Preschool–Grade 6

Daniel's Diet

Sunday School Lesson for 3rd to 5th Grade, 45–60 minutes

Main point: Purpose in your heart to obey God before the test comes, and God gives wisdom.
Bible passage: Daniel 1:1–21. Read it before class.
Memory verse: "As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams." *Daniel 1:17 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), a whiteboard or large paper, a marker, paper and pencils, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the board. Draw a row of ten boxes on the board for the ten days.

1. Opening game: Decide Before (5–10 minutes)

Read each situation. Kids hold up one finger if it is easier to decide in the moment, or two fingers if it is easier to decide ahead of time. 1) A friend asks you to copy his homework. 2) Someone offers you a video your parents said no to. 3) Your class is making fun of a new kid. Ask: *Why does it help to make up your mind before it happens?* Say: "Today we meet a young man who made up his mind before the king's food was ever set in front of him."

2. Bible story: Daniel Purposed in His Heart (15 minutes)

Kids open their Bibles to Daniel 1. When you reach a **Look up** line, a child finds the verse and reads it out loud. Tell the rest in your own words.

Taken to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon **besieged** Jerusalem, which means his army surrounded it (Daniel 1:1). He carried away vessels from the house of God (1:2). The king told Ashpenaz, his chief officer, to bring some of the **children of Israel** to the palace: young, without **blemish** (nothing wrong with them), wise and quick to learn. They would learn the language and learning of the **Chaldeans**, the people of Babylon (1:3–4). The Bible calls them "children," and it doesn't say how old they were.

The king's portion. The king gave them a daily share of his **meat**, his food, and of his wine, for three years (1:5). Among them were four from Judah: **Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah**. The prince gave them new names (1:6–7).

Look up Daniel 1:8. Daniel **purposed in his heart**: he made up his mind. He would not **defile** himself, or make himself unclean before God, with the king's food and wine. The Bible doesn't say exactly why the king's food would defile him, so we don't guess. It shows that Daniel decided ahead of time, and then he asked politely.

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God gave favor. God brought Daniel into favor with the chief officer (1:9). But the officer was afraid: if Daniel looked worse than the others, the king could put the officer's life in danger (1:10).

The ten-day test. Look up Daniel 1:12. Daniel asked **Melzar**, the man set over the four friends, to **prove** (test) them ten days with **pulse**, food grown from seeds, and water. Then he could compare their faces with the others' (1:13). Melzar agreed (1:14). Shade one box on the board for each day as you count to ten together.

The result. Look up Daniel 1:15. At the end of ten days their **countenances**, their faces, looked fairer and fatter in flesh, which means healthier, than all who ate the king's food. So Melzar kept giving them pulse (1:16).

God gave wisdom. Look up Daniel 1:17. God gave the four "knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom," and Daniel understanding in visions and dreams. After three years the king talked with them, and "among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah" (1:19). In all matters of wisdom he found them ten times better (1:20).

3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

Thinking questions (no single right answer; let kids talk)

1. Daniel was far from home. Why do you think he still obeyed God?
2. Daniel decided first (1:8) and then asked politely (1:8, 1:12). Why is the way we say no important?
3. The officer was afraid (1:10). How did Daniel's ten-day idea help him?
4. What is one thing you can "purpose in your heart" now, before a test comes?
5. Who gave Daniel his wisdom (1:17)? Why does that matter?

Recall questions

1. What did Daniel ask to eat and drink? *(Pulse and water, Daniel 1:12)*
2. How long were they tested? *(Ten days, 1:14)*
3. What did God give the four? *(Knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom, 1:17)*

4. Memory verse: Erase a Word (5 minutes)

Explain the old words: **as for these four children** means Daniel and his three friends, **knowledge and skill** means knowing things and being good at them, **understanding** means knowing what something means, and **visions and dreams** are what God showed Daniel. Read the verse on the board together. Erase two words and read it again. Keep erasing two words at a time until the board is empty and the class can say it alone. Then kids say it to a partner.

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5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "Daniel purposed in his heart to obey God. The most important choice any of us will make is to obey the gospel. God loves you. The Bible says: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means all of us have done wrong, and none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, which means God came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). How do we obey the gospel? '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) To **repent** means to turn away from sin; our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are **buried with Jesus in baptism**, all the way under the water, in Jesus' name. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we come up to live a 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 the words (Acts 2:4). The Bible calls this being born again (John 3:5)."
Pray with the kids, 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.
This week: write down one thing you purpose in your heart to do for God, and keep it where you will see it every day.

6. Activity: Bible Look-Up Race (10–15 minutes)

Kids work in pairs with one Bible. Read a reference and a question. The first pair to find the verse and read the answer out loud wins the point.

1. Daniel 1:1: Which city did Nebuchadnezzar besiege? *(Jerusalem)*
2. Daniel 1:5: How many years would they be nourished? *(Three years)*
3. Daniel 1:6: Name the four from Judah. *(Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah)*
4. Daniel 1:9: Who brought Daniel into favor? *(God)*
5. Daniel 1:11: Who was set over the four? *(Melzar)*
6. Daniel 1:12: What did Daniel ask for? *(Pulse to eat and water to drink)*
7. Daniel 1:17: What did Daniel understand? *(All visions and dreams)*
8. Daniel 1:16: What did Melzar give them instead of the king's meat? *(Pulse)*

For more, use the **word search, crossword, maze or worksheet** (vbshq.com/bible-stories/daniels-diet).

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that You were with Daniel far from home. Help us purpose in our hearts to obey You before the test comes, and to say no politely and bravely. Thank You for giving wisdom. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a child asks if certain foods are sinful: say this story is about Daniel obeying God, and Daniel 1 doesn't say exactly why the king's food would defile him. Kids should eat what their parents give them and ask their parents and pastor about any other questions.

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