

Daniel and His Friends Obeyed God

1

BIBLE PASSAGE: Daniel 1

MAIN POINT: Daniel obeyed God by not eating the king's food.

KEY PASSAGE: Daniel 2:20-21

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How can we obey God? We trust God to give us strength to obey Him.

SMALL GROUP OPENING (10–15 MINUTES) **LARGE GROUP BIBLE STUDY** (25–30 MINUTES) **SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES** (25–30 MINUTES)

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Leader BIBLE STUDY

God's people had been warned. The prophets had come with messages from God: "Turn from your sin, and turn back to God!" But the people did not listen. The nation of Judah was consumed by idol worship; the kings did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. So God kept His word—He allowed His people to be taken from their land.

Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon, the strong and powerful nation that overtook Judah's capital of Jerusalem and brought God's people from Israel to Babylon. Daniel was a young man in Judah when this happened. He might have heard about the prophet Isaiah's warnings; now he witnessed their fulfillment. (See Isa. 39:5-7.)

King Nebuchadnezzar called for the best young men from Judah to be trained for service in the palace. Among these teens were Daniel and three of his friends. The chosen boys were given new identities—new names, new education, new culture. But Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah stayed faithful to the one true God and refused to make themselves unclean by eating the king's food.

God blessed Daniel and his friends. Daniel's obedience to God led to his favor with King Nebuchadnezzar, and Daniel's life would be a testament to God's control over all things. God remembered His people during the exile and promised to bring them back to their homeland and set up a new kingdom.

As you share this story with the kids you teach, explain that obedience is not always easy, but we trust God to give us strength to obey Him. Point out that Daniel lived about 600 years before Jesus—the perfectly obedient Promised One. We can trust that Jesus will return someday to set up His kingdom forever.



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The BIBLE STORY

Daniel and His Friends Obeyed God

Daniel 1

When Jehoiakim (jih HOY uh kim) was the king of Judah, **Nebuchadnezzar** (NEB yoo kad NEZ uhr), the **king of Babylon, went with his army to Judah.** Because God's people had sinned against Him, **God allowed King Nebuchadnezzar to take over the city of Jerusalem.**

King Nebuchadnezzar told one of his leaders to bring some of the people to Babylon. He wanted boys who were healthy, handsome, and good learners to serve in his palace.

Every day, King Nebuchadnezzar gave **the boys** a special diet. They **ate the same food and drank the same drinks that the king ate and drank.**

Four of the boys who came from Judah were different than the others. They worshiped the Lord, the one true God. Their names were Daniel, Hananiah (HAN uh NIGH uh), Mishael (MISH eh uhl), and Azariah (az uh RIGH uh). The man in charge of the boys gave them new Babylonian names. Daniel's new name was Belteshazzar (bel tih SHAZ uhr). Hananiah's new name was **Shadrach** (SHAD rak). Mishael's new name was **Meshach** (MEE shak), **and** Azariah's new name was **Abednego** (uh BED-nih goh).

Even though Daniel and his friends weren't in Judah anymore, **Daniel still wanted to obey God. God's laws told Daniel what he could and could not eat. Daniel was not allowed to eat some of the food that the king gave the boys. Daniel asked the man in charge for permission to eat other foods,** but the man in charge was afraid.

“If you don't eat the king's food, you won't be strong like

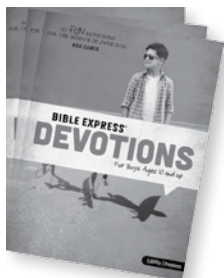
the other young men. The king might get angry and kill me!” he said.

Daniel said, “Try this for 10 days. Let us eat only vegetables and drink only water. Then see if we are healthier than the other young men.”

The guard agreed. At the end of 10 days, Daniel and his friends looked healthier than the young men who had eaten the king’s food. After that, the guard allowed Daniel and his friends to keep drinking water and eating vegetables.

God was happy that Daniel obeyed Him. God blessed Daniel and his friends. He made them wise and smart. They learned lots of new things. God gave Daniel the ability to understand visions and dreams. When their training was over, Daniel and his friends stood before the king. The king saw that they were smarter and stronger than all the other young men. They were even smarter than the wise men who worked for the king. **Daniel served the king for many years.**

Christ Connection: Daniel chose to obey God no matter what, and God blessed Daniel and his friends. In an even greater way, Jesus always obeyed God. He came to earth and followed God’s plan to save sinners. Jesus never sinned, but He died the death we deserve. Jesus rose from the dead, and those who trust in Him receive God’s forgiveness and blessing.



**WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD’S WORD?
GET
BIBLE EXPRESS!**

Invite kids to check out this week’s devotionals to discover that before Daniel and his friends were taken to Babylon, Isaiah prophesied about the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6) bringing hope to the captives. Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out www.lifeway.com/devotionals.

Small Group OPENING

SESSION TITLE: Daniel and His Friends Obeyed God

BIBLE PASSAGE: Daniel 1

MAIN POINT: Daniel obeyed God by not eating the king's food.

KEY PASSAGE: Daniel 2:20-21

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How can we obey God? We trust God to give us strength to obey Him.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Ask kids to think of times or places in their lives when they need to listen and obey. Talk about the consequences of both obedience and disobedience.

SAY • Listening and obeying are important in these situations. Did you know that God expects us to listen to and obey Him every day? In today's Bible story, we will hear about a group of people who made the choice to obey God, even when it meant doing something no one else around them was doing.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "Friends in Babylon" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete "Friends in Babylon" on the activity page. Kids should use the key to decode the names of the four boys in today's Bible story. (*Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego*)

SAY • Today, we will hear a Bible story about four friends who served together in the king's palace. The boys chose to be obedient to God. They trusted God to give them the strength to obey Him.

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Scavenger hunt

Hide vegetables (real or plastic) in small batches around the room; hide at least one vegetable per kid. Allow the group to move around the room together, searching for the vegetables. Give instructions such as “look higher,” “look lower,” “move to the left,” “turn around,” and so on.

When kids find vegetables, they may each claim one and bring it to you. Allow kids to hunt until each kid has claimed a vegetable.

SAY • In today’s Bible story, four friends chose to obey God by eating only vegetables. Do you think you could do that? We know that all of God’s instructions are for our good, but that doesn’t always make them easy to obey! God gives us strength to obey Him.

OPTION 2: Mystery bags

Place a piece of fruit or a vegetable inside a brown paper bag. Invite a volunteer to reach into the bag to feel the item and describe it to the rest of the class. Challenge the other children to try to guess the mystery item.

Consider preparing a few mystery bags and allowing multiple volunteers to participate. (Suggested items: onion, broccoli, banana, lettuce, dry beans, and so forth.)

SAY • Though you couldn’t see what was in each of these bags, you listened carefully to the description and thought about what you heard. Today, we will learn about listening carefully to God. We can trust God to help us listen to and understand His Word.



- vegetables (real or plastic), 1 per kid
- Allergy Alert download (optional)

- fruit or vegetables
- brown paper bags
- Allergy Alert download

Transition to large group

Large Group LEADER

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- room decorations
- Theme Background Slide (optional)

Suggested Theme Decorating Ideas: Simulate the inside of a pizza parlor. Position a table and two chairs at the front of the room. Cover the table with a red and white checkered tablecloth. Consider using a chalkboard to display a simple Italian menu and price list. You may also project the theme background slide.

Countdown

- countdown video
- “The Big Story” video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as large group time begins. Then begin the session by showing the video “The Big Story.”

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

- leader attire
- pizza box, pizza cutter, or oven mitts

[Large Group Leader enters wearing an apron and chef's hat and carrying a pizza box, pizza cutter, or oven mitts.]

LEADER • Hi, everyone! Welcome to my pizza parlor! My name is [*your name*], and I am so glad you've joined me in my restaurant today!

This restaurant has been in my family for years, and we make delicious food using secret recipes that have been passed down from my great-great-Nonna from Italy. Her recipe for ooey-goey macaroni and

cheese is my absolute favorite, and my cousin Eddie loves Nonna's spaghetti! But our restaurant is most famous for her delicious pizza. Even though it's an old recipe, it's a good one. It's trusty—not rusty—I say, and it keeps people coming back for more.

Her special sauce is what makes our pizza so famous. I wish I could tell you what's in it, but it's a secret! When I share it with my cooks, they look at me like I'm crazy. But I tell them over and over again, "Just trust me!" and when they listen and follow the directions I give them, they see that it all works out and they make the most delicious sauce!

