



Daniel



MEETING AIM

To explore what it means to stay close to God in difficult circumstances.



BIBLE PASSAGE

Daniel 1



BACKGROUND

This is not the most famous story in Daniel, so the young people may not know it. It sets up the relationship that Daniel and his friends have with the Babylonian empire. They serve the king, but on their own terms. In this story, just as many of the others in Daniel, Daniel and his friends refuse to make compromises when it comes to worshipping God. In the lives of the young people (and ours) how often do we have to make compromises? Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah (that's Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego) stand firm and face terrible consequences. What can we learn from their story?

+ GATHERING TIME



You will need: refreshments; a comfortable place to sit and chat

As the young people arrive, serve them the refreshments you have provided. Try to have something a bit more interesting than biscuits and squash - is there someone in your congregation who could make cake? Do you have the facilities to make toast and tea? Could you provide a healthy option? As you eat and drink together, ask the group if they've made it through any sticky situations this week.

+ FOOD TASTING



You will need: raw vegetables (such as peppers, carrots or cucumbers); rich foods (such as chocolate cake, meat pie or crême caramel); bowls; spoons; hand-washing facilities

Before the session, prepare the foods and put them in bowls. Show the young people the food you brought and enjoy tasting them all together. Talk about which ones are good for you and which ones aren't. If you were to eat just the rich food or just the vegetables for a long time,

what would you be like? Has anyone made decisions about what they're going to eat (for whatever reason)? Be aware of food hygiene and allergy issues during this activity. It is also worth being aware of and sensitive towards young people struggling with eating disorders.

+ BIBLE EXPLORATION



You will need: large sheet of paper and marker pens; Bibles; appropriate costumes; food from 'Food tasting'

Ask the group if they know anything about the story of Daniel. Write down all the suggestions on a large sheet of paper to see how much the young people know. Explain that the kingdom of Judah has been conquered by the Babylonian empire, and that is how Daniel and his friends find themselves in exile in Babylon.

Read Daniel 1 together to find out how Daniel's story starts. When you have read it through once, challenge the group to dramatise the story. This can be as simple as acting out the story as it is read from the Bible through to writing a narration or improvising some dialogue.

Start by trying to imagine what was happening with Daniel and his friends before this chapter. Get some ideas and write them down on the reverse of your sheet of paper, so that the young people get some idea of how they feel, what they've been through etc.

Work together to create the dramatisation in whatever way the young people would like to. Show the group the costumes you've brought, decide who is going to play which part and what they're going to do, say, wear and eat! Rehearse your drama a few times, and then perform it. Maybe you could even perform the drama to some of the other groups in your church?

Once you've finished, spend some time thinking about what might happen next. How were the friends treated? What did they do with the favour they received from Nebuchadnezzar?

+ CHATTING TOGETHER



Ask the young people these questions, making sure everyone has the chance to contribute:

- What do you think of the situation the friends found themselves in?
- If you were one of the friends, how would you have felt?
- Can you see yourself in this story?
- Have you ever found yourself with difficult faith decisions to make?

- What do you want to do after hearing this story?

+ CREATIVE RESPONSE



You will need: paper or small notebooks; pens; pencil crayons; felt-tip pens; reflective music and the means to play it (optional)

Give out sheets of paper to the young people. Explain that you're going to give them some time to write or draw their thoughts about what God has said to them through today's Bible passage. You might wish to give them some small notebooks, so that they can start their own faith journal or scrapbook, and carry this on after the session has finished.

Give them enough space and time to write and draw their thoughts. If anyone would like to share their response, let them do so. Encourage them to keep up their reflections on what God is saying to them throughout the week.

+ PRAYER



You will need: Post-it notes or pieces of card; pens

Give out the Post-it notes or pieces of card and ask the young people to think about a situation in their lives when they need to stick with God's plan, even though it's really difficult. Encourage them to write that down or draw it on a Post-it or piece of card. If they don't want to be explicit, then they can draw a symbol or mark that represents that situation for them.

Stick the Post-it notes to a wall or spread the cards out on a table. Pray together for what everyone has drawn or written. Encourage everyone to take one or two of the Post-its / cards home to pray over during the week.

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