Bible Passage: Daniel 1
Main Point: Daniel obeyed God by not eating the king’s food.
Unit 17 Big Picture Question: How can we obey God? We trust God to give us strength to obey Him.

Leader DEVOTIONAL

Leaders: this is just for you! Read ahead of time to engage with the Bible story on an adult level and prepare your heart to teach on Sunday.

God’s people had been warned. The prophets had come with messages from God: “Turn from your sin, and turn back to God!” But the people did not listen. The nation of Judah was consumed by idol worship; the kings did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. So God kept His word—He allowed His people to be taken from their land.

Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon, the strong and powerful nation that overtook Judah’s capital of Jerusalem and brought God’s people from Israel to Babylon. Daniel was a young man in Judah when this happened. He might have heard about the prophet Isaiah’s warnings; now he witnessed their fulfillment. (See Isa. 39:5-7.)

King Nebuchadnezzar called for the best young men from Judah to be trained for service in the palace. Among these teens were Daniel and three of his friends. The chosen boys were given new identities—new names, new education, new culture. But Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah stayed faithful to the one true God and refused to make themselves unclean by eating the king’s food.

God blessed Daniel and his friends. Daniel’s obedience to God led to his favor with King Nebuchadnezzar, and Daniel’s life would be a testament to God’s control over all things. God remembered His people during the exile and promised to bring them back to their homeland and set up a new kingdom.

As you share this story with the kids you teach, explain that obedience is not always easy, but we trust God to give us strength to obey Him. Point out that Daniel lived about 600 years before Jesus—the perfectly obedient promised One. We can trust that Jesus will return someday to set up His kingdom forever.
Daniel and His Friends Obeyed God

Daniel 1

When Jehoiakim (jih HOY uh kim) was the king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar (NEB yoo kad NEZ uhr), the king of Babylon, went with his army to Judah. Because God’s people had sinned against Him, God allowed King Nebuchadnezzar to take over the city of Jerusalem.

King Nebuchadnezzar told one of his leaders to bring some of the people to Babylon. He wanted boys who were healthy, handsome, and good learners to serve in his palace.

Every day, King Nebuchadnezzar gave the boys a special diet. They ate the same food and drank the same drinks that the king ate and drank.

Four of the boys who came from Judah were different than the others. They worshiped the Lord, the one true God. Their names were Daniel, Hananiah (HAN uh NIGH uh), Mishael (MISH eh uhl), and Azariah (az uh RIGH uh). The man in charge of the boys gave them new Babylonian names. Daniel’s new name was Belteshazzar (bel tih SHAZ uhr). Hananiah’s new name was Shadrach (SHAD rak). Mishael’s new name was Meshach (MEE shak), and Azariah’s new name was Abednego (uh BED-nih goh).

Even though Daniel and his friends weren’t in Judah anymore, Daniel still wanted to obey God. God’s laws told Daniel what he could and could not eat. Daniel was not allowed to eat some of the food that the king gave the boys.

Daniel asked the man in charge for permission to eat other foods, but the man in charge was afraid.

“If you don’t eat the king’s food, you won’t be strong like the other young men. The king might get angry and kill me!” he said.

Daniel said, “Try this for 10 days. Let us eat only vegetables and drink only water. Then see if we are healthier than the other young men.”

The guard agreed. At the end of 10 days, Daniel and his friends looked healthier than the young men who had eaten the king’s food. After that, the guard allowed Daniel and his friends to keep drinking water and eating vegetables.

God was happy that Daniel obeyed Him. God blessed Daniel and his friends. He made them wise and smart. They learned lots of new things. God gave Daniel the ability to understand visions and dreams. When their training was over, Daniel and his friends stood before the king. The king saw that they were smarter and stronger than all the other young men. They were even smarter than the wise men who worked for the king. Daniel served the king for many years.

Christ Connection: Daniel chose to obey God no matter what, and God blessed Daniel and his friends. In an even greater way, Jesus always obeyed God. He came to earth and followed God’s plan to save sinners. Jesus never sinned, but He died the death we deserve. Jesus rose from the dead, and those who trust in Him receive God’s forgiveness and blessing.
Small Group OPENING

Welcome time
Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to help new kids connect to your group. As kids arrive, ask them about a time they felt pressured to disobey God. Be ready to provide example situations. Ask them how they reacted, or would have reacted.
Say • Today we will learn about a group of God’s people who were asked to break God’s laws about what foods to eat. We will learn if they remained obedient to God or gave in to the pressure.

Activity page
"Menu Mix-Up” activity page, 1 per kid
pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete the “Menu Mix-Up” activity page. Ask them to unscramble the names of the foods pictured.
Say • Daniel and his friends had to choose whether they would obey God or eat the king’s food. We will learn more about what they chose and why in large group.

Key passage activity
Key Passage Poster
heavyweight paper
markers, crayons, or colored pencils

Provide each child with a half-sheet of heavyweight paper. Instruct kids to write out the key passage, copying it from the poster. Then provide them with a variety of markers, crayons, or colored pencils to write the verse in three to five more colors, with each letter offset just slightly from the letter they wrote in the first color.
Say • This verse teaches that God is in control of everything. He changes the seasons, which allow us to grow crops like the colorful fruits and vegetables Daniel and his friends chose to eat. We trust God to give us strength to obey Him.

