

All change

MEETING AIM

To discover that Daniel and his friends embraced the enforced change but never forgot who they were or whose they were.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Daniel 1

KEY VERSE

"But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself in this way" (Daniel 1:8).

5

PRAYER AND WORSHIP

OPTION 1

You will need: large map of your area; marker pens

Spread the map out on the floor or a wall / noticeboard (or in several locations if you have a big congregation). Ask people to draw or pinpoint on the map places or things they are particularly thankful for. They can talk to those around them as they do this. At the end of the activity, encourage people to pray simple prayers of thanks with the person or people alongside them.

OPTION 2

Introduce a body prayer. Begin by holding up your hands as if you are surrendering. This reminds us that we can come to worship just as we are, leaving behind our expectations and anxieties. Next, cup your hands in front of you, as if receiving something. This reminds us that when we come together God wants to speak to us as a family and as individuals. Finally, give yourself a hug. This reminds us that we are here to connect with our spiritual family. We are reminded to be welcoming of one another. This might naturally lead on to people giving one another a sign of greeting.

10

STORY

You will need: signs (as detailed below); a large cake; four carrots

Before the session, make signs for Jerusalem and Babylon, placing them on either side at the front of your worship space. You'll also need to have signs of the following Babylonian names: Nebuchadnezzar, Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

Begin by saying that Jerusalem and God's people had come under attack from the Babylonians. Babylon was very powerful, and they had a clever strategy for taking over other nations. They would take the best people away to their nation and train them up to become part of their society; that way they kept all the power. The king of Babylon was called Nebuchadnezzar. Choose someone to be king and give them a name sign to hold. Stand them next to Babylon.

Explain that Nebuchadnezzar ordered that the best of God's people be brought to Babylon. Choose four volunteers to stand in Jerusalem, complimenting them for their skills and attributes as you choose them. Then tell this story:

Nebuchadnezzar took these fine human specimens over to Babylon with him. *The king leads the volunteers across.* These men were called Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. Part of the deal when you got to Babylon was that you were given a new name. Daniel became Belteshazzar, Hananiah became Shadrach, Mishael became Meshach and Azariah became Abednego. Give each person a new name card to hold.

There were lots of other new things to learn in Babylon. They learnt all about Babylonian culture, got to grips with the new language and became familiar with Babylonian literature. They didn't resist; they studied hard and learned to fit in. However, there was one thing they were not too happy about: the food. These men felt that eating the royal food would be wrong. It was probably nice, fancy, rich food, and there would have been plenty of wine on offer too, but Daniel and his friends decided it was a step too far and they weren't going to eat or drink it. *Try to tempt your volunteers with the large cake.*

They spoke to the guy in charge, but he wasn't sure: "What if you look worse than the other guys who eat this stuff?" he asked. "I'm frightened that I'll get into all kinds of trouble with the king." Daniel suggested they try an experiment. They would eat only vegetables and drink only water for ten days. If they looked OK compared with the others they could carry on with the vegetables. *Give your volunteers a carrot each.*

And guess what? At the end of the ten days Daniel and his pals looked way healthier than all the others. Not only were Daniel and his friends healthier; they were also smarter and wiser, and when the time came for them to be presented to the king they were top of the class and were given great jobs.

10

REFLECTIVE RESPONSE

OPTION 1

Daniel and his friends gave up the fancy food of Babylon because they knew it would stop them remembering who they were and that they belonged to God, even in a strange land.

Ask everyone to pause and think of the things that make us forget we belong to God. Maybe it's watching particular things on TV, using language we know isn't right, or spending our money on certain things. Ask everyone to imagine they are giving that thing to God.

Pray and ask God to help us remember that we belong to him and not to get tied up with all the things that might make us forget that.

OPTION 2

Some people respond to the story of Daniel by doing a 'Daniel fast'. This means only eating foods that grow naturally from seeds (fruit, vegetables, wholegrains, nuts, seeds, beans etc) and only drinking water. When we fast it helps us focus on God and also helps us step away from the excesses of the world.

