

# God Calls Daniel



1

**Before you begin**, please read the introduction on the right to yourself.

2

With the help of your child, prepare the meeting space. Pull out your Bible, light some candles, and add any other decoration you'd like to make the space beautiful. You will also need your handout from the last session, about Elijah.

Then begin with a prayer.

3

**Getting started.** Think of one time when you felt you were really in a mess and you weren't sure how you would get out of it. Discuss together: How did it end? What did you feel or what did you think when it was all over?

The Book of Daniel is actually a combination of different types of writing. Sometimes it is narrative and sometimes it is visionary. Daniel is reported living in Babylon, first under the Babylonian kings, then under the Persians who conquered this nation. Daniel's message is that God's wisdom is different from human wisdom. Even in the face of persecutions, faithfulness to God is required by the covenant.

Have one family member read the text below out loud or take turns. Along the way, clarify anything your child might not understand.

**A** long, long, long time ago, the Chosen People lost their Promised Land. They had forgotten that they were special and tried instead to be just like everyone else. Stronger nations came in and took over their nation. It was during this time that Daniel lived.

The kingdom of Babylon ruled over the Israelites, and they forced many of the Chosen People to move to Babylon. Daniel's family was among them. Though they were far from their beloved home, Daniel and his family did not lose their faith. They continued to celebrate their feasts and pray to God, even when they were very sad. It is hard to be strangers in a place that doesn't understand you, but the Chosen People held captive in Babylon trusted in God's promise to take care of them.

Daniel was a very talented young man. He was chosen at a young age to serve the king of Babylon. God also selected Daniel for great things. Daniel could interpret dreams and he could see in his imagination what God wanted for the Israelites. The king of Babylon knew that Daniel was special indeed, and promoted him to a place of high esteem among all the people.

Daniel served under different kings, outliving them as he grew older. To each one he proved how valuable and trustworthy he was. All the kings had respected Daniel, but none more than King Darius. Darius liked Daniel so well that he planned to put him in charge of the whole kingdom of Babylon.

The other leaders were very upset. After all, Daniel was an exile, a Hebrew. How could he rule over Babylon? Try as they might, however, they could find nothing with which to accuse Daniel. They knew Daniel was nothing less than a just and wise man. They came to realize that the only thing different about



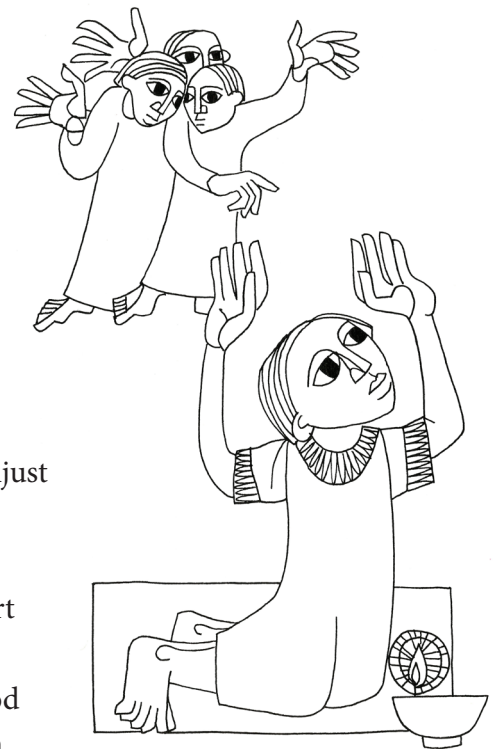
Daniel was his faith in God. So this was what they decided to use to be rid of him.

The leaders went to Darius. “Live forever, King Darius,” they said. “We believe that all must know your power is the highest in the world. You should order that no one may pray to anyone else, divine or human, for the next 30 days. In fact, if anyone does pray to someone other than you, that person should be thrown into a den of lions. And, since you are our king, you must also say that no one or nothing may change this order.” Poor, flattered Darius was easily fooled into signing this unjust law. He didn’t know that his friend Daniel would be the first victim.



Those who planned this knew, however. And they knew that Daniel would not stop praying to God, even upon pain of death. They were right. Daniel prayed three times a day, as he always had. He refused to hide what he was doing, and prayed with his window open. Soon the evil ones who plotted against him came to his house. “Now we have you, Daniel!” They took Daniel to Darius immediately.