Session starter
Mystery bags
fruit or vegetables
brown paper bags
Allergy Alert download

Place a piece of fruit or a vegetable inside a brown paper bag. Invite a volunteer to reach into the bag to feel the item and describe it to the rest of the class. Challenge the other children to try to guess the mystery item. Prepare a few mystery bags and allow multiple volunteers to participate. (Suggested items: onion, broccoli, banana, dry beans, and so forth.)
Say • Though you couldn’t see what was in each of these bags, you listened carefully to the description and thought about what you heard. Today, we will learn about listening carefully to God. We can trust God to help us listen to and understand His Word.

Transition to large group
**Unit 17 Session 1: Daniel and His Friends Obeyed God**

**Bible Passage:** Daniel 1

**Main Point:** Daniel obeyed God by not eating the king’s food.

**Unit 17 Big Picture Question:** How can we obey God? We trust God to give us strength to obey Him.

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**Small Group LEADER**

**Bible story review & Bible skills**

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster
- Pencils
- Crayons
- Large sheets of paper or poster board, 1 per group
- Masking or painter’s tape

Form groups of two to five kids. Instruct kids to find Daniel 1 in their Bibles. Give each group a large sheet of paper or poster board. Assign them a scene from the story, and ask them to draw that scene as a group. Hang the pictures around the room, and allow the kids to walk along the pictures. Discuss with them the events of the story.

Use these scenes:

- Daniel and his friends were captured by the king of Babylon. (Daniel 1:1)
- Nebuchadnezzar selected young men to be trained. (Daniel 1:3-5)
- Daniel and his friends asked for permission to avoid the king’s food. (Daniel 1:8)
- Daniel and his friends ate only vegetables. (Daniel 1:12-14)
- Daniel and his friends were healthier than the men who ate the king’s food. (Daniel 1:15-19)

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

**Say**

- Daniel and his friends knew that God’s laws were more important than the king of Babylon’s laws or instructions. They chose to obey God even if it meant giving up the tasty food the king wanted them to eat. God gave them the strength they needed to obey Him.

  Jesus also chose to obey God when He went to the cross to die for the sin of the world. Jesus relied on God to give Him strength despite the terrible pain of the cross. On the third day, God raised Jesus from the dead to show that He is in control of all things, just as He was in control over Daniel’s health and diet.

**Engage**

**Planter pots**

- Planter pots, 1 per kid
- Markers
- Soil (optional)
- Small seeds (optional)

Provide each child with a small planter pot and markers to decorate the pots. Help kids write the main point, big picture answer, or key passage around the rim. You may also choose to provide potting soil and small seeds for the kids to plant.

(Note: It may be productive to use the discussion questions included in “prayer time” on the next page while kids work on decorating their pots and/or planting their seeds.)

**Say**

- **Daniel obeyed God by not eating the king’s food.** He only wanted to eat foods that God allowed His people to eat. Daniel’s choice to obey could have gotten him in big trouble with the king, but he obeyed anyway. Daniel points us to Jesus, who also chose to obey no matter the cost. Jesus gave up His life to save us from sin. Apart from Jesus,
cannot obey God. **How can we obey God? We trust God to give us strength to obey Him** because of what Jesus did on the cross.

**Prayer Time**

Class prayer request notebook

Say • Earlier in our large group time, we heard the question “how do we know that we are growing in our relationship with Jesus?”

How do we know that a plant is growing? *(Invite kids to offer responses.)* That’s right. It gets bigger and taller, and pretty soon it produces more leaves and branches and later fruit.

Does a plant grow all by itself? *(No.)* What does It need to grow? *(Let kids answer.)* That’s right. Light, water, air, and good soil.

What about a person? How do you know a person is growing physically? What do they need in order to do that? *(They get bigger; they need good food, water, sleep, etc.)*

What about growing spiritually? How do you think you would know if a person is growing spiritually? *(Let kids offer ideas. If kids don’t suggest it on their own, mention that increased obedience to God is one sign that a person is growing spiritually.)*

What do you think a person needs to grow spiritually?

Next, invite kids to think of choices they have faced where they could obey or disobey God. Ask them to think about what kind of consequences may come from either, and remind them that they can only obey because Jesus died to make the way for them to return to God.

Say • Even after we trust in Jesus, we face choices where we can obey God or disobey God. We should obey God because God loves us and wants what is best for us and because we love God. When we face choices, we can pray to God and ask Him for help. He promises to be with us. **We trust God to give us strength to obey Him.**

When we choose to disobey, we can still return to God and confess our sin. When we ask God for forgiveness, He offers it freely because Jesus already died on the cross for our sin. We can obey because Jesus defeated sin for us.

Take prayer requests. Pray, asking God to give your class the strength needed to obey God no matter what choices they face. Thank Jesus for dying for our sin, and praise God for His perfect plans and control of all things. Ask God to help the kids to grow spiritually and to love and obey Him more and more.

**Closing and Pick-Up**

**Bible Story Coloring Page, 1 per kid**

 crayons or markers

 **Big Picture Cards**

After prayer time is done, continue any unfinished activities and/or let kids color this week’s Bible Story Coloring Page until parents arrive. Send each kid home with this week’s **Big Picture Card** so kids and their parents can interact with the biblical content at home.