Have people form small groups and talk about whether there is a food they could all fast from this week. A straightforward one might be chocolate! Agree to check in with one another next week and see whether it helped you focus on God and move away from excess a little.

10

GROUP DISCUSSION

Divide into mixed-aged groups and discuss these questions:

- If you had to go and live in a different country, what would be the most difficult part?
- Why do you think Daniel and his friends weren't grumpier about going to live in Babylon?
- What was most courageous about the characters in the story?
- Which things do you feel called to stand up and be different about?
- Why is it hard to live in a way that is different from everyone around you?

JENNY CHEUNG

is a mum, church planter and choir-nut! She pioneers The Voice Project Scotland – a missional expression inviting children and their families to find their voices and enter into community to sing.



Priya and the perfect prefect

Priya waited at the side of the classroom. She watched her opponent Chloe walk to the front and set out her speech.

"I think I would be an amazing class prefect," started Chloe. "I am on the hockey team, I won the silver medal at the Maths Olympics and played Maria in the school's production of *West Side Story*."

Priya looked at her feet. She had wanted to be in *West Side Story*; the memory of her audition made her squirm. She'd got halfway through her song, forgotten the words and run out of the room fighting back the tears.

"Mrs Price said that I would make a perfect prefect," Chloe continued. "She said that I would be a credit to the school. Unlike other people..." Chloe paused and shot a mocking glance at Priya. "Vote for me and I will make sure that everyone knows what a great prefect this class has elected. Thank you very much."

Chloe smiled as the class applauded. As she sat down, she turned to her friend and whispered: "In. The. Bag."

Mr Awoniyi looked at Priya. "Thank you, Chloe. OK, Priya, it's your turn. Would you like to tell us why you'd be a good prefect?"

Priya moved to the front. She stared down at the scrap of paper she'd written her speech on.

"Er, right..." She paused and stared at her shoes. Someone – Chloe – sniggered. Priya took a deep breath and started again. "Look, I know I've not been the best person to be around. And I'm sorry. But being a prefect would be a chance to change things."

As she spoke, Priya recalled some of the bad choices she'd made, the hours she'd spent outside Mrs Price's office and that time she was excluded for a day.

"If you elect me as your prefect, I'll work hard to make sure your voice is heard. I'll try to represent this class well when I do, er, my prefect stuff. And, um, yes. Er, thanks." Priya scurried back to her seat as the class applauded.

Mr Awoniyi gave out some slips of paper and said: "OK, everyone gets one vote. Write your choice down, fold the paper in half and put it in the basket at the front."

When everyone had voted and the votes counted, there was only one winner: Priya.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Was the class right to vote for Priya? Why? Why not?
- Who do you identify with in the story? Why?
- Are there times in your life when you don't feel worthy or deserving of something?
- Is it easy for people to see the real you, or do they just judge on outward appearances or reputation?
- Have you judged others? What caused you to judge them?

This story is based on Luke 18:9-14. Read the passage and compare that story with this one. Discuss what Jesus might have been saying through the story, encouraging the group to think about it in a new way.

ALEX TAYLOR

is resources editor for *Premier Youth and Children's Work*.



Making time

I had a good friend growing up. We'd walk to school together each day and I'd be in and out of his house so much that I considered his family friends too. I remember one day standing in their hallway waiting for him to come downstairs and, amid some innocuous small talk, my friend's mother said something that has really stayed with me. It was a perfect example of the mentoring that comes from having significant adults in your life growing up. She said: "Well, you always make time for the things you truly want to do."

It was like a lightbulb came on. If you really want to do something you'll find a way to make time for it. Or on the converse side, if you're not doing something that you would say was important to you, either you're not actually as keen as you think or something is stopping you that is stronger than your desire to do it.

There's a subconscious filter on how we spend our time and all too often the wrong priorities prevail – we choose to do things that bring quickest reward and gratification.

This is why we sometimes choose to procrastinate by playing *Candy Crush* over finishing that assignment! We might say reading our Bible is really important to us but I'm sure we all choose to check our Facebook or Instagram first.

I would urge you to do a little soul searching about this – first off for your own benefit, but then (as with all your mentoring) so that you can enable your mentee along a similar journey.