That's kind of how it is with God, isn't it? Sometimes life can seem weird or we may be scared or it may be difficult for us to obey God for a bunch of different reasons. But God knows best. He is big and wise and in control—even when things don't make sense. We can trust Him to give us strength to obey Him.

Over the next few weeks, we will gather together here in my restaurant to hear true stories about people who were in some crazy, hard, or interesting situations. In each of these stories, we will learn about how these people learned to trust and obey God.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

LEADER • Before we get started with our first story, let's remember where we've been on our giant timeline. Point out previous stories on the giant timeline and show kids where today's Bible story, "Daniel and His Friends Obeyed God," falls chronologically.

• Giant Timeline or
Big Story Circle

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • As we listen to today’s story, ask yourselves, *How can we obey God?* That is our big picture question. Listen carefully to see how Daniel and friends trusted and obeyed the Lord.

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Daniel 1. Tell the Bible story in your own words, or show the Bible story video “Daniel and His Friends Obeyed God.”

LEADER • Does anyone else feel a little silly reading about eating only healthy fruits and vegetables while sitting in a pizza parlor? [*Laugh nervously.*] But this story isn’t about the importance of eating healthy food.

Instead, this story is about God’s people being set apart and doing different things so they could give God glory. But I have to be honest, if I were to live in this pizza parlor surrounded by delicious pizza all day and God asked me to only eat, like, salads and healthy stuff ... Mamma mia! It would be tough!

This reminds me of our big picture question: *How can we obey God?* What do you think? [*Allow kids to respond.*] I think I heard the answer! *We trust God to give us strength to obey Him.*

Daniel obeyed God by not eating the king’s food. Daniel and his friends trusted God to give them the strength to obey Him.

God was faithful to give Daniel and his friends the strength to obey Him, and He honored their obedience by making them the healthiest and strongest young men in the group.

God was glorified by the young men’s obedience,

- Bibles
- “Daniel and His Friends Obeyed God” video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster

and He was glorified when the king noticed that God blessed Daniel in special ways.

Daniel chose to obey God no matter what, and God blessed Daniel and his friends. In an even greater way, Jesus always obeyed God. He came to earth and followed God's plan to save sinners. Jesus never sinned, but He died the death we deserve. Jesus rose from the dead, and those who trust in Him receive God's forgiveness and blessing.

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me (optional)

Use Scripture and the guide provided with this session to explain to boys and girls how to become a Christian. Assign individuals to meet with kids who have more questions.

Encourage boys and girls to ask their parents, small group leaders, or other Christian adults any questions they may have about becoming a Christian.

*Tip: Provide *I'm a Christian Now* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.*

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Daniel 2:20-21.

- Key Passage Poster
- "Name of God" song

LEADER • There is a reason God wanted Daniel and his friends to make different choices than the other boys who served the king. Our key passage tells us that God has great wisdom and power.

When we trust and obey God, we are also trusting in His wisdom and we are relying on His power to give us the strength to obey Him. God is so wise, powerful, and trustworthy. He is worthy of our praise!

Lead boys and girls to sing "Name of God."

• “Unit 16, Session 1”
discussion starter
video

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • Have you ever been in a situation where you knew you should do something other than what everyone else was doing? Watch this.

Show the “Unit 16, Session 1” discussion starter video. Lead kids to discuss why it is difficult to do the right thing, especially when no one else is. Prompt kids to talk about why it is important to obey God.

LEADER • God wants us to honor Him with our choices and actions. Our lives can show others how God has saved us and changed us. Living for Jesus is better than anything this world offers.

Sing (4 minutes)

• “It Is Well” song

LEADER • We have learned that God is wise, powerful, trustworthy, and worthy of our praise. Let’s take some time now to sing together and praise God! Sing together “It Is Well.”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups.

LEADER • Let’s pray together. God, thank You for giving us the strength to obey You. Thank You for giving us Your true Word—the Bible—so we can learn about how You strengthened and cared for Your people.

Most of all, thank You for Jesus. Thank You, Jesus, for living an obedient life, for dying the death we deserve, for rising from the dead, and for offering us forgiveness and blessing. Amen.

Dismiss to small groups

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus.

Small Group LEADER

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Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- paper
- pens or pencils
- crayons or colored pencils

Show the key passage poster and lead kids to read the verses aloud. Then distribute paper, pens or pencils, and crayons or colored pencils. Invite kids to copy the key passage onto their papers. Then direct kids to trace over the passage with as many colors as possible as time allows.