Darius was very upset when he realized how they had tricked him into betraying Daniel. They reminded the king that even he could not change the law, no matter how much he wanted to protect Daniel. So Darius sadly went with Daniel to the lions’ den. As the lions paced hungrily, the king spoke to his trusted friend. “You have been faithful in your service to your God. May God save you.” Daniel was thrown into the den, and Darius went back to his palace. But that evening Darius wasn’t able to eat or sleep. He knew the lions were fierce. He knew that the rock in front of the den had Daniel trapped inside. Most of all, he knew his law had been unjust and selfish.



First thing in the morning, Darius ran back to the den. “Daniel, servant of God, has your God saved you?” Darius’ heart sang to hear Daniel’s reply, “My God sent an angel to shut the lions’ mouths. This proves that I have done no wrong before God or before you, my king.” Darius had Daniel taken out of the den,

and he saw that he had not a mark on him.

The king punished those who had accused Daniel for their treachery. And that wasn't all: King Darius had a new decree written for people in all languages. "The God of Daniel is the living God. This God's kingdom will never end. Daniel's God rescues those who love God. This is the true God, the God we must respect and honor."

Daniel served Darius and future kings of Babylon, but everyone knew who Daniel really served first. Daniel placed God above all else, God who was always with Daniel.

*So it is that God speaks to us today.  
"Come to me, trust in me. When you feel there is nothing left, I am still with you. I am with you when you are frightened, lonely, sad, or confused. Come to me and pray. I will hear you."*

1

Now discuss the story with your child. Use the following or other questions:

1. What most struck you in the story? Why?
2. What do you think Daniel was thinking and feeling when he refused to obey the new law? Would you have the courage to disobey an unjust law?
3. If you had been the king, what would you have said to Daniel the next morning?

2

Get your child started on the activity on the next page, then continue to read below.

3

**Just for you:** We need to stay connected to God. Prayer is our way of staying connected.

Prayer is the crux of our relationship with God. Daniel's commitment to prayer is very costly for him. It places him in mortal danger because of his enemies' evil intentions. But this commitment is Daniel's way of being faithful, and it is what saves him from the hungry lions.

There are four common types of prayer: asking God for something (petition), saying we are sorry (contrition), giving God glory and recognition (praise), and showing God our gratitude (thanksgiving).

# 'Hello, God, Are You There?'

Daniel prayed with confidence to God, even when the law forbade him to.  
And when he was facing a pretty miserable death, he still trusted that God would hear him.

What if someone gave you God's private phone number?



Here's your chance. You have about a minute to leave a message for God. What are you going to say?

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# A User-Friendly World (continued)

1

Help your child get started on their activity on the next page, and then continue to the next step.

2

Daniel was a leader and a prophet who, like Elijah, was working toward and praying for a better world. Just like Daniel, we need both to act and to pray.

3

Look back at your computer screen from the Elijah activity. Write two prayers for the “Save” issues and two for the “Delete” issues. Share with your child when you’re both ready.

## ‘Save’ Prayers

I give you praise and love, God, because ...

I thank you, God, for ...

## ‘Delete’ Prayers

God of our hearts, I ask you for ...

God, I’m not perfect. I am sorry I ...

# Action and Prayer

Daniel was a leader and a prophet who, like Elijah, was working toward and praying for a better world. Just like Daniel, we need both to act and to pray. Look back at your computer screen from the Elijah activity. Using the issues you wrote there, finish the following prayers.

## **'Save' Prayers**

God, you are really great because ...

Thanks, God, for ...

## **'Delete' Prayers**

God, please help ...

God, I'm not perfect. I am sorry I ...

# Types of Prayer

1

At Mass next Sunday, see if you and your child can find the four types of prayer during the liturgy.

Discuss how we use these four different ways of speaking (requests, apologies, compliments and gratitude) even when we are talking to each other.



## Closing Ritual

2

Make the Sign of the Cross.

Take one of your prayers from your activity pages and pray it together.

Make a commitment to pray one of your prayers every day this week—together if possible.

