

THE DANIEL SERIES · PART THREE

Daniel in the Lions' Den

The Night the King Couldn't Sleep

SCRIPTURE	WATCH FREE	FILM
Daniel 6:1-28	phillacolla.com/biblestories	About 10 minutes

Cover: a still from the film. Visuals in this series are AI-generated under the director's guidance.

A Companion Guide for Families, Groups & Students

DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN · DANIEL 6:1-28

Choose Your Track

One story, five ways in. Use one track or several. Each is complete on its own.

I **Family Study** — PAGE 3

For parents, grandparents, and kids at home. Watch together, hear the story, talk, play, and pray.

The story simply told · Questions for ages 4-7, 8-12, and teens · Activity · Memory verse · Prayer

II **Kids Ministry** — PAGE 5

For children's ministry teachers. A complete 45-60 minute lesson for grades K-5, with preschool notes.

Teacher prep · Story script · Game · Object lesson · Craft · Small groups · Take-home page for parents

III **Youth Ministry** — PAGE 9

For youth leaders. A 60-75 minute night for middle and high school students.

Hook · Leader talk · Discussion · Breakouts · Reflection · Weekly challenge · Hard questions

IV **Bible Study & Small Group** — PAGE 12

For adult small groups, classes, and Bible studies. A complete 45-60 minute session.

Leader prep · Opener · Watch · Discussion questions · Application · Prayer · Leader notes

V **Deep Dive** — PAGE 15

For teachers, preachers, and anyone who wants to dig deeper into the text.

History and culture · Structure · Commentary · Aramaic key words · Interpretive views · Christ · Further study

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Start by watching the film. Families can go straight to Track I and spread it over a few evenings. Children's and youth leaders will find ready-to-teach plans in Tracks II and III, including a take-home page for parents. Adult groups will find a complete session in Track IV, and Track V is for anyone preparing to teach or wanting to go deeper.

Above all, read the passage itself. The film and this guide are meant to send you back to Scripture, where God speaks.

WATCH THE FILM

phillacolla.com/biblestories
Free on YouTube · about 10 minutes

Scripture quotations are from the World English Bible (WEB), current edition as published at eBible.org (public domain); older WEB printings differ in a few words. Aramaic words are cited from the original text of Daniel. This guide is free to print, copy, and share for non-commercial ministry use. Bible Stories Brought to Life · youtube.com/@BSBTLFilms

TRACK ONE

Family Study

For parents, grandparents, and kids of every age. Watch together, read the story, talk, play, and pray.



"...he kneeled on his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did before." (Daniel 6:10, WEB)

The Story, Simply Told

Part Three of the Daniel Series, retold from Daniel 6. Quoted words are paraphrased for children. Verse 24 (the accusers punished) is mentioned only briefly.

God had rescued Daniel's friends from the fiery furnace, and Daniel had read the writing on the wall the night Babylon fell. Now a new king ruled. The Bible calls him Darius the Mede.

King Darius chose 120 leaders to help him rule, and three officials over them. One of the three was Daniel, now an old man. He did his work so well that the king planned to put him over the whole kingdom. The other leaders looked for something he had done wrong, but they found nothing, because he was faithful. So they made a plan: we will catch him only through the law of his God.

They went to the king. "King Darius, make a law! For thirty days, no one may pray to any god or person except you. Anyone who does will be thrown into the den of lions." The king signed it, and a law of the Medes and Persians could not be changed.

When Daniel knew the law was signed, he went home to his room, where the windows were open toward Jerusalem. He knelt three times a day, prayed, and gave thanks to God, as he always had. The men found him praying and told the king. The king worked until sunset to save Daniel, but the law could not be changed. So Daniel was put into the den of lions. The king said, "Your God, whom you serve all the time, will rescue you." A stone was placed over the opening and sealed.

That night the king could not eat or sleep. At dawn he hurried to the den and called out, "Daniel, servant of the living God, was your God able to rescue you?" And Daniel answered! "My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths. They have not hurt me." The king was overjoyed. Daniel was lifted out, and he was not hurt at all, because he had trusted in his God. The king punished the men who set the trap and told every nation to honor the God of Daniel, the living God, who rescues.

The law was new, but Daniel's prayers were not.

Talk Together

AGES 4-7

1. What did Daniel do three times every day?
2. How do you think the king felt all night long?
3. Who shut the lions' mouths?

AGES 8-12

1. The leaders found nothing wrong with Daniel's work. Why does honest work matter to God?
2. Why didn't Daniel stop praying?
3. When is it hard for you to trust God?

TEENS

1. Daniel's enemies could fault him only over "the law of his God" (6:5). What would people notice about your faith?
2. Daniel gave thanks in danger (6:10). How can thankfulness change how you face pressure?
3. God doesn't promise to rescue us from every danger. How can we still trust Him?

Try This Together

Open-Window Prayer Card 10 MINUTES Fold both edges of a sheet of paper to the middle to make window shutters. Inside, write *Morning*, *Noon*, and *Night*, with one thing to thank God for beside each. Tape it near a window and pray together at those times this week.

The Law That Couldn't Change 5 MINUTES A parent writes a silly rule ("Everyone claps before dinner") and seals it with a sticker: no one can change it now. Try to keep the rule all through dinner. Then talk: the king couldn't change his law, but no human law could stop the living God, "steadfast forever" (6:26).

MEMORY VERSE

"When I am afraid, I will put my trust in you."

PSALM 56:3, WEB

Younger children: learn "...I will put my trust in you." with open hands.

