

The Book of Daniel

Introducing the Characters

Daniel 1:1-6

¹ In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. ² And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia[a] and put in the treasure house of his god.

³ Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring into the king's service some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility— ⁴ young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians. ⁵ The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service.

⁶ Among those who were chosen were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. ⁷ The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.

About the Series

This series explores 6 stories from The Book of Daniel.

On the left there is the Bible verse, which is covered in the session. It's taken from the NIV.

The notes for the leaders tries to give an overview of each of the sessions activities. Switch in what bits suit your activity session. Have freedom to make it your own, the main point of these are to make the sessions more interactive, memorable and to discover more about the stories of the Bible.

Read through the activities and Talk and Discussion before delivering these to the young people. I've tried to make the preparation notes as bold as possible, bright orange at the top of the page, to make sure you bring the right things for the illustrations, but you might want to embellish bits, with re-enactments, getting the young people to read, and part of the session.

I've tried to make it as easy as possible to get the scripture into the sessions, and I think it's key for you as the leader understand the story, so there's big chunks on the left you can read before the session.

Notes for Leaders

Overview of the Series

- Quick overview of the characters from the Book of Daniel.
- Some items and food for packing Activity 1
- Food items, healthy and unhealthy items

1. Packing their Bags

Daniel and his friends had to leave their family and home, put lots of items on the table, from sweets, toys, practical things knife, rope, food, and let the children tell you what they would take and why in smaller groups.

2. Colouring Pages

They can colour the pages below.

3. Stick together Tag

Like Daniel and his friends (now named) Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego get the children to play tag in pairs if they let go they have to freeze.

4. Daniels Food Game

Daniel's Food Sort Challenge

Theme: Healthy vs. King's Table

Game Type: Sorting & Discussion

Setup:

Lay out a variety of play or real food items—some healthy (fruits, veggies, water cups) and some rich or sweet (cookies, sweets, juice, cake).

Goal: Kids must sort the food into two baskets:

“Daniel's Food” (healthy, simple)

“King's Food” (rich or unhealthy)

Let the young people share out the food after sorting them.

The Bible Project do an excellent job at illustrating the story of Daniel, and it can be found here:

<https://youtu.be/9cSC9uobtPM>

Faithful in a Foreign Land

The story begins during a difficult time for God's people. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had conquered Jerusalem and taken many young Israelites into exile. Among them were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah—young men from noble families of Judah. They were taken far from home, language, and culture, into the powerful and pagan empire of Babylon.

These young men were chosen to be trained in the king's court. They were taught Babylonian language, literature, and customs and were even given new Babylonian names:

Daniel → Belteshazzar

Hananiah → Shadrach

Mishael → Meshach

Azariah → Abednego

Despite being outsiders in a foreign land, they remained faithful to God and did not give in to the pressures to conform.

A Crisis of Identity and Faith

In the third year of King Jehoiakim's reign, Jerusalem was conquered by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. This was not just a military defeat—it was a spiritual and cultural crisis. The enemy not only took the people into exile, but also looted sacred objects from the temple of God, placing them in the temple of Babylon's false gods (v.2). This act symbolized total domination—not just of land, but of belief.

Selected for Service in a Pagan Court

Among the young exiles were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah—likely teenagers from royal or noble families (v.3–4). The Babylonian program aimed to erase their Jewish identity:

- They were taught Babylonian language and literature
- Expected to eat from the king's table
- And given new Babylonian names tied to Babylonian gods

Everything was designed to reshape their identity—to turn them from servants of God into loyal Babylonians.

1. They Remained Together

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah stayed close as friends. Community gave them strength. Even in a foreign palace, God gave them support through one another—an important reminder that faith is stronger when shared.

2. They Did Not Resist the Culture Violently—But They Did Not Forget Who They Were

Even though they had no power to refuse their captivity or training, they quietly held on to their true names and identity in God. The world tried to rename them, but they remembered their God-given names, each of which pointed to Yahweh:

Hebrew Name - Meaning

Daniel - "God is my judge"

Hananiah - "Yahweh is gracious"

Mishael - "Who is what God is?"

Azariah - "Yahweh has helped"

Though the chief official renamed them to reflect Babylonian gods, God gave them the conviction not to forget who they truly were.

3. They Accepted Opportunity Without Compromise

They allowed themselves to be educated and trained in Babylonian customs, but not at the cost of their beliefs. While verse 5 introduces the pressure to eat the king's food, the real test of conviction comes in what follows—choosing God's way even when it means standing out.

