

# STORIES — AND — RITUALS

## LESSON 12

### Stories & Rituals: The Bible in Broad Strokes

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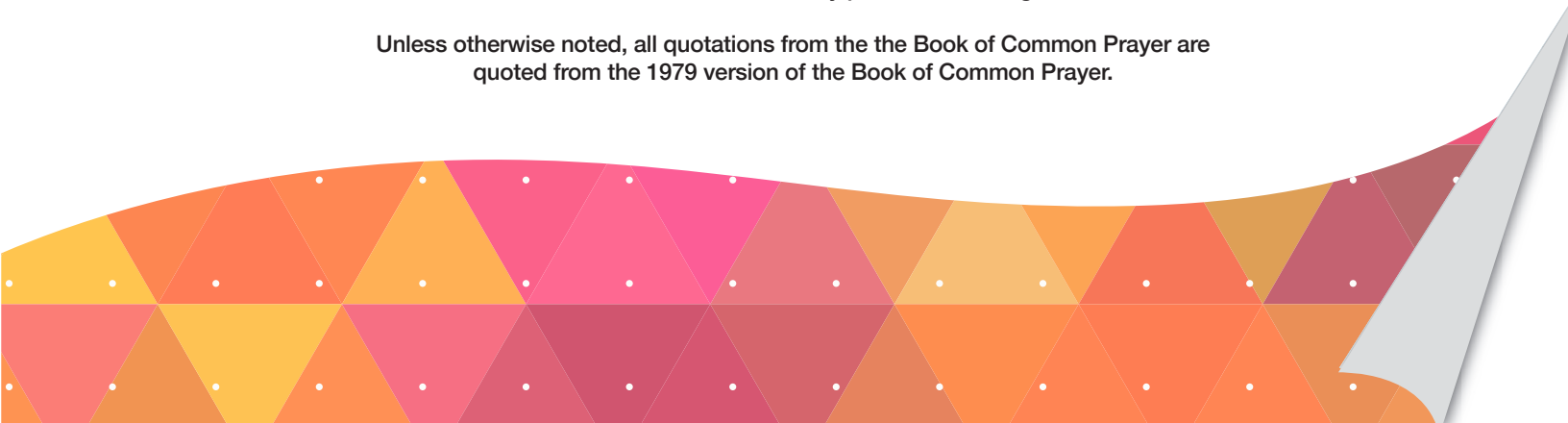
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# Daniel in a Lion's Den

**Texts: Daniel 6:1-27**

**Big Idea: Faithfulness through discipleship**

## Lesson Objectives

### Participants will:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of commitment to a team by completing a team challenge.
2. Understand faithfulness through discipleship by engaging in a re-telling of Daniel's story.
3. Recognize their commitment to God and their faith by sharing these commitments with others.

### ACTIVITY (TIME)

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Dive In (10 minutes)  
**Group Check-In**

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Community Builder (15 minutes)  
**Have a Ball!**

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The Story (15 minutes)  
**Daniel in a Lions Den**

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The Ritual (15 minutes)  
**Our Commitments**

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Dig Deeper (10 minutes)  
**The Cost of Discipleship**

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Wrap it Up (5 minutes)  
**Closing Prayer**

### MATERIALS NEEDED

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- Nothing

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- Beach Ball

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- Copy of Lesson Sheet 12.1

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- Soft, instrumental music (optional)
- Method for playing music (optional)
- Sharpies (or other permanent markers)
- Stones
- Bowl or glass jar

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- Copies of prisoner stories,
- Paper, pens envelopes (optional)
- Smartphones, tablets, or other devices that can connect to the Internet

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- Nothing

# LESSON OVERVIEW



## What's the Story?

Today's story is found in Daniel 6:1-27. The story of Daniel in a Lion's Den is a story that many of us have heard in Sunday school. In Christian traditions, the book of Daniel is grouped together with the writings and teachings of other prophets, and the later portions of this text include descriptions of visions that many classify as apocalyptic literature. Our story today makes up a larger narrative in the first six chapters of Daniel, during which we hear the story of Daniel and his friends showing great faithfulness and dedication to their God.