A FAMILY PRAYER

Dear God, thank You that You are the living God and You hear every prayer. Help us talk with You every day and thank You even when things are hard. When we are afraid, help us trust You. Thank You for Jesus, who promised to be with us always. In Jesus' name, amen.

TRACK TWO

Kids Ministry

A complete 45-60 minute lesson for elementary classes (about grades K-5), with notes for preschool and a take-home page for parents.

THE BIG IDEA

I can trust God and talk to Him every day, even when it's hard.

LESSON PLAN

	45 MIN	60 MIN
Welcome and opening game	8	10
Bible story (told or film)	10	12
Object lesson	5	6
Craft	10	15
Small groups	7	10
Memory verse	3	4
Prayer and goodbye	2	3

THE STORY IN PLAIN WORDS

Leaders who could find nothing wrong with Daniel's work got King Darius to sign a law: for thirty days, pray only to the king, or be thrown to the lions. Daniel kept praying and giving thanks, as he always had. In the den, God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths. Daniel was not hurt, because he trusted in his God.

READ BEFORE CLASS

Daniel 6, the whole chapter, and Hebrews 11:32-34. If you will show the film, watch it all the way through first.

What Kids May Ask

"Was Daniel scared?" The Bible doesn't say how Daniel felt, only what he did: he kept praying, gave thanks, and trusted God (6:10, 23). Say: *Even when we feel scared, we can trust God.*

"Did the lions go to sleep?" The Bible says only that God "has shut the lions' mouths" (6:22). Say: *We don't know everything about that night, but God kept Daniel safe.*

"What did the angel look like?" The Bible doesn't say. It's fine to say *we don't know.*

What happened to the men who set the trap (6:24). With K-2 and preschool, leave it out. If an older child asks directly, say it once, simply: *The king punished the men who tricked him. The Bible says their families were thrown in too. That was the king's command. God's own law said children must not be punished for what their parents did* (Deuteronomy 24:16). Don't add details.

"Will God always keep me safe?" Be honest and gentle. People who love God sometimes still get hurt, but God never leaves His people (Hebrews 13:5). Say: *God may not stop every hard thing, but He will never leave you.*

Telling the Story

YOU'LL NEED a paper crown, a large sheet of paper rolled up like a scroll, a big sheet of brown paper for the den, taped flat to the floor away from walking paths (no one steps on it), and a large piece of gray paper for the stone. *SAY lines are a dramatized paraphrase for children; READ lines quote the WEB.*

DO Teach the cues. When you hear "lions," roar softly. When you hear "shut their mouths," cover your mouth with both hands.

SAY Old Daniel did his work for King Darius so well that the king wanted to put him in charge of everything. Other leaders looked for something wrong. They found nothing!

DO Put on the crown and unroll the scroll.

SAY The leaders said, *O king, sign a new law! For thirty days, no one may pray to any god or person except you. Anyone who does goes to the lions!* The king signed it, and a law of the Medes and Persians could never be changed.

DO Take off the crown. Kneel, facing a window if you have one, with open hands.

READ Daniel 6:10 aloud: "When Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house (now his windows were open in his room toward Jerusalem) and he kneeled on his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did before."

SAY The men caught Daniel praying. The king tried until sunset to save him, but he couldn't change the law. So Daniel was put in the den with the lions. A big stone covered the opening. *(Lay the gray paper over the den.)* All night the king couldn't eat or sleep. Early in the morning he hurried to the den and called, *Daniel! Was your God able to rescue you?*

READ Daniel 6:22 aloud: "My God has sent his angel, and has shut the lions' mouths, and they have not hurt me..."

SAY God shut their mouths! Daniel was lifted out, and he wasn't hurt at all, because he trusted in his God. Then the king told everyone in his kingdom to honor Daniel's God, the living God.

ASK What did Daniel keep doing, even when the law said no? What could you talk to God about today?

USING THE FILM INSTEAD. The film runs about 10 minutes. Preview it before class, and set your stop point ahead of time (prepare the clip in advance, or mark the stop time in your player) so no one is racing the clock. For grades K-2, show 1:24 to 6:54 (the search for a fault through Daniel lifted out). **STOP THE MOMENT DANIEL IS LIFTED OUT UNHARMED (ABOUT 6:54),** before the narration at 6:57 describes 6:24. The words may upset young children. For grades 3-5, show 0:33 to 8:22, the whole story through Daniel 6:28, or also stop at 6:54. If you play on, first tell children briefly that the king punished the men who tricked him and their families, and that the Bible reports the king's command; it doesn't say God commanded it. No attack is shown on screen. Times are from the film's final caption file.

Opening Game: What Changed?

Kids look at you for 20 seconds, then close their eyes while you change three things (put on a hat, roll up a sleeve, take off your watch). Kids raise a hand to say what changed. Play two or three rounds; no one is out.

Wrap up: *Today a king makes a new law, and lots of things change. But one thing about Daniel doesn't change. Watch for it!*

Object Lesson: Sealed In

YOU'LL NEED a shoebox with a lid, wide tape or a big sticker, and a card that says GOD IS WITH ME.

Before class, put the GOD IS WITH ME card inside the shoebox, close the lid, and seal it with the tape. Ask: *Can anybody get into this box now without breaking the seal?* **Say:** *The king sealed the den with his ring so nothing could change for Daniel* (6:17). *No person could get in to help him. But no stone and no seal can keep God out. God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths.* Open the box and show the card. *God was with Daniel, and He is with you.*

Craft: The Open Window

Kids glue two paper shutters onto a sheet of construction paper so they open like a window. Under the shutters, they draw themselves praying and write **I will talk to God every day.** Beside the window they write *Morning*, *Noon*, and *Night*. Grades 3-5 can copy the memory verse on the back.

