

Daniel faces Big Questions

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| Session 1: | Why do bad things happen to good people? |
| Series: | Daniel faces Big Questions |
| Themes: | suffering, questions, unfairness |
| Bible Passage: | Daniel 1:1-7; 2 Chronicles 36:5-7 |
| Suggested age group: | 14+ |
| Session aims: | To consider how actions bring reactions To think about why bad things happen to good people |

Way in 1 – Conquest

Time: 5 mins

Bible knowledge: n/a

With: two hula-hoops, pack of cards, pens, paper, two balloons

1. Divide the group into two teams to compete against each other
2. Each competition is a dual between one member from each team. Each team member may only compete in one dual.
3. Duals are to:
 - Hula-hoop the longest without stopping
 - Tell the funniest joke
 - Build the highest card house in 30 seconds
 - Draw the best cat or dog
 - Arm wrestle
 - Whistle a recognisable tune
 - Blow up a balloon until it bursts
4. Keep score to find out the winning team

Way in 2 - Snakes and Ladders

Time: 5 mins

Bible knowledge: n/a

With: snakes and ladders board, dice, counters

1. Play a game such as snakes and ladders, requiring some participants to roll the dice and proceed around the board in the normal way, but allowing other participants to choose any number between one and six when it is their turn, thus allowing them to make maximum use of ladders and avoid the snakes
2. When there are complaints, ask group members how they feel when things are unfair

Connecting 1 - God's dealings with his people

Time: 5 mins

Bible knowledge: some

With: copies of resource sheet 1 'Daniel and Friends arrive in Babylon', pens

1. Explain the background to Daniel
 - God had given his people a land of their own

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- He had promised that as long as they lived according to his laws, they could remain living there
 - Generally, the people had not remained faithful to God
 - God had repeatedly warned that he would punish their disobedience
 - The nation of Israel had been destroyed by the Assyrians
 - God continued to call the nation of Judah back to himself
 - Judah continued to ignore God
 - Finally, God sent the Babylonians to destroy Judah
2. Give out copies of resource sheet 1, 'Daniel and Friends arrive in Babylon' (which is taken from 2 Chronicles 36 and Daniel 1)
 3. Ask group members to create two lists, one of characteristics of Jehoiakim, and the other of characteristics of Daniel and his friends

Connecting 2 - Why did that happen?

Time: 10 mins

Bible knowledge: some

1. The Bible doesn't actually tell us that Daniel was a believer in God before he left Judah, but one of the first things he did when he arrived in Babylon was to make a stand for God, so we can assume that he was.
2. The people of Judah had mostly rebelled against God, and therefore deserved his punishment; but was it fair that innocent people who loved and worshipped God were also punished? Daniel and his friends lost their homes, may have had family members killed, were taken as prisoners – but they had not rebelled against God.
3. Ask group members, 'Why do you think the good guys were punished along with the bad? Why did God not protect Daniel and the others?'
4. Make the following points:
 - Modern Western cultures see people as individuals; in ancient Jewish culture, Daniel would have recognised himself as part of a nation that had sinned, and therefore was deserving of punishment
 - People have freedom of choice to follow God or not; however, if they decide not to follow God there are serious consequences. Daniel's exile was a direct result of people exercising their freewill
 - Although these men had to leave their own homes, we see very clearly from the rest of the book that God was with them. Perhaps they learnt something new about God from this experience – they learnt that God wasn't powerful just in Judah, he had the same power anywhere in the world
 - God has plans for our lives. Again as the story in the book of Daniel unfolds, we see God's plans for Nebuchadnezzar, for Babylon, for letting people know about future events, besides his plans for Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. God is able to use the bad things that happen in our lives to bring about good

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Responding - What about these days?

Time: 10 mins

Bible knowledge: some

With: copies of resource sheet 2 'Case Studies'

1. Divide group into small clusters of about three. Give each cluster a case study and ask them to discuss how can God allow that situation to happen, what might help the people concerned come to terms with this, what practical help can other Christians offer
2. Allow clusters to feed back very briefly
3. Pray for Christians caught up in difficult situations, that they may be very aware of God's comforting presence and of the support of other Christians

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Resource Sheet 1 - Daniel and Friends arrive in Babylon

Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he was king in Jerusalem for eleven years. He did what the LORD his God said was wrong. The Lord allowed Nebuchadnezzar to capture Jehoiakim king of Judah. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon attacked Judah, captured Jehoiakim, put bronze chains on him, and took him to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar also took some of the things from the Temple of God, which he carried to Babylonia and put in the temple of his gods.

Then King Nebuchadnezzar ordered Ashpenaz, his chief officer, to bring some of the men of Judah into his palace. He wanted them to be from important families, including the family of the king of Judah. King Nebuchadnezzar wanted only young Israelite men who had nothing wrong with them. They were to be handsome and well educated, capable of learning and understanding, and able to serve in his palace. Ashpenaz was to teach them the language and writings of the Babylonians. The king gave the young men a certain amount of food and wine every day, just like the food he ate. The young men were to be trained for three years, and then they would become servants of the king of Babylon.

Among those young men were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah from the people of Judah. Ashpenaz, the chief officer, gave them Babylonian names. Daniel's new name was Belteshazzar, Hananiah's was Shadrach, Mishael's was Meshach, and Azariah's was Abednego.

(Taken from 2 Chronicles 36:5,6 and Daniel 1:1-7 NCV (anglicised edition) text used with permission from Authentic Media.)

| Jehoiakim | Daniel and Friends |
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Resource Sheet 2 - Case Studies

A missionary family in Africa have three children at boarding school in the nearby town. At the end of term, a friend collects the children from school and is driving them home. A lorry being driven by an unlicensed driver crashes head-on into them. The lorry driver is uninjured, the friend suffers a broken arm, but two of the children are killed outright and the third is left brain-damaged for life.

A leader of the church in China hears a knock on the door late at night. He has been repeatedly warned not to carry on telling people about Jesus, but he has ignored the warnings. Now the soldiers at the door take him and imprison him in a tiny cell where there is not enough room for him to stand upright, nor enough room to sit comfortably. He is taken out daily and beaten on the soles of his feet.

A well known preacher with a gift for healing is diagnosed as having cancer. Although many people pray for him and ask God for healing, the cancer gets worse rapidly.

A Christian family in Sudan, pray daily for God to protect them and to provide for their needs. However, rebel soldiers visit their village, burn down the houses and force the family, along with many others, to run for their lives. In the confusion, their ten-year-old daughter is lost. The family eventually arrive at a refugee camp with nothing and no idea what has happened to their daughter.

A minister's wife and child are walking along the pavement when a drunken driver loses control of the car they are driving. The car crashes into the two, killing the mother and injuring the child so badly that her leg has to be amputated.

A Christian couple, both involved in youth work full-time, are unable to have children of their own. Eventually, after 11 years, the wife does get pregnant and has a daughter. However, during the birth, the baby is starved of oxygen and is left a quadriplegic for life. The wife has to give up her work to care full-time for their child.

