Daniel Trusts God in the Lions’ Den
Daniel 6

People around the world face challenges to their faith every day—some small, some significant, and even some life-threatening. In our Bible story, we explore and observe the example Daniel provides of faithfulness in the midst of such a challenge. While Daniel's story had a happy ending, we do not put our faith in specific outcomes; instead, we have faith that no matter what happens, God is with us and will help us in amazing ways...in VBS, and beyond!

Materials
- Bibles and/or Bible App for smart phone/tablet
- Drama (pages 11-13)
  - Storyteller costume (This can be as simple as a tunic for a Bible-times vibe or a story stole. The Storyteller connects Bible times with the present, so modern attire with a VBS T-shirt may also work.)
  - Bible-times attire for Leaders 1, 2, and 3—simple tunics or robes
  - Bible-times attire for Daniel—tunic/robe of a different color than the Leaders’
  - Bible-times attire for King Darius—purple or blue robe and crown
  - Pen and paper for writing the decree
  - Wall adhesive for posting the decree
  - King Darius’ throne—could be a chair draped in purple material
  - CD player or other audio device
  - To Mars and Beyond song, “Even When the Lions Roar” (available on the Complete Music CD or mp3)

Setting the Scene
1. Designate one wall to be the focal point, the backdrop for the story action.
2. Divide the stage into three main areas:
   - Stage Left—Darius’s throne room; create the feel of a palace with gray craft paper designed to look like stone walls, banners and pennants, and gold- or brass-finish props.
   - Stage Right—Daniel's praying area; create a window with craft paper and a space for Daniel to kneel in front of it.
   - Center Stage—the lion’s den; create a cave with a large cardboard box or craft paper, large paper or plastic bones around the opening, and stuffed or paper lions.
3. Optional: Create and display Bible era-style or space-themed signs around your stage including such messages as the Bible story titles and verses, outer space graphics, and funny signs (like “Don’t Feed the Lions!”).
The Book of Daniel takes place in Babylon during the captivity of the Jews. King Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem in 605 BC and took many of its people, including Daniel, back to Babylon. Once in Babylon, Daniel was one of a handful of young exiles selected to serve the king personally. Though these Judeans impressed their supervisors with wisdom and skill, they also clashed often over religious matters. Time after time, the faith of Daniel and his friends was called into competition against the rules and rulers of the land, and God proved faithful each time to help them rise above in amazing ways.

In 539 BC, Daniel came to serve under his third king, known in this telling as Darius the Mede. Daniel impressed King Darius and quickly rose through the ranks from wise man to governor to soon-to-be second-in-command. This threatened the other leaders such that they began to look for ways to get Daniel in trouble. Since Daniel had no record of “negligence or corruption” (Daniel 6:4), they schemed to use his faith—publicly known and proven to be of highest importance to Daniel—against him. They advised Darius to establish a law making it illegal for anyone to say a prayer to any “god or human being” other than the king (6:7), the punishment for which would be death in a den of lions.

Daniel’s next move was one of great faith: “When Daniel learned that the document had been signed, he... knelt down, prayed, and praised his God three times that day, just as he always did” (6:10). Daniel knew his relationship with God was the very thing that had brought him wisdom, strength, and happiness in all circumstances. He trusted God to continue to take care of him even in the face of his enemies’ schemes.

King Darius was dismayed and did not want to throw Daniel to the lions, but he had no choice. So it was that, in the midst of this horrible turn of events came a remarkable moment; this king who previously had no allegiance to God suddenly made a strong statement of faith to Daniel that “God—the one you serve so consistently—will rescue you” (6:16), and that is exactly what happened. The next morning, verse 23 tells us, “Daniel was lifted out. Not a scratch was found on him, because he trusted in his God.”

It is important to note that, while Scripture testifies to many such miraculous rescues at God’s hands, there are plenty of other examples where God’s people suffered and died for their faith (see Acts 7:54-60, among others). God’s love and protection do not always mean we will be spared from consequences, pain, or even physical death. We trust God not for a specific desired outcome, but that God can take anything the world throws at us and make it work for our good. Like Daniel, we can trust God to help us rise above and beyond the world’s schemes and to do amazing things in and through our lives!
Story Starter

Hello Voyagers! Welcome to the Bible Story Station. This is where we get together at VBS and blast off to Mars and Beyond as we explore where God's power can take us through exciting stories in the Bible!

In space travel, it's very important to direct a flight craft to a desired point; this is called vectoring. As we explore to Mars and beyond, we have a Vector Verse to guide us on our journey.

Our Vector Verse comes from the New Testament book of Ephesians, chapter 3, verse 20. It says: “Glory to God, who is able to do far beyond all that we could ask or imagine by his power at work within us.”

Now we’re going to practice our Vector Verse as a team. Since we’re at the beginning of our exploration together, let’s imagine we’re at a launch site. In movies, a countdown always has an echoey effect to it, so I’ll say part of the Vector Verse, and you say it back like an echo-echo-echo. Got it-got it-got it? Here we go-go-go! [Voyagers repeat after you each line with echo-y voices.]

Glory to God-God-God,
Who is able to do far beyond-beyond-beyond
All that we could ask-ask-ask
Or imagine-imagine-imagine
By his power-power-power
At work within us-us-us!

That was great-great-great!

Today’s Bible story is a classic found in the Old Testament book of Daniel. It takes place in Babylon where the Jewish people are captives to the Babylonians. King Darius, the leader of Babylon, has been very impressed by a man named Daniel and has decided to make Daniel second-in-command...but some of the other leaders are very jealous.

If performing the drama with adult or youth team members, this is where Leaders 1, 2, and 3 enter. Say: Oh look, here come those leaders now.

If performing the drama with volunteers from the class, say something like: In order to tell our Bible story, I am going to need five Voyagers to come and read parts. Who’s feeling adventurous to join me and read? For this option, either have Voyagers read aloud or you read aloud and have Voyagers act out the motions and repeat the lines you call out.

If performing the Single Storyteller option, skip to page 14.
Bible Story Option 1
Drama

Cast of Characters
1. Storyteller
2. Leaders 1 and 2—manipulative, cunning, jealous of Daniel
3. Leader 3—kinder than the others
4. Daniel
5. King Darius

If you don’t have enough actors to put one person in each part, consider combining Leaders 1 and 2, and even King Darius with the Bible Storyteller.

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Leaders 1, 2, and 3 enter and go to Center Stage.

Leader 1: Daniel, Daniel, Daniel! I am so sick of hearing how great Daniel is!

Leader 2: Me too. Can you believe King Darius made him second-in-command?

Leader 1: [mocking]: Ooh, look at all the vegetables Daniel eats. He’s sooo healthy.

Leader 1: [also mocking]: Look at how Daniel interprets dreams. He’s sooo wise.

Leader 3: I think Daniel is cool.

Leader 1: “Cool?!” He’s not even one of us. He’s an Israelite, yet the King has promoted him over us. I’ll tell you what Daniel is. He’s...

Daniel walks across, nodding to the Leaders as he passes by.

Leader 1: [changes to a sweet tone]: …the most amazing, talented man in all of Babylon. Why, I was just saying that Daniel...

Daniel exits.

Leader 1: [returns to mocking]: …is a royal pain and needs to be gotten rid of.

Leader 2: Agreed. But how? We’ve tried to catch him messing up, but he’s just so GOOD at everything.

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Teacher Tip
A stole is normally a long strip of fabric worn around the back of the neck and over the shoulders. You may see ecclesiastical stoles worn by clergy of certain traditions during various types of worship services.
Leader 1: Then we have to think of something Daniel does that's good and make it seem like a bad thing.

Leader 2: He does pray to his God a lot—three times each day.

Leader 3: That's because Daniel is so faithful.

Leader 1: Hmm...good point! His faith may be the one thing that trips him up. Come on. Let's go see the king.

Leaders 1, 2, and 3: (skipping across as they sing to the tune of “This Is the Way We Go to School”):
Here we go now to see the King,
See the King, see the King.
Here we go now to see the King,
We have a villainous plan!

They arrive at King Darius, who is seated on the throne.

Leader 1: King Darius, we have come with a great idea for you!

King Darius: I love good ideas! Have you talked to Daniel about it? He is my second-in-command.

Leader 1: [disgusted]: Yes. We know.
[enthusiastically again] But this is such a good idea, we had to share it with you personally.

Leader 2: What if you made a special law that, for 30 days, no one can say prayers to any other people or gods. Just you.

King Darius: Hey. I like that.

Leader 1: And furthermore, anyone who disobeys your law is to be thrown into...

Leader 3: [helpfully]: Into a room full of pillows? A tub of cold noodles?

Leaders 1 and 2: A den of lions!

Leader 3: That seems a bit harsh.

King Darius: Harsh, but effective. If I had paper and a pen I would sign this into law right away.

Leader 2: [pulls out paper and pen]: I just happen to have that right here.

King Darius: [pantomimes writing while using Leader 3’s back as a desk]: Pray to no one but me. 30 days. No exceptions. Den of lions.

Leader 3: [giggling]: That tickles, Your Majesty.

King Darius: And now the royal signature...and it's a law!

Leader 1: [takes the paper]: Very good, King Darius. We'll just go post this new law in a place where everyone can see it.

