TRACK THREE

DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN · COMPANION GUIDE

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 track.

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.*