

Back to School

—→ with God ←—



All-age Service Outline

The service lasts approximately one hour. Please feel free to adapt by selecting the activity options that work best for your congregation and adding your own praise items.

Involving children, young people and adults in the service, e.g. reading the Bible passage and taking part in prayers, will strengthen and enrich the service. You might like to invite an older teenager to lead an activity or even one section of the teaching.

Optional Resources can be downloaded from the website.

- [BSG20 An Overview of Resources](#)
- [BSG20 All-age Service PPT slides](#)
- [BSG20 Video – Introducing Daniel](#)
- [BSG20 Script – Introducing Daniel](#)
- [BSG20 PPT Bible Story Script](#)
- [BSG20 Bookmarks](#)
- [BSG20 Responsive prayer](#)
- [BSG20 Children’s Talk](#), for those wanting a 10-minute BSG slot within a wider service.
- [BSG20 Children’s Crafts](#)

Setting the Scene

15 mins

INTRO

PPT Slide 1 – Welcome slide

Welcome to our Back to School with God service.

Today we are thinking about the start of a new school year and how we might prepare well. All of us are settling back into a routine after a major time of change and challenge. Perhaps you are starting school for the first time, going into a new year group or moving on to further study. Maybe, as an adult, you are starting a new job, or going back to work. In all of these things it is normal to feel excited and nervous at the same time!

Sometimes we might wonder what lies ahead in the days and weeks to come, but here is a Bible verse to encourage and remember. Psalm 145:18-19 tells us,

PPT Slide 2

The Lord is close to everyone who prays, to all who truly pray to him. He gives those who fear him what they want. He listens when they cry, and he saves them. Psalm 145:18-19 (ICB)

This Bible verse is a wonderful reminder that God not only hears us when we pray, he wants to come close to us, care for us and rescue us. God wants us to talk to him about everything, so let's talk to him now.

PRAYER **Opening prayer** (*own words or suggested prayer below*)

Lord God, thank you that you are close when we talk to you. Thank you that you listen to us; that your son Jesus came to die to save us; that you love us deeply. Thank you that you hear the cries of our heart.

As we come together this morning, may we be aware of your presence. Help us to listen to your words in the Bible. Help us to know what you want to teach us. Give us hearts that long to obey you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Let's praise and thank God for hearing our prayer by worshipping him together.

PRAISE *Choose your own hymn or song of praise.*

BIBLE **PPT Slide 3**

When you see lions, I wonder what Bible story you think of? *Allow the children or wider church family to guess.*

When you hear the name Daniel, who do you imagine? Maybe you are called Daniel, or you know someone who is! The Daniel we are thinking about today is the Daniel of the Bible. That Daniel lived a long time ago, approximately 600 years before Jesus was born. He had many great adventures. Let's find out a little more about him now.

VIDEO **PPT Slide 4 – BSG20 Video – Introducing Daniel**

The video is a mock TV news interview with an actor playing the part of Daniel. It sets the scene and puts Chapter 6 in context.

*If you would like to perform this live using members of your church, the script can be downloaded as **BSG20 Script – Introducing Daniel**.*

BIBLE 1 Daniel has had an exciting life so far! In chapter 6 of the book of Daniel, Daniel is about to have another adventure. A new king, King Darius, is on the throne. Let's find out what happens next.

Daniel 6:1-10. Options for the Bible reading:

- Invite a young person or a teacher to read the passage.
- Dramatise the passage, with different voices playing the narrator and the governors.
- Download **BSG20 PPT Bible Story Script** (*based on the Living Bible*) and read it alongside **PPT Slides 5-9**. You might like to invite a child, teenager or teacher to read. (*The PPT images have been downloaded from www.freebibleimages.com. The website offers different styles. Feel free to download alternatives.*)

Bible Teaching 1 – Prayer shapes

20 mins

PPT Slide 10

With a new king comes lots of new rules to follow. Let's find out how good you are at following rules by playing a quick game of Simon says.

If including the game in your service, invite the children to gather at the front.

GAME **Simon Says** (optional)

There are two ways to play this game.

Version 1: One person is designated Simon; the others are the players. Standing in front of the group, Simon tells players what they must do. However, the players must only obey commands that begin with the words “Simon Says.” If Simon says, “Simon says touch your nose,” then players must touch their nose. But, if Simon simply says, “jump,” without first saying “Simon says,” players must not jump. Those who jump are out.

