



Relationship Case Study: Daniel and the Kings

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Theme

- God's control/witness

Background

Daniel is a powerful story of God's control in our lives. This book was written as historical background of the Babylonian captivity of the Jewish people. Daniel was in exile in Babylon when he was chosen to train under the king's government. This study focuses on the beginning chapters of Daniel (1-6), and the relationship of Daniel with King Nebuchadnezzar and his descendant, King Belshazzar.

Opening

1. Show a clip from a beauty contest/scholarship pageant (Miss USA, Miss America, Miss Universe, etc.) or a clip from the movie *Miss Congeniality*; show a part of the movie that highlights the competition.... The talent section would be good.
2. Have all students write down one question they think would be in a beauty pageant competition. Then host a youth group contest by bringing in costumes and have each youth walk down a "runway" to answer one question. This activity is meant to be silly and break the ice for the group. Bringing in costumes or wigs would help everyone get out of their comfort zone.

Say: Everyone in the room has seen/heard about some type of contest on beauty. There are movies and TV shows that highlight the lives of people who enter these type contests/scholarship pageants. We even hosted our own competition today.

List what judges usually look for in these types of competitions. Be ready to compare to the list of qualifications for today's beauty contests and Daniel's.

Dig In

Say: Today, we are going to look at the book of Daniel. We will focus on the relationship he had with King Nebuchadnezzar. This relationship in the Bible started with a beauty pageant. I know you are probably thinking you have never heard of a beauty pageant in the Bible, but it happened on more than one occasion. Esther was chosen to be queen based on her beauty...in a contest.

Read Daniel 1: 1-4.

List the events that took place in verses 1-2

[King Neb besieged Jerusalem. The Lord delivered the king of Judah (Jehoiakim) into Neb's hand. Some articles from the temple of God were placed in the treasure house of a god in Babylonia.]

Say: God let King Jehoiakim be defeated by King Nebuchadnezzar...check out Jeremiah 22:17 to find out why (he was an evil king in the sight of the Lord). King Neb had a god named Bel. He believed that Bel was the god who allowed Babylon to defeat Judah, which showed that the Lord was inferior to Bel. King Neb had some of the sacred vessels from Judah placed in the temple built for Bel.

List the qualifications that King Neb had for the young men from Judah he wanted to train.

[Israelite, from royal family/ nobility, without physical defect, handsome, learner, informed, quick to understand, qualified to serve]

Say: There were only a few men that qualified to be trained for the king's service. Daniel was a man that God wanted to use. This was the beginning of the relationship of Daniel and King Neb.

[Have a student(s) make a timeline of the following events. Make sure to talk about how the men shared their faith with King Neb and Daniel with the kings. Use drawings to help with visuals.]

Here are the highlights of the relationship:

- Daniel quickly grew in favor with the king. "God gave knowledge and understanding of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds." (1:17)
- In chapter 2, not one of the king's astrologers, magicians, enchanters, or sorcerers could interpret his disturbing dream. He called for all the wise men of the court to be executed. Daniel, being one of the men to be killed, went to the king to ask for time to interpret his dream. Daniel asked his friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah to pray to God for wisdom. Daniel praised God when the dream was revealed to him by God (2: 20-23).
- Daniel was bold and shared with the King that God had given him wisdom to interpret his dream. King Neb acknowledged that Daniel's God must be "the God of gods" (2:47). King Neb placed Daniel in a high position and gave him gifts.
- (3:1-6) King Neb built a golden image that he made all people worship whenever the people heard music from flutes, horn, zither, etc. This is the story Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (these men are Daniel's same friends from earlier) being thrown into the fiery furnace. God protected and saved them from harm so King Neb made a decree that nothing should be said against the Lord.
- Chapters 4 talks about another dream of the King that Daniel was able to interpret. Daniel was able to tell the King to repent of his sins (4:27). The dream of the King was fulfilled and a voice from heaven made a decree (4:31-35).
- Chapter 5 begins about 30 years later with King Belshazzar. Again, none of the king's wise men can interpret the writing on the wall that occurred during a social banquet. The queen reminds the king of Daniel, who King Neb used to interpret dreams.
- Daniel gives the interpretation to the King and does not hesitate to tell him everything, even stuff the king probably didn't want to hear, but needed to hear. Daniel was able to see this as an opportunity for God to use him in front of many leaders (5:17).
- King Belshazzar had sinned against God (5:22-23) and therefore received his punishment, death.
- Chapter 6 is the start of a new king, Darius, and Daniel becoming one of three administrators over the land. King Darius wanted to promote Daniel to rule over the whole kingdom, which made the other administrators and satraps very jealous and they wanted to trap him.
- The other admins and satraps decide to go to the king to convince him to make a decree that no other gods could be worshiped...only the king.
- Once Daniel heard about the decree he went home to pray. He was caught and thrown into the lion's den. King Darius was fond of Daniel and hoped the Lord would protect him (6:16). The king could not eat, sleep, or drink during the night and ran to the lion's den as soon as the sun came up. He was overjoyed that the Lord had protected Daniel.
- King Darius wrote to all people in the land about the Lord. See 6:25-27.

Application

Say: After hearing about the life of Daniel with 3 kings, what do you think is the overall theme?

[The Lord's protection, God is in control, etc.]

We read/heard about several relationships within the first six chapters of the book of Daniel. God's control is evident in the lives of Daniel and his friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men show us what it means to be bold in their faith. How were they bold?

[Prayed openly, shared about God's wisdom and protection, praised the Lord]

Have you ever had an experience similar to Daniel's?

[School: gossip, faced with challenges, stood up for faith; jealousy of friends]

This may sound ridiculous, but Daniel was always dealing with other people who were jealous of him and gossiped about him. These kinds of situations happen a lot in life, especially in school. Daniel constantly had to keep his head up and his eyes focused on the Lord. Daniel knew that God had given him a purpose even though he couldn't see it at the time and God was using him for HIS glory.

We are given opportunities each day to share our faith and be bold among friends. Why do you think it would be important to be bold in faith?

[God calls us to be bold and to not be afraid]

Because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, we have the right to be BOLD in our faith. Our God has conquered sin, death, and the devil. Our God is the creator of the universe and master of life. Even though we don't always see God's plan or know when God is using us we have the opportunity to be bold in our faith. Daniel could have interpreted the kings' dreams and thanked God in private for his abilities. Instead, he boldly proclaimed the Lord's awesome power.

Closing

Think of a friend, relative, or acquaintance who doesn't know about God. What is one way that you can be bold in this relationship?

Pair all of the students together and ask them to pray together. Have each of the students pray for one another and include prayers for boldness.

Verse for the week: 2 Corinthians 3:12 "Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold."