

On your marks

Many children's leaders have found the style of storytelling that has been developed within Godly Play to be a very helpful and effective way of opening up the Bible with children. At BRF, we have experimented with some additional stories from scripture presented in this style, and we are making them available so you can try them out with your children's group. We would be interested in any feedback on how they were received. Remember to tell the story slowly, focusing on the objects and on the story itself, **not** on the children who are listening. When you have finished telling the story, leave a short space and then use the wondering questions written out for you at the end of the piece.

Get set

Daniel's story belongs to the time when the people of God were in exile in Babylon. Taken into exile far from the land of promise and from the temple, which had been destroyed, they thought that not only had they deserted God but also that God had abandoned them. They seemed far from his presence and help. However through what happened to Daniel, and also through the preaching of other prophets like Ezekiel, they came to understand that God was also in this foreign and strange land. All of God was in every place, waiting to be found.

For this presentation, you will need a special gift box into which you can put the following items, choosing or making 3D objects that are both simple and attractive (you may like to decide on a particular colour of box, which you will use in future for stories of individual prophets like Daniel):

- a long piece of red felt which will unroll like a scroll and onto which you will place the different objects (your right to your left) to tell the story
- four small golden crowns - you could make these from card
- two wooden lions from a Noah's ark set
- a small bowl on to which you can place some pieces of pretend fruit - you could make these with Playdoh
- a tower of different colours (such as from a child's building set) to represent the statue in the King's dream and a small golden stone
- a chain
- a flat, outline figure of Christ in white
- four symbols or pictures of praying hands - such as the famous picture by Dürer
- a small book or model scroll to represent the scriptures
- a small empty frame (from a photo frame) to represent an open window
- three thought bubbles drawn or printed on paper and mounted on card to represent the dreams
- finally use some clay to create a flat writing surface and onto this carve the words from the writing on the wall - Mene Mene Tekel Parsin.



Go!

1

Watch carefully where I go to fetch this story.

Bring the box and place it down on the floor in the middle of your circle of children

This is one of the stories about the special people of God. I wonder whose special story is in this box? Shall we open it and see?

Move the box to your side. Now open the box just enough to draw out one object at a time as you tell the story. Bring out the red felt roll first and lay it to your right in the middle of the circle. Unroll it a little to be ready for the first part of the story. Before each new section of Daniel's story, unroll it a little more. You will need to practice this beforehand to be sure you have the right length of felt for the whole story

Let's see what's in the box to help us tell the story. Watch carefully; a piece of red felt. It is like a long scroll ready to be unrolled. This must be a long story and a special story about someone important because red is an important colour.

There is nothing else to help us get ready for the story. So let's start.

2

This is the story of one of God's people. His name is Daniel.

Put down the piece of chain

The people of God were in exile. They were trapped. They'd been taken from Jerusalem across the desert and made to live in the city of Babylon. They hung up their harps on the weeping willows and were very sad, when they remembered Jerusalem.

3

Put down a symbol of praying hands

They used to turn towards Jerusalem when they prayed and they wondered if they would ever see the city again. They were cut off from home and they thought they were cut off from God.

Put down one of the golden crowns

But the King of Babylon, who was called Nebuchadnezzar, allowed the people to work and some of them opened shops and some of them even worked for the King. Slowly the people of God began to realise that God was in this place too.

4

Put down a second symbol of praying hands



As they prayed and met together to hear the old stories, God came close to them and they came close to God.

5

One of the people of God called Daniel was a very handsome and gifted man. The King wanted to train him to become a leading minister in the kingdom. Daniel and some friends were taken away to train for three years and learn Babylonian and live like Babylonians. They were even given Babylonian names. The King also wanted them to eat the same food as the Babylonians ate but Daniel knew that this was not allowed in God's laws. He asked to be excused this food. The man in charge of Daniel was very scared, because if the King found this out he would be killed. Daniel promised him that even though he wasn't eating the King's rich food, he would still look strong and fit, because God would look after him.

Put down the bowl with the fruit

Daniel and his friends prayed and God came close to Daniel and Daniel knew that God was close to him. God kept them fit and healthy. In fact, they were 10 times healthier than all the other people in training.