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|-----------------------------|---|
| Session 2: | How much Compromise? |
| Series: | Daniel faces some Big Questions |
| Themes: | Compromise, fitting in with culture, standing up for God |
| Bible Passage: | Daniel 1:3-21 |
| Suggested age group: | 14+ |
| Session aim: | To consider when it might be alright to adapt to our surroundings and when we need to hold fast to our belief in God |

Way in 1 - Camouflage

Time: 10 mins

Bible knowledge: n/a

1. With everyone seated in a circle, one person is chosen to be on and temporarily leaves the room.
2. In their absence, the group make a change, such as, two group members swapping shoes, a group member taking off a jacket, or putting on a jumper, a group member holding something that had previously been on the floor or a desk.
3. The person who is 'on' returns and tries to identify the change.
4. If he succeeds, another player takes his place for another round.

Way in 2 - Living in another country

Time: 5 mins

Bible knowledge: n/a

With: flashcards, Blu-tack

1. Ask group members to imagine they were taken to live in another country; what sort of different things would they need to get accustomed to?
2. Write the following anagrams on flashcards and display them around the room – rehcartctuei (architecture), oodf (food), tgvereomnn (government), eaaulggn (language), eeisfbl (beliefs), yotshir (history), sotcehl (clothes), ttlreeurai (literature), nsoitdirat (traditions), gnlreiiio (religion), nedtacuoio (education), urelctcu (culture), siumc (music), sreelu (rules).
3. Group members go round working out the anagrams.

Connecting 1 - Yes and No

Time: 5 mins

Bible knowledge: some

With: Bibles or copies of resource sheet – Daniel 1:3-21

1. Read Daniel 1:3-21, asking group members to note which things Daniel and his friends said 'yes' to, and which they said 'no' to.
2. After they have had a go, comment that Daniel and his friends said YES to:
 - A new education which involved learning a new language, history, culture, science and magic.

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- A change in name, even though each of their Jewish names had something of God in it and they were changed to include the Babylonian pagan gods names. The friends knew these gods were not real.
 - A political career, prepared to regard their service of this foreign government as a way of serving God.
- Daniel and his friends said NO to the King's food. Perhaps this was because
- Jewish laws did not let them eat some foods and they wanted to keep the law, even though it was not recognised in Babylon.
 - The food might have been offered to idols.
 - By doing this, they were indicating that there were some things that they would not compromise on. This was an important issue for Daniel and his friends.

Connecting 2 - Making your mind up

Time: 10 mins

Bible knowledge: some

1. Daniel made up his mind to keep himself ritually clean (v8) and he stuck to that decision even against great pressure to give in and conform. Discuss with the group members:
 - What things have you had to make up your mind about?
 - Have you ever been in a situation where you didn't make up your mind, but afterwards wished that you had?
 - How can you ensure that you keep thinking 'God-wards'?
2. Remind group members of Romans 12:2, 'Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God – what is good and is pleasing to him and is perfect.'
3. Challenge group members to learn this verse and remember it until next time the group meets.

Responding - Committed

Time: 5 mins

Bible knowledge: some

With: music and words for song or post-it notes and sheet of card

Choose one of the following activities to allow group members to express their commitment to live God's way within their culture:

1. Sing 'Everyday' by Hillsong United
2. Allow group members to write prayers on post-it notes and put them onto a sheet of card under the title 'We have made up our minds to put God first'

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Resource Sheet – Daniel 1:3-21

³ Then King Nebuchadnezzar ordered Ashpenaz, his chief officer, to bring some of the men of Judah into his palace. He wanted them to be from important families, including the family of the king of Judah. ⁴ King Nebuchadnezzar wanted only young Israelite men who had nothing wrong with them. They were to be handsome and well educated, capable of learning and understanding, and able to serve in his palace. Ashpenaz was to teach them the language and writings of the Babylonians. ⁵ The king gave the young men a certain amount of food and wine every day, just like the food he ate. The young men were to be trained for three years, and then they would become servants of the king of Babylon. ⁶ Among those young men were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah from the people of Judah.

⁷ Ashpenaz, the chief officer, gave them Babylonian names. Daniel's new name was Belteshazzar, Hananiah's was Shadrach, Mishael's was Meshach, and Azariah's was Abednego.

⁸ Daniel decided not to eat the king's food or drink his wine because that would make him unclean. So he asked Ashpenaz for permission not to make himself unclean in this way.

⁹ God made Ashpenaz, the chief officer, want to be kind and merciful to Daniel, ¹⁰ but Ashpenaz said to Daniel, "I am afraid of my master, the king. He ordered me to give you this food and drink. If you begin to look worse than other young men your age, the king will see this. Then he will cut off my head because of you."

¹¹ Ashpenaz had ordered a guard to watch Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. ¹² Daniel said to the guard, "Please give us this test for ten days: Don't give us anything but vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³ After ten days compare how we look with how the other young men look who eat the king's food. See for yourself and then decide how you want to treat us, your servants."

¹⁴ So the guard agreed to test them for ten days. ¹⁵ After ten days they looked healthier and better fed than all the young men who ate the king's food. ¹⁶ So the guard took away the king's special food and wine, feeding them vegetables instead.

¹⁷ God gave these four young men wisdom and the ability to learn many things that people had written and studied. Daniel could also understand visions and dreams.

¹⁸ At the end of the time set for them by the king, Ashpenaz brought all the young men to King Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹ The king talked to them and found that none of the young men were as good as Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. So those four young men became the king's servants. ²⁰ Every time the king asked them about something important, they showed much wisdom and understanding. They were ten times better than all the fortune-tellers and magicians in his kingdom! ²¹ So Daniel continued to be the king's servant until the first year Cyrus was king.

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| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Session 3: | It's not what you know, It's who you know |
| Series: | Daniel faces some Big Questions |
| Themes: | mystery, God's omniscience (all-knowing), dreams, answers to prayer |
| Bible Passage: | Daniel 2 |
| Suggested age group: | 14+ |
| Session aim: | To show that God is a powerful God who communicates and gives understanding to his followers |

Way in 1 - Yes/No game

Time: *5 mins*

Bible knowledge: *n/a*

With: *small sweets such as M&Ms (be aware of any group member with allergies to food colouring)*

1. Give each group member five sweets
2. Challenge them to ask each other questions
3. They are not allowed to use the words 'yes', 'no', 'yeah', 'nah', 'umm', 'uh-uh', etc., nor to nod or shake their heads
4. Anyone using one of the forbidden words must give a sweet to the player asking the question
5. Stop the game after five minutes. The winner is the person with the most sweets.

Way in 2 - What's in the jar?

Time: *5 mins*

Bible knowledge: *n/a*

With: *glass jar, dried peas, rice, pasta or lentils, dark paper*

1. Fill a glass jar with dried peas, rice, pasta or lentils.
2. Cover the jar with dark paper so that it is impossible to see in.
3. Ask the group
 - What is in the jar?
 - How many are there in the jar?
 - What is the weight of the jar?
4. Discuss with the group what it feels like to be asked questions that are impossible to answer.
5. Take off the paper and reveal what is in the jar.

Connecting 1 - Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Time: *10 mins*

Bible knowledge: *n/a*

With: *a Bible, copies of resource sheet 1 'Daniel 2:16-24', pens*

1. Nebuchadnezzar had had a dream. He set his magicians and astrologers the impossible task of not only interpreting the meaning of his dream, but also telling him what the dream had been.

