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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'

Jr High (Ages 12-14)

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

Lesson Overview

"God's Faithfulness in the Fire" (Daniel in the Lions' Den , Lesson Overview) Imagine being so sure of God's love that, even when the king orders you to pray to himself, you stand firm, because you've seen how He's already protected you. Daniel and his friends didn't get a happy ending without risk, but their trust was not empty. The lions' den? Just a test of what matters most: will we bow to fear or to faith? Real Question: What if God's answer isn't the one we want? Here's the truth: He always keeps promises, but sometimes, the way we trust Him looks like surrender. For junior high kids, this means asking: What's the real cost of my choices today? (A heartbreak? A missed opportunity? A name called out in the arena?) Daniel's story isn't just about survival, it's a reminder: God isn't asking us to be fearless; He's asking us to choose Him, even when the lions roar. Life App: Teach them to pray boldly and live honestly, because trust isn't just faith in the abstract; it's walking through fire with eyes open. End with a challenge: Where's a time God "denied" you something? How did you respond? (No scripted answers, let them name their battles.) Hook for Volunteers: Play the lion roar audio clip (or describe it!) right before the story, kids will sit up straight. Then pause after Daniel's prayer: "What's the one thing God says to you right now?" (Keep it raw but hopeful!)

Bible Story

Sunday School Lesson: Daniel in the Lions' Den "When God is with You, No Fear Wins!"

In the land of Babylon, where kings ruled with absolute power, a group of Jewish leaders named Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were working in the king's palace. They were all smart, faithful, and refused to bow down to the king's gold statue, a command that came after the king declared, "Whoever eats or drinks anything while standing in front of this statue will be thrown into a burning furnace!" (Daniel 3:6). The other leaders obeyed, but Daniel and his friends stayed firm: "We will not worship any gods except the God of heaven, who rules over all." (Daniel 3:23 NLT). The king was furious, so he ordered them thrown into the fiery furnace, but God protected them. When they stepped

in, the flames didn't harm them; instead, four men walked out unscathed. (Daniel 3:25-27).

Now, years later, King Darius of Babylon (who had replaced the evil king) still loved Daniel because the man was trustworthy. When Darius decided to promote his own officials, he said, "Whoever finds Daniel will be given 10,000 talents of silver, and his house in the palace will be made over to the greatest man in the kingdom." (Daniel 6:2). The officials plotted against Daniel, tricking the king into believing he should bow down to an idol every day. Darius signed the decree: "No one may ask anyone to pray to God for thirty days." (Daniel 6:12). Daniel was devastated, his friends had warned him about this, but he had no choice but to obey.

That's when Daniel made a bold choice. Even though he knew the consequences, he prayed to God privately, ignoring the decree. The next day, the officials watched as Daniel walked straight to his prayers. When the king saw him, he was shocked. "Is it true that this Daniel, whom you say is a man of God, has made this decree?" (Daniel 6:16). Darius was torn. If Daniel was wrong, he'd lose his reputation; if he obeyed the law, he'd offend Daniel. Then came the lions, twenty-five strong, roaring to devour Daniel. But the lions only shook their tails and left him unharmed. (Daniel 6:23).

When Daniel was brought out, the king's face fell. He said, "Your God, whom you serve all day, has rescued you from the lions!" (Daniel 6:23). Daniel smiled, and the king declared: "Blessed be the God of Daniel! He has sent his angel and rescued his servant." The officials were stunned, and the king ordered Daniel promoted again. This story wasn't just about survival, it was about faith that faced impossible odds. Daniel chose to trust God even when the world said, "You must obey!" and God proved He was stronger.

Why This Story Matters Today Daniel's story teaches us that faith isn't about never being afraid, it's about choosing God even when fear feels too big. In school, with peer pressure, or when facing hard choices, we'll sometimes be tempted to compromise our beliefs to avoid conflict. But Daniel's example shows that God doesn't ask us to be fearless, He asks us to be faithful. His prayers, his obedience, and his trust in God's power changed everything. When we do the same, even when no one is watching, we prove that our hearts belong to Him, not the world. And like Daniel, we'll be surprised by how much God can do when we trust Him with our fear.

