

Bible background

Daniel 1:1-7 (verses 8-21 optional)

Aim of lesson

To show how Daniel trusted God and did not complain even when he lost everything.

Preparation required

You will need coloured paper as a backing for a frieze and a punch to form holes, pieces of wool to form the pictures into little booklets and colouring materials.

Suggested outline of lesson

1. Ask the children if they complain sometimes and what they complain about. Would they complain if everyone got a sweet except them or if they lost their favourite toy, or there was no tea when they got home. Do they complain when asked to tidy up? Ask how they would like it if what happened to Daniel happened to them. His country was invaded by an enemy. He was captured and taken away as a slave. He did not see his family or home again.
2. Use the pictures in the activity book to illustrate what happened to Daniel, as you tell the story of Daniel being captured and taken to Babylon. You might like to tell the children what a magnificent city Babylon was, with the great river Euphrates flowing through the middle with large boats on it. The walls were so thick that there was a road along the top, and there were beautiful gardens and towers. Although Daniel would have preferred to be back at home he knew he had not left God behind, and he must still try to serve him.
3. Would they feel sad? Daniel did. Would they complain? Daniel did not. Teach that God does not want us to complain about bad things, but trust that he is in charge and he knows best. Daniel did this even when he was taken as a slave to work in the palace of the enemy king.
4. Teach the song 'He's Got The Whole World In His Hands'.
5. Have the class colour the three pictures from the activity book to start a frieze on the life of Daniel round the room or to make into a book if you don't have wall space. It is probably best to use your pictures to make a frieze, and to allow the children each to make a booklet. It is a good idea to keep the booklets so that they can add to them each week. The long strip 'Daniel did not complain' can be used as a heading for this section of the frieze and as a folded pull-out page in the booklet.
6. If you have an attentive older infants class you may like to include the decision of Daniel and his three friends to keep God's law by not eating food that God had forbidden. It is best to stick to one set of names for Daniel's three friends. Most children will enjoy learning how to say Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego. Daniel and his friends were not refusing to work or obey the king's orders, but they accepted eating just vegetables and drinking only water rather than eat the meat which was forbidden by God. If you decide to include this section, be prepared, if necessary, to explain that we do not have the same law about food, and bring out the point that God blessed the friends because they served him so faithfully and were concerned about keeping his law.

Alternative activities

1. Make models of Jerusalem and Babylon with boxes, blocks, Lego or Plasticine. Make some soldiers and some captives from Plasticine or use play figures. Act out the story.
2. Role-play. Have one area as Jerusalem and another as Babylon. Let some 'soldiers' march the 'captives' away. Ask the captives to look sad. When they get to Babylon, they remember that God is still with them, so get them to pray or perhaps sing the song suggested in the lesson notes or any suitable alternative your class knows. You may want to set up a table with some plastic or paper plates, cups, cutlery, jugs etc. Let some of the class be the king's servants bringing in the royal food on trays (use play food or make some from Plasticine or dough) Choose some children to be Daniel and his friends who say, "No thank you", to the king's food. Let the servants bring them some vegetables and water.
3. Make food from Plasticine or salt dough; rich food from the king and the vegetables chosen by Daniel and his friends.
4. Give each child 2 paper plates or circles drawn on paper or cut from card. Let them draw or stick pictures of the food offered by the king on one plate and the food Daniel chose on the other.
5. You might want to take along some vegetables, lentils, pulses etc for the children to look at, touch, smell or even taste. (You need to make sure that none of the children is allergic to any of the items you will be using, even if they are not actually tasting them, as skin contact is enough to trigger a reaction in some individuals. Please check with parents/carers in advance.)

Relevance to the children's lives

To teach the children to show their trust in God by accepting disappointments and hardship without complaining. Ask them to say what practical disappointments they will accept without grumbling to show they trust God.

Prayer

Ask who would like to say a prayer about not complaining.

Verse

'Do not grumble.' 1 Corinthians 10:10.

Song

He's Got The Whole Word



Actions

Chorus: He's got the whole world in his hands (*four times*)

v.1 He's got poor sad Daniel in his hands (*three times - hold sides of face*)

He's got the whole world in his hands

Music and Chorus: Traditional.

There is a different verse of this song for the four weeks on Daniel. You may like to build up the song from week to week. You may also like to include the names of the children, two at a time in the song, e.g. 'He's got Jonathan and Simon in his hands'. This should be used to teach that God has us all in his hands and cares for us when we are sad or when things go wrong for us.