Lessons in Conviction from Daniel

God allows His people to enter hard places—but He also equips them to stand firm.

- The world may try to redefine us, but our true identity is found in who God says we are.
- Conviction doesn't always begin with loud actions; it starts in the quiet decisions to remember, resist, and remain faithful.
- Even young people can be strong in faith, even in unfamiliar, intimidating places.

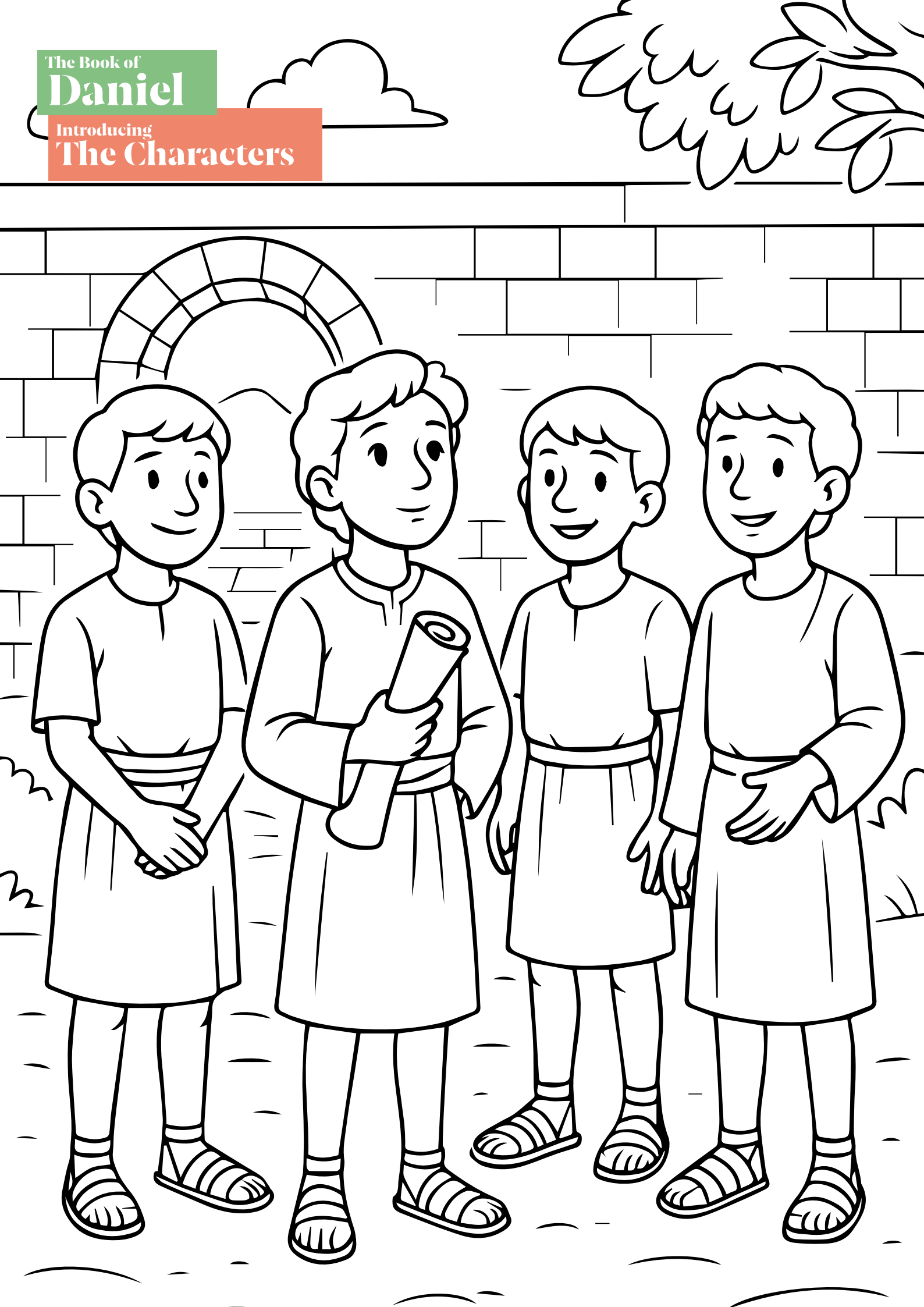
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