WITH YOUR MENTEE

Ask your mentee to look at how they spend their time to understand better what their real priorities are. Go through the last week – list all activities and together try to spot what they care about most. If they're spending inordinate amounts of time (and money) on something maybe there's an emphasis there that you should bring before God? Are you sleeping too much? Are naps your escapism? How often and how long do you spend looking at your phone? List what you look at and do on it. You'll need to be brutally honest about it all together! Go on to discuss these questions:

- What are the three things that you really want to do 'if you had more time?' Choose just one thing to tackle.
- What is stopping you from getting to these things? Think both in terms of time but also in your motivation, effort levels and commitment.
- Do you prioritise urgent but unimportant things over these important things? What three things can you do to recognise this and overturn it when necessary?

Reassure your mentee not to beat themselves up about it but be positive, recognising this itself is the first step to finding creative solutions. Ask the right questions so that they can see why they behave as they do, but don't offer solutions. Rather ask the right questions so they think of creative ideas themselves, even if it takes time.

JOEL TOOMBS

has an MA in Christian mentoring and wrote the Grove booklet, *Mentoring and Young People*. He is a volunteer youth worker.

Word games

Sometimes your young people chat constantly, and it feels like all they do is talk! Here are some ways to channel those words into fun and educational games. These should work for any ability, from those who have quick brains, to excellent general knowledge, to those who are just downright creative!



STOP THE BUS

You will need:

pens; paper; a timer

This game is suitable for children and young people who are confident readers and writers (or it can be done in pairs if someone needs extra help).

Hand out the pens and paper and ask everyone to draw a five by five grid. Above the grid write a five-letter word, one letter for each column (eg B A N K S). There must not be any letters repeated. Down the side of the grid you must think of five categories for each row (eg birds, girls' names, cars). You can either do this as a group or have prepared categories.

Each player must fill the boxes with a word that fits into the category and begins with that letter (eg B – birds = blackbird). Set a timer, depending on how quick you think your group will need. If someone completes their grid before the time is up, they must shout: "Stop the bus" and everyone must stop writing.

Valid answers receive one point. Unique answers receive two points. Blank boxes or incorrect answers receive 0 points. The player with the most points wins!

If you don't have much time you can have a smaller grid, or expand your grid with an abundance of categories if you have lots of time.



DICTIONARY CORNER

You will need:

a dictionary; pens; paper

This game is suitable for young people aged 12 and up.

Choose someone to find an obscure word in the dictionary that the group are unlikely to know and write its definition on a piece of paper. Everyone else must write down a made-up definition for the word. The person who chose the word gathers all the definitions and reads them out, including the real one. People must vote on which definition they think is the correct one. Points are awarded for having votes for your definition and for guessing the correct definition.



FAMOUS FRIENDS

Sit in a circle and start a slow clap beat. When ready, say a famous person's name to the beat. The next person must say a famous person whose first name starts with the last initial of the previous person (eg Harry Kane – Keira Knightley). If the first name and last name starts with the same initial the direction of play reverses. If someone cannot think of a name within the beat, they are out. Or if you want to be a bit kinder, two beats. Each time someone gets out, the beat gets faster. Play until one person is left the winner!

An alternative version is to choose one name and the group must think of as many people they can with that name (eg famous Davids).

SAGRANAM

ANAGRAMS

You will need:

pens; paper; a timer

Write out a word or a jumble of letters. Set a timer for a suitable length of time. The children and young people must make as many words as possible out of the letters provided. Award more points for longer words.

For little ones just learning to read and write, use magnetic letters or large printed letters that the children can move around themselves.

This can be made as easy or as hard as you'd like by increasing or reducing the number of letters. You can even use a themed word or phrase to introduce your session.



RAP OFF

Sit in a circle and get a clapped beat going. Start off the first line of a rap or poem. It can be completely random or themed (eg a rap about the plagues of Egypt). The next person continues the rap with one sentence which must rhyme. Keep going around until someone can't think of any. To make it trickier speed up the beat.

The fiery furnace

BACKGROUND

The story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace has strong themes of faith, strength, protection, determination and worship. These crafts will help children to explore these themes in a very hands-on and often messy way!

PROTECTION BUBBLES



You will need: bubble wrap with giant bubbles; fabric; felt; tissue paper; ribbon; wool; scissors or a craft knife

Even though the fire is incredibly fierce and burns up the soldiers who throw them in, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are protected from the flames by God. This is a great way to create artwork with something we usually use as a protective material!

Unroll and spread out the bubble wrap so that a whole group of children can gather around it. Before you start, get an adult to cut a slit in the middle of each of the giant bubbles in the bubble wrap using scissors or a craft knife. This can be a bit fiddly, but it is worth it! Make sure that you only cut the back of each bubble, creating a pocket for the fabric to sit in. Ask the children to fill each bubble with fabric, wool or tissue paper, using the slit as an entrance point. As the bubbles fill, it will create a unique and colourful piece of artwork! As the children are creating, talk about God's protection in the story and about those we know who help to protect us.

AMAZING GOD SENSORY PAINTING



You will need: a packet of cornflour; water; food colouring; forks
This is a very sensory process art activity that will bring with it some awe and wonder moments. The awe and wonder is a way in to helping the children think about the miracle that God did in the story and about how amazing he is. The colour mixing will add to the

wonder of the activity!

Mix water into the cornflour gradually until it reaches a consistency where it's a mixture of liquid and solid depending on how quickly you touch it. If you touch it slowly, your fingers sink in like water, but if you hit it, it responds like a solid (it's a non-Newtonian fluid). The ratio is roughly 1:1.5 to 1:2 parts water to cornflour. (You will get the feel of it when you experiment.) When your cornflour is ready, dot the surface with drops of different coloured food colouring. Encourage children to play with the mixture with their hands and with forks. The colours will mix and they will love exploring the textures!

FOUR IN THE FURNACE PICTURES



You will need: yellow and red paint; paper plates; masking tape; cling film (optional)

The king and his advisors see a fourth figure in the fire with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and believe that he is like the son of the gods. This craft helps to emphasise the protection of the four figures and has the added bonus of creating some messy flames!

Cut four small pieces of masking tape and stick them on different parts of the paper plate. Put a few dots of yellow paint and red paint onto the plate and then use fingers to spread and mix the paint over the plate so that it completely covers the surface, including the masking tape pieces. If you want a slightly less messy activity but still one with a sensory feel, cover the plate and paint with a sheet of cling film. With fingers on top of the cling film, mix paint and cover the plate. When the paint is dry, remove the masking tape to reveal 4 blank spaces that have been protected from the paint.

STRONG WALLS



You will need: items for wall building eg wooden blocks; Duplo; paper cups; cardboard; pegs; stones; sticky tape

In the story of the fiery furnace, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego stand strong in their belief that they should not worship other gods. This craft explores the idea of strength.

Present children with a collection of wall-building materials and ask them to build the strongest wall they can. As they build, talk about what it means to be strong and how Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego looked to God for strength in the story.

MINA MUNNS

is founder of Flame: Creative Children's Ministry
flamecreativekids.blogspot.co.uk



Ocean's 8

CLIP: 00:27:32 – 00:31:58

RATING: 12A

SYNOPSIS

Five years, eight months, twelve days and counting. That's how long Debbie Ocean has been devising the biggest heist of her life. She knows what it's going to take: a team of the best people in the field, starting with her partner-in-crime Lou Miller. Together, they recruit a crew of specialists, including jeweller Amita, street con Constance, suburban mum Tammy, hacker Nine Ball and fashion designer Rose. Their target is a necklace that's worth more than \$150 million. Unfortunately, the pendant has the highest security possible and will be around the neck of diva actress Daphne Kluger for the entire time. The characters are so slick and fun to be around that you easily forget that they are essentially the bad guys of the film. There are other characters depicted as being deserving of being robbed, but ultimately *Ocean's 8* manages to seduce the audience into willing the band of thieves to succeed and get away with their crime.

The clip that this session focuses on sees Debbie approach Tammy, who has seemingly left her criminal past behind her and is now a mother. Debbie tries to convince Tammy to join her group to "pull off one of the biggest jewellery heists in history". After initially seeming reluctant to accept, Tammy agrees when she discovers just how much money she could get from taking part.

DISCUSS

After showing the clip break into smaller groups to discuss the following questions before returning to a larger group to get some feedback and ideas from your young people. Encourage them to ask each other further questions or to develop any points raised.

- What do you think is the motivation of different characters to pull off the heist?
- Is there a difference between breaking the law and committing a sin?
- Is it wrong to want a group of criminals to succeed in their heist?
- Is it morally acceptable to break the law to get some money that could be used to benefit a lot of people and bring happiness?

Once you've had your first set of discussions, read together Romans 13 (if you are tight for time just focus on verses 1 to 7). Once you have done that break off into small groups to discuss the following questions. You may want to have a whole group feedback session afterwards to share ideas.

- What do you think this passage is saying in relation to obeying the laws of the government?
- Does this mean that a Christian should never disobey the government laws? Does this mean that Christians should not protest?
- Can a bad action lead to a good outcome?
- Does this passage apply today, or was it meant to only be followed 2,000 years ago?

TOM WADE

is head of humanities at Leventhorpe School in Sawbridgeworth.



Breathin'

ARTIST: Ariana Grande
SUITABLE FOR: over-13s

INTRODUCTION

The pressure that young people are under and the impact it is having on their mental wellbeing has been well documented. This session explores how we can aid our sense of wellbeing by remembering to be still, before God. Be careful not to give the wrong impression about issues surrounding mental health and faith. You may need to seek additional advice or support from an organisation such as Livability, Youthscape or CAMHS.

As you begin the session, set up a graffiti wall with large sheets of lining paper and marker pens, and encourage the young people to add some of the things that they find pile up as pressures upon them. Give the young people time and space to add as many thoughts as they wish without drawing attention to any individual's comments.

Gather the young people together and look at some of the things that have been written on the wall. Explain that you recognise some of the many pressures they feel, all of which

can have a negative impact on their wellbeing. During this session, we will be looking at some of the things that can help us.

LISTEN AND DISCUSS

Play the track and as a group, discuss:

- How would you describe the feelings of the singer in this song?
- Is this something you can relate to, perhaps for yourself or for a friend?
- What helps us when we feel this way?

Explain to the group that it is important when we are struggling with our mental health that we seek support from the right places. These include the GP, counselling or support services, which you can help them access as appropriate.

In all circumstances, God promises to be with us, and help us as we find a way to still all the noise around us. Provide Bibles and, perhaps in smaller groups, invite the young people to take a look at some of the following verses: Psalm 46:10; Exodus 14:14; Psalm 37:7; Psalm 62:5; Psalm 131:2.

Encourage the young people to explore what these verses mean, and how they

relate to our own experiences.

Explain to the group that we live in a very noisy world – physically, technologically, academically, mentally and emotionally – and that all that noise can cause us to be unsettled for a variety of reasons. Following God does not leave us immune from difficulties with mental health, but finding ways to help us to be still can help us to stay connected to God who can bring us peace. Share some examples of practical things you do that help you to calm yourself before God and to be still with him, encouraging your group to do the same.

As you draw the session to a close, pray together for the group and for any difficulties they may face. Challenge them to find some time in the week ahead to be still, with God. Ensure that you follow up any needs with the appropriate support.

BECKY MAY

is a freelance writer and experienced children's and youth leader. She can be found at theresourcescupboard.co.uk.

DEATH TO LIFE

In the autumn, the tree loses its leaves to conserve energy for the colder months. But the leaves aren't wasted; they rot into the ground, providing nutrients for the tree.

