



Shaped to Serve

Sunday, January 29, 2017

Daniel: The Invincible Visionary

Some Background

“Part historical fiction, part apocalyptic, Daniel questions what it means to be Jew in a foreign land. An example of the kind of writing that developed in the Diaspora under Persian and Greek rule (long after the Babylonian Captivity had ended), it depicts a hero who remains loyal to his fellow Jews—by remaining faithful to his ancestral religion.”
—Michael D. Coogan, *The Old Testament*, p. 525.

Diaspora: (di-as-po-ra) a dispersion of a people, language, or culture that was formerly concentrated in one place.

Daniel and his friends were among the thousands deported to Babylon. As young men, they faced tremendous challenges. They had to learn a new language, take a new name, and adopt the customs and values of another people and culture. Daniel, however, never forgot who—or whose—he was. His unshakeable faith in God’s faithfulness enabled him to overcome every adversity. God gave Daniel the wisdom to interpret kings’ dreams and courage to inspire faith in others.

When life gets hard, faith can easily give way to doubt. We’re no longer sure of who or what we believe. Daniel reminds us that God’s love never leaves us; that trust in God—not our own ability—can empower us to speak and live out our faith even in the most difficult circumstances. As they explore how Daniel’s faith inspired others, students discover that they, too, are models of faith.

Youth Mindset: In Daniel, students see how faith informs identity. Faith empowers us to embrace who we truly are, giving us the courage to assert our identity—to say, do, and live out our faith even when the going gets rough.

Teacher Homework: Read some key passages about the life of Daniel from chapters 1, 2 and 4, 5, 6, and 7-8 of the book sharing his name.

Opening Activity

Invite students to think about their experiences traveling or moving and describe what it is like to be in a new place. Daniel was a stranger in a strange land. Locate Babylon on a map and maybe show some of the splendor of this ancient city. Ask students to imagine the challenges that Daniel may have faced, and in small groups have students come up with two lists. One list should contain things he missed about home. The other should contain new things he had to learn. From their lists, have them list the top three easiest adjustments and top three most difficult.

Watch the Video

Show the video: “Daniel: The Invincible Visionary.”

- What surprised you most about Daniel?
- How do you think Daniel and his friends felt getting new names?
- How did being different from everyone else hurt them? Help them?

In the Bible

Read together Daniel 5, and on the board chart social media status updates that Daniel may have written had he had a Twitter, Instagram, or Facebook account. What does Daniel pray for from one day to the next? What kind of people does he follow or what pages does he like? Do you like seeing advertisements while online? What Babylonian ads pop up every day and what are the Babylonians trying to sell Daniel and his friends?

Something Silly!

Have a six-sided die on hand. Instruct the group that we will be doing an improv game, with only two rules: God is always faithful to God’s people, and Daniel is always faithful. A roll of 1-2 means that things happened as the Bible says in the Lion’s den. A roll of 3-4 means that the lions were a little hungry and maybe gnawed off Daniel’s arm. A roll of 5-6 means that the lions were really hungry, and Daniel, although faithful suffers death. Keep rolling the die until all have been involved in the skit, giving just 30 seconds between performances. Close in prayer.

Take-Home Question

Talk with a person of faith who has moved around a lot or just found a new faith community. What was difficult about this change, especially on a spiritual level? What does this person have to share with you that you can learn from their experience?