Leaders 1, 2, and 3: (skipping/singing as they post the decree nearby):
Here we go now to post the law,
Post the law, post the law.
Here we go now to post the law.
We have a villainous plan!

Leader 3: Now what?

Leader 1: We wait. Here comes Daniel. Quick, hide!

Leaders crouch or hide behind props or even Voyagers as Daniel enters.

Daniel: [walks by, reads law, and sighs]: There's the easy way and there's the right way. God's way is always the right way. [goes to the side and kneels in prayer]

Leader 2: Ha! He's doing it. He's breaking the law. Let's get him!

Leader 3: Aw. Can't we wait till he's finished talking with his God?

Leader 1: No! [Leaders jump out.] Well, Mr. “Second-in-command,” you have broken the law, and the penalty is severe.
Leaders 1, 2, and 3: (skipping/singing as they take Daniel to the den):
Throw him into the lions’ den,
Lions’ den, lions’ den.
Throw him into the lions’ den,
We have a villainous plan!

Leaders arrive at the den. King Darius walks over.

King Darius: And just what do you think you’re doing with my second-in-command?!

Leader 1: We all saw him kneel and pray to his God.

King Darius: That hardly seems the kind of thing to be punished.

Leader 2: But it’s your new law, Your Majesty, It must be obeyed.

King Darius (sadly): Very well. The law is the law. Throw him in the lions’ den.

Leaders 1 and 2: Hooray!

King Darius: Daniel, maybe your God—the one you serve so consistently—will save you.

Leaders 1 and 2 put Daniel in the den. Cue “Even When the Lions Roar” song. King Darius walks to his throne and paces.

Storyteller: King Darius couldn’t eat or sleep all night. He cared for Daniel. In the morning he returned to the lions’ den.

King Darius [at den]: Daniel, servant of the living God! Was your God able to rescue you from the lions?

Daniel: Long live the king!

King Darius: He’s alive! Get him out of there!

Leader 3 helps Daniel out.

Daniel: My God sent an angel who shut the lions’ mouths. The lions never even touched me.

Leaders slowly begin to sneak away.

King Darius: That’s great news!

Leader 3: Yay, Daniel!

Leader 1 and 2: Shh!

Leaders continue to slink away.

King Darius: I think it’s time for a new decree.

Storyteller: (clears throat) Excuse me! Your Highness!

King Darius: Excuse you? Who are you? And why are you interrupting me, the king, when I’m making a new decree?

Storyteller: So sorry for the interruption, Your Highness, it’s just that word, “decree,” well, it’s kind of fancy, and it’s kind of important, since it is a decree and all. Would it be okay if I explained what a decree is?

King Darius: Well I suppose it doesn’t hurt for people to know what a decree is. Go ahead. Explain away.

Storyteller: Very good, Your Highness. Voyagers, a decree is a very important law or order given by someone important like a king or maybe even a mayor or a president.

King Darius: Are you done?

Storyteller: Yes, Your Highness.

King Darius: Finally! Now, back to the new decree. Let all the people of my kingdom worship the God of Daniel because Daniel’s God is the living God! And now if you’ll excuse me...[starts heading off after Leaders]...I need to take care of some royal business concerning a few of my soon-to-be EX-leaders.

All exit.
Bible Story Option 2
Single Storyteller

Teach Voyagers the corresponding sound effect for each of the Bible story figures listed below. Then have them listen closely and make each sound as the name of that figure occurs in the story.

- Daniel—"Praise God!"
- King Darius—Trumpet noises
- Jealous Men—"Mwah-ha-ha!" (while twirling fake mustache)
- Lions—Roar!

King Darius appointed many men to be leaders in his kingdom. One of these leaders was Daniel. Daniel was so good at his job, that he really impressed King Darius. I mean Daniel was really impressive. So impressive King Darius really liked and trusted him. King Darius liked and trusted Daniel so much that he planned to have him oversee the whole kingdom.

Well some other leaders found out about King Darius’ plan. And to tell this truth, it turned these leaders into very Jealous Men. And these Jealous Men, they got angry. Who did Daniel think he was?! The Jealous Men tried to get Daniel in trouble, but Daniel always behaved righteously, so there was nothing they could do.

When you behave righteously...

Wait a minute. Does anyone hear the truth, and you are nice, and you don’t steal. I guess behaving righteously is behaving like, well, like Daniel. So, it was not easy for the Jealous Men to get Daniel into trouble. But, they kept trying.

Eventually the Jealous Men came up with a plan. They went to King Darius and convinced him to sign a decree forbidding anyone to pray to any god or human other than King Darius. Anyone disobeying the decree would be thrown into a den of lions.

But Daniel was always true to God and bowed down in prayer three times each day. Sure enough, the Jealous Men caught him and brought him before King Darius. King Darius liked Daniel very much, but what could he do? He couldn’t go against his own law. So Daniel was thrown into a den of lions.

Yet Daniel wasn’t all alone with those lions. God’s love never left his side, and God even sent an angel to be with Daniel.

The next day, King Darius rushed to the den. Daniel was okay, he hadn’t even been touched by the lions. The Jealous Men had not won. From that day on, King Darius decided that throughout the kingdom everyone must worship the God of Daniel.
Life Application

- How often did Daniel pray and praise God? [three times each day]
- When the decree came out that people could only pray to the king, what did Daniel do? [He kept praying to God.]

There’s a saying: Do what is right, not what is easy.
- What do you think might have been the easy thing for Daniel to do? [hide, pretend not to pray, stop praying]
- When was a time you chose to do the right thing even though it was difficult? How did things work out?
- Does doing the right thing mean we’ll always be free from trouble or people not liking us?

Having faith doesn’t mean bad things will never happen, but it does mean that, through the good and the bad, God is with us. When we follow God’s way rather than our own, amazing things can happen.

Our Power Launchers help us explore where God’s power can take us. This time, our Power Launcher is Go Beyond with Faith! Daniel went beyond with faith, and so can we!

Let’s all count down together and say our Power Launcher. [with Voyagers] 5...4...3...2...1...Go Beyond with Faith!

Power Elements & Mission Badges

Speaking of going beyond with Faith, what element did Captain 2B-Yon (pronounced “two-bee-yahn”) give us a mission to collect? (Faith)

Yes! To accomplish our mission, I need your help collecting a sample of Faith to send to the Starship Galaxion (pronounced guh-LAX-ee-ahn). To do that, I will ask you an important question, and your answers will help fuel this Power Element. (Hold up your Power Element prop.) Here is the question: Besides Daniel, who are some other people who show or showed great faith (from the Bible or otherwise!)? (After Voyagers answer, turn the prop on so it lights up.)

Great job, Voyagers! You’ve powered up our Faith so we can share it with the Starship Galaxion! Let’s celebrate accomplishing your mission with special To Mars and Beyond Mission Badges. (Ask Guides to assist handing out lanyards and helping Voyagers put their Faith badges on them as needed.)
You have now earned your Faith Mission Badge; congratulations!
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Teacher Tip
Optional Activity:
How would you tell this story as a “Space Opera” set in a faraway galaxy? Invite Voyagers to “space up” this story and capture the results with the video recorder on a smartphone or tablet device.

- What would a space king look like?
- What kind of space creature would Daniel be thrown to?
Have fun with this one!

Active Learning Booster
One Word at a Time

1. Invite Voyagers to sit in a circle.
2. Invite one volunteer Voyager to start the story of Daniel in the Lions’ Den by saying the first word or phrase, such as “Once” or “Once there was a man named, “Daniel.”
3. The next Voyager in the circle says the next word in the story, and so on.
4. Go around the circle several times until the story has been told.

Example –
Voyager 1: Once
Voyager 2: there
Voyager 3: was
Voyager 4: a
Voyager 5: man
Voyager 6: named
Voyager 7: Daniel...

For a more simple challenge, have the Voyagers use this activity for reciting the Vector Verse.
Power Launcher ASL

Go

Step 1: Hold hands at shoulder level and point index fingers upward.

Step 2: Move hands down so fingers are pointing forward.

Beyond

Step 1: Place open hands over chest, palms in, right hands in front.

Step 2: Bring right hand forward in front.

with

Step 1: Hold fists at waist level with fingers touching each other.

Step 2: Move fists forward with fingers still touching.

Faith!

Step 1: Place right hand to head with index finger touching temple.

Step 2: Move right hand to touch left at waist level, making circles with both index fingers and thumbs.

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Teacher Tip
For a video demonstration of this sign, see the Adventure Video DVD!
Closing Prayer
No Worries!

Think about something you are really worried about. It could be the dark, a bully, disappointing a grown-up you love, going to a new place and not knowing anybody...anything.

Now place your hands on either side of your head.

Gently rub your temples.

Pretend you are bringing all the worry to the surface, and pull it away from your head with both hands.

Now pretend to roll the worry into a ball with your hands. Keep rolling that worry ball smaller and smaller, until it’s the size of a little marble. Keep rolling the worry ball smaller, and smaller, and smaller...until it completely disappears.

Now repeat after me:
Every last worry (Voyagers repeat.)
Every last care (Voyagers repeat.)
I give them to you, Lord (Voyagers repeat.)
I give them in prayer. (Voyagers repeat.)
Amen. (Voyagers repeat.)

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