



# Enter the Story

## ***Daniel***

A narrative about how God uses our small acts of faithfulness in big ways.

## ***THE BIBLE***

Daniel 5-6

*Prepare for the Story*

## **ICEBREAKER**

There is a saying that “hindsight is 20/20”. Share about a time when you looked back on past events and realized that God had done something for a reason, which you didn’t understand at the time, but now you see it clearly.

*Rewind the Story*

Can someone highlight what has happened in the story so far ...

- Exile – The people of Jerusalem taken to Babylon
- King of Babylon – Nebuchadnezzar's wild pride
- The Fall of Judah – Jeremiah & King Zedekiah

*Hear the Story*

### **Scene One: Writing on the Wall**

Despite being taken from his homeland, Daniel served the kings of Bablon faithfully. Some of the kings appreciated how God had gifted him and blessed him, while others ignored him and openly mocked his God.

Once, at a party, King Belshazzar poured his best wine into chalices that were taken from the temple in Jerusalem. Along with his guests, they drank merrily and taunted the Jews who were in their service. At the height of the fun, suddenly, a large and mysterious hand appeared and wrote something on the wall of the banquet chamber.

The king was frightened and called for Daniel to make sense of it. The writing on the wall said, *"You have been weighed on the scales, and you have been found wanting."* Daniel explained to the king that soon, his kingdom would be taken away from him. And that very night, as the party was ending, the Persian army rode victoriously through Babylon's gates, killing King Belshazzar and taking control of the city, and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom of Babylon.

### **Scene Two: Darius' Decree**

Daniel served another king and empire with honor and distinction. He became a top administrator and was extremely favored by Darius. As he began to rule the territory of Babylon, he set up one hundred and twenty officials to rule throughout the kingdom. He also appointed three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel.

Now, Daniel distinguished himself among the administrators and the officials by his exceptional qualities, so the king decided to put Daniel in charge of the whole kingdom.

When the other officials heard rumors of what the King wanted to do, they decided to find a way to bring charges against Daniel. They talked to everyone they could and used all their political tricks, but they couldn't find anything that Daniel had improperly done. Unlike most of the politicians, they couldn't find any corruption in him. He was completely trustworthy. Because they were unable to find a scandal, they decided the only way to get Daniel in trouble was to create a scenario where Daniel would have to choose between being obedient to the laws of the land or the laws of his God.

So, the officials went to the King and convinced him to issue a new law. The new law stated that *"Anyone who prayed to any god or human being during the next thirty days, except King Darius, would be thrown into the lion's den."* As the King stamped the law with his royal seal, the official had set their trap for Daniel.

### **Scene Three: The Lion's Den**

When Daniel learned of this new law, he went to his room, and with the windows open, he began to pray, giving thanks to God just as he had done before. When the officials saw what Daniel was doing, they immediately went to the King and said to him, *"Remember the law you just put into place. One of your administrators, Daniel, has no respect for your laws; he breaks your decree for the whole world to see."*

The King had big plans for Daniel, but he couldn't tolerate his officials openly disobeying his commands. So regretfully, the King gave the order for Daniel to be thrown into the lions' den. With the King's blessing, the other officials seized Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. Before they left Daniel to his fate, the King said, *"Daniel, may your God, whom you never cease to serve, rescue you!"*

That night, the King returned to his palace, but he was unable to eat or sleep. He was so disturbed by what was happening to Daniel. Nothing he tried worked. He was restless, so at first light, he got up and hurried to the lions' den.

When he came near, it was difficult to see, so he called out to Daniel, *"Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God saved you and rescued you from the lions?"* Daniel's voice spoke, breaking through the darkness, *"May the king live forever! My God sent an angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me because I was found innocent in his sight. King, what have I done to undermine you or disobey you?"*

The King was overjoyed to hear Daniel's voice and to know that he had not been harmed. So he gave orders for Daniel to be lifted out of the lions' den. When Daniel reached safety, the truth of his words became clear. No wound was found on him. He had placed his trust in God, and God had protected him from harm.

At the King's command, the men who had manipulated the King in order to get rid of Daniel were brought to the lions' den. The King also ordered that their entire family be brought with them. Darius decided that they would experience the same fate they had wished on Daniel.

They were forced into the lions' den, and before they reached the floor, the lions overpowered them and crushed all of their bones.

## **Scene Four: Rescues and Saves**

After this event, King Darius sent a message to every corner of his kingdom. He had it translated into every known language, and here is what the message said, *“May you prosper greatly! I am putting a new law into effect. In every part of my kingdom, every person should demonstrate reverent fear and awe for Yahweh, the god of Daniel. This is god is the living God, and He endures forever. His kingdom will not be destroyed; His dominion will never end. He rescues, and He saves; He performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the Earth. I have seen this first-hand; He rescued Daniel from the power of the lions.”*

### *Retell the Story*

- How was Daniel viewed by the kings he served?
- What happened between Daniel & King Belshazzar at the king’s party?
- Who defeated the Babylonians?
- How did King Darius view Daniel? How did the other officials feel about Daniel?
- What did the other officials do to try and get rid of Daniel?
- What did Daniel do knowing it was illegal to pray to his God?
- What did Darius do when Daniel was brought to him?
- How did Darius feel about throwing Daniel to the lions?
- What happened to Daniel in the lions’ den?
- What did Darius do to the officials who manipulated him?
- What message did the king send to everyone in the kingdom?

### *Discuss the Story*

- What is your first reaction to this story? How did this story make you feel?
- What stood out to you from this story? What did you notice for the first time?

- What from this story made you wonder?
- Why do you think the other officials disliked Daniel so much?
- What significance do you think the open windows in Daniel's room have to do with the story?
- Why do you think Darius was bothered so much by throwing Daniel into the lions' den?
- What were the results of God delivering Daniel from the lions' den?
- Did you hear anything that reminded you of **other** stories?
- From this story, what did you notice about humans?
- What do you notice from this story about God's character or qualities?

### *Join the Story*

## 1) WRITING ON THE WALL

The phrase "writing on the wall" comes from Daniel 5 – and the strange account of God warning King Belshazzar about his pride. Throughout God's story, we see Him warn people to turn from their arrogance and pride and begin to place their trust in God. Why do you think so many of us struggle with pride? How do we convince ourselves that our actions will have different consequences than all the other times before? Why do you think God is patient with us and warns us time and time again?

## 2) IMPOSSIBLE MADE POSSIBLE

In Daniel 6, we see the impossible made possible. Perhaps we've read the story too often, and the miracle of Daniel in the lions' den is lost on us. But it wasn't lost on King Darius. He was astonished. It was a moment that changed everything for Him. Where have you seen God take the impossible and make it possible? What are you praying for right now that seems like it would take a God-sized miracle to turn the impossible into possible?

## 3) SEEING THE BIG PICTURE

If the question was, "How will God reach a nation of foreign people, who worship other gods, with the truth about Who He is and what He's done," the expected answer wouldn't be through one captive Jew. But that's the impact and influence that God gave to Daniel. God used his faithfulness in a powerful way to spread the truth about God to people who were far from Him. How can God use your faithfulness in a similar way? Who is it in your life that God could be trying to reach through you and your faithfulness?

*Pray*

*God,*

*When we consider Daniel's story, we can't help but acknowledge how many times we have turned from You to save our skin. Give us the courage to be faithful, trusting that our small acts of trust will make an impact in Your world. We don't know where You will place us or who You will put in our path. But give us eyes to see what You see and wisdom to trust You even when we don't understand why we experience challenges and difficulties. Thank you for being a God who rescues us and uses our efforts today to build Your Kingdom. Amen.*