Historically, the book takes place during the time of the Babylonian exile. Daniel himself was one of the exiles, sent away from his home in Judea to live under the rule of the Babylonian king. In the first six chapters of Daniel, we hear the story of how Daniel and his companions prove that their God is the God who will rescue people of Israel from their bondage and exile.

The story of Daniel reminds us that God has promised to deliver God's people, and God will do so; in return, we are committed and faithful disciples of the Lord.



## What's the "Big Idea?"

Today's lesson focuses on *faithfulness through discipleship*. Sometimes, being a person of faith is hard. There are people and events that hold us back from truly committing to a journey with God. There are many people who, through their faithfulness, have faced persecution. Daniel's story invites us to think about the commitments we make in our daily lives, and how we can still remain faithful, even when other things get in the way of our faithfulness.



## What's the Symbol?

In today's story, Daniel was thrown into a lion's den, which was closed and sealed by a stone. Place a bowl or jar of stones on your altar area to use during the ritual. These stones will be used to remind us of the commitment Daniel showed to God, and will invite us to think about the commitment we show to God, too.



## What's the Ritual?

Today's ritual will invite participants to think about to what things they commit in their lives. Individuals will be invited to write these commitments on rocks and share them with small and large groups. Finally, each person will be invited to renew their commitment to faithfulness through discipleship and reaffirm this commitment as a community.



## Setting Up Your Space

Set up your "altar" area. Set up a table and cover it with fabric or linen. On the table, place a few candles and a large cross. Place a bowl or glass jar on the altar and fill it with the stones needed for the ritual. Have permanent markers and supplies for the Dig Deeper activity nearby. If you are using the Community Builder activity, set up the challenge.

## DIVE IN (10 MINUTES)

### Group Check-In

#### Materials:

- Nothing

#### During the session:

- Open your session with a quick prayer. Use this one or a prayer of your own:  
**Holy Lord, open our eyes, ears, and hearts to see your love and faithfulness in the world around us. Help us see your love for us in your Word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.**
- Let's start our time together by sharing some of the great and not-so-great things that have happened to us this week. What were the high points and low points of your week? Go around the group and invite everyone to share.

## COMMUNITY BUILDER (15 MINUTES)

### Have a Ball!

#### Materials:

- Beach Ball

*Special Note: This activity includes running around and moving. It is best to play this game in a large, open space where your group can stand in a giant circle.*

#### During the session:

- Invite the group to stand in a circle. Show the group the inflated beach ball. **Today we are going to work together as a team to reach a goal. Your goal is to keep this ball in the air for 20 hits while following the rules I give you. Hitters of the ball can only hit underhand, and the same person is not allowed to hit the ball twice in a row. For this stage, you are allowed to use both hands. Once you complete the first stage, we'll move on to the next one.**
- Throw the ball in the air, and see if the group can keep the ball up for 20 hits. Once they do, move on to the next stage. **Now, your goal is to keep the ball in the air for 20 hits again, but this time, you must call out your name once you hit the ball.**
- Throw the ball in the air, and see if the group can keep up the ball for 20 hits again. Once they do, move on to the next stage. **Now, your goal is to keep the ball in the air for 20 hits again, but this time, you have to clap your hands three times after hitting the ball.**

## COMMUNITY BUILDER - CONTINUED

- Throw the ball in the air and see if the group can keep the ball up. If you have time, you can continue adding stages and playing the game. Some stages to include might be: can only use non-dominant hand to hit the ball; can use both hands, but have to turn around after hitting the ball; can use both hands, but must high-five a partner after hitting the ball; etc. You can also create your own stages to challenge your group
- **As we played this game, did you find yourself committed to achieving your team's goal?**  
**How did your team work together to make your achievement possible?**



## THE STORY (15 MINUTES)

### Daniel in a Lion's Den

#### Materials:

- Copy of Lesson Sheet 12.1

#### Before the session:

- Make a copy of Lesson Sheet 12.1
- Practice reading through the story several times so you are familiar with it.

#### During the session:

- Tell the story on Lesson Sheet 12.1.
- **After the story, ask: What is this story telling us about God?** *[Answers will vary, but may include: God expects faithfulness; God protects those who are faithful.]*
- **What is this story telling us about humanity?** *[Answers will vary, but may include: We all have values and morals; we all want to stand up for those values and morals, no matter what happens to us.]*
- **What is this story telling us about the world?** *[Answers will vary, but may include: The world may have different values and morals; people in the world may never understand why we are faithful to God; our words and actions help other people understand why we believe in and trust God.]*
- **Daniel made the decision to be faithful to God, even though he knew that it meant having to stand up for his faith at a time when having faith could hurt, or even kill, him. Daniel believed so much in God that he was able to be faithful, all the way to the lion's den. Each of us also has values, morals, or a faith that we commit to. The question we must ask ourselves is this: do we believe strongly enough in something to stand up for it, no matter what?**



# THE RITUAL

## (15 MINUTES)

## Our Commitments

### Materials:

- Soft, instrumental music (optional)
- Method for playing music (optional)
- Bowl or glass jar
- Stones
- Sharpies (or other permanent markers)

### Before the session:

- Gather stones for your group to use for the ritual. The stones should be big enough so that individuals can write on them. You should have enough stones so that each person can take three or four. Place the stones in a bowl or glass jar.

### During the session:

- If you are playing music, begin playing it softly.
- **We are all faithful to something. Sometimes it's God, and sometimes it's something else. What are some of the things you are committed to? Take a moment to think about it.**
- Give participants time to think and reflect.
- **In a moment, I am going to hand you a few stones. Using the permanent markers, write on your stones the things that you are committed to. Be honest with yourself and with God.**
- Hand out stones and markers. Give participants time to write their commitments on the stones. Once everyone is finished, invite the large group back together.
- **Look at your stones and at some of the things you wrote down. To what are you committed and faithful? Find a partner and share what you wrote down.**
- Pair up participants and invite them to share their findings with their partner.
- **Once you and your partner have finished sharing what you wrote on your stones, take a moment to share with each other why you are committed to these things. What makes you faithful to something?**
- Give pairs an opportunity to share their stories with one another. Once they are finished talking, bring the large group back together.
- **We are all committed to something. Daniel's commitment was to God. He was so faithful to God that he prayed, even when the king told him not to. He was so faithful that he even when he was thrown in a lion's den, he continued praying to God. Are you so committed to God that you would do the same? Or, are you committed to other things?**
- Invite participants to hold their stones.
- **In a moment, I am going to invite you to bring your stones to our altar. As a symbol of our commitment to live lives of faith, we are going to offer our other commitments to God. Maybe right now you don't feel as committed to God as Daniel. That's okay. If you don't feel that committed, still place your stones at the altar as a symbol of your willingness to explore what being faithful to God might mean.**
- Invite the group to approach the altar one at a time with their stones.
- **Let's close our time together by saying the Lord's Prayer, as a renewal of our commitment to be faithful disciples of God.**

## THE RITUAL - CONTINUED

- End by saying the Lord's Prayer together.
- Invite participants to pick up their rocks and carry them home as a reminder of the commitments we make in our lives, and of their renewed commitment to God.

## DIG DEEPER (10 MINUTES)

### The Cost of Discipleship

#### Materials:

- Copies of prisoner stories
- Paper, pens envelopes (optional)
- Smartphone, tablet, or other device that can connect to the Internet (optional)

#### Before the session:

- Visit [www.prisoneralert.com](http://www.prisoneralert.com) and print off stories of people currently in prison because of their faith. You should have one story for every two people. PrisonerAlert is a ministry of The Voice of the Martyrs ([www.persecution.com](http://www.persecution.com)), a nonprofit dedicated to providing support and assistance to Christians imprisoned and persecuted around the world, and their families.
- If you wish for your group to write letters to the prisoners, read through the instructions on how to do so. Note that in order to write letters, you must be able to access the PrisonerAlert website in order to translate messages.

