



On your marks

The story of Daniel has been used by many people to encourage believers to stay true to their faith even in the face of fierce opposition. The Daniel stories were particularly popular among the first Christians, who faced persecution from the authorities in their day. Just as God was with Daniel and even saved him from death, so Christians can trust in the Lord Jesus to be with them, whatever might happen.

Get set

You can find a version of this story in the [Barnabas Family Bible](#) (page 102).

If you are using the following idea to tell the story, encourage as much participation and interaction as possible. Some stage directions are included below but, in particular, the phrase **one true God** should become a recurring theme, accompanied by one hand pointing upwards as everyone says the phrase loudly together.

One simple prop will be useful - a paper crown.

Go!

Story

This is the story of Daniel and his scary sleepover.

Has anyone here ever had a sleepover? Did you get any sleep? I'm not sure Daniel got much sleep on his scary sleepover, but it wasn't because he was talking all night. In fact, I think he kept as quiet as possible. Let me tell you about what happened.

In Babylon there was a new king. (*Produce a crown*)

Three cheers for King Darius! (*Lead three cheers*)

Babylon was a big kingdom and, of course, King Darius could only be in one place at one time, so he divided up his kingdom so that there were governors for each area - 120 governors altogether.

Now that's a lot of governors, and Darius couldn't look after all of them by himself, so he appointed three presidents to look after the 120 governors. And guess what? One of those presidents was Daniel.

Daniel believed in the **one true God** and didn't come from Babylon. He had arrived as a prisoner many years before but had done such a good job that he had risen through the ranks to become one of the most important people in the kingdom. He was an outsider, but he was trusted by the king.



But wait! The other two presidents were local and didn't like Daniel the outsider. They wanted to get rid of him. They were jealous because King Darius liked Daniel best of all. Listen to their whispers of jealousy. (*Encourage everyone to whisper behind their hands*)

They hatched a plan. They knew that Daniel believed in the **one true God** and that Daniel prayed every single day - not once, not twice but three times, upstairs in his house with the window open facing west towards his home city of Jerusalem.

Daniel was such a good man. Daniel did everything by the book - God's book. So the only way they were going to catch him out was through his faith in God

They went to King Darius with a plan. 'Everyone agrees you're the best king ever,' they said. 'Everyone agrees that you should be honoured above anyone else. Everyone agrees that you should be treated like a god. Let there be a command that for 30 days no one should pray to anyone or anything except to you... you alone.'

Darius was flattered. Darius liked to be thought of as special. Darius was rather full of himself, so he agreed. What harm could there be in it?

The new law was proclaimed: 'Only pray to the king!' (*Encourage this to be shouted out loud two or three times*)

Daniel knew about the new ruling, but Daniel always put the **one true God** first, so Daniel could not keep the rule. Daniel continued to open his windows facing west toward Jerusalem, three times a day. He continued to pray to and thank the **one true God**.

And the two presidents spotted him. The two presidents dragged him before King Darius. The two presidents accused him of breaking the law. The two presidents reminded the king that this law could never be changed.

There was anger in their voices. (*Lead some angry shouting and fist waving*)

The King was sad, but he knew he could not break his own law. He knew that Daniel had to be punished. And what was worse, he knew that the punishment was death by being thrown to... the lions. (*Lead a great roar*)

The king did not want to do it. He tried hard to find a way round it. He tried everything possible, but it had to be. Daniel was taken away, and the stone was removed from the lions' den and Daniel was thrown in. (*Let out a great scream as he falls into the pit*)

'I pray that the **one true God** will look after you,' cried the king, and these were the last words that Daniel heard as the stone was dragged over the pit. This was going to be Daniel's scary sleepover!

The lions prowled around, growling. (*Lead growling*)

They were mean; they were restless; they were hungry. Poor Daniel didn't stand a chance. But



suddenly, standing right there in the lions' den was a giant of an angel, stronger and bigger and scarier than any lion.

'Stop! You shall not touch Daniel tonight. It's not feeding time but sleeping time,' said the angel with authority.

He began to stroke the lions so that their growling became a great purring. *(Lead the sound of growling, turning into purring)*

One by one, each lion lay down peacefully and the purring became a deep lions' snoring. *(Lead the sound of deep snoring)*

I don't think Daniel slept, but he was kept safe. God did send help

The next morning, the king - who also hadn't slept all night for worry and for praying and for hoping that Daniel would be kept safe - came rushing to the den entrance to look in. He dragged back the stone and cried out, 'Daniel, are you safe? Has God rescued you?'

Daniel shouted back: 'May the king live for ever. My God knew I was innocent and sent an angel to keep the lions from eating me. I am safe. The **one true God** has rescued me. *(Lead a big cheer)*

Daniel was brought out of the den, alive and well. Daniel always put God first, so because of that, God put Daniel first and kept him safe. And King Darius learnt a big lesson. He knew that the **one true God** was also a rescuer God and he wanted everyone in his kingdom to believe in this amazing, true God

This story has encouraged Christians down the ages to trust God when things get tough - to put God first when our enemies whisper against us and when everything seems lost. This story tells us a little bit more about the God who is actually a rescuing God. And do you know what? The word for 'rescue' in the Jewish language is 'Jeshua' or, as we say the name, 'Jesus'.

Prayers

Daniel prayed three times a day. We're going to describe an arc shape with our arms above our heads, moving from east to west - just as the sun rises, goes high in the sky and then sets. At three points we will stop and pray a one-line prayer together, just in the same way as Daniel prayed three times a day.

(Stop at three points - soon after you have started, half way across, and just before the end)

- In the morning we pray: Lord Jesus, thank you for the gift of a new day.
- At midday we pray: Lord Jesus, help us to do what is right and put you first.
- In the evening we pray: Lord Jesus, thank you for all the good things you have given us this day. Amen