SUPPLIES (PER CHILD)

- Two sheets of construction paper
- Shutter flaps, pre-cut for K-2
- Crayons or markers
- A glue stick
- Rounded-tip scissors (grades 3-5, supervised)

Small Groups

GRADES K-2

1. What did Daniel do when the law was signed?
2. Who shut the lions' mouths?
3. What are some times you can talk to God, like when you wake up or at dinner?

GRADES 3-5

1. The leaders looked for something wrong with Daniel's work and found nothing (6:4). What does doing your work honestly look like at school?
2. Daniel prayed the same way he always had (6:10). Why do you think he didn't change?
3. Daniel gave thanks even when he was in danger. What can you thank God for when things are hard?
4. The king couldn't change his own law. What does this story show about who is more powerful?

Memory Verse Practice

MEMORY VERSE

"When I am afraid, I will put my trust in you."

PSALM 56:3, WEB

Motions: on "afraid," hug yourself; on "trust," open your hands; on "you," point up. Say it softly, then like a roar, then in a whisper. K-2: learn "...I will put my trust in you."

Prayer

Invite kids to name one thing they're thankful for, out loud or silently. Anyone may pass. Then pray: *Dear God, thank You that You hear us every time we pray. When we are afraid, help us trust You. Thank You for Jesus, who is always with us. Amen.*

CLASSROOM TIPS

- **Attention signal:** say "Lions!" and kids roar softly; say "Shut!" and they cover their mouths and go quiet.
- Pair younger kids with an older buddy for the game so everyone can join.
- Use only large, safe items. No coins, rocks, beads, or other small objects: they are choking hazards for little ones.
- **Safeguarding.** If a child or teen tells you about abuse, neglect, self-harm, harmful drinking or drug use at home, or anything else that makes you worried for their safety: stay calm, listen, and thank them for telling you. Don't promise to keep it secret, don't question them for details or investigate, and don't confront anyone involved. Write down what they said as soon as you can, and report it the same day to your church's designated safeguarding lead, following your church's safeguarding policy and any mandatory-reporting law that applies to you. If anyone is in immediate danger, stay with them and call emergency services. Telling a church safeguarding lead does not replace any report the law requires you to make directly to child-protection authorities or police.

FOR PRESCHOOL (AGES 3-5)

- Plan 20-25 minutes: story with cues, the sealed box, the craft with pre-cut shutters, and prayer.
- Tell it as *Daniel kept praying, and God kept him safe.* Leave out what happened to the men who set the trap.
- Questions: *Who did Daniel talk to? What did God do to the lions' mouths?*
- Practice "...I will put my trust in you." with open hands.

TAKE-HOME PAGE · FOR PARENTS

Today in Kids Ministry

Daniel in the Lions' Den

DANIEL 6

WHAT WE LEARNED

A new law said no one could pray to anyone but King Darius for thirty days. Daniel kept praying and thanking God three times a day, as he always had. He was thrown into the den of lions, but God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, and Daniel was not hurt, because he trusted in his God. **Big idea:** *I can trust God and talk to Him every day, even when it's hard.*

TALK ON THE WAY HOME

1. What part of Daniel's story do you remember most?
2. When are good times for our family to pray together?
3. What makes you afraid? How could we pray about it?

MEMORY VERSE

"When I am afraid, I will put my trust in you."

PSALM 56:3, WEB

TRY THIS AT HOME

Make an open-window prayer card: fold the edges of a sheet of paper in to make two shutters, and write *Morning*, *Noon*, and *Night* inside. Tape it by a window, and pray together at those times this week.

Watch the film together

Scan, or visit phillacolla.com/biblestories. Free, about 10 minutes, listed there from release day. Parents, preview the film first; it narrates the hard events of Daniel 6:24. No attack is shown on screen.

GO DEEPER AS A FAMILY

The **Family Study** track of this companion guide, on page 3, has the story, questions for every age, an activity, and a prayer. Get the full guide free at phillacolla.com/biblestories. Next in the series: *A Queen in Persia* (Esther).

PRAY TOGETHER

God, thank You that You hear us every time we pray. Help us trust You and talk with You every day. In Jesus' name, amen.

KIDS: DRAW DANIEL PRAYING AT HIS OPEN WINDOW

Bible Stories Brought to Life · Scripture from the World English Bible (public domain) · Free to copy for church and family use

TRACK THREE

YOUTH MINISTRY

A 60-75 minute youth night for middle and high school students: a hook, a talk, discussion, breakouts, and a challenge for the week.

THE BIG IDEA

The law was new; Daniel's prayers were not. Faithfulness in the crisis grows out of faithfulness on ordinary days, and the living God is worth trusting through the longest night.

NIGHT PLAN

	60 MIN	75 MIN
Arrival and hook	9	11
Watch the film	10	10
Leader talk	15	18
Large-group discussion	8	10
Small-group breakouts	12	16
Reflection	4	6
Challenge and prayer	2	4

THE HOOK: STREAK CHECK

Ask: *What's the longest streak you've ever kept going?* Practicing an instrument, training, reading, showing up for a team. No phones needed, and no one has to answer. Take a few answers, then ask: *What keeps a streak alive? What usually breaks one?* Bridge: *Tonight we meet a man who had prayed the same way for years, and a law written to make him stop.*

Low-prep option: *Pressure Ranking.* Students rank, on paper or out loud, which is hardest to stand firm against: a friend's teasing, a group chat, a coach, pressure to cheat for a better grade, or a rule that feels unfair. Ask why.

LEADER TALK

1 **NO FAULT FOUND.** Daniel was "distinguished above the presidents and the local governors, because an excellent spirit was in him" (6:3). His rivals combed through his work, but "they could find no occasion or fault, because he was faithful" (6:4). Ask: *If someone went through your week, what would they find?* Faithfulness starts in ordinary places: homework, chores, how you treat people.

2 **THE TRAP.** "We won't find any occasion against this Daniel, unless we find it against him concerning the law of his God." (6:5) They flattered the king and wrote a law that could not be changed (6:6-9). The only thing they could use against Daniel was his faithfulness to God.

3 **AS HE DID BEFORE.** Read 6:10. Daniel didn't stage a protest, and he didn't hide. He went home and did what he had always done: he knelt, prayed, and gave thanks. Prayer wasn't a streak he was protecting to keep God happy. It was a relationship with God he would not give up.

4 **THE LONGEST NIGHT.** At dawn the king, who hadn't slept, cried out: "Daniel, servant of the living God, is your God, whom you serve continually, able to deliver you from the lions?" (6:20) Daniel answered, "My God has sent his angel, and has shut the lions' mouths…" (6:22) He came out unharmed "because he had trusted in his God" (6:23). Be honest with students: Scripture doesn't promise that every faithful person will be rescued from every danger (Hebrews 11:35-38). God is able, and He is worth trusting either way.

5 **JESUS.** *(A gospel parallel, not a prediction in Daniel 6.)* Daniel was blameless and accused. Of Jesus, Pilate said, "I find no basis for a charge against this man." (Luke 23:4) Daniel was sealed in and came out alive. Jesus really died, His tomb was sealed (Matthew 27:66), and on the third day He rose. Daniel was kept from death. Jesus went through death for us, and He opens the way to God for everyone who trusts Him.

6 **KEEP YOUR WINDOWS OPEN.** The film ends with a question: what would it look like for you to keep your windows open this week? Not a show and not a streak, but an honest, daily habit of talking with the living God and thanking Him.

DISCUSSION

MIDDLE SCHOOL

1. What did Daniel's enemies try to use against him? Why that?
2. Daniel kept praying the same way he always had (6:10). What helps a good habit stay strong under pressure?
3. King Darius was powerful but couldn't undo his own decision. Have you ever made a choice you wished you could take back?
4. Where is it hard to let people know you follow Jesus?

HIGH SCHOOL

1. The officials used the law against Daniel's faith (6:5). When might following Jesus put you at odds with what others expect, and how can you respond graciously?
2. When is it right to disobey a rule or law? Read Acts 5:29 and Romans 13:1. How did Daniel stay respectful?
3. Daniel gave thanks under a death sentence (6:10). What does gratitude do in a crisis?
4. Why do you think Scripture tells stories of rescue (Daniel 6) and stories where faithful people were not rescued (Hebrews 11:35-38)?

BREAKOUT GROUPS

1. What's one ordinary habit that helps you stay close to God? What gets in the way?
2. Which is harder for you: staying faithful when people are watching, or when no one is?
3. What are you anxious about right now that you could bring to God with thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6)?
4. What's one step you'll take this week to keep your windows open?

REFLECTION: TWO OPTIONS

Phones down. Hand each student an index card titled *My Window*. They write three times this week they'll stop to pray (for example, waking up, lunch, bedtime) and one thing to thank God for at each. Have them keep the card.

Phones out (no social media). Students privately set three reminders labeled *Windows open* for morning, midday, and night. No one shows a screen or says what they wrote.

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

WINDOWS OPEN, THREE TIMES A DAY.

Each day this week, stop three times, morning, midday, and night, to pray for one minute and thank God for one thing. Next time your small group meets, share how it went, if you want to. Anyone may pass.

LEADER NOTES ON HARD QUESTIONS

"WHY WERE THE FAMILIES THROWN IN TOO?" Daniel 6:24 says the king had the accusers, "their children, and their wives" cast into the den. The text reports the king's command; it never says God commanded or approved it. God's own law forbade punishing children for their parents' sins (Deuteronomy 24:16; Ezekiel 18:20). Ancient writers describe Persian kings punishing whole families too, though those accounts come from other periods and don't independently document Daniel 6:24. Answer honestly and soberly, without graphic detail, and remember that some students have lived through violence.

"DOES GOD ALWAYS RESCUE PEOPLE WHO TRUST HIM?" No, and the Bible says so. Hebrews 11 lists people who "stopped the mouths of lions" (Hebrews 11:33) and others who were tortured and killed (11:35-38). Daniel's friends said God was able, "But if not…" (Daniel 3:18). God is always present, He is always able, and in Jesus every believer's final rescue is certain. Remind students that even in suffering, those believers were never separated from God's presence and love (Romans 8:35-39).

"SO SHOULD CHRISTIANS BREAK LAWS?" Scripture calls believers to respect and obey the authorities (Romans 13:1; 1 Peter 2:13-17). But when a law requires disobeying God, "We must obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29) Daniel didn't riot, mock the king, or lie. He kept praying, and he accepted the consequences. Help students see this isn't a license to ignore parents or teachers on ordinary matters.

"DID THIS REALLY HAPPEN?" Scripture calls the king Darius the Mede (5:31). He isn't named in surviving records outside the Bible, and evangelical scholars have proposed several identifications; none is settled. See the Deep Dive, page 17.

SAFEGUARDING. If a child or teen tells you about abuse, neglect, self-harm, harmful drinking or drug use at home, or anything else that makes you worried for their safety: stay calm, listen, and thank them for telling you. Don't promise to keep it secret, don't question them for details or investigate, and don't confront anyone involved. Write down what they said as soon as you can, and report it the same day to your church's designated safeguarding lead, following your church's safeguarding policy and any mandatory-reporting law that applies to you. If anyone is in immediate danger, stay with them and call emergency services. Telling a church safeguarding lead does not replace any report the law requires you to make directly to child-protection authorities or police.

PRAYER

Give students a moment of silence to pray Psalm 56:3: "When I am afraid, I will put my trust in you." Then close: *Living God, You see us on ordinary days and in the longest nights. Make us faithful in small things, honest in hard places, and thankful in every season. Thank You that Jesus went through death for us and rose again. Amen.*

TRACK FOUR

Bible Study & Small Group

A complete session for small groups, classes, and Bible studies, with leader preparation and notes. Plan on 45 to 60 minutes.

Leader Preparation

THE BIG IDEA

Daniel's faithfulness in the crisis grew out of faithfulness on ordinary days: honest work, and prayer with thanksgiving "as he did before." The living God is able to deliver, and He is worth trusting whether He rescues us from trouble or carries us through it.

> *"When Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house (now his windows were open in his room toward Jerusalem) and he kneeled on his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did before."*
>
> DANIEL 6:10, WEB

BACKGROUND

- **Setting.** Just after Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians in 539 BC. Chapter 6 follows straight on from 5:31.
- **The king.** Scripture calls him Darius the Mede. Who he was in other records is debated; see the Deep Dive, page 17.
- **Daniel.** Taken to Babylon around 605 BC, so likely in his eighties *(an estimate; the Bible gives no age)*.
- **The law.** Daniel 6 and Esther both present a decree "of the Medes and Persians" as unchangeable (6:8, 12, 15; Esther 8:8).
- **Toward Jerusalem.** Solomon asked God to hear exiles who prayed toward the land, the city, and the temple (1 Kings 8:46-49). The temple had been destroyed in 586 BC.
- **The series.** Part One: the fiery furnace (Daniel 3). Part Two: the writing on the wall (Daniel 5). Next: *A Queen in Persia*, the first story of Esther.

SESSION PLAN

	45 MIN	60 MIN
Welcome and opener	5	8
Watch the film	10	10
Read Daniel 6:1-28	6	6
Discussion (choose 4-5)	16	24
Application and prayer	8	12

BEFORE YOU MEET

Read Daniel 6 and Daniel 3; the two chapters mirror each other. Preview the film: the narration of 6:24 is sober, and no attack is shown. Read the leader notes on page 14.

The Session

1. **Open.** What is one habit you've kept for years? What has kept it going?

2. **Watch.** Play *Daniel in the Lions' Den* (phillacolla.com/biblestories, about 10 minutes). Ask the group to notice what Daniel does, and what he doesn't do, once the law is signed.

3. **Read.** Read Daniel 6:1-28 aloud together. Verse 24 reports the king's punishment of the accusers; it doesn't say God commanded it.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What image or moment from the film stayed with you?

2. Daniel's rivals "could find no occasion or fault, because he was faithful" (6:4). What does that kind of faithfulness look like at work today?

3. The only charge they could bring concerned "the law of his God" (6:5). What does it say about Daniel that his faith, not a failure, was the target?

4. Look closely at 6:10. What did Daniel do, and what didn't he do? Why does the phrase "as he did before" matter?

5. Daniel gave thanks under a death sentence (6:10). Read Philippians 4:6. How is thanksgiving possible in a crisis?

6. King Darius ruled over 120 local governors (6:1), yet he was bound by his own decree (6:14-15). What does this show about human power compared with God's?

7. Daniel says the lions did not hurt him "because innocence was found in me before him" (6:22), and the narrator adds that no harm was found on him "because he had trusted in his God." (6:23) How do integrity and trust fit together?

8. Darius ends by praising "the living God" whose kingdom "will not be destroyed" (6:26). Read Hebrews 11:32-38. How do these passages help us trust God whether He rescues us from trouble or carries us through it?

APPLICATION

- **Keep your windows open.** Choose set times this week to pray and give thanks, and keep them, not to impress anyone, but to stay close to God.
- **Work faithfully.** Do your ordinary work this week honestly and well, not out of fear of being checked, but "as for the Lord and not for men..." (Colossians 3:23).
- **Give thanks first.** Before you bring your requests to God this week, name one thing you are thankful for.

PRAYER

Pray together through Philippians 4:6: bring your worries to God with thanksgiving. Close by thanking Him that He is the living God, "steadfast forever" (Daniel 6:26), and that in Jesus nothing can separate us from His love (Romans 8:38-39).

Leader Notes on the Questions

Q2, FAITHFUL AT WORK. The investigation was about Daniel's conduct "as touching the kingdom" (6:4), his work for the state. Even in an earlier reign Daniel did "the king's business" (8:27). His integrity was public before his faith was tested.

Q4, WHAT HE DID AND DIDN'T DO. He didn't change his practice, hide, protest, or insult the king. The open windows were already his custom, and the text stresses continuity. Interpreters differ on whether to read 6:10 as a deliberate public witness or simply as unchanged faithfulness. See the Deep Dive, page 17.

Q6, A LAW THAT COULDN'T CHANGE. Compare Esther 1:19 and 8:8, where a Persian king's sealed decree could not be reversed. Darius "set his heart on Daniel to deliver him" (6:14), but his own word bound him. God's word is unchanging too, but He is never trapped by it: He is faithful and merciful at once.

Q7, INNOCENCE AND TRUST. The word for Daniel's being "faithful" in 6:4 and the word for his having "trusted" in his God in 6:23 come from the same Aramaic root (see the Deep Dive key words). The man men could trust was the man who trusted God.

Q8, RESCUE AND PROMISE. Hebrews 11:33 recalls those who "stopped the mouths of lions", but 11:35-38 recalls faithful people who were not delivered. Guard against promising that faith always brings escape. The promise is God's presence and final resurrection.

IF SOMEONE ASKS ABOUT 6:24. The text reports the king's command to cast in the accusers with their wives and children. It doesn't say God commanded or approved it, and God's law forbade punishing children for their parents' sins (Deuteronomy 24:16). Answer honestly and briefly. Don't let the group dwell on graphic details or speculate; gently bring the focus back to God's rescue of Daniel and what the text actually teaches.

TRACK FIVE

Deep Dive

A closer study of Daniel 6 for teachers, preachers, and anyone who wants to dig in: history, language, structure, interpretation, and Christ.

How to read this section. Where scholars disagree, the major views held by orthodox Christian interpreters are set side by side and labeled. Scripture is quoted from the World English Bible (WEB). Aramaic words are given in Hebrew script with a simple transliteration. Verse numbers follow English Bibles; in the Aramaic text each verse of chapter 6 is numbered one higher, because English 5:31 is Aramaic 6:1.

1. Historical and Cultural Background

AFTER THE FALL OF BABYLON

Daniel 6 picks up where chapter 5 ends: "Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old." (5:31) Babylon fell to the forces of Cyrus in October 539 BC (see *The Writing on the Wall* guide). Daniel had been taken to Babylon around 605 BC (1:1-6), so he had been in exile about 66 years and was probably in his eighties. *(An estimate; the Bible gives no age.)* He would continue "even to the first year of King Cyrus" (1:21) and beyond (10:1).

GOVERNING AN EMPIRE

Darius set "one hundred twenty local governors" over the kingdom, with three presidents over them, "that the king should suffer no loss" (6:1-2). The WEB's "local governors" translates *'ăḥašdarpĕnayyā'* (אֲחַשְׁדַּרְפְּנַיָּא), an Aramaic loanword from Old Persian; the same title reached English, through Greek, as *satrap*. Herodotus counts only twenty satrapies under Darius I (*Histories* 3.89), so Daniel's 120 were probably officials over smaller districts. *(An interpretation; compare Esther 1:1.)*

"THE LAW OF THE MEDES AND PERSIANS"

The officials press the king to sign a decree "according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which doesn't alter" (6:8; also 6:12, 15). Esther presents the Persian decree the same way: one sealed with the king's ring "may not be reversed by any man" (Esther 8:8; compare 1:19). Evidence outside the Bible is limited. Diodorus Siculus (*Library* 17.30) tells how Darius III regretted ordering the execution of Charidemus but could not undo it: a king unable to reverse an execution, not proof of a legal rule.

LIONS AND THE DEN

Lions lived wild in ancient Mesopotamia, and Assyrian kings kept them for royal hunts; the Nineveh reliefs of Ashurbanipal (British Museum) show lions released from cages. The den itself has not been identified archaeologically. The text says only that the pit had a mouth a stone could cover (6:17) and a bottom (6:24). The stone was sealed with the king's signet and his lords' signets (6:17), probably impressions pressed into clay across the stone so that any tampering would show. *(An inference from ancient sealing practice.)*

PRAYING TOWARD JERUSALEM

Daniel's windows were open toward Jerusalem (6:10). At the temple's dedication Solomon asked God to hear His people if, in exile, they would pray "toward their land which you gave to their fathers, the city which you have chosen and the house which I have built for your name" (1 Kings 8:48). The temple had been burned in 586 BC (2 Kings 25:9), but Daniel still prayed toward the place of God's promise. Daniel 9 records another of his prayers from "the first year of Darius" (9:1).

2. Literary Structure

DANIEL 6 WITHIN DANIEL 2-7

In the mirror pattern of the Aramaic chapters (see Adrien Lenglet's 1972 study),[1] Daniel 6 is paired with Daniel 3:

A	DANIEL 2	Four kingdoms, and the kingdom of God
B	DANIEL 3	Faithful servants delivered from the furnace
C	DANIEL 4	A proud king humbled, and restored
C′	DANIEL 5	A proud king weighed, and judged

B′	DANIEL 6	**A faithful servant delivered from the lions**
A′	DANIEL 7	Four kingdoms, and the kingdom of God

The parallels with chapter 3 are close. Jews in royal service are accused by rivals (3:8-12; 6:4-13). A royal decree collides with the worship of God. The penalty is death, by fire or by lions. God "has sent his angel" (3:28; 6:22), the men are found unharmed (3:27; 6:23), and the king praises their God in a public decree (3:29; 6:26-27). The differences matter too. In chapter 3 three young men refuse false worship; in chapter 6 one old man refuses to stop true worship.

THE SHAPE OF CHAPTER 6

6:1-3	Daniel distinguished under Darius
6:4-9	The search for a fault, and the decree
6:10	Daniel's prayer, "as he did before"
6:11-15	The accusation and the king's distress
6:16-18	The den, the sealed stone, the king's night
6:19-23	Dawn: Daniel delivered
6:24	Judgment on the accusers
6:25-28	Darius's decree; Daniel prospers

3. Commentary

6:1-3, DANIEL DISTINGUISHED. Daniel stands out "because an excellent spirit was in him" (6:3; compare 5:12), and the king plans to set him "over the whole realm" (6:3).

6:4-5, NO FAULT FOUND. The rivals investigate Daniel "as touching the kingdom" (6:4), that is, his official conduct. They find "no occasion or fault, because he was faithful" (6:4). Their conclusion is a backhanded tribute: "We won't find any occasion against this Daniel, unless we find it against him concerning the law of his God." (6:5) The text doesn't state their motive. Envy is a common reading. *(An interpretation.)*

6:6-9, THE DECREE. The officials come to the king together. The verb *hargišû* (הַרְגִּשׁוּ; 6:6, 11, 15) has been understood as coming in a throng or coming by agreement. Their claim that "All the presidents of the kingdom" had agreed (6:7) was evidently untrue, since Daniel was one of the three. *(A widely noted inference.)* The decree forbids any petition "of any god or man for thirty days, except of you, O king" (6:7). The king signs (6:9), apparently without seeing the trap.

6:10, AS HE DID BEFORE. The verse is carefully worded. Daniel *knew* the writing was signed. He went to his own room, where the windows were already open toward Jerusalem (the Aramaic word means an upper room). He knelt three times a day "and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did before." (6:10; compare Psalm 55:17) He neither hid nor staged a protest. Thanksgiving under a death sentence is the surprising detail. Jesus' warning about praying "to be seen" (Matthew 6:5) concerns motive. Daniel prayed in his own room, as was his custom.

6:11-15, THE ACCUSATION. The men find Daniel "making petition and supplication before his God" (6:11). They call him one "of the children of the captivity of Judah" (6:13) and claim he "doesn't respect you, O king", which the chapter shows to be false (6:4, 22). The king is "very displeased" (6:14). He works "until the going down of the sun" to rescue Daniel (6:14). The king who ruled over 120 local governors is bound by his own decree (6:15).

6:16-18, THE DEN AND THE SEAL. Darius says, "Your God whom you serve continually, he will deliver you." (6:16) The WEB, like the KJV, reads this as a statement. Many translations render it as a wish ("May your God..."), and the Aramaic verb form allows either. The stone is sealed "that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel" (6:17). The language of the unchangeable decree now closes over Daniel himself. The king fasts, no "musical instruments" are brought (the Aramaic word is uncertain), and "his sleep fled from him" (6:18).

6:19-23, DAWN. The king hurries to the den and calls "with a troubled voice" (6:20). He calls Daniel "servant of the living God" and asks whether his God was "able to deliver" him (6:20), echoing Nebuchadnezzar's challenge in 3:15 and the three men's confession in 3:17. Daniel answers: "My God has sent his angel, and has shut the lions' mouths, and they have not hurt me, because innocence was found in me before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm." (6:22) The angel is not described. The narrator adds the decisive explanation: no harm was found on him "because he had trusted in his God" (6:23). The verb is from the same root as *faithful* in 6:4 (see section 4). Hebrews 11:33 later remembers those who through faith "stopped the mouths of lions".

6:24, THE ACCUSERS. The king has the accusers cast into the den, "them, their children, and their wives", and the lions overpower them "before they came to the bottom of the den" (6:24). The verse shows the lions were not tame or full, so Daniel's preservation was God's doing. *(A common observation.)* It also shows a reversal Scripture often describes: the one who digs a pit falls into it (Psalm 7:15; Proverbs 26:27; compare Haman in Esther 7:10). See section 5.

6:25-28, THE DECREE. Darius writes to "all the peoples, nations, and languages" (6:25), as Nebuchadnezzar had (4:1). He commands his realm to "tremble and fear before the God of Daniel" (6:26) and confesses that "he is the living God, and steadfast forever" (6:26), that His kingdom "will not be destroyed" (6:26), and that "He delivers and rescues..." (6:27) These themes run through the book (2:44; 4:3, 34) and prepare for Daniel 7:14. The closing note, "So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian." (6:28), reports what happened; it is not a promise of prosperity to every believer.

4. Key Words

WORD	TRANSLITERATION	MEANING AND USE
עִלָּה	*ʿillâ*	"occasion," grounds for a charge (6:4-5). The rivals searched for one and found none.
מְהֵימַן	*mĕhêman*	"faithful, trustworthy" (6:4), from the root *ʾmn*, "to be firm."
הֵימִן	*hêmin*	"he trusted" (6:23), the same root. The man found trustworthy before men had trusted in his God.
בְּדָת אֱלָהֵהּ	*bĕdāt ʾĕlāhēh*	"concerning the law of his God" (6:5). *Dāt*, a Persian loanword, is also the "law of the Medes and Persians" (6:8, 12, 15): two laws collide.
אֱסָר	*ʾĕsār*	"decree, interdict," from a root meaning "to bind" (6:7-9, 12-13, 15)
מְצַלֶּא וּמוֹדֵא	*mĕṣallēʾ ûmôdēʾ*	"praying and giving thanks" (6:10): Daniel's response to the decree
גֻּבָּא	*gubbāʾ*	"the pit, the den" (6:7, 12, 16-17, 19-20, 23-24)
שֵׁיזִב	*šêzib*	"to rescue, deliver" (6:14, 16, 20, 27), the same verb used in the furnace story (3:15, 17, 28)
זָכוּ	*zākû*	"innocence, blamelessness" (6:22)
אֱלָהָא חַיָּא	*ʾĕlāhāʾ ḥayyāʾ*	"the living God" (6:20, 26), in contrast to the lifeless gods of gold and silver (5:4, 23)

5. Interpretive Questions

WHO WAS DARIUS THE MEDE?

Daniel calls him Darius the Mede (5:31; 11:1) and "the son of Ahasuerus, of the offspring of the Medes" (9:1), says he "received the kingdom" (5:31), and distinguishes his reign from that of Cyrus the Persian (6:28). Babylonian records, including the Nabonidus Chronicle, name Cyrus as Babylon's conqueror and king and mention officials named Ugbaru and Gubaru, but no king named Darius before Darius I (522 BC). Evangelical scholars have proposed:

- **Gubaru,** the governor Cyrus installed over Babylon (John C. Whitcomb, 1959). The Chronicle names an Ugbaru and a Gubaru; whether they are one man is debated. *Darius* would be a throne name, and "was made king" (9:1) would fit a ruler appointed under Cyrus. No surviving record calls Gubaru king.
- **Cyrus himself** (D. J. Wiseman, 1965), reading 6:28 as *the reign of Darius, that is, the reign of Cyrus the Persian*. Compare 1 Chronicles 5:26, where two names for one Assyrian king are joined the same way. But Daniel calls Darius a Mede, gives a different father (9:1), and seems to keep the two kings distinct.
- **Cyaxares II,** a Median king, Cyrus's uncle and senior partner in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* (argued at length by Steven D. Anderson, 2014). Josephus also says Darius was the son of Astyages and had another name among the Greeks (*Antiquities* 10.248). Herodotus and the cuneiform sources do not mention Cyaxares II.

Many critical scholars read Darius the Mede as a literary figure. This guide, following Daniel's own presentation, takes the account as historical. No identification is settled, and silence in surviving records is not proof of error. Belshazzar, too, was once known only from the Bible (see *The Writing on the Wall* Deep Dive), though his case does not settle who Darius was.

WAS DANIEL'S OPEN WINDOW AN ACT OF DEFIANCE?

Some read 6:10 as a deliberate public witness. Others stress "as he did before": he changed nothing, neither hiding nor flaunting. Both agree on the main point. When a law

forbade what God commands, Daniel obeyed God (compare Acts 5:29), and he stayed respectful (6:21-22) and accepted the penalty. He did not resist with force or disrespect, which fits the New Testament's call to honor rulers (1 Peter 2:13-17).

WHY WERE THE ACCUSERS' FAMILIES THROWN IN (6:24)?

The text records the king's command and the result. It neither commends nor condemns it. Herodotus tells how Darius I arrested a conspirator with his sons and household (*Histories* 3.119); Ammianus Marcellinus (4th century AD) describes Persian laws that put a guilty man's relatives to death with him.[2] Both show collective punishment in ancient accounts of Persian rule; neither independently documents 6:24. God's law forbade this kind of punishment: "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers." (Deuteronomy 24:16; compare Ezekiel 18:20) The verse shows the severity of a pagan king's justice. It is not a model for God's people.

6. Cross-References

- **Daniel 3**: the companion chapter to Daniel 6.
- **1 Kings 8:46-49**: praying toward the land, the city, and the temple.
- **Psalm 55:17**: "Evening, morning, and at noon, I will cry out in distress. He will hear my voice." (WEB)
- **Deuteronomy 24:16; Ezekiel 18:20**: each person answers for their own sin.
- **Acts 5:29**: "We must obey God rather than men." (WEB)
- **Hebrews 11:33-38**: some "stopped the mouths of lions"; others were not delivered.
- **2 Timothy 4:17**: "So I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." (WEB)
- **1 Peter 5:8**: the adversary walks around "like a roaring lion".

7. How Daniel 6 Points to Christ

Blameless, and accused. (A gospel parallel, not a claim that Daniel 6 predicts it.) Daniel's enemies could find no fault in his work, so they used his faithfulness to God against him. Jesus was handed over "because of envy" (Matthew 27:18, WEB), and Pilate said, "I find no basis for a charge against this man." (Luke 23:4, WEB)

Sealed in. (A theological reflection.) The king sealed the stone over Daniel "that nothing might be changed" (Daniel 6:17). The authorities sealed Jesus' tomb too: they "made the tomb secure, sealing the stone." (Matthew 27:66, WEB) The difference is important. Daniel was kept from death. Jesus truly died, and He rose from the dead.

The king who could not save, and the God who does. Darius could not both keep his law and rescue Daniel. In the gospel, God does not set His justice aside. In Christ He is "just and the justifier of him who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26, WEB). *(A theological application.)*

The living God and His everlasting kingdom. Darius confessed that God's kingdom "will not be destroyed" (6:26). The next chapter shows "one like a son of man" receiving a kingdom "that will not be destroyed" (Daniel 7:13-14, WEB), and Jesus took that title for Himself (Mark 14:62). Here the New Testament itself draws the connection.

8. For Further Study

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NOTES

1. Lenglet, *Biblica* 53 (1972): 169-90; see also J. Paul Tanner, "The Literary Structure of the Book of Daniel," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 160 (2003).
2. Ammianus Marcellinus, *Roman History* 23.6.81 (4th century AD); Herodotus, *Histories* 3.119, on Intaphernes.

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