Preschool–Grade 6

Daniel's Diet

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

Main point: Decide to obey God before the pressure comes. God honors a heart that is made up, and He is the one who gives wisdom.
Bible passage: Daniel 1:1–21. Students read Daniel 1:1–19 out loud themselves; the teacher sums up 1:20–21.
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 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 1. Write both memory verses on the board. Decide who reads which verses, or go around the room a few verses each.

1. Opening game: When Did You Decide? (5–10 minutes)

Read each situation. Students say whether the right choice is easier if decided "Before" or "In the moment." 1) Everyone in your group chat is sharing a mean picture of someone. 2) A friend offers you something your parents said no to. 3) You find money on the floor at school. 4) A teammate asks you to lie for him. Ask: *What happens when you wait to decide until the pressure is on?* Say: "Daniel was a young man, far from home, in a king's palace, and he decided before the plate was set in front of him."

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

Read out loud: Daniel 1:1–7. Old words in this passage:

- **besieged** (1:1): surrounded a city with an army
- **vessels of the house of God** (1:2): the holy dishes and tools from the temple in Jerusalem
- **Ashpenaz** (1:3): the king's chief palace officer
- **no blemish, well favoured** (1:4): nothing wrong with them, good-looking
- **cunning in knowledge, understanding science** (1:4): quick to learn and understand
- **the Chaldeans** (1:4): the people of Babylon; **provision** (1:5): a share given out
- **meat** (1:5): food of any kind
- **gave names** (1:7): new Babylonian names (Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego)

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Read out loud: Daniel 1:8–16. Old words in this passage:

- **purposed in his heart** (1:8): made up his mind, settled it inside
- **defile** (1:8): make unclean before God
- **favour and tender love** (1:9): kindness and goodwill
- **worse liking** (1:10): looking worse, less healthy; **endanger my head**: put my life at risk
- **prove** (1:12): test; **I beseech thee**: please
- **pulse** (1:12): food grown from seeds
- **countenances** (1:13): faces; **fairer and fatter in flesh** (1:15): healthier

Read out loud: Daniel 1:17–19. God gave the four knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom, and Daniel understanding in all visions and dreams. When the king **communed** (talked) with them, he found none like them. **Teacher sums up 1:20–21:** in every matter of wisdom and understanding, the king found them ten times better, and Daniel continued there until the first year of King Cyrus.

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. Daniel 1:8 says Daniel "purposed in his heart" before he asked anything. Why does the order matter: decide first, then speak?
2. Daniel was respectful to the officer, and offered a ten-day test (1:12–13). What does that teach about standing firm without being rude?
3. God gave Daniel favor (1:9) and wisdom (1:17). What did Daniel do, and what did God do?
4. Daniel 1:8 is a small choice about food. Daniel 6 is a big choice about prayer and lions. How might small choices prepare us for big ones?
5. The Bible doesn't say exactly why the king's food would defile Daniel. Why is it wise not to add reasons the Bible doesn't give?
6. What is one thing you need to settle in your heart now, before the pressure comes?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

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. Daniel 1:8 is what Daniel decided; Daniel 1:17 is what God gave.

Read the verse together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner until they can say Daniel 1:17 alone.

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

Say: "Daniel settled it in his heart to obey God. The biggest decision of your life is to obey the gospel. 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 do I feel the most pressure to go along with what everyone else is doing?
2. What is one thing I will purpose in my heart today, before that pressure comes?
3. Write a short prayer asking God for courage to obey Him and wisdom to say no respectfully.
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Corinthians 10:31, KJV) Read it each morning and pick one choice to make for God that day.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for Daniel, who obeyed You far from home. Help us settle it in our hearts to obey You, and give us wisdom like You gave him. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a student asks whether Christians must eat a certain way: keep to the story: Daniel 1 shows a young man obeying God, and the Bible doesn't say exactly why that food would defile him. Encourage students to ask their parents and pastor.

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