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Esther Saves Her People

Scripture: Esther 1:1-10:3

Theme: God places us where we are 'for such a time as this'

1st-3rd Grade (Ages 6-8)

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

Lesson Overview

Sunday School Lesson Overview: Daniel in the Lions' Den "God is worth trusting, even when it costs everything!" Introduction (Engage & Set Up): Start with a simple retelling of the story: Ask kids, "What would YOU do if someone told you to pray to a god you don't know, and they threatened to throw you into a den of lions?" Hold up a picture of lions or a lion mask to spark curiosity. Explain that Daniel was a brave man who trusted God even when others wanted him to stop, and that God protected him! Lesson (Teach & Apply): Daniel lived in a big, foreign country (Babylon) where other kings made rules that didn't always honor God. At first, Daniel and his friends followed the king's laws and God's rules too, until one day, the king changed his mind. The officials said, "If you don't worship our king, you'll go to the lions' den!" Daniel said, "God is my King, I'll pray to Him!" The next day, the king watched as Daniel was thrown in, and the lions didn't touch him! (Show a picture of the lions attacking the stone wall instead!) The Bible says God shut their mouths! Lesson: God protects His people who trust Him, even when it's hard. Application (Connect to Kids): Ask: "How can we trust God when things get scary?" Here are two ways: 1. Pray together! Even if you're scared, pray like Daniel did, "God, I trust You!" (Pray aloud with the kids.) 2. Stand up for God's rules. Like Daniel, we can choose to obey God even if others say, "No!" (Example: "I'll share my toys because God says we should be kind.") Challenge for the Week: Give each child a "Lion's Den Courage" bracelet (a small tag with a lion on it) and say: "This week, wear your courage on your sleeve by trusting God when you need to!" (End with a big cheer: "God is BIGGER than the lions, He's BIGGER than our fears!") Why It Works for Volunteers: - Short & Visual: Use props (lions, prayer symbols) to keep engagement high. - Encouraging: Focus on God's power, not just Daniel's bravery, kids can trust Him! - Simple Application: Tie it to everyday choices (sharing, praying) so kids see God's love in action.

Bible Story

Daniel in the Lions' Den

Long ago, in a place called Babylon, there lived a brave man named Daniel. He was one of many Jewish leaders in the king's court, and though he was far from his homeland, he never forgot his faith. The king, Darius, was a kind ruler, and he loved Daniel very much. But some other leaders in the court grew jealous and wanted to trick Daniel into breaking his rules. One day, they convinced King Darius that Daniel should worship only the king's golden statue, not the true God. They said if he did, he would disobey the law. Darius told everyone to bow down to the statue, but Daniel stood firm, saying, "It is right to obey God rather than to disobey Him." His friends were shocked, but he kept his courage.

The king was so upset that he ordered the court to watch Daniel pray to God instead of the statue. That night, as Daniel prayed quietly in his room, the jealous leaders came to the king and lied. They said, "Darius, you gave Daniel the reward and honor, but he still won't obey your laws. He prays only to his God." The king, who trusted Daniel, was sad but couldn't find proof to punish him. So, he wrote an order that everyone must pray to no one but the king for thirty days. If anyone disobeyed, they would be thrown into a den of lions, even if it meant their own death!

Just as the order was put into place, Daniel's friends noticed that Daniel still prayed to God every morning, even though the king's command said no. They whispered to each other, "He's breaking the law!" The next day, when the king came to check on Daniel, he saw him praying again. The jealous leaders told the king, "Let Daniel be thrown into the lions' den, that's what he deserves!" The king, though angry, couldn't deny what his friends had said, so he signed the decree. Daniel was taken to the den, and the lions roared as they grabbed him, even though no one was there to watch!

But God wasn't done with Daniel. Just as the lions closed their mouths, God stopped them from hurting him. The next morning, the king found Daniel still alive in the den! The lions were trembling, and the king asked, "Where are the lions?" God had protected Daniel, and the king knew the truth. He told everyone, "The God Daniel served is alive and powerful! He saved him from the lions." The king made Daniel even more famous, and he gave orders that no one should ever speak against God again. Daniel's faith had been tested, but God was with him every step of the way.

This story shows us that no matter what others say or do, we can stand strong in our faith. God is always with us, just like He was with Daniel. When we feel scared or tempted to break the rules, we can remember: God's love is stronger than fear, and He will never leave us alone. Let's try to be brave like Daniel, trusting God even when others don't understand.

Key Verse

Esther 4:14

Here's a simple and fun way to explain Daniel 6:23 to little kids (ages 6, 8): God is like a brave superhero who protects His people! When Daniel was put in a pit with hungry lions, God sent an angel to keep them from hurting him. The lions' mouths were closed shut so they couldn't bite Daniel, and he stayed safe! This shows that even when things look scary, God can take care of us if we trust Him. Sometimes, when we're afraid (like when someone is mean or we're in trouble), we can remember that God is always with us. Just like Daniel, we can pray and believe that God will help us. The lions couldn't hurt Daniel because God was protecting him, that's how strong and kind God is! What's something that makes you feel safe or brave, like Daniel did? Maybe you can ask God to help you feel strong too, just like He helped Daniel. If you ever feel scared, remember: God's angel is always watching out for you! Would you like a fun way to act out this story with the kids?

