and of Cyrus the Persian (6:28).

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. The leaders couldn't find any fault in Daniel's work (6:4). Their only plan was to attack his faith (6:5). What does that tell you about the kind of person Daniel was?
2. Daniel knew the law was signed, and he prayed with his windows open "as he did aforetime" (6:10). Why do you think he didn't just close the windows or pray in secret for thirty days?
3. Daniel's faithfulness in the lions' den started long before that night. What habits are you building now that will help you stay faithful when something hard comes?
4. King Darius was trapped by his own words (6:14–15). Have you ever agreed to something too fast and regretted it? What can we learn from him?
5. Daniel said, "before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt" (6:22). Daniel honored God and still respected the king. How can we stay faithful to God and still be respectful to people in charge?
6. Because of one man's faithfulness, a whole empire heard that the God of Daniel is the living God (6:25–27). Who might be watching how you live for God?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words in Hebrews 11:33: **subdued kingdoms** means won victories over kingdoms; **wrought righteousness** means did what was right; **obtained promises** means received what God promised; **stopped the mouths of lions** points back to Daniel 6:22. The verse is part of a list of people who trusted God by faith.

Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say Daniel 6:22 this week; keep working on Hebrews 11:33 next week too.

5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "God delivered Daniel from the lions, and He delivers us from sin. God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter preached it: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the Holy Ghost, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)."

Pray with the students, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.



6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. Where in my life is it hard to let people see that I love God, like Daniel's open windows?
2. What would a daily prayer habit look like for me? When and where could I pray three times a day?
3. Write a short prayer asking God for courage to stay faithful and for help to be honest in everything.
If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: pray at three set times every day, and don't hide that you love God when the moment comes.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, You are the living God, and You never change. Give us courage to stay faithful to You when others are watching, help us be honest in everything we do, and teach us to talk with You every day. Thank You for loving us and making a way to save us through Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a student asks about Daniel 6:24: students may read ahead. That verse tells how King Darius had the men who accused Daniel, and their families, cast into the den, and the lions overpowered them. Answer honestly and briefly: the punishment the men planned for Daniel fell on them instead, by the king's order. The Bible reports it plainly and does not ask us to cheer about it. God is always good and fair.

If a student asks whether God always rescues people who obey Him: God is always with us, but He doesn't always take hard things away right away. Daniel's friends told a king that God was able to deliver them, "but if not," they would still serve only God (Daniel 3:17–18).