Key Verse

Esther 4:14

Memory Verse: Daniel 6:23 , "My God sent His angel, and He shut the mouths of the lions!" Imagine Daniel was in prison, alone and scared, when God wasn't even there, but He still had a plan. Deep down, he knew God wasn't just watching from afar; He was with him, protecting him like a shield. Even when life feels dark, dangerous, or unfair, God isn't out of sight, He's right there, stronger than the lions, stronger than the problems. That means when you face tough situations, remember: God didn't forget you. He's got a way to shut your fears and the lions' mouths, just trust Him, even when it's hard. Why this matters: - Fear vs. Faith: Daniel didn't let his prison or lions stop him from trusting God. What scares you right now? Could be school stress, peer pressure, or a big decision, God's got you. - God's Promise: Lions aren't the only wild beasts we face. The "lions" could be bullying, failure, or even guilt. But Daniel's story shows God never leaves us to fend for ourselves. - Action Step: Next time you feel stuck, say: "Even if no one's helping, God's helping me." Pray a little, even if it's just: "Thank You for this moment, even if it's scary." God loves you enough to use even your "bad" moments to show you His power. Real Question Answered: "But what if God's not doing anything?" That's when you see God's work in the little things, like how He keeps you safe, or how He gives you strength to stand up for what's right, even when no one else is watching. Daniel's story isn't just about lions; it's about you believing God's got your back, no matter what.

Activities

Activity 1:

1. Introduction (2 min)

2. Begin by reading Daniel 6:10-11 aloud: "Then Daniel said to the king, 'Let your grace be given to me, and let me stand in your presence.' The king said, 'Go now, Daniel, for you have my approval in all matters.'"
3. Ask: "What would you do if you knew your life could depend on trusting God? How does Daniel's courage challenge you today?"
4. Fearful to Fearless Prompts (5 min)
5. Distribute notebooks/paper. Provide these prompts to write or draw (students can choose one):
6. "What's a time you felt scared but trusted God?"
7. "What's a 'lion's den' moment in your life right now?" (e.g., school pressure, peer drama, family conflict)
8. "How can Daniel's example help you stand strong?"
9. Encourage students to share one sentence with a partner after writing.
10. Reflection Circle (5 min)
11. Gather students in a circle. Invite one volunteer to share their prompt with the group. Discuss: "What does it mean to trust God even when things feel unsafe?"
12. Life Application:
13. This activity helps students connect Daniel's story to their own fears, teaching them that God's strength empowers them to stand firm, just like Daniel did.
2. Activity: "Lion's Den Challenge" , Courageous Commitment
15. Story Recap (2 min)
16. Read Daniel 6:22-23 together: "Then Daniel prayed to him and said, 'O God, you are righteous, and you act justly in all you do...'"
17. Ask: "Why did Daniel pray like that? What does 'just and righteous' mean to you?"
18. Group Challenge (7 min)
19. Divide students into groups of 3-5. Give each group:
20. A sheet of cardstock (folded into 3 sections for a tri-fold).
21. Prompts to discuss: "What would make you stand for God in your 'lion's den'?" (e.g., bullying, wrong choices, family pressure).
22. Assign one student to write their group's "courage pledge" on the cardstock, while others draw a symbolic image (e.g., a shield, lion, or hand holding God's

Discussion Questions

- Lesson: "What Would You Do?" , Daniel in the Lions' Den (Daniel 6:1-28)
- A Story About Courage, Faith, and Standing Up for What's Right
- Context for the Discussion:
 - Imagine you're a student at your school, and your friends start making fun of someone because they don't look like "normal" kids, they wear glasses, talk about books, or have a different hairstyle. One day, they start spreading rumors that you're not really interested in sports or fashion, just "nerdy stuff." Your friends whisper behind your back, and your friends in class start to avoid you. You've been a good friend to others, but now you're starting to wonder: Do I keep my head down and stay quiet, or do I speak up? The story of Daniel in the lions' den isn't just about being thrown into a den of hungry animals, it's about the moment when we have to decide: Who will I be when no one else is watching?
- Four Open-Ended Discussion Questions (With Life Application)
- Faith vs. Fear: What Keeps You from Standing Up?
- Daniel was thrown into the lions' den because he wouldn't stop praying to God, even when it meant disobeying the king's command. The story starts with something much quieter: What small, daily choices do you make that

might be seen as "rebellious" by others? For example:

- Do you spend time reading books or learning new things instead of just watching TV?
- Do you pray or thank God before meals, even if no one else does?
- Do you speak up when you see something unfair, like a bully or an unfair rule?
- Daniel chose faith, but what if you're afraid of what others will think? What's one thing you've kept quiet about yourself that you think others might judge? How do you think Daniel would encourage you to handle that?
- Why it matters: This question helps students connect their own struggles with Daniel's, we often feel like we're alone in our values, but the Bible shows us that God sees what we keep inside. How can you remind yourself that no one's opinion is as important as God's approval?
- Who Do You Trust to Help You?
 - Daniel didn't fight alone, he had friends who stood with him. In the story, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Daniel's friends) were thrown into the fire because they refused to stop praying, even though Daniel had already been in the den. This shows something powerful: When we face tough choices, we don't have to do it alone. Think about a time when you needed someone to talk to, your teacher, a trusted parent, or a friend who believed in you.
 - Who in your life knows you well enough to support you when you're scared or wrong?
 - What would happen if you asked them for help with something big (like standing up for someone else, or making a hard decision)? How would it feel to know you weren't alone?
 - Why it matters: Daniel's story teaches that God doesn't always deliver us from danger, He often delivers us through people. Who can you reach out to when you're facing your own "lion's den" moment?
- The Power of a Small Voice
 - Daniel wasn't famous or brave, he was just a young man who loved God. The king's decree made it seem like Daniel had to choose between his faith and his life, but the story starts with something smaller: the way Daniel handled his time. The king was angry because Daniel and his friends had practiced their faith in private, not in public. That's the real lesson here:
 - How do you spend your time when no one's watching? Are you living out your values in quiet moments, reading, praying, or serving others, even if no one notices?
 - What's one small thing you could do every day to live more like Daniel? (Example: Start your day with prayer. Bring a book to school instead of a video game. Help a classmate who's struggling.)
 - Why it matters: Daniel's faith wasn't a grand show, it was the way he lived day by day. How can you be a light in the darkest moments, even when no one is watching?
- What Would You Bet Your Life On?
 - The king's final test was: If God really exists, will He save you from the lions? Daniel didn't say, "I hope God saves me", he said, "Let it be known to the king." That's the difference between hoping and believing. Think about something you care about deeply, maybe your family, your faith, or even your friends, and imagine a time when someone said, "What if you're wrong?"
 - If you had to bet your life on something you believed in, what would it be?
 - How do you think Daniel would answer that question? (Hint: He didn't just say, "I hope." He said, "Let it be known.")
 - Why it matters: This question pushes students to think about what they actually believe, not just what they say, but what they're willing to stand by. Daniel's faith wasn't just about praying, it was about living it, even when it cost him.
- Closing Thought for Reflection:

- Daniel's story isn't just about lions and fire, it's about the moment we all have to ask: Who am I when no one else is watching? Whether it's standing up for someone, choosing kindness over gossip, or trusting God in the face of fear, Daniel shows us that our faith isn't just about what we do when it's easy, it's about what we do when it's hard.
- How to Use These Questions:
- Pair them with the story (e.g., pause after Daniel is thrown in the den and ask #1).
- Write them on cards and have students discuss in small groups.
- Connect them to real-life scenarios (e.g., "What would you do if your friends started bullying someone?").
- End with a prayer: "Lord, help me to stand for what's right, even when it's hard. Give me courage like Daniel's."
- Would you like any of these questions adjusted for a specific setting (e.g., Bible study, class discussion)?

Prayer Focus

Here's a heartfelt, student-friendly prayer for junior high students about Daniel in the Lions' Den, full of honesty, faith, and real-life application: "Lord, we come before You with honest hearts, just like Daniel did. Sometimes, being brave in Your presence is easier than facing fear in the world, like when we feel like hiding our faith or lying to keep peace. Help us to stand bold, even when it's hard. Just like Daniel trusted You even when he knew the lions were waiting, teach us to trust You with our words, our actions, and our fears. When we stumble or doubt, remind us: You're not asking us to be perfect, just faithful. And when our friends or circumstances try to shake our courage, let us remember: You're with us. In Jesus' name, Amen." Why this works: - Relatable: Speaks to their struggles (peer pressure, fear of failure). - Biblical but real: Connects Daniel's faith to their own challenges. - Practical: Ends with a reminder that God isn't asking them to be perfect, just them. You could even add a short reflection question after: "What's one thing you could pray for today to stand strong like Daniel?"

>> 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.