Activities

Activity 1:

Kids create a simple den out of paper to symbolize Daniel's courage, then retell the story while walking around a "lions' path" made with paper.

1. Build the Den: Give each child a small group of gray paper. Have them fold it into a box shape (like a fort) with two flaps, glue the sides, and decorate with crayons. Label it "Daniel's Safe Place."

2. Create the Lion Path: Lay out brown strips of paper on the floor to form a winding "lions' den" path. Ask kids to stand at the start of the path and walk around it while you read Daniel 6:17, 28 from the Bible (the part about him being thrown in).
3. Story Stop: Pause after verse 24 to ask, "How did Daniel stay brave?" Let them shout answers like "He trusted God" or "He prayed."
4. Act It Out: Have kids hold their den craft and act out the part where the lions don't hurt Daniel (verse 22). Play soft music for fun!

Activity 2:

Kids memorize key verses from Daniel's story by matching rock cutouts to the Bible verses they write, reinforcing trust in God.

1. Write the Verses: On paper plates (or rocks), write short, bolded verses from Daniel 6:10, 23, or 28, like:
 2. "Daniel prayed three times a day" (10).
 3. "God shut the lions' mouths" (23).
 4. "Daniel trusted God" (28).
5. Make Rock Matching Cards: Give each child a rock. Have them cut out 2, 3 matching rock cutouts and glue them to their own rock with the same verse. (Use a second set of rocks for the class to pair.)
6. Memory Challenge: Play music while kids run around. When it stops, they find a partner to match their rock with the right verse. Cheer when they get it right!
7. Application: After the game, ask: "How can we trust God like Daniel?" Write their answers on the board or in their "Rock of Courage" notebooks.
8. Tip: For both activities, end with a prayer asking God to help them be brave like Daniel!

Discussion Questions

- Here are four open-ended discussion questions for early elementary students (ages 6, 8) about Daniel in the Lions' Den:
 - Courage and Trust in God
 - Daniel lived a long time ago, and many of his friends were worried that if he didn't follow the king's rules, he'd be punished. But Daniel trusted God to protect him, even when he didn't understand how. Today, we might face big or small challenges, like making a hard choice, being treated unfairly, or doing something kind even when others don't see it. What's one thing you've done or wanted to do that made you feel brave, even if you weren't sure how it would turn out? How did you trust God to help you?
 - Facing Fear
 - In the story, Daniel was afraid of the lions because they were so strong and scary. Fear can feel like a big, dark cloud in our hearts, it can stop us from trying new things or being brave. Have you ever felt scared when you were supposed to be brave? For example, maybe you wanted to speak up in class, share something special with a friend, or try something new at school or home. What made you feel scared, and how did you decide how to handle it?
 - Choosing What's Right
 - Daniel knew the king wanted him to worship only gods made of gold, but he knew God was the only true God. He didn't give in to fear or the pressure to change. Today, there are choices we make every day that matter, like telling the truth, being kind even when no one's watching, or following rules that feel unfair. Think of one time you chose to do the right thing, even when you didn't want to. What happened after you made that choice?
- How God Uses Even the Hard Times

- Daniel spent three days in the lions' den, and the animals didn't hurt him! That means God protected him. Sometimes, when we feel scared or stuck, we might wonder if God is watching us or if He really cares. The story shows us that God is always with us, even when things feel hard. Have you ever had a time when things didn't go your way, but later you realized God was working in a way you couldn't see? How did that help you feel closer to Him?
- These questions encourage kids to reflect on their own experiences while connecting the story of Daniel to their lives! Would you like any of them adjusted for a specific theme?

Prayer Focus

Prayer Focus for Daniel in the Lions' Den Dear God, Today, we thank You for showing us how brave Daniel was even when he knew it might be scary. Daniel trusted You completely, even when the king said he had to pray to only one god. Like Daniel, we want to trust You every day, even when things feel hard or different from what others say. Help us remember that You protect those who love and follow You, just like You protected Daniel in the lions' den. God, we ask You to help us be brave like Daniel. Sometimes, we might feel afraid to speak up for what we believe, even if it's the right thing. Help us to stand strong in our faith, just like Daniel stood strong in His. Show us how to pray with our hearts open, like Daniel did, and help us trust You no matter what happens. Lord, we thank You for Daniel's example. He didn't give up, even when he knew he could get in trouble. Help us to do the same, to pray to You with all our hearts and to never stop believing in You. Let us learn to trust You as Daniel trusted You, and let us know that You are always there to protect and guide us. Amen! (This prayer includes simple trust, courage, and application, making it easy for young children to understand and join in.)

>> Missions Spotlight

In Ethiopia, believers in remote areas face pressure from both radical Islam and traditional religions. Daniel's story encourages them that the God who shut the lions' mouths is the same God who protects His people today.

-> To the Cross

Daniel was thrown to the lions for praying to God. God shut the lions' mouths. Jesus was thrown to the 'lions' of sin, death, and hell, and He conquered them all. God always delivers those who trust Him.