Version 2: One person is designated Simon, the others are the players. Standing in front of the group, Simon performs an action while at the same time saying, “Simon says, do this!” Play continues with Simon performing various actions to copy. However, if Simon says “Do this!” without first saying “Simon says”, players who copy the action are out.

TEACHING Well done! You did that very well. It isn’t always easy to follow rules. King Darius couldn’t be everywhere at once, and he ruled over a very large kingdom. For that reason, he chose reliable, responsible leaders to make sure people were keeping his rules. One of them was Daniel. **PPT slide 11**

It’s a bit like what happens in school: your Head Teacher is in charge, but he or she asks others to help so the school runs smoothly. Perhaps some of you here today might help a teacher or Head Teacher - acting as monitors, mediators, or buddies to younger children. In secondary school you might be a prefect, a head of your house, or even Head Boy or Head Girl. Hopefully, like Daniel, you are given responsibility because you can be trusted and people think well of you.

Daniel stood out from the crowd. He was trustworthy, he wasn’t lazy, and he didn’t cheat. In school, I wonder what that might look like. It might be working hard; not being late for class; getting your homework in on time; helping others; keeping your promises; listening well; being respectful and kind. If you do these things, people will notice.

Sometimes, however, we don’t do things with the best motives. We are going to watch a wee clip from the children’s programme *Horrid Henry* that shows this.

VIDEO A short *Horrid Henry* clip called ‘Be Nice to Your Brother Day’ can be streamed from [YouTube](#). Henry imagines what he might need to do to win a prize. Insert in **PPT slide 12.**

TEACHING Horrid Henry didn’t have good motives. He was only nice to Peter because he wanted to gain something. Daniel wasn’t like this. Daniel loved and trusted God, and that shaped who he was. Daniel always worked hard. He did this so his life would bring honour to God – not so he would become rich or famous.

God gave Daniel success. He caused the king to give Daniel promotion. **PPT slide 13** God loved Daniel, and Daniel loved God. Daniel allowed God to be in charge, and as a result, God was the one who was shaping Daniel’s life for him. God is pleased when we live for him, rather than living for ourselves. We might hear people around us say that you can map out your own future, or the future is in

your hands, but the Bible tells us that only God knows our future! Let's be like Daniel and trust God to shape our lives for us. The more time we spend with God, the more he changes our thinking and our attitudes to be more like Jesus.

PPT Slide 14 *Three times a day* Daniel got down on his knees and prayed. Wow! He didn't just pray a quick prayer in the morning, or a brief thank you prayer at night. Because he prayed often, he became the kind of person God wanted him to be. His strength and trust were in God, not in himself. His focus wasn't on what great things *he* could do – but what great things *God* could do through him.

Remember back in our Bible reading when the king made a new law that put people who prayed to God in danger? Did Daniel stop praying? Not at all!

Did he pray to King Darius instead? Certainly not! When he heard about the new rule, he did as he usually did. He went to his room, knelt down and prayed.

Even when the king's new law was introduced Daniel "prayed and thanked God, just as he had always done." Taking everything to God in prayer was normal for Daniel, and he wasn't going to stop now. He thanked God as he usually did, *before* asking him for help.

Prayer made a big difference in Daniel's life. Why is prayer still so important for us today? Let's find out.

ACTIVITY 'Family Fortunes' Prayer Quiz

Why does the Bible say we should pray?

We asked 100 Christians that question. We have the 5 most popular answers ready to reveal – but what do **you** think? Chat to the people around you. Why is prayer so important? Why does the Bible say we should pray?

Allow a few moments for people to chat to one another.

Let's find out if your answers match those of the 100 people!

PPT Slide 15 *Click to reveal each answer in turn.*

1. The most important reason to pray is because it is vital for our **relationship with God**. 98 people out of 100 said this. Remember the Bible verse we read at the start? It tells us this too! **The Lord is close to everyone who prays. Psalm 145:18**
2. 61 out of 100 people said we pray because **God cares for us**. 1 Peter 5:7 says, "Give all your worries to him, because he cares for you." A great reason to pray!
3. Next, with 46 votes in our survey, is that we pray because **we need God's help**. Jesus taught his disciples to say "Give us today our daily bread", (Matthew 6:11) God is a good Father who wants to provide for his children. And so we ask him for help.
4. Close behind, with 42 votes, is that it is important **to thank and praise God**. Psalm 100:4 tells us "Come into his courtyards with songs of praise. Thank him, and praise his name."

5. Finally, 36 people said prayer is important in order **to listen to God**. Proverbs 1:22, 23 gives great advice. “You foolish people! Listen when I correct you... I will tell you what is in my heart. I will tell you what I am thinking.” Prayer quietyens us. It helps us to listen to God.

So - how did you do? Give yourselves one point for every answer that matched.

Hands up if you managed to get 1 point... 2 points... 3 points... 4 points... 5 points. Well done! Give yourselves a cheer (*or a pat on the back!*)

Prayer made Daniel the person he was – **prayer shaped Daniel**. What about us?

PPT Slide 16

- Do we pray regularly, like Daniel?
- Does prayer shape our character, like it did Daniel’s?

That’s something to think about.

PRAISE **Wide and Long and High and Deep** by Colin Pye.

*From the album: A Ton of Worship – 100 Songs for Kids by Kingsway Kids 2009.
Available to stream from [YouTube](#).*

Bible Teaching 2 – Prayer saves

15 mins

BIBLE 2 **Daniel 6:11-28. Options for the Bible reading:**

- Invite a young person or a teacher to read the passage from the Bible.
- Dramatise the Bible passage, with different voices playing the narrator, the administrators, the king and Daniel.
- Download **BSG20 PPT Bible Story Script** (*based on the Living Bible*) and read it alongside **PPT Slides 17-24**. You might like to invite a child, teenager or teacher to read. (*The PPT images have been downloaded from www.freebibleimages.com. The website offers different styles. Feel free to download alternatives.*)

TEACHING **Prayer Saves PPT Slide 25**

Daniel was in danger! But the men found him praying and asking God for help – not running away and hiding, and definitely **not** praying to King Darius.

PPT Slide 26 That meant he would face the consequences – and the penalty was to be flung into a den of lions.

How would we feel in Daniel’s situation? I know I would... (*Share a personal response*)

We aren’t told how Daniel felt. But we can see from his actions that he was calm and collected. He knew he had done nothing wrong. Daniel showed no panic, just absolute trust. Why? This could be because he had spent time in prayer; he knew he was not alone, that God was with him. He didn’t go to the king for help. He asked God for help. Prayer helps us to know God and what he is like.

Remember again the Bible verse we read at the start of our service? Let’s read it together again. **PPT Slide 27**

The Lord is close to everyone who prays, to all who truly pray to him. He gives those who fear him what they want. He listens when they cry, and he saves them. Psalm 145:18-19. (ICB)

God was close to Daniel, and that made all the difference. We don't read of Daniel protesting, or making a fuss. Unlike King Darius, who was now in a panic!

Daniel's prayers didn't just save Daniel. There is a twist in this story – prayer saved the king and others as well. Darius liked Daniel and the Bible tells us he tried to rescue him. The Bible says 'He made every effort until sunset to save him'. And yet he came to realise that even as king, he could do nothing. He had to carry out the law he had issued, as royal decrees could never be changed. Even though he was king, he was powerless. He had to throw Daniel into the lion's den. *He couldn't rescue Daniel: only God could.*

Suddenly, as Daniel was being flung into the den of lions, King Darius realised Daniel's only hope was God. **PPT Slide 28**

He shouted, 'May the God you serve all the time save you!' King Darius showed the first step it takes to truly trust God – recognising that God is in control and we are not. He alone can save.

So after a sleepless, hungry night, the king hurried to the lions' den, desperately hoping that God had heard his prayer. And God had. **PPT Slide 29** Miraculously, Daniel was completely safe and unharmed. What an amazing sight that must have been! God had saved him. God had heard both Daniel, and Darius's, prayer.

The impossible had happened – Daniel was alive, not dead! Only God could have done this. Darius had seen first-hand the power of God, and he was overjoyed. And so, Darius came to trust God for himself. **PPT Slide 30** Not only that, he declared that everyone else in his kingdom should worship God too.

PPT Slide 31 Prayer saves. Prayer saved Daniel. And prayer saved King Darius. What an encouragement to us today. **Prayer shapes** who we are. And **prayer saves**. Hallelujah!

TESTIMONY *(Optional) Before the service, invite someone to share a brief testimony (3-4 minutes) about a time they faced a challenge and how prayer helped them and shaped their thinking. We suggest:*

- A teenager who had to home school because of Coronavirus.
- A child who has experienced moving to a new school and having to make new friends.
- An adult who faced illness or redundancy.

Response

10 mins

SONG *(Optional) We suggest watching [King of Me: Rend Co. Kids](#) as a reflective response.*

PRAYER **A prayer of response.** *The prayer can be downloaded as [BSG20 Responsive Prayer](#). Before the service invite the following to take part:*

- A parent who will pray for nursery schools
- A child who will pray for primary schools

- A teenager who will pray for secondary schools
- A church member who will pray for the community

Leader: On this Back to School with God Sunday we want to pray for our children, teachers, and local schools. Would those who have been invited to take part and lead in prayer please come up front? *Allow time for this.*

It is a privilege to be able to support schools in prayer, particularly as we all know they have been through a difficult time.

I would invite you to stand if you are someone who is connected with a nursery, primary or secondary school in any way – as a pupil, staff member, SU Group leader, parent, grandparent, governor or parent council member. Or even if you attended a school!

(*Mention names*) will lead us in prayer. However, so we can all take part – at different points when we hear the words “Lord, hear our prayer,” we will respond by saying together the words on the screen: **PPT Slide 32 Thank you, God, that you are close to us when we pray.**

Parent: **Let us pray.** (*Pause*)
 Father God, we pray for our nurseries and those who work in them. Thank you, Lord, for watching over our little children. Thank you that you love them. We pray you will help nursery staff in the amazing job they do, creating happy places where our children can be safe and cared for well. Please help the children to settle, make friends, and learn to love and help one another. Lord, hear our prayer.

All: **Thank you, God that you are close to us when we pray.**

Child: **Let us pray** (*Pause*)
 Father God, thank you for our primary schools and all those who work in them. Thank you that we are able to get back to school again, and we remember in prayer all the children in the world who have no school to go to. Please encourage our school staff, who do such a brilliant job of running our schools. Help them to adjust to a new routine. Please help all the boys and girls who are starting school for the first time, or who are nervous about returning to school. Help them to settle quickly and know that you are with them. When we are worried like Daniel, remind us that we can turn to you and ask for help. Lord, hear our prayer.

All: **Thank you, God that you are close to us when we pray.**

Teenager: **Let us pray** (*Pause*)
 Father God, thank you for the Bible story of Daniel and for his good character, shaped by prayer. Lord, we pray the same might be said of those who work or study in our secondary schools. We pray that we may be people who can be trusted; who work hard; are respectful and kind. Lord, we are grateful for our education.

Help us to appreciate those who teach us. As we go back to school please help those who are anxious or afraid. Strengthen our school community, so that we might help and support one another. Lord, hear our prayer.

All: **Thank you, God that you are close to us when we pray.**

Adult: **Let us pray** *(Pause)*

Our heavenly Father, thank you for this service today and for the reminder that prayer shapes, prayer saves. Remind us to pray for our schools, those who work in them, and the children and young people who attend them. We pray for the SU Groups that meet in them, asking that pupils will grasp what a great God you are. We lift our children to you. We love them, and we want to see them flourish at school. Lord, thank you for sustaining them through the months spent at home. Help them now to readjust and to gladly benefit from being part of a church and school family once more. We ask you to bless our community and our role as a church within it. May our prayers make a difference! Lord, hear our prayer.

All: **Thank you, God that you are close to us when we pray. AMEN.**

Leader: *Thank those who took part and invite everyone to sit.*

BOOKMARK *(Optional) Bookmarks which encourage prayer in the morning, at dinner-time and in the evening are available to download and print ([BSG20 Bookmarks](#)).*

Daniel prayed three times a day. It made a big difference, not just to his own life, but to the lives of others. It shaped him, and it saved him.

To help us follow the same pattern of praying three times a day we would encourage you to use the **Back to School with God bookmark**. **PPT Slide 33** *Invite the children to hand these out.*

On the reverse there are suggestions of things to pray for throughout the day. Perhaps families or households could even join together to pray!

Let's finish this special Back to School with God Sunday service with a great hymn that speaks so powerfully about prayer: What a Friend we have in Jesus.

PRAISE *What a friend we have in Jesus* by Joseph M Scriven. Public domain.