6

Put down one of the dream bubble pictures

Once the King had a terrible dream. He woke up very frightened and knew it meant something special, but he could not remember the details of the dream, so he ordered all his wise men to tell him the dream and its meaning. All the wise men in the kingdom said this was impossible. Only the gods could do this. The King was so angry he decided to kill all the wise men and this would include Daniel and his friends. Daniel knew what to do. Daniel prayed and God came close to Daniel and God showed Daniel what the dream was and its meaning.

7

Put down the coloured tower

He told the King about a great statue that he had seen in his dream - made of gold and silver and bronze and iron and iron mixed with clay. The statue looked beautiful and strong but then a tiny rock came.

Put a small golden stone beside the tower and then lay the tower flat

It had been carved mysteriously from a mountain and broke the whole statue to pieces. Then that rock grew bigger and bigger and filled the whole world. Daniel told the King that the different parts of the statue were different Kings in the times to come but that all the kingdoms would one day crumble before a special kingdom that came from God. Nebuchadnezzar recognised God's power and knew that it was God who was in charge of history, removing kings and setting up kings, revealing mysteries and giving wisdom and strength to his people. You won't be surprised to discover that before he died Nebuchadnezzar also learned to trust God like Daniel.

8

Put down another golden crown

A new king came to the throne his name was Belshazzar. Once he held a great feast at which they used the special golden plates and cups that had been stolen from the temple in Jerusalem years before. During the feast a very strange thing happened. The people saw a hand, writing words on the plaster of the wall, where the party was being held.

Put down the clay with the words carved on it

They were strange words and everyone was filled with fear. The king's wife knew whom to turn to. Daniel was a man, who was in touch the Spirit of God. Daniel told the King what the words meant. The kingdom's days were numbered; the injustices of the kingdom had been weighed; and now the kingdom would be cut in two and given to others. It all happened just as Daniel said and God looked after Daniel.

9

Put down another gold crown

Another king came - this time from Persia. His name was Darius. He had heard of how trustworthy Daniel was, so he gave him a position of great honour in the land. Daniel's secret was simple. Three times a day he would open his window and turn and face Jerusalem and pray to God.

Put down the frame

Praying by his window was his special place to be with God; to hear the words of God, to talk with God and to read the stories of God. The other leaders in the land grew jealous and tricked the King into passing a law that everyone must worship only the king. Daniel could never worship the king because he worshipped God. Daniel was brought for trial and the sentence was passed. Very sadly the king had to agree to the law, because it could not be changed. Daniel was thrown into a den of hungry lions.

Put down the lions

Even King Darius prayed that Daniel's God would rescue Daniel. Daniel prayed and God came close to Daniel and Daniel knew that God was close to him. God sent an angel to shut the mouths of the lions, so that all night long he was safe. You will not be a surprised to hear that the King was so happy that he too came to trust in Daniel's God.

10

Put down another dream bubble picture

Daniel was a man of dreams. Some of them were very scary but he knew what to do. He prayed and God showed him what those dreams meant. In one dream he even saw a man from heaven, equal with God.



Put down the other symbol of praying hands and also the flat white outline of Christ

This man was very special and the kingdoms were all given to this man. I wonder who that man was?

11

Put down the little book or model scroll to represent the scriptures and also a final symbol of praying hands

Daniel used to go regularly to his special place and he would read the story of God's people in the Bible and he prayed every day. He knew that it was God who was in charge of history and that one day the people of God would go back to Jerusalem.

But Daniel also knew what they should have known all along, that God was in every place and not just in Jerusalem; and that whenever they pray, God comes close and God will show them what to do.

12

Put the final gold crown down

Finally a fourth King came to the throne. His name was Cyrus.

Put down a final dream bubble picture

Daniel was a very old man by now but he had many more strange and wonderful dreams. Some of them are very hard to understand. In some of them he met with Gabriel, God's special messenger angel. In some of them he heard the man from heaven talking to him about the end of the world. He also told Daniel that one day all the kingdoms and kings of the world would belong to God and to God's people.

I wonder which part of this story you like the best?

I wonder which part of this story is most important?

I wonder where you are in this story or which part of the story is about you?

I wonder if there is any part of the story we could leave out and still have the whole story of Daniel?