SAY • This week at home, look at your “rainbow key passage” every day and try to memorize as much of it as you can. Ask God to help you! Next week, let’s see how much you know from memory.

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster

Provide Bibles and guide kids in locating Daniel 1. Remind them that the Book of Daniel is in the Old Testament.

Invite a volunteer to identify which book comes before Daniel (*Ezekiel*) and another volunteer to identify which book comes after Daniel (*Hosea*).

SAY • We heard a true story today about how God gave strength to Daniel and his friends to trust and obey Him. Let’s see how much you can remember.

Ask the following review questions:

1. What kind of boys did the king want to serve him?

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

(healthy, handsome, good learners; Dan. 1:4)

2. How were the four boys from Judah different? *(They served God, Dan. 1:8-9)*
3. What did Daniel and his friends eat that was different? *(They refused the king's royal food and ate only vegetables and drank only water, Dan. 1:11-16)*
4. How do we know that God was pleased with Daniel's obedience? *(God blessed Daniel and his friends, made them smart, gave them the ability to understand special things, and gave them favor with the king; Dan. 1:17-20)*
5. ***How can we obey God? We trust God to give us strength to obey Him.***

SAY • Great job, everyone! You remembered that **Daniel obeyed God by not eating the king's food**, and you understand how God strengthened Daniel and his friends and blessed them for their obedience.

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Paint with water

Take paintbrushes and buckets of water outside and allow kids to paint scenes from the story on the sidewalk. If weather does not permit outdoor activities, kids may paint with water on sheets of construction paper. When kids finish, encourage them to share with a friend about the scene they painted.

If kids need more direction, suggest these scenes:

- Daniel and his friends were taken to Babylon.
- Daniel and his friends asked to eat only vegetables and drink only water.
- Daniel and his friends stood before the king.
- Daniel and his friends were smarter and stronger



- buckets of water
- paintbrushes
- construction paper (optional)

than all the other young men.

- Daniel and his friends served the king for many years.

SAY • In today's Bible story, Daniel and his friends chose to do things differently than the people around them.

Daniel obeyed God by not eating the king's food.

Daniel and his friends trusted God to give them the strength to obey Him.

OPTION 2: Following in Jesus' footprints

Guide each kid to find a partner. Distribute pencils and paper. Instruct partners to trace their feet onto pieces of paper until each kid has a total of seven footprints—one for each day of the week. Staple together the heels of the seven footprints to create a booklet.

SAY • **Daniel obeyed God by not eating the king's food.**

Daniel and his friends had to make the decision every day to not eat the king's food and to obey God instead. I want to encourage you to make decisions to follow God every day this week.

Let's remember to pray for one another and ask God to give us the strength to obey Him. Every day that you make a decision that shows obedience to God, write about it in your footprint book.

When we disobey God, we sin. Just like we can trust God to give us the strength to obey Him, we can trust God's perfect solution for sin—His Son, Jesus. Jesus lived a perfectly obedient life. Jesus never sinned, but He died the death we deserve. Jesus rose from the dead, and those who trust in Him receive God's forgiveness and blessing. This is great news! We can praise God forever because of His great love.

- pencils
- paper
- stapler

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Encourage kids to write about a decision they can make that would honor or show obedience to God. Consider these questions:

- Is there someone at school who might need you to be her friend?
- How can you make more time in your schedule to read your Bible or learn about God?
- Is there something you can give away that might help someone else?

SAY • Daniel and his friends made different choices than the people around them because they wanted to obey, honor, and please God.

We can also make choices that honor, obey, and please God. Sometimes the choice is easy and sometimes the choice is hard, but either way, ***we can trust God to give us strength to obey Him.***

Lead the kids in prayer, thanking God for sending His Son, Jesus, to rescue us from sin. Pray that God would give kids power and strength through the Holy Spirit to make wise choices that honor Him.

As time allows, lead kids to complete “Honoring Our God” on the activity page. Kids should circle things that are honoring to God (*prayer, Bible study, giving, service, thanksgiving, obedience*) and cross out the things that do not honor God (*cheating, disobedience, lying, pride*). Then they will use the bolded letters in the God-honoring things to fill in the missing letters in today’s main point.

- pencils
- Journal Page
- “Honoring Our God” activity page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week’s *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.