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2. The astrologers were unable to do this and Nebuchadnezzar was so furious that he ordered the execution of all the wise men in Babylon, including Daniel and his friends.
3. When Daniel heard what was happening, he went to the king and asked for time so that he could interpret the king's dream.
4. Give out resource sheet. Read Daniel 2:16-24, asking group members to note down the answers to the questions as you read

Connecting 2 - Result!

Time: 10 mins

Bible knowledge: some

1. Daniel shared what he knew with the king, but he made sure that the king understood that it was not by his own ability that he could interpret the dream but by God's power
2. As a result Daniel was placed as ruler of the entire province of Babylon and he was able to ask for his friends to work with him.
3. Daniel and his friends continued to put God first and God honoured this.
4. Discuss the following questions:
 - When is it difficult to put God first?
 - What do you do when you don't know how to react to a situation?
 - Do you pray to God?
 - Has God ever answered a prayer for you? Share some examples.

Responding - Prayer

Time: 5 mins

Bible knowledge: some

With: music and words for song

1. In silence, think of a problem to share with God.
2. Pray silently to him
3. Offer the opportunity for group members to pray in pairs if they want
4. Remind them to praise and thank God when he answers
5. Sing 'Faithful One' by Brian Doerkson, from Vineyard

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Resource Sheet - Daniel 2:16-24

1. What did Daniel do as soon as he left the king?
2. What did the friends do together?
3. Why did they pray?
4. How did God answer their prayers?
5. What did Daniel do?
6. What did Daniel say when he praised God?
7. How could you put Daniel's example into practice in your life?

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| Session 4: | How much does it cost to follow God? |
| Series: | Daniel faces some Big Questions |
| Themes: | fear, standing firm |
| Bible Passage: | Daniel 3 |
| Suggested age group: | 14+ |
| Session aim: | To show that obedience to God can sometimes mean ignoring what everyone else is doing and doing what you know to be correct |
| | To consider that God is stronger than anything that we fear |

Way in 1 - Fears and Phobias

Time: 5 mins

Bible knowledge: n/a

With: copies of resource sheet 'Phobias and Fears', pens

1. Give out the resource sheets
2. Ask group members to link phobias on left with fears on right
3. Go through the sheet together, telling group members the correct answers, which are:
 - a. Ablutophobia – fear of washing or bathing
 - b. Agrizoophobia – fear of wild animals
 - c. Barophobia – fear of gravity
 - d. Brontophobia – fear of thunder and lightning
 - e. Cacophobia – fear of ugliness
 - f. Dextrophobia – fear of objects on the right side of the body
 - g. Didaskaleinophobia – fear of going to school
 - h. Ephebiphobia – fear of teenagers
 - i. Geliophobia – fear of laughter
 - j. Lachanophobia – fear of vegetables
 - k. Peniaphobia – fear of poverty
 - l. Xanthophobia – fear of the colour or the word 'yellow'

Way in 2 - Dealing with Fears

Time: 5 mins

Bible knowledge: n/a

1. Do a brief survey to find which is the most common fear amongst your group. Ask group members to put up their hands to indicate whether they are frightened of spiders, dark, small enclosed spaces, heights, war, other people, snakes, water, death, fire
2. Discuss with group how they cope with fears. What strategies do they employ to deal with the things they are afraid of? Do they just avoid the things they are afraid of? What happens when that thing cannot be avoided?

Connecting 1 - Bow or Burn

Time: 10 mins

Bible knowledge: some

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1. Ask group members to close their eyes and imagine that they are either Shadrach, Meshach or Abednego, important civil servants in Babylon. Lead them through this guided meditation
 - a. You received an invitation today with the Royal Seal on it. You are summoned, by order of the King, to attend the dedication of a new statue
 - b. You arrive and see the statue for the first time, gleaming in the sunshine. It is amazing, made only of gold and towering above all the buildings. It must be at least 27m high, but it isn't very wide – only about 3m.
 - c. You are standing along with all the other civil servants when one of the King's heralds makes an announcement. You can hardly believe your ears. Whenever you hear the instruments playing, you are supposed to bow down to this statue – but it is nothing more than an idol – a lump of gold. But the herald's announcement said that anyone who did not bow down would be thrown into the furnace.
 - d. You make up your mind to follow God's ways. You remember the commandment, 'Worship no God but me.' You are certain that God will be with you if you put him first, even if you do end up in the fire.
 - e. Someone must have reported you for not bowing down to the statue, because some soldiers appear and drag you away into the palace
 - f. The king is furious, but he gives you another chance to bow down to his statue.
 - g. You explain that you believe that your God is powerful enough to save you from the furnace, but that even if he didn't, you would not bow down to any other god or statue.
 - h. The king's face turned bright red – he was so angry. He ordered the furnace to be heated seven times hotter than normal. There was no hope he would calm down. Only God could possibly save you now.
 - i. You are tied up and dragged to the furnace door by the hugest guards you have ever seen.
 - j. As you are pushed, still tied up, into the fire, you think, 'This is it. Soon I'll be in heaven, seeing God face to face. I hope it's quick!'
 - k. How incredible! You are inside the furnace. The ropes have burnt up, but you did not feel hot. You are able to walk around in the fire, and who is that walking around with you and your friends? It looks like an angel, could it be God himself?
 - l. Over the noise of the flames, you hear the king's voice calling you out. You don't waste any time. You are out of the furnace like a shot.
 - m. Everyone gathers around you, to see what has happened, but you have not been harmed by the fire at all – your hair is not singed, your clothes are not scorched, you don't even smell of smoke.
 - n. The king orders everyone in his kingdom to respect God because he recognises that there is no other god who can rescue like this.
 - o. The king promotes you to higher positions in the civil service. You were definitely right to risk your life and put God first.

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2. Ask group members to open their eyes and return to the present. Discuss with them what emotions they felt at different times in the story. Have they ever felt similar emotions as they have tried to live for God?

Connecting 2 - Standing Firm

Time: 5 mins

Bible knowledge: some

1. Comment that not many people in Britain today are faced with the threat of a furnace for their beliefs.
2. Ask:
 - a. What is the worst you could face for your beliefs?
 - b. Do you believe God is able to save you from any situation you might face at school?
 - c. Have you ever stood up for God against the crowd or a particular person?
3. Read Philippians 1:20. My deep desire and hope is that I shall never fail in my duty, but that at all times, and especially just now, I shall be full of courage, so that with my whole being I shall bring honour to Christ, whether I live or die. Challenge group members to learn this verse.
4. Discuss how group members can bring honour to Christ in their school.

Responding - Facing Fears with God

Time: 10 mins

Bible knowledge: some

With: anagrams on cards, tea light candles, matches, music and words for song

1. Ask the group what sort of things they need to stand firm about, rather than just following the crowd.
2. Write the following anagrams on cards and display them round the room:

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|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Srltnpihsoaie (relationships) | ugdsr (drugs) |
| Ogd (God) | smiuc (music) |
| Bstiwees (websites) | lcoaloh (alcohol) |
| Yonem (money) | reegattcesi (cigarettes) |
3. Comment that it is important for people to work out what they believe about these sorts of things, and to decide how they want to act so that nothing becomes more important than God. God never promises that it will be easy to stand up for him and to be different from others, but he does promise to be with us.
4. Ask group members to consider which areas they find it most difficult to stand firm for God, where they are afraid of other things.
5. Ask group members in pairs to pray that God would overcome fear in their partner's life.
6. Allow group members to each light a tea light candle to represent God's love which dispels fear.
7. Sing 'Everlasting God' by Chris Tomlin from CD 'See the Morning'

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Resource sheet - Phobias and Fears

Link the following phobias with the appropriate fear in the opposite column:

Phobia



Ablutophobia

Agrizoophobia

Barophobia

Brontophobia

Cacophobia

Dextrophia

Didaskaleinophobia

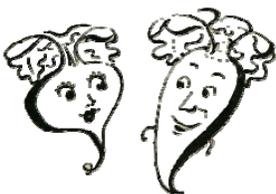
Ephibiphobia

Geliophobia

Lachanophobia

Peniaphobia

Xanthophobia



Fear of ...



wild animals

ugliness

going to school

teenagers

poverty

washing or bathing

thunder and lightning

the colour or the word 'yellow'

laughter

gravity

vegetables

objects on the right side of the body



(Source – The Phobia List, <http://phobialist.com>)

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| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Session 5: | What does God think about pride? |
| Series: | Daniel faces some Big Questions |
| Themes: | pride, humility, repentance, God's power |
| Bible Passage: | Daniel 4; 1 Samuel 16:7; Proverbs 3:34 |
| Suggested age group: | 14+ |
| Session aim: | To recognise that everything we have comes from God To show that God's desire for humanity is that we live in relationship with him To consider the fact that God knows what we are really like |

Way in 1 - Jenga

Time: 5 mins

Bible knowledge: n/a

With: Jenga bricks or plain biscuits, tray

1. Play a game of Jenga – make a tower of wooden blocks. Group members take it in turns to pull out a block from lower down in the pile and replace it on top. The game continues until the tower topples.
2. If no jenga bricks are available, place biscuits on a tray. In turn group members take a biscuit and place it in centre of tray, with each successive biscuit on top of the previous one. The game continues till the pile topples. Allow group members to eat the biscuits.
3. In both games, the towers could only continue so far before toppling. Sometimes people build their lives on unstable things – for a while they may appear to be successful, but in the end they will topple.

Way in 2 - Nebuchadnezzar's fact file

Time: 5 mins

Bible knowledge: n/a

With: wooden blocks or small cardboard boxes, marker pen

1. Over the previous few sessions, we have heard quite a bit about Nebuchadnezzar.
2. However, historians and archaeologists have discovered a whole lot more about this impressive king.
3. Describe some of Nebuchadnezzar's achievements, writing each one on a block or cardboard box as you mention it and stacking the boxes in a tower:
 - a. He built an empire that lasted 70 years
 - b. He built a city
 - c. His city contained one of the 'wonders of the ancient world' – the hanging gardens of Babylon
 - d. He built a culture of music and art
 - e. He built an educated and organised civil service
4. But despite being an obviously intelligent and gifted man, and despite seeing God's power at work on several occasions, Nebuchadnezzar did not acknowledge God. (Knock your tower over.)

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Connecting 1 - Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Time: 10 mins

Bible knowledge: n/a

With: Bibles or copies of resource sheet 1 'Daniel 4', pens, large sheets of liner paper

1. Divide group into two. Give one group copies of Daniel 4:1-18, and the other group copies of Daniel 4:28-33, asking them to draw a picture describing what was happening in their passage.
2. After five minutes, bring the two groups together to look at each others' pictures. Discuss what they think the link is between the two pictures.
3. Read Daniel 4:19-27, Daniel's explanation of the dream.
4. Comment:
 - a. God warned Nebuchadnezzar what would happen
 - b. Daniel pleaded with Nebuchadnezzar to repent
 - c. God gave Nebuchadnezzar 12 months to sort himself out
 - d. But Nebuchadnezzar ignored all of this and remained proud
5. Even though Nebuchadnezzar's pride led to the loss of his sanity, God did not give up on him
6. Read Daniel 4:34-37. When Nebuchadnezzar repented, his sanity was restored.
7. Ask group members in what ways Nebuchadnezzar had changed.

Connecting 2 - Acknowledging God

Time: 10 mins

Bible knowledge: some

With: 4 large sheets of card, resource sheet 2 'Bible verses' printed out and cut into 4 separate pieces, glue, pens

1. Glue each Bible verse into the middle of each sheet of card.
2. Give out pens to group members, giving the following instructions:
 - a. On card with 1 Samuel 16:7, write down natural gifts and abilities they have which they know are from God
 - b. On card with Proverbs 3:34, write down world situations which seem out of control, or over which people might be anxious
 - c. On card with 1 Chronicles 29:14, write down things God has given that they would like to thank him for
 - d. On card with Daniel 4:34, write down attributes of God and things to praise him for
3. Allow five minutes for group members to write on cards
4. As a group look at each of the cards in turn

Responding - Reflection

Time: 5 mins

Bible knowledge: some

With: play dough, music and words for song

1. Give each group member a small lump of play dough

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2. Comment that Nebuchadnezzar had achieved a lot, but that he did not thank God for giving him the abilities and opportunities to do that.
3. Ask group members to reflect over their past year – what things have they achieved, what opportunities have arisen for them, were there things that they should have achieved but did not, what prevented them achieving or making the most of the opportunities they have been given?
4. As group members are reflecting, ask them to make a shape out of the play dough representing what they feel about their achievement or lack of it, and their attitude towards that.
5. Suggest that it might be appropriate for group members to thank God for things, to say sorry about things, to ask for a new start and fresh opportunities.
6. Leave a short silence to allow group members to talk to God
7. Close with a prayer thanking God that he is as much in control of events today as he was at the time of Nebuchadnezzar
8. Sing 'Everything' by Tim Hughes, from CD 'Holding Nothing Back'.

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Resource sheet 1 – Daniel 4

Daniel 4: 1-18 – Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a tree

King Nebuchadnezzar sent this letter to the people, nations, and those who speak every language in all the world:

I wish you peace and great wealth! The Most High God has done miracles and wonderful things for me that I am happy to tell you about. His wonderful acts are great, and his miracles are mighty. His kingdom goes on forever, and his rule continues from now on.

I, Nebuchadnezzar, was happy and successful at my palace, but I had a dream that made me afraid. As I was lying on my bed, I saw pictures and visions in my mind that alarmed me. So I ordered all the wise men of Babylon to come to me and tell me what my dream meant. The fortune-tellers, magicians, and wise men came, and I told them about the dream. But they could not tell me what it meant.

Finally, Daniel came to me. (I called him Belteshazzar to honour my god, because the spirit of the holy gods is in him.) I told my dream to him. I said, "Belteshazzar, you are the most important of all the fortune-tellers. I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you, so there is no secret that is too hard for you to understand. This was what I dreamed; tell me what it means. These are the visions I saw while I was lying in my bed: I looked, and there in front of me was a tree standing in the middle of the earth. And it was very tall. The tree grew large and strong. The top of the tree touched the sky and could be seen from anywhere on earth. The leaves of the tree were beautiful. It had plenty of good fruit on it, enough food for everyone. The wild animals found shelter under the tree, and the birds lived in its branches. Every animal ate from it.