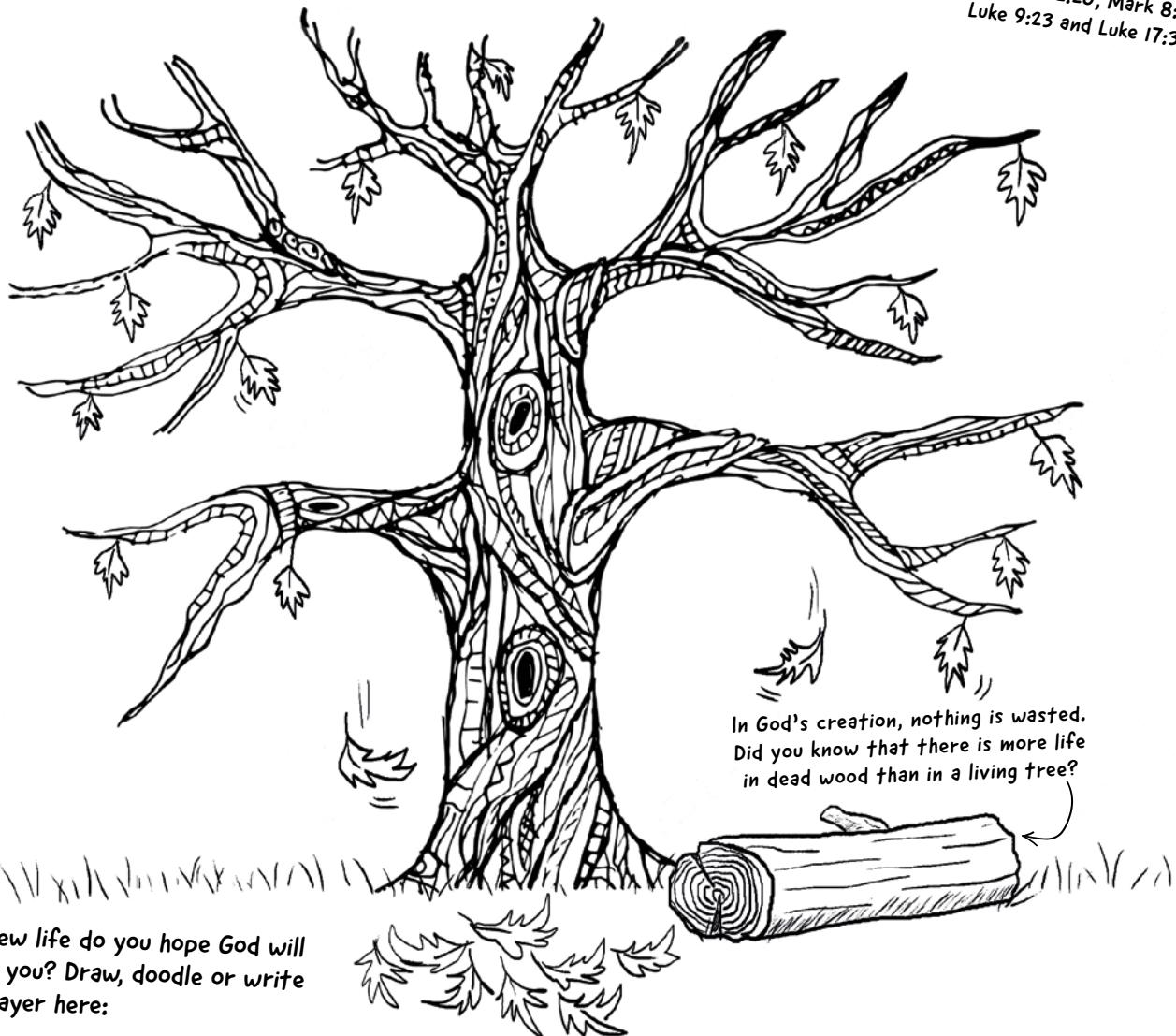
The Bible is full of references to death producing life, such as Jesus saying that "...unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds."

(John 12:24)

"PUT TO DEATH THE SINFUL, EARTHLY THINGS LURKING WITHIN YOU..."
(COLOSSIANS 3:5, NLT)

What within you needs putting to death?
Doodle around the tree and the falling leaves.

See also
*Galatians 2:20, Mark 8:35,
Luke 9:23 and Luke 17:33.*



What new life do you hope God will grow in you? Draw, doodle or write your prayer here: