

Explore It FOR LEADERS



PRAYER

Daniel 9 Daniel's prayer

How do you feel when you think about the situations you hear about on the news or in your classroom? Does all the bad news sometimes seem overwhelming? Do you ever feel helpless to make a difference?

Daniel looked back through the Scriptures and saw that God's prophecy had come true in his time. Instead of this driving him to despair and discouragement, Daniel uses it to inspire his prayers and he pleads with God to change the situation for his people.

What situations drive you to prayer and which do you find it hard to believe that God could act in? Why is this? What different methods of prayer have you tried? Which do you like and dislike? Do you find it easy to hear God's voice? How could you make more space for this in your prayer times?

Each child will need:

→ Images from the images sheet stuck on sticks (three per child) – see Tell It section

You will need:

→ Chairs, music, a variety of prayer cards for people or situations, sticky tape, a timer – see Start It section

→ A rough cloth or sack and prepare a dramatic Bible reading – see Tell It section

→ Paper and pens/pencils and set up prayer activities or prayer stations (use prayer stations sheet) – see Pray It section

Start It

Play a game of *Musical Prayers*. Set up chairs for a game of musical chairs and tape one prayer card to the front of each chair and one to the back. On each prayer card there should be the name of a person or situation to pray for. This could be from the local news, or people within your church.

Play some music, and when it stops each person sits down, picks up the card on the front of the chair and prays for one minute for that person/situation. Ask the children to share the person or situation they have prayed for. For round two use the prayer card on the back of the chair.

Sing It

● **Say:** Today we are thinking about different ways we can spend time in prayer to God. Our song for today includes different Bible stories, including Daniel's, and reminds us exactly who we are praying to.

'King of me' by Rend Co Kids (2 mins 19 secs)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Yt3vPANmVU>

Tell It

🗨️ **Say:** Over the past few weeks we have discovered more about the life of Daniel.

Ask: How would you describe Daniel to someone who doesn't know anything about him?

🗨️ **Say:** Daniel had to face very challenging circumstances. He came from a place filled with war and conflict and ended up in a country where he didn't speak the language. Although he was successful and influential, there were others who tried to make life difficult for him. Throughout all this, God was faithful.

🗨️ **Say:** In today's part of the story, Daniel is very worried about what is happening in the world around him and what will happen in the future.

Ask:

➔ How do you feel when you think about situations you hear about on the news or in the classroom?

➔ Does all the bad news seem overwhelming sometimes?

➔ Do you ever feel helpless to make a difference?

🗨️ **Say:** The people of Daniel's day were not following God how they should – and Daniel realised this. That's why things were going wrong. Daniel looked back through the Scriptures and realised that God was not happy with how the people were behaving, and that if they carried on acting this way then it wouldn't end well. So Daniel decided to pray.

Daniel's prayer

Prepare a dramatic reading as Daniel. It's quite a long reading but it is important for the children to see how honest Daniel was with God.

Put a rough cloth over your shoulders and give the children the images on sticks. Ask the children to listen carefully, and when they hear examples listed below, to show the correct image.

Happy face: the good things God has done

Sad face: the things that made people sad

Red cross: the bad things that people did (sinned)

Help the children with the listening activity with cues like smiling, looking sad, or shaking your head.

Read Daniel 9:3-19 (ICB)

'Then I turned to the Lord God. I prayed to him and asked him for help. I did not eat any food. [SAD FACE] To show how sad I was I put on rough cloth and sat in ashes. [SAD FACE] I prayed to the Lord my God. I told him about all of my sins. [RED CROSS] I said, "Lord, you are a great God. [HAPPY FACE] You cause fear and wonder. [HAPPY FACE] You keep your agreement of love with all who love you and obey your commands. [HAPPY FACE]

"But we have sinned and done wrong. [RED CROSS] We have been wicked and turned against you. [RED CROSS] We have not obeyed your commands and laws. [RED CROSS] We did not listen to your servants, the prophets. [RED CROSS] They spoke for you to our kings, our leaders and our ancestors. They spoke to all the people of the land.

"Lord, you are good and right. [HAPPY FACE] But we are full of shame today. [SAD FACE] The people of Judah and Jerusalem and all the people of Israel are ashamed. [SAD FACE] People near and far whom you scattered among many nations are ashamed. [SAD FACE] We were not loyal to you. [RED CROSS] Lord, we are all ashamed. [SAD FACE] Our kings and leaders and our fathers are ashamed. [SAD FACE] This is because we have sinned against you. [RED CROSS]

"But, Lord our God, you show us mercy. [HAPPY FACE] You forgive us even though we have turned against you. [RED CROSS] We have not obeyed the Lord our God. [RED CROSS] We have not obeyed the teachings he gave us through his servants, the prophets. All the people of Israel have disobeyed your teachings. [RED CROSS] They all have turned away and refused to obey you. [RED CROSS] So you brought on us the

curses and promises of punishment written in the Teachings of Moses, the servant of God. [SAD FACE] These things have happened to us because we sinned against you. [RED CROSS]

“God said these things would happen to us and our leaders. And he made them happen. You brought on us a great disaster. [SAD FACE] Nothing has ever been done here on earth like what was done to Jerusalem. All this disaster came to us just as it is written in the Teachings of Moses. [SAD FACE] But we still have not stopped sinning. [RED CROSS] We still do not pay attention to your truth. [RED CROSS] The Lord was ready to bring the disaster on us. This is because he is right in everything he does. [HAPPY FACE] But we still have not obeyed him. [RED CROSS]

“Lord our God, you used your power and brought us out of Egypt. [HAPPY FACE] Because of that, your name is known even today. [HAPPY FACE] Lord, we have sinned. [RED CROSS] We have done wrong. [RED CROSS] Lord, you do the right things. [HAPPY FACE] So do not be angry with Jerusalem. Jerusalem is your city on your holy hill. All this has happened because of our sins and the evil things done by our ancestors. [RED CROSS] So now people all around insult and make fun of Jerusalem and your people. [RED CROSS]

“Now, our God, hear my prayers. [HAPPY FACE] I am your servant. [HAPPY FACE] Listen to my prayer for help. [HAPPY FACE] Do good things for your holy place that is in ruins. [HAPPY FACE] Do this for your sake. [HAPPY FACE] My God, pay attention and hear me. Open your eyes and see all the terrible things that have happened to us. See what has happened to the city that is called by your name. We do not ask these things because we are good. We ask because of your mercy. [HAPPY FACE] Lord, listen! Lord, forgive! Lord, hear us and do something! For your sake, don't wait! Your city and your people are called by your name.”

🗨️ **Say:** Daniel was desperate for things to change in the world, but rather than this driving him to discouragement, he decided to pray.

Ask: What situations drive you to prayer, and which to you find it hard to believe that God could act in? Why is this?

Action It

There are three activities that can be used in succession or as part of prayer stations. They give the children an opportunity to follow the example of Daniel and discover different ways to pray.

These activities might be useful as a handout on separate sheet so that they can either be given out or placed at the prayer station.

Activity 1 - Daniel's prayer of praise

Daniel faced a tricky situation as he tried to work out the meaning of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream. When God reveals it to Daniel, he begins to say a prayer of praise.

'Praise God for ever and ever.
He has wisdom and power.
He changes the times and seasons of the year.
He takes away the power of kings.
And he gives their power to new kings.
He gives wisdom to people so they become wise.
And he helps people learn and know things.
He makes known secrets that are deep and hidden.
He knows what is hidden in darkness,
and light lives with him.
I thank you and praise you, God of my ancestors.
You have given me wisdom and power.
You told me what we asked of you.
You told us about the king's dream.'

— Daniel 2: 20-23 (ICB)

Think back over the last school year.

- What kind of prayers have you prayed?
- How has God answered your prayers?
- What are you thankful for?

Write a prayer of praise and thanksgiving to God, just as Daniel did.

Activity 2 - Daniel's prayer routine

Daniel's prayer routine got him into a lot of trouble, as the royal advisers used it against him. They were jealous of Daniel and encouraged the king to make Daniel's prayer to God illegal. Daniel faced a night in the lions' den just because he wouldn't change his prayer routine. That's how important prayer was to Daniel. He felt secure in God because he spent so much time with him.

Read Daniel 6:10 (*ICB*).

'When Daniel heard that the new law had been written, he went to his house. He went to his upstairs room. The windows of that room opened toward Jerusalem. Three times each day Daniel got down on his knees and prayed. He prayed and thanked God, just as he always had done.'

How often do you spend time praying to God?

Don't feel bad if you don't pray much at the moment. The idea of this activity is not to make you feel guilty about how much or little you pray. God loves spending time with us, and the more we pray, the more we get to know him. Daniel felt secure because he spent so much time praying to God and reading Scripture.

Create a prayer plan for yourself that will take you through next week and plan in slots of time where you can spend time praying to God.

Activity 3 - Daniel 9

In chapter 9 Daniel spends time sharing with God all his worries and concerns. He also recognises the things that he has done wrong, and the ways in which his people have turned away from God. Daniel gives thanks, asks for forgiveness and prays for himself and the situations around him. We can use this example of prayer ourselves.

Use the PRAY acronym to spend time with God.

P – Praise

God, I praise you because ...

R – Repent

Forgive me, Lord, for ...

A – Ask

God, I ask that you would ...

Y – Yes

Yes, Lord, thank you for answering these prayers ...

Regardless of how you use these activities, spend some time at the end of this section discussing what the children have been doing. Which of these prayer activities will they try at home? Do they have any other prayer methods that they could share with the rest of the group?

Pray It

🗨️ **Say:** We have spent a lot of time thinking about prayer today.

Ask:

- Do you ever wonder if God hears your prayers?
- Why is that?

🗨️ **Say:** Daniel prayed throughout his life, often in difficult circumstances. Towards the end of the book of Daniel we read that God has heard every word of Daniel's prayers.

Read Daniel 10:12 (ICB)

'Then the man said to me, "Daniel, do not be afraid. Some time ago you decided to try to get understanding. You wanted to be humble before God. Since that time God has listened to you. And I came to you because you have been praying."'

🗨 **Say:** God reassured Daniel that he was listening to his prayers and working toward an answer. Let's follow Daniel's example and pray, no matter what is going on around us.

Video

To finish the session on a lively note, use the song 'Pray' by CeCe Winans. The lyrics for the chorus are as follows and the children will soon pick up the 'I pray, you pray, we pray' part. If not, you can all have fun dancing to this prayer song together.

'Pray' by CeCe Winans (3 mins 30 secs)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0v5fckxZ2j0>

**When the world feels like it's on your shoulders
(I pray, you pray, we pray)
When your life seems like it's upside down
(I pray, you pray, we pray)
When your lonely nights are getting colder
(I pray, you pray, we pray)
I pray, you pray no matter how dark the day**

Explore It

Remember to send home the Explore It (For Me) and Explore It (Together) ideas for children and families.