"As I was looking at those things in the vision while lying on my bed, I saw an observer, a holy angel coming down from heaven. He spoke very loudly and said, 'Cut down the tree and cut off its branches. Strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the animals under the tree run away, and let the birds in its branches fly away. But leave the stump and its roots in the ground with a band of iron and bronze around it; let it stay in the field with the grass around it. Let the man become wet with dew, and let him live among the animals and plants of the earth. Let him not think like a human any longer, but let him have the mind of an animal for seven years.'

"The observers gave this command; the holy ones declared the sentence. 'This is so all people may know that the Most High God rules over every kingdom on earth. God gives those kingdoms to anyone he wants, and he chooses people to rule them who are not proud.'

"That is what I, King Nebuchadnezzar, dreamed. Now Belteshazzar, tell me what the dream means. None of the wise men in my kingdom can explain it to me, but you can, because the spirit of the holy gods is in you."

Daniel 4: 19-27 Daniel explains the dream

Then Daniel, who was called Belteshazzar, was very quiet for a while, because his understanding of the dream frightened him. So the king said, "Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its meaning make you afraid."

Then Belteshazzar answered, "My master, I wish the dream were about your enemies, and I wish its meaning were for those who are against you! You saw a tree in your dream that grew large and strong. Its top touched the sky, and it could be seen from all over the earth. Its leaves were beautiful, and it had plenty of fruit for everyone to eat. It was a home for the wild animals, and its branches were nesting places for the birds. O king, you are that tree! You have become great and powerful, like the tall tree that touched the sky. Your power reaches to the far parts of the earth.

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Resource sheet 1 – Daniel 4 cont.

"O king, you saw an observer, a holy angel, coming down from heaven who said, 'Cut down the tree and destroy it. But leave the stump and its roots in the ground with a band of iron and bronze around it; leave it in the field with the grass. Let him become wet with dew and live like a wild animal for seven years.'

"This is the meaning of the dream, O king. The Most High God has commanded these things to happen to my master the king: You will be forced away from people to live among the wild animals. People will feed you grass like an ox, and dew from the sky will make you wet. Seven years will pass, and then you will learn this lesson: The Most High God is ruler over every kingdom on earth, and he gives those kingdoms to anyone he chooses.

"Since the stump of the tree and its roots were left in the ground, your kingdom will be given back to you when you learn that one in heaven rules your kingdom. So, O king, please accept my advice. Stop sinning and do what is right. Stop doing wicked things and be kind to the poor. Then you might continue to be successful."

Daniel 4: 28-33 – The King's dream comes true

All these things happened to King Nebuchadnezzar. Twelve months later as he was walking on the roof of his palace in Babylon, he said, "I have built this great Babylon as my royal home. I built it by my power to show my glory and my majesty."

The words were still in his mouth when a voice from heaven said, "King Nebuchadnezzar, these things will happen to you: Your royal power has been taken away from you. You will be forced away from people. You will live with the wild animals and will be fed grass like an ox. Seven years will pass before you learn this lesson: The Most High God rules over every kingdom on earth and gives those kingdoms to anyone he chooses."

Immediately the words came true. Nebuchadnezzar was forced to go away from people, and he began eating grass like an ox. He became wet from dew. His hair grew long like the feathers of an eagle, and his nails grew like the claws of a bird.

Daniel 4: 34-37 – Sanity returns

At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, looked up toward heaven, and I could think normally again! Then I gave praise to the Most High God; I gave honor and glory to him who lives forever.

God's rule is forever, and his kingdom continues for all time.

People on earth are not truly important.

God does what he wants with the powers of heaven and the people on earth.

No one can stop his powerful hand or question what he does.

At that time I could think normally again, and God gave back my great honor and power and returned the glory to my kingdom. The people who advised me and the royal family came to me for help again. I became king again and was even greater and more powerful than before. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, give praise and honor and glory to the King of heaven. Everything he does is right and fair, and he is able to make proud people humble.

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Daniel faces Big Questions

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Resource sheet 2 - Bible verses

1 Samuel 16:7 (NCV)

The Lord said, 'God does not see the same way people see. People look at the outside of a person, but the LORD looks at the heart.'

Proverbs 3:34 (NIV)

The Lord mocks proud mockers
but gives grace to the humble.

1 Chronicles 29:14 (NIV)

Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.

Daniel 4:34 (NCV)

I gave praise to the Most High God; I gave honour and glory to him who lives forever.
God's rule is forever,
and his kingdom continues for all time.

Daniel faces Big Questions

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| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Session 6: | What happens if we ignore God? |
| Series: | Daniel faces some Big Questions |
| Themes: | warning, judgement, God's power |
| Bible Passage: | Daniel 5 |
| Suggested age group: | 14+ |
| Session aim: | To consider God's power – he is ultimately in control To think about warnings given in the Bible |

Way in 1 - Getting through to you

Time: 5 mins

Bible knowledge: n/a

1. Divide the group into pairs or threes
2. In each small group, one member must try and remain impassive, while the other(s) try to get them to smile or laugh
3. Discuss how difficult (or easy) it was to continue ignoring someone who is trying to communicate with you, and how frustrating it was to try and communicate with someone who would not pay any attention

Way in 2 - What do you value?

Time: 5 mins

Bible knowledge: n/a

With: tray containing lump of Blu-tack with £2 hidden inside and various other things such as mini mars bar, chocolate biscuit, some wrapped sweets, paper clips, new pencil, etc., cloth to cover tray

1. Put all the items on the tray and cover it with the cloth
2. If there are more group members than items on the tray, choose a number of volunteers (less than the number of items on the tray)
3. Instruct the group members, or group of volunteers that when you uncover the tray they have five seconds to choose and keep something off the tray.
4. Uncover the tray and allow them to choose
5. If the Blu-tack is left behind, take it yourself. Ask why no-one chose it. Open it up and reveal the £2 coin inside. If someone has taken the Blu-tack, ask why they chose that seemingly unattractive item from the tray.
6. Comment – everyone had access to the £2, but they did not recognise it's value. There is a new king in Babylon – he must have heard about God from his father, Nebuchadnezzar, but he thought other things were of greater value.

Connecting 1 - Letters from the Palace

Time: 10 mins

Bible knowledge: some

With: Bibles or copies of resource sheet 1 'Daniel 5', copies of resource sheet 2 'A letter from the Palace', pens

1. Divide into five groups

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2. Give each small group a copy of the resource sheet 2 'A letter from the Palace' and one of the following set of verses: Daniel 5:7-9; Daniel 5:10-12; Daniel 5:13-17; Daniel 5:18-24; Daniel 5:25-31
3. Ask each group to finish the letter using the information in the verses they have been given.
4. Encourage each group to read out their account

Connecting 2 - What about these days?

Time: 5 mins

Bible knowledge: some

1. Comment that people these days still ignore God, or treat him as irrelevant. Do group members think that God still gets angry about that, or have things become more multi-faith these days? (Allow group members to respond personally to this question, but ask them to give reasons for their answers.)
2. Read 2 Corinthians 5:10, 'For all of us must appear before Christ, to be judged by him. We will each receive what we deserve, according to everything we have done, good or bad, in our bodily life.'
3. Explain that this is quite a solemn belief:
 - a. People that do ignore God will get punished. However, God loves people and does not want to have to punish them.
 - b. We have a responsibility to be praying for friends and family to realise the reality of God's justice and his love and to turn to him.
 - c. We might be the only person in a position to do that for some of our friends.

Responding - Pebble Prayers

Time: 10 mins

Bible knowledge: some

With: pebbles, permanent markers

1. Ask group members to each think of three friends and family members that they would be willing to commit to pray for.
2. Ask them to select a pebble to represent each person and to write the person's initials on the pebble with a permanent marker.
3. Challenge the group members to carry the pebbles with them and to pray for their friends whenever they feel the pebbles in their pockets.
4. Discuss whether there is a positive way that the group encourage people to seriously consider the claims of God on their lives. For example, could the group offer to take an assembly, could they hold a special group meeting for anyone to come and ask any questions about God, could they work in partnership with a local church to plan a special event, perhaps with a Christian band and speaker, to which people could be invited, would it be appropriate to think of one person who does not know God that each member could encourage to go on a Scripture Union holiday.
5. Pray as a group about whatever ideas have come up. Make a definite plan to put something into practice.

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Resource Sheet 1 – Daniel 5

Daniel 5: 1-6

King Belshazzar gave a big banquet for a thousand royal guests and drank wine with them. As Belshazzar was drinking his wine, he gave orders to bring the gold and silver cups that his ancestor Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Temple in Jerusalem. This was so the king, his royal guests, his wives, and his slave women could drink from those cups. So they brought the gold cups that had been taken from the Temple of God in Jerusalem. And the king and his royal guests, his wives, and his slave women drank from them. As they were drinking, they praised their gods, which were made from gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

Suddenly the fingers of a person's hand appeared and began writing on the plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace. The king watched the hand as it wrote.

King Belshazzar was very frightened. His face turned white, his knees knocked together, and he could not stand up because his legs were too weak.

Daniel 5: 7-9

The king called for the magicians, wise men, and wizards of Babylon and said to them, "Anyone who can read this writing and explain it will receive purple clothes fit for a king and a gold chain around his neck. And I will make that person the third highest ruler in the kingdom."

Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or tell the king what it meant. King Belshazzar became even more afraid, and his face became even whiter. His royal guests were confused.

Daniel 5: 10-12

Then the king's mother, who had heard the voices of the king and his royal guests, came into the banquet room. She said, "O king, live forever! Don't be afraid or let your face be white with fear! There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods. In the days of your father, this man showed understanding, knowledge, and wisdom like the gods. Your father, King Nebuchadnezzar, put this man in charge of all the wise men, fortune-tellers, magicians, and wizards. The man I am talking about is named Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. He was very wise and had knowledge and understanding. He could explain dreams and secrets and could answer very hard problems. Call for Daniel. He will tell you what the writing on the wall means."

Daniel 5: 13-17

So they brought Daniel to the king, and the king asked, "Is your name Daniel? Are you one of the captives my father the king brought from Judah? I have heard that the spirit of the gods is in you, and that you are very wise and have knowledge and extraordinary understanding. The wise men and magicians were brought to me to read this writing and to explain what it means, but they could not explain it. I have heard that you are able to explain what things mean and can find the answers to hard problems. Read this writing on the wall and explain it to me. If you can, I will give you purple clothes fit for a king and a gold chain to wear around your neck. And you will become the third highest ruler in the kingdom."

Then Daniel answered the king, "You may keep your gifts for yourself, or you may give those rewards to someone else. But I will read the writing on the wall for you and will explain to you what it means."

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Resource Sheet 1 – Daniel 5 cont.

Daniel 5: 18-24

"O king, the Most High God made your father Nebuchadnezzar a great, important, and powerful king. Because God made him important, all the people, nations, and those who spoke every language were very frightened of Nebuchadnezzar. If he wanted someone to die, he killed that person. If he wanted someone to live, he let that person live. Those he wanted to promote, he promoted. Those he wanted to be less important, he made less important.

"But Nebuchadnezzar became too proud and stubborn, so he was taken off his royal throne. His glory was taken away. He was forced away from people, and his mind became like the mind of an animal. He lived with the wild donkeys and was fed grass like an ox and became wet with dew. These things happened to him until he learned his lesson: The Most High God rules over every kingdom on earth, and he sets anyone he chooses over those kingdoms.

"Belshazzar, you already knew these things, because you are a descendant of Nebuchadnezzar. Still you have not been sorry for what you have done. Instead, you have set yourself against the Lord of heaven. You ordered the drinking cups from the Temple of the Lord to be brought to you. Then you and your royal guests, your wives, and your slave women drank wine from them. You praised the gods of silver, gold, bronze, iron, wood, and stone that are not really gods; they cannot see or hear or understand anything. You did not honor God, who has power over your life and everything you do. So God sent the hand that wrote on the wall.

Daniel 5: 25-31

"These are the words that were written on the wall: 'Mene, mene, tekel, and parsin.'

"This is what the words mean: Mene: God has counted the days until your kingdom will end. Tekel: You have been weighed on the scales and found not good enough. Parsin: Your kingdom is being divided and will be given to the Medes and the Persians."

Then Belshazzar gave an order for Daniel to be dressed in purple clothes and to have a gold chain put around his neck. And it was announced that Daniel was the third highest ruler in the kingdom.

That very same night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonian people, was killed. So Darius the Mede became the new king when he was sixty-two years old.

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Daniel faces Big Questions

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Resource Sheet 2 - A letter from the Palace

Dear Friend

I was invited to the king's banquet tonight. There were hundreds of us present and the drink was flowing freely. Belshazzar was pretty drunk and even had the gold and silver cups and bowls brought in from the temple – you know, that stuff that Nebuchadnezzar brought back from the Jewish temple, which he never allowed anyone to use. People were very pleased to be given such fine utensils, and some even filled them up and offered sacrifices to our Babylonian gods.

Suddenly, we were all stopped in our tracks ... all we could see was a human hand – no body – writing on the wall, words which didn't seem to make sense – number, number, weight, divisions.

Belshazzar couldn't move ... we wondered whether he was having a stroke or something ... he was SO white and shaking all over. We were all terrified ...

Daniel faces Big Questions

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| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Session 7: | How can you thank God when everything is going wrong? |
| Series: | Daniel faces some Big Questions |
| Themes: | faithfulness, giving thanks in difficult circumstances |
| Bible Passage: | Daniel 6 |
| Suggested age group: | 14+ |
| Session aim: | To show that following God can be costly and involves commitment To consider Daniel's example of giving thanks even when physical circumstances were not good |

Way in 1 - Thank You

Time: 5 mins

Bible knowledge: n/a

With: music or video, CD player or video projector

1. Play 'Thank You' by Dido. (It is possible to buy the video from Amazon or iTunes; the lyrics are available on <http://www.lyrics007.com/Dido%20Lyrics/Thank%20You%20Lyrics.html>)
2. Discuss with young people what struck them from that song, what went wrong in the video, what was Dido saying 'thank you' for?
3. Can group members think of situations where everything might be going wrong, but they can still say 'thank you' to someone?

