



SESSION 1 of 4

The king's dream

MEETING AIM

To discover that God is with us and helps us.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Daniel 2

BACKGROUND

The stories in Daniel initially seem like easy ones to explore with younger children, yet many are filled with uncertainty, threat and actual violence. However, there is still much for children to discover about who God is and about their relationship with him. God stands with his people during these times of peril and he stands with us now. We can rely on and look to him for help and protection.

5 CIRCLE TIME

Welcome the children by name and invite them to join you in your circle. Share out any refreshments you have and chat with the children about the events of their week. If you have done anything out of the ordinary, share it with the group (if appropriate). Ask the children if they have had any funny dreams this week. You may need to acknowledge that sometimes we have bad dreams but that they are just that: dreams and not real. Comment that the children can talk to their parents, carers, you or other adults they trust if they feel unhappy or scared.

10 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: junk (such as egg boxes, silver foil, cardboard and scraps of material); sticky tape; scissors; felt-tip pens or paint and brushes (plus cover-up and clean-up equipment)

Work together to create a statue from all the 'junk' you have collected. Colour or paint the statue however the children would like. Alternatively, provide lots of Duplo bricks (or similar) and create statues using your chosen building blocks.

As you work, talk about statues the children have seen around your neighbourhood or town. When you have finished, display the statue for everyone to admire.

You may even have statues in your church building. If so, go and see them and chat about who they depict and what they might mean.

10 BIBLE STORY

You will need: picture of the statue described in Daniel 2:31-33 (or a Duplo or junk-model version of it); cover for your picture or model; cushions and pillows; play people

Before the session, draw a picture or make a model of the statue from King Nebuchadnezzar's dream (described in Daniel 2:31-33). Cover the drawing (or model) so the children can't see it.

Gather the group together and invite them to lie down on the cushions and pillows. Explain that you're going to tell them a story that starts with a dream. Encourage them to pretend to sleep before 'waking them up'. Stretch and rub your eyes, then go on to tell this story:

Once, a long time ago, there were four friends. They were called Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. *Set out four play people.* They were friends of God, but they had been taken away to live in a foreign land. The king in this new land was called Nebuchadnezzar. *All practise saying the name Nebuchadnezzar. Produce another play person to be the king.*

Daniel and his friends worked for the king. *All say Nebuchadnezzar again.* One night, Nebuchadnezzar had a dream. It made him quite upset. He called all his advisers and helpers and asked them what the dream meant, but he refused to tell them what the dream was about. He thought they should already know!

The advisers and helpers were upset. *Show the covered picture or model.* If they didn't know what the dream was, how could they tell him what it was about? The king became very angry.

But Daniel knew someone who could help. He and his friends asked God to show them what the dream was about and what it meant. And God did. *Uncover the picture or model to reveal what it is.* The king had dreamt about a giant statue made of different materials like gold and iron. *Point to the different parts of the statue.*

Daniel went to see the king. "Oh, Nebuchadnezzar," he said, "God has shown me what your dream means. Your kingdom is like the gold part of the statue. *Point to the top of the statue.* It is shining and beautiful. But there will be kings who come after you who won't be as strong. But after that God will set up a kingdom that will never end!"

God looked after Daniel and his friends, even though the king was angry and threatened them. They were safe, and Nebuchadnezzar even gave them better jobs!

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Chat about the Bible story using these questions. Try to involve all the children in the discussion:

- What's your favourite part of this story?
- How do you think Daniel and his friends felt?
- Have you ever been scared or nervous? Who helped you?
- Have you ever asked God for help? What did he do?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: gold, bronze, brown and grey paint; paintbrushes; large sheets of paper; cover-up and clean-up facilities

Show the children the paint and paper, and challenge them to use the four colours to create a picture. As you work, continue your chat about the story. Share a story from your life about a time when you were scared and relied on God to help you.

Once you have all finished, admire the pictures together. If any of the children want to tell the group about their picture, let them do so.

5 PRAYER

You will need: play people (enough for one each)

Give each child a play person and ask them to hold that person in their hand. Say that God holds us safe in his hands, just like the children holding the play people. He keeps us safe! Ask the children to think about anything in their life or in the upcoming week that they feel scared or worried about.

Leave a few seconds for the children to think about that, then say a prayer thanking God for helping and looking after Daniel and his friends, and for helping and looking after us. Encourage any children who wish to say a prayer out loud to do so.

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SESSION 2 of 4

The fiery furnace

MEETING AIM

To see that God can be trusted.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Daniel 3

BACKGROUND

Peer pressure isn't so pronounced among children under the age of 5 or 6, but the kids in our groups will sometimes do things because everyone else is doing them, even if they're not the best things to do. Opening up this story will help them see that God can be trusted, and that he is the one they should follow.

5 CIRCLE TIME

Welcome the children by name and invite them to join you in your circle. Share out any refreshments you have and chat with the children about the events of their week. Ask if they have done anything different from what everyone else was doing. Share a story from your own life if appropriate.

5 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: pictures of people such as doctors, teachers and lollipop people (find them online or draw your own); paper; felt-tip pens

Explain that there are lots of people in our lives we can trust. They help and want the best for us. Show the group your pictures and ask them to identify the people in them. Chat about the last time you saw one of those people. What happened when you met them?

Then give out paper and pens and ask the children to draw a picture of someone they trust. (You might need to give them some help in thinking of someone if they haven't got their heads around the idea of trust.) When everyone has finished, share the pictures of people they feel we can trust.

10 BIBLE STORY

You will need: paper; sticky tape; musical instruments such as tambourines or shakers; a scroll of paper with Daniel 3:4-6 on it

Give each child a sheet of paper and show them how to roll the paper around to make a cone. Make sure you leave a small gap at the narrow end. Help them to secure their cone with a piece of sticky tape. Explain that these are trumpets. Practise saying "Ahhhh" through the narrow end to imitate a trumpet sound. Give the children the instruments you have brought but tell them to keep quiet until you give them the signal. Tell this story:

Once there were three friends called Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They were friends of God, but they were taken far from home by a king called Nebuchadnezzar. *All practise saying 'Nebuchadnezzar'.*

The king decided he would make a statue of himself. A huge golden statue! He ordered everyone to come and see it, then a servant read out the king's orders. *Give the scroll to another leader and ask them to read the instructions.*

The music started to play. *Encourage the children to play their trumpets and any other instruments.* And everyone bowed down to worship the statue. Ask everyone to kneel on the floor. Everyone apart from three people. The three friends: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. *Ask three children to stand up again.*

Some of the officials told the king what had happened. They told him that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had not bowed down to worship the statue. The king was very angry. He called for the three friends and demanded that, when the music started, they should worship the statue. *Encourage everyone to blow their trumpets and play their instruments again.* Otherwise he'd throw them into a big fire!

But the three friends refused. They said: "Your Majesty, we don't need to defend ourselves. The God we worship can save us from your flaming furnace."

The king was furious. His guards threw the three friends into the fire! But, do you know what? They didn't burn at all. In fact, when the king looked into the fire he saw *four* people, not just *three*, walking around!

The king ordered the three friends to come out. They weren't burnt – they didn't even smell of smoke. The king realised that God had saved them. He ordered everyone to worship God, not the statue! *Ask everyone to play their musical instruments to celebrate.*

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Chat about the Bible story using these questions. Try to involve all the children in the discussion:

- What's your favourite part of this story?
- How did the friends stand up for God and trust him?
- Have you ever been scared or nervous? Who did you trust to help you?
- Have you ever asked God for help? How can we trust God?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: art materials; large sheets of paper; cover-up and clean-up facilities

Beforehand, collect a range of art materials and set them out ready for the children to use. At this point in the session, show the children the art materials and encourage them to create a picture that represents what they thought about the story, who God is or anything they might be thinking about today.

As they work, chat about the story and encourage the children in their creativity. This is a space for the group to process what God has said to them. It doesn't matter if they don't produce a finished picture, or even if the picture seems to have nothing to do with the story. God will be speaking to the children and working in their lives, so the picture they create is almost incidental.

If any of the children want to show their pictures to the rest of the group, let them do so.

5 PRAYER

You will need: musical instruments from 'Bible story'; praise music and the means to play it

Give out the musical instruments again, making sure everyone has their own paper trumpet. After putting on the praise music, encourage the children to play the musical instruments and blow their trumpets.

After a couple of minutes, turn down the music and quieten the children. Say: "Thank you, God, for keeping Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego safe when they stood up for you. Help us to stand up for you this week. Amen."