#### During the session:

- **There are many people in the world who, like Daniel, remain faithful to God, even when their belief may put them in the way of harm or danger. Today we are going to read the stories of a few people who are currently in prison because of their faithfulness.**
- Split the group into pairs. Give each pair the story of a prisoner to read.
- **Read the real story you were just given. Be ready to share your story with the rest of the group!**
- Give time for pairs to read the story. After everyone has read their story, invite members of the group to share their story with everyone else.
- **How can we support these individuals and bring them hope and comfort?** *[Answers will vary.]*
- If you have time and would like your group to do so, invite them to use the translators on the PrisonerAlert website to write a note of encouragement to the prisoner.

# WRAP IT UP

## (5 MINUTES)

### Closing Prayer

Invite the group to share any prayer concerns or requests they may have for the week. Close your time together in prayer. Use the following or pray your own prayer:

**Almighty God, you kindle the flame of your love in the hearts of your servants. Give all of your servants a strong faith like Daniel, so that all might follow his example of faithfulness and discipleship. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.**



# Lesson Sheet 12.1

## Daniel in a Lion's Den

### **A story about the prophet Daniel:**

a king named Darius. King Darius took a liking to a prophet named Daniel, who had interpreted a sign from God. Darius appointed administrators and officers to oversee his kingdom, and Daniel became one of these officers. Daniel's deeds were so great and loved by the king that Darius wanted to appoint Daniel to oversee the whole kingdom. Because of this, the other administrators and officers tried to find a way to get rid of Daniel, but they couldn't find anything because he was a faithful servant.

These people decided that the only way they could find a problem with Daniel was through his connection to God. So, they went to the king, saying, "King Darius, you will live forever! All of your administrators, officers, and governors advise you to issue a new decree throughout the kingdom, and enforce a new law. This law will say that anyone who worships something or someone other than you, the king, will be thrown in a pit of lions. Nobody can change or edit this law." The king signed the decree, and it became law.

Daniel heard about this law, but he still went home and prayed. He knelt in his room, facing Jerusalem, and prayed to God three times every day, just like he always did. While Daniel was praying, the king's advisors came to his house and found him praying. They took Daniel to the king.

The advisors said to King Darius, "Look, King Darius! Didn't you just sign a decree saying that people can't worship anyone other than you, or be thrown in a den of lions?" The king responded, "Yes, and the law can't be changed." Then the advisors said, "This man, Daniel, still prays to his God three times a day. He hasn't listened to you and followed your orders."

King Darius wasn't happy when he heard about Daniel. He wanted to save Daniel, but the advisors kept reminding him that the law couldn't be changed. So, King Darius gave the order, and Daniel was thrown into the lion's den. The king said to Daniel, "May your God hear your prayers and save you!"

After Daniel was thrown in the den, a stone was rolled to seal it. Then, the king went back to his palace for the night, upset at what he had just done. He couldn't eat and he couldn't sleep. At the first sign of sunrise, Darius awoke and went to the lion's den.

As he approached the den, Darius cried to Daniel, "Daniel! Has your God, the one you served, saved you from the lions?" Daniel said to Darius, "Yes, my God sent an angel that kept the lions' mouths closed. They could not hurt me, because my God saw me as innocent, and you should, too!"

King Darius was happy that Daniel was alive. He ordered that Daniel be taken out of the den. Because Daniel remained faithful to God, he was not hurt at all. Then the king ordered that all of the advisors be thrown into the pit. As that happened, none of them survived the lions.

Then, King Darius issued a new decree. It said: "To everyone in this kingdom, may you live in peace and prosperity! I decree that everyone should worship and revere the God of Daniel. Daniel's God is the living God, and will live forever. God's rule will last until the end of time. This God is a rescuer and deliverer, because Daniel was saved from the mouths of the lions!" And Daniel became very prosperous during the rule of King Darius.