Way in 2 - Keeping Going

Time: 5 mins

Bible knowledge: n/a

1. Ask for volunteers to see how many press-ups, squats or waist kicks they can do in 3 mins.
2. As the volunteers are doing their activity, encourage the rest of the group to cheer them on, to help them keep going.
3. Discuss what it feels like to start something with enthusiasm, but then find it difficult to maintain momentum.
4. Comment that Daniel by this stage had been living in Babylon for about 60 years, he may have now been about 80 years old, but things have still not got any easier for him to keep on living for God.

Connecting 1 - What would you do?

Time: 10 mins

Bible knowledge: n/a

With: Bibles or copies of resource sheet 1 'Daniel 6'

1. Ask group members, suppose you had been in a position of responsibility under one boss/head teacher/ manager. Now a rival has taken over and is appointing new people – but you are chosen again. How would you feel? Read Daniel 6:1-3
2. Suppose other people were jealous of your success and tried to get you into trouble unfairly. How would you feel? Read Daniel 6:4-5

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3. Suppose a law was passed which made it illegal to worship God in the way you always had done. What would you do? Read Daniel 6:6-10
4. Suppose you had done something from completely positive motives, but someone had twisted it, to make it appear negative. How would you feel? Read Daniel 6:11-13
5. Suppose you are in a difficult situation and someone you are relying on tries to help you, but fails. How do you feel? Read Daniel 6:14-15
6. Suppose you are thrown into a frightening situation, from which there seems no human solution. What do you do? Read Daniel 6:16-18
7. Suppose you were in a situation where you saw God at work. It could only have been God; there was no other logical explanation. How do you feel? Read Daniel 6:19-23
8. Comment sometimes a familiar story becomes too familiar and we forget to be excited that God made those lions act in an unnatural way; or it can seem so remote because none of us have ever been in danger of being thrown into a pit of lions, and so we don't think it has anything to do with us. But all of us face difficult situations, from which God is the only one who can rescue us. And God is still the same God who is powerful and answers prayer. Read Daniel 6:25-27

Connecting 2 - In everything, give thanks

Time: 5 mins

Bible knowledge: some

1. Daniel 6:10 tells us that Daniel offered *thanks* and prayers to God. Comment Daniel would hardly have been thanking God for this new law, thanking him that his life was in danger.
2. Ask group members what things Daniel might have been thanking God for. What things will still be true about God and our relationship with him, even if we are diagnosed with a terminal illness, a close friend dies, we are picked on unfairly, we are forced to become refugees, a flood destroys our home, etc.?

Responding - Thanking God

Time: 10 mins

Bible knowledge: some

With: music and words for songs, roll of lining paper, pens, tissue paper, glue, card

1. Sing a few praise songs such as 'Jesus Christ, I think upon your sacrifice (Once again)' by Matt Redman, from 'The Friendship and the Fear', 'Your love is amazing' by Brenton Brown and Brian Doerksen, from 'Worship Together: Be Glorified, or 'There's a place where the streets shine' by Paul Oakley, from 'Because of You'.
2. On a roll of lining paper, get group members to write attributes of God that are always true regardless of our physical circumstances
3. Give out sheets of card. Ask group members to make a collage out of tissue paper, expressing their thanks to God

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Resource Sheet - Daniel 6

Verses 1-3

Darius thought it would be a good idea to choose one hundred twenty governors who would rule his kingdom. He chose three men as supervisors over those governors, and Daniel was one of the supervisors. The supervisors were to ensure that the governors did not try to cheat the king. Daniel showed that he could do the work better than the other supervisors and governors, so the king planned to put Daniel in charge of the whole kingdom.

Verses 4-5

Because of this, the other supervisors and governors tried to find reasons to accuse Daniel about his work in the government. But they could not find anything wrong with him or any reason to accuse him, because he was trustworthy and not lazy or dishonest. Finally these men said, "We will never find any reason to accuse Daniel unless it is about the law of his God."

Verses 6-10

So the supervisors and governors went as a group to the king and said: "King Darius, live forever! The supervisors, assistant governors, governors, the people who advise you, and the captains of the soldiers have all agreed that you should make a new law for everyone to obey: For the next thirty days no one should pray to any god or human except to you, O king. Anyone who doesn't obey will be thrown into the lions' den. Now, O king, make the law and sign your name to it so that it cannot be changed, because then it will be a law of the Medes and Persians and cannot be canceled." So King Darius signed the law. Even though Daniel knew that the new law had been written, he went to pray in an upstairs room in his house, which had windows that opened toward Jerusalem. Three times each day Daniel would kneel down to pray and thank God, just as he always had done.

Verses 11-13

Then those men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help. So they went to the king and talked to him about the law he had made. They said, "Didn't you sign a law that says no one may pray to any god or human except you, O king? Doesn't it say that anyone who disobeys during the next thirty days will be thrown into the lions' den?" The king answered, "Yes, that is the law, and the laws of the Medes and Persians cannot be canceled."

Then they said to the king, "Daniel, one of the captives from Judah, is not paying attention to you, O king, or to the law you signed. Daniel still prays to his God three times every day."

Verses 14-15

The king became very upset when he heard this. He wanted to save Daniel, and he worked hard until sunset trying to think of a way to save him.

Then those men went as a group to the king. They said, "Remember, O king, the law of the Medes and Persians says that no law or command given by the king can be changed."

Daniel faces Big Questions

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Resource Sheet - Daniel 6 cont

Verses 16-18

So King Darius gave the order, and Daniel was brought in and thrown into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, "May the God you serve all the time save you!" A big stone was brought and placed over the opening of the lions' den. Then the king used his signet ring and the rings of his royal officers to put special seals on the rock. This ensured that no one would move the rock and bring Daniel out. Then King Darius went back to his palace. He did not eat that night, he did not have any entertainment brought to him, and he could not sleep.

Verses 19-23

The next morning King Darius got up at dawn and hurried to the lions' den. As he came near the den, he was worried. He called out to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God! Has your God that you always worship been able to save you from the lions?"

Daniel answered, "O king, live forever! My God sent his angel to close the lions' mouths. They have not hurt me, because my God knows I am innocent. I never did anything wrong to you, O king."

King Darius was very happy and told his servants to lift Daniel out of the lions' den. So they lifted him out and did not find any injury on him, because Daniel had trusted in his God.

Verses 25-27

Then King Darius wrote a letter to all people and all nations, to those who spoke every language in the world:

I wish you great peace and wealth.

I am making a new law for people in every part of my kingdom. All of you must fear and respect the God of Daniel.

Daniel's God is the living God;
he lives forever.

His kingdom will never be destroyed,
and his rule will never end.

God rescues and saves people
and does mighty miracles
in heaven and on earth.

He is the one who saved Daniel
from the power of the lions.

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Daniel faces Big Questions

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| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Session 8: | Should I take responsibility what other people do wrong? |
| Series: | Daniel faces some Big Questions |
| Themes: | prayer, confession, God's loving forgiveness |
| Bible Passage: | Daniel 9:1-23 |
| Suggested age group: | 14+ |
| Session aim: | To consider God's loving and forgiving nature |
| | To think about the need to confess our sins and ask God for forgiveness |

Way in 1 - Wink murder

Time: *5 mins*

Bible knowledge: *n/a*

1. Play wink murder
2. Group members sit in a circle
3. One member is chosen as detective, and leaves the room temporarily
4. While the detective is out of the room, a 'murderer' is chosen
5. When the detective returns, the 'murderer' attacks by winking at people surreptitiously
6. If someone is 'murdered' they must 'die' dramatically so that everyone is aware
7. The detective attempts to identify the murderer

Way in 2 - Daniel's life

Time: *5 mins*

Bible knowledge: *some*

With: *strips of paper, pens*

1. Ask group members to draw a time line of Daniel's life, including the incidents looked at over the course of this series.
2. Time lines could include:
 - a. Born in Judah
 - b. Taken captive to Babylon
 - c. Selected for special training
 - d. Refused to eat 'unclean' food
 - e. Interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream
 - f. His friends survived the fiery furnace
 - g. Nebuchadnezzar goes mad for seven years
 - h. Nebuchadnezzar regains his sanity
 - i. Belshazzar becomes king
 - j. Daniel interprets the writing on the wall
 - k. Babylon is conquered by the Medes, Darius becomes king
 - l. Daniel is promoted
 - m. A law is passed forbidding prayer
 - n. Daniel survives lions' den
 - o. Darius commands all people of the empire to respect Daniel's God

Daniel faces Big Questions

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Connecting 1 - Daniel's Prayer

Time: 15 mins

Bible knowledge: *limited*

With: *copies of resource sheet 1 'Daniel's Prayer', pens*

1. Comment that throughout the life of Daniel he was recognised as an example of a good, upright, godly man. The Bible records failings of many other Bible characters, but nothing bad is reported of Daniel. Even when his enemies tried to find fault, they had to resort to trickery. However, Daniel 9 records a prayer of Daniel's, where he is earnestly confessing sins.
2. Give out copies of Daniel's prayer, asking group members to read through it, marking it in the following way:
 - a. Put a ? beside anything you don't understand
 - b. Put a ! beside anything you find surprising
 - c. Put an → beside anything that you think applies to you
 - d. Put an * beside anything that gives you a new insight into the character of God
3. Allow group members 5 minutes to go through the passage on their own
4. Draw the group together and ask them to report back on each of the categories in turn
5. Ensure that the point is made that Daniel is confessing on behalf of his nation. We do not know whether the Jewish people themselves were repentant, but God accepts Daniel's confession on their behalf.

Connecting 2 - Praying for our nation

Time: 5 mins

Bible knowledge: *n/a*

With: *rice paper, bucket of water, pens*

1. In 2 Chronicles 7:14, God says, 'If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray, then will I hear from heaven, forgive their sins and heal their land.'
2. What things do group members think are wrong in Britain today? Brainstorm together
3. Following Daniel's example, and the instructions in the verse, challenge group members to confess to God the things that are wrong in our country, and to ask for his forgiveness and healing.
4. Allow group members to write prayers of confession on small pieces of rice paper, and drop them into the bucket of water. As the paper dissolves away to nothing, remind the group members that God promises to remove our sins from us.

Responding 1 – Have mercy, God

Time: 5 mins

Bible knowledge: *n/a*

With: *words and music or CD and CD player*

Daniel faces Big Questions

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1. Play or sing 'O Lord, the clouds are gathering' from 'Sacred Journey' by Graham Kendrick
2. (This could be done whilst writing on rice paper in previous activity)

Responding 2 – Lessons from Daniel

Time: *5 mins*

Bible knowledge: *limited*

1. Reflect back with group on all the sessions on Daniel
2. Ask group members which aspect of Daniel's life they have found most relevant to their situation
3. How will they remember and put into practice the lessons learnt from Daniel?
4. Take time to allow group members to pray for each other in pairs.

Daniel faces Big Questions

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Resource Sheet – Daniel's Prayer

² During Darius' first year as king, I, Daniel, was reading the Scriptures. I saw that the LORD told Jeremiah that Jerusalem would be empty ruins for seventy years.

³ Then I turned to the Lord God and prayed and asked him for help. To show my sadness, I fasted, put on rough cloth, and sat in ashes. ⁴ I prayed to the LORD my God and told him about all of our sins. I said, "Lord, you are a great God who causes fear and wonder. You keep your agreement of love with all who love you and obey your commands.

⁵ "But we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and turned against you, your commands, and your laws.⁶ We did not listen to your servants, the prophets, who spoke for you to our kings, our leaders, our ancestors, and all the people of the land.

⁷ "Lord, you are good and right, but we are full of shame today—the people of Judah and Jerusalem, all the people of Israel, those near and far whom you scattered among many nations because they were not loyal to you.⁸ LORD, we are all ashamed. Our kings and leaders and our fathers are ashamed, because we have sinned against you.

⁹ "But, Lord our God, you show us mercy and forgive us even though we have turned against you.¹⁰ We have not obeyed the LORD our God or the teachings he gave us through his servants, the prophets.¹¹ All the people of Israel have disobeyed your teachings and have turned away, refusing to obey you. So you brought on us the curses and promises of punishment written in the Teachings of Moses, the servant of God, because we sinned against you.

¹² "You said these things would happen to us and our leaders, and you made them happen; you brought on us a great disaster. Nothing has ever been done on earth like what was done to Jerusalem.¹³ All this disaster came to us just as it is written in the Teachings of Moses. But we have not pleaded with the LORD our God. We have not stopped sinning. We have not paid attention to your truth.¹⁴ The LORD was ready to bring the disaster on us, and he did it because the LORD our God is right in everything he does. But we still did not obey him.

¹⁵ "Lord our God, you used your power and brought us out of Egypt. Because of that, your name is known even today. But we have sinned and have done wrong.¹⁶ Lord, you do what is right, but please do not be angry with Jerusalem, your city on your holy hill. Because of our sins and the evil things done by our ancestors, people all around insult and make fun of Jerusalem and your people.

¹⁷ "Now, our God, hear the prayers of your servant. Listen to my prayer for help, and for your sake do good things for your holy place that is in ruins.¹⁸ My God, pay attention and hear me. Open your eyes and see all the terrible things that have happened to us. See how our lives have been ruined and what has happened to the city that is called by your name. We do not ask these things because we are good; instead, we ask because of your mercy.¹⁹ Lord, listen! Lord, forgive! Lord, hear us and do something! For your sake, don't wait, because your city and your people are called by your name."

Gabriel's Explanation

²⁰ While I was saying these things in my prayer to the LORD, my God, confessing my sins and the sins of the people of Israel and praying for God's holy hill,²¹ Gabriel came to me. He came flying quickly to me about the time of the evening sacrifice, while I was still praying.²² He taught me and said to me, "Daniel, I have come to give you wisdom and to help you understand."²³ When you first started praying, an answer was given, and I came to tell you, because God loves you very much.

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