Turn the music back up and enjoy praising God with instruments, voices and dancing again.

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SESSION 3 of 4

The writing on the wall

MEETING AIM

To discover that God sees injustice and works to right it.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Daniel 5

BACKGROUND

This is a strange story, but beneath the surface we can see God perceiving injustice and sin, and bringing judgement against those who gloat over the fall of Israel and Judah. The events of the story will be alien to children, but this sense of injustice and the hurt it can cause will be real to some in our groups. God is still interested in our lives and fights on our side.

5 CIRCLE TIME

Welcome the children by name and invite them to join you in your circle. Save your refreshments for 'Intro activity', but chat with the children about the events of their week. If you have done anything out of the ordinary this week share it with the group (if appropriate). Ask the group what their favourite food is and whether they can remember any particularly good meals they have had.

15 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: some simple foods to prepare (such as sandwiches to make or biscuits to decorate); the means to prepare these snacks; cover-up and clean-up equipment

Before the session, gather together the ingredients and equipment needed to prepare two or three simple dishes, such as sandwiches to make or biscuits / cupcakes to decorate. Make sure everything is easy for the children to prepare, and be aware of food hygiene and allergy issues.

Show the children the food you have brought with you and help them put everything together. As you work, continue your chat about favourite foods and memorable meals.

10 BIBLE STORY

You will need: food from 'Intro activity'; water or squash; cushions and rugs; tablecloth; paper plates and cups

Show the children the rugs, cushions and the tablecloth, and work together to create a place where you can all sit or lie and have your meal. Lay the tablecloth in the centre and arrange the rugs and cushions around it. Put the food on the tablecloth and sit on the cushions and rugs. Start your meal, sharing out the food and making sure everyone has something they can eat.

Halfway through your meal, explain that today's story happened during a meal:

Do you remember our four friends, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego? They were friends of God, but lived in a place called Babylon, where most people didn't know God. They stood up for him and stayed friends with him, even though it was dangerous. *If you did the first two sessions of this series, ask the children if they can remember any stories about the four friends.*

There was a new king called Belshazzar. Practise saying *Belshazzar* together. One day he was having a big feast, like we are now. He invited all his friends and family. Belshazzar wanted to use some special cups and plates, so he ordered his servants to get some silver and gold cups and plates that had been stolen from the temple – the special place where God's friends worshipped him. Belshazzar and his guest laughed at God and said that their gods were better.

These cups and plates were special, and Belshazzar shouldn't have insulted God. God saw what was happening and wrote some words on the wall of the room where Belshazzar has having his feast. Belshazzar didn't know what the words meant or that they came from God. None of his friends, family, servants or advisers could read them.

So they sent for Daniel. They knew Daniel was special, and that he was a friend of God. When Daniel read the words he told the king he'd done terrible things and that God was going to punish him. Belshazzar wasn't going to be king for very much longer.

And do you know what happened? That night, another king came and took over the city. Belshazzar wasn't king any more!

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Chat about the Bible story using these questions. Try to involve all the children in the discussion:

- What's your favourite part of this story?
- What do you think about Belshazzar's actions?
- Has anyone been mean to you or laughed at you the way Belshazzar laughed at God? What happened?
- What can we do when people are mean or laugh at us?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: a large sheet of paper; a marker pen

Explain to the children that God often uses people to help us when things go wrong, or when people laugh at or are mean to us. In this story, God used his friend Daniel and the new king to stop Belshazzar insulting God and to make things right again.

Gather the group around the large sheet of paper and ask them who they think God might use to help us. Write down the children's suggestions. Also write down how those people can help them. If they need a bit of inspiration you could point out how their parents or carers, teachers or people at church might help them.

Once you have finished writing the list, think together about how we can get help from these people when we need it. Point out that God has put people in our lives to help us!

5 PRAYER

You will need: the sheet of paper from 'Creative response'

Have a short time of prayer, asking God to help you when people are mean or laugh at you. Ask the children if they have any specific times when others have made them feel bad. If these issues are unresolved, pray specifically that God would help them and make things better. If those times were in the past and are now OK, thank God for sorting things out.

Finally, thank God for the people on your list and for putting them in your lives to help you.

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SESSION 4 of 4

The lions' den

MEETING AIM

To think about how God is faithful, and we can trust and rely on him.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Daniel 6

BACKGROUND

This is a well-known story, but it might be the first time the children in our groups hear it. Daniel has been in Babylon for decades and is now around 80 years old. Throughout his life he has been in mortal danger and under pressure to worship other gods. But Daniel has trusted in God from his youth to his old age. Even in the face of hungry lions, this old man is not going to stop trusting, worshipping, obeying or honouring God.

5 CIRCLE TIME

Welcome the children by name and invite them to join you in your circle. Share out any refreshments you have and chat with the children about the events of their week. If you have done anything out of the ordinary this week, share it with the group (if appropriate). Ask them if they have experienced anything unusual this week. Have they been surprised by something they didn't think would happen? Or by something they thought would happen but didn't?

5 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: pictures of different animals, including lions

Spread the pictures of animals out in front of the children and ask them to choose their favourite. Invite them to tell you why they prefer one animal or another. Then ask the group to choose the animal they like the least. Why did they choose that one? Explore ideas of danger or being frightened, but be reassuring as you do so. Be prepared for some very different answers!

Finally, try to order the pictures in order of 'best' to 'worst' animal. Are you able to come to an agreement? Don't labour this too hard, as younger children's negotiation skills aren't as well developed as older children's.

15 BIBLE STORY

You will need: equipment to make a den eg cushions, rugs, tablecloths, sheets, chairs, clothes dryers and pegs

Work together to create a den that everyone can fit in. Help the children think about how it must be safe and not collapse on everyone once they're inside. Spread cushions and rugs out on the floor of the den so you can all sit comfortably. Once you have finished, check to make sure that it's safe, then admire your creation. Congratulate everyone and go on to tell this story:

Do you remember Daniel? He was a friend of God, but lived in a place called Babylon, where people didn't know God. Daniel had been standing up for God and refusing to worship any other gods for a long time. And now he was very old.

Daniel was an important man in the kingdom. The king, who was called Darius, had put him in charge. But the other officials were jealous and persuaded the king to sign a law. The law said that everyone had to pray to King Darius, as if he were a god, and no one else. The law also said that if anyone refused they should be thrown into a pit filled with lions! *Gesture toward your den.*

The jealous officials knew that Daniel would refuse to worship the king. They knew he was a friend of God. They were going to trap Daniel!

Sure enough, Daniel carried on worshipping and praying to God. *Everyone mime praying to God.* The jealous officials watched Daniel praying. They sneaked back to the king and said to him: "Didn't you make a law that everyone had to pray to you? And that anyone who refused should be thrown into a pit filled with lions?"

"Yes," said the king. "I did exactly that."

"Well," said the officials, "we've seen Daniel praying to his God!"

The king was very upset. He liked Daniel and realised he had been tricked by the jealous officials, but the law couldn't be changed so the king ordered that Daniel be thrown into the pit. *Encourage everyone to crawl inside your den.*

The king thought the lions would kill Daniel, but God sent an angel to stop them eating him. Daniel trusted God and God saved Daniel!

The king couldn't believe it! In the morning he ordered that Daniel be brought out. *Everyone leaves the den.* Then he sent out an order that everyone should pray to God, and only God!

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Chat about the Bible story using these questions. Try to involve all the children in the discussion:

- What's your favourite part of this story?
- How do you feel about what happened to Daniel?
- What do you want to say to God after hearing this story?
- How can we trust God today?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: simple eye masks; felt-tip pens; brown wool and paper; scissors; PVA glue and spreaders; pictures of lions

Give out the simple eye masks and show the children the craft materials and the picture of lions. Challenge them to decorate their mask to make it look like a lion.

As you work, chat about the story. Ask the children how they would have felt if they were in a den with lots of lions. Do they think God would save them? Have a story prepared about when you stood up for God and trusted that he would stand up for you. This will help the children contextualise the story in a world they understand.

When you have finished, put on your lion masks and roar!

5 PRAYER

You will need: praise music and the means to play it

Chat to the children about the different ways we can thank God for being trustworthy and reliable, and for standing up for us. Think about times when we might have to stand up for God this week, and times when we might feel scared and need God's help and comfort. Invite them to share and then say a simple prayer asking God to be with us and help us during those times.

To finish, play your praise music. Encourage the children to dance and sing, thanking God for being with us. They could even wear their lion masks from 'Creative response'!

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