



LESSON PLAN

Scripture Texts:

Daniel 5:1-30

2 Peter 1:19-21

Session Theme:

Judgment

a. Welcome to Class

Teachers should arrive in the classroom well in advance of class. Welcome students as they enter, and inquire about their week. Pass out name tags and record attendance on a classroom chart.

b. Icebreaker: Turn It Around!

Write the message “Honor God above all” on the board, but write it backwards. It will look like this: “ronoH doG evoba lla.” Ask if anyone can decode this message. If there are younger kids in the class, give them a hint for each word, or even tell them that each word is written backwards. When the class has figured out what the message says, ask them if they can tell you what it means to “honor God above all.”

To honor God means to have no other gods, to listen to the true God and treat his Word and his Church with respect. In today's story, there was a king who did none of those things. He needed to turn things around! Let's begin our story and find out what happened.

c. Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, you have given us so much, and we are grateful. Help us to put you first in our lives. Teach us to honor you and your Word above all else. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

d. SEED Video or Song (Optional)

The teacher may introduce the lesson by playing the video clip from the SEED website. This time may also include an opening song or two, using a commercial Sunday School music CD.

Song suggestions for this lesson:

- “Trust and Obey” (hymn)
- “O Be Careful” (children's song)

e. Brief Bible Background

Read together the introduction to the lessons for the day, and briefly summarize the context and setting:

- Today's Lesson is from the Old Testament
- Scripture Section: Exile

God's people were attacked and conquered in the north by the Assyrian Empire, then later in the south by the Babylonian Empire. Many of the people were carried away in exile, far from home.

f. Communicate the Bible Story

Always keep in mind that the main purpose of Sunday School is to put people in contact with Bible stories. Use a version that is appropriate to the age level:

Upper Elementary: Read the Bible Story and Rhyme

Youth/Adults: Read the Scripture text from the Bible

For Upper and Lower Elementary, use the Storyteller questions to help the students think about the events of the story.

g. Complete the Worksheet(s)

Continue with the handout sheets appropriate to the age level of the students in class:

Upper Elementary: Worksheet and Drama

Youth: Bible Study (Maps, Timelines, and Questions)

Adults: Bible Study (Large or Small Group Discussion)

h. Craft and Activity Time

If there is time after covering the Bible story, the class may move to craft and activity time, described on the following page. (Do not let the activity time supersede the actual time spent on the Scripture lesson.)

i. Summarize and Review

Before ending class, briefly summarize the day's lesson one last time. Use the Bible Rhyme as a short review, or simply ask questions to help the students recall the events of the story.

Youth/Adult: Discuss “Reflection for the Week Ahead”

j. Closing Prayer

Close the session in prayer before dismissal:

Upper Elementary: Practice a prayer from memory (e.g., the Lord's Prayer, Luther's Morning Prayer, etc.)

Youth/Adult: Use the ADTRC Prayer format

Bible Study Leader's Guide

The following is a discussion and answer guide for the Youth and Adult Bible Study sheets. For all leaders, it can serve to provide some background on the Bible lesson.

Discuss: Daniel 5:1-30

1. King Belshazzar of Babylon was a powerful man in his day. Why do you think he threw great parties and invited so many lords and nobles? How did that help him in his rulership of the country?

In ancient days, one of the ways that rulers gained the loyalty of important people was to give out gifts or throw large banquets of celebration. Being invited to such feasts made people feel special. By being shown this favor (even in a superficial sense), they were more likely to return the favor with loyalty to the king.

2. According to verses 2-4, what was so offensive to God about what Belshazzar did? Do you think the king had any idea that he was doing anything wrong? Why or why not?

The vessels (cups and bowls) used to serve the people at this party had been taken from God's temple when Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem years earlier. These "holy vessels" were meant to be used in the worship of God. (Look at Numbers 18:3.) Here, these same vessels were being used to drink and party and to worship false gods and idols. By his actions, it seems that the king did not think what he was doing was wrong but thought it was actually a good thing.

3. They say, "Ignorance is no excuse." In our lives, do we always know when we are doing things wrong? In what way are we accountable for our actions regardless?

Psalm 19:12 says: "Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults. Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me!" Wrong is wrong, whether we are aware of it or not. Bad actions have bad consequences. Ignorance may explain our actions, but the consequences will still take effect. That is why we actually listen to what God has to say. We may not know all the implications of our own actions. God knows more than we do.

4. Verse 5 says: "The fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall." How do you picture this scene? Was the hand big or small? What do you imagine the marks looked like?

We all may picture the scene differently. Perhaps it was a large ghostly hand writing these letters, etching them in the plaster of the walls like large

scratches. Others may imagine something else. In any case, by the king's reaction, it was clearly something noticeable and frightening!

5. Prior to this story, Daniel had worked in the court of King Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian ruler who conquered Judah. According to verses 13-16, what was Daniel known for?

Daniel was known for his wisdom and insight and for having the Spirit of God in him. He had been an advisor to Nebuchadnezzar, when the former king had dreams he could not explain. Not only was Daniel able to explain the dreams, but he did so without even having the king tell him what he saw in his dreams.

6. What sort of king had Nebuchadnezzar been? According to verses 20-21, what did God do to teach him a lesson? What lesson did Nebuchadnezzar finally learn? Does it seem like Belshazzar learned anything from his father's experience?

Nebuchadnezzar was a proud, arrogant, and self-centered man. God taught him humility by having him live like a wild animal until he acknowledged that God rules over all.

Like his father, Belshazzar honored himself and worshiped idols. Though he saw what happened to his father, Belshazzar did not learn to honor God.

7. What did the three words on the wall mean?

a) Mene: God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end.

b) Tekel: You have been weighed in the balances and found wanting.

c) Parsin (Peres): Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and the Persians.

8. Was Daniel able to explain the words because he was smart or clever? Read 2 Peter 1:19-21. How does Peter describe the source and authority of biblical prophecy?

Daniel denied having any special skill of his own; he gave all the credit to God for revealing the truth of his own message. Daniel 2:29-30 says:

"He who reveals mysteries made known to you what is to be. But as for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because of any wisdom that I have more than all the living."

In the same way, Peter says that the prophecy of Scripture does not come from the human speaking; it comes from the Holy Spirit speaking through that person. Jesus promises that the Spirit gives us words to speak as well (Mark 13:11).

Classroom Craft and Activity Page

Listed below are in-class activities and craft projects related to the theme for the day. Choose one of the following based on the age and capabilities of the students. (Never let the activity or craft time take precedence over the biblical story.)

Activity 1: Jeweled Cup Craft

Materials Needed:

- Clear or colored plastic cups
- Stick on jewels
- Permanent markers

Instructions:

King Belshazzar drank from the goblets in God's temple, but did not honor God.

What might one of those cups have looked like? Let kids make one and decorate it with stick-on jewels.



To do this, give each person a clear or colored plastic cup. Invite kids to press the stick-on jewels around their cup in different patterns. Using permanent markers, have them write their initials on the bottom of their cup. They can use the permanent markers to draw designs on the cup as well. Be sure they don't draw too close to the top of the cup, in case they decide to drink from it.

King Belshazzar felt very important. After all, he was a high ruler — a king! But he forgot that there was One above him, and God was not pleased with the king's attitude and behavior.

When the king took the gold goblets and other items that had belonged to the temple in Jerusalem and drank out of them (while worshipping the gods of gold and silver), that was the last straw. No longer would Belshazzar be in power. His days as king were done.

It can be easy to let power go to our heads.

Oddly enough, when everything is going well for us, we may be tempted to forget about God and to think that we deserve all the blessings in our lives. This is when we are in the most danger.

The story of the writing on the wall can remind us to be humble and to honor God first, no matter how successful we become.

Activity 2: Decode the Note Activity

Materials Needed:

- Paper
- Pencils

Instructions:

Give each student a piece of paper and a pencil.

On the board, make a chart where each letter of the alphabet is represented by a number. For example, A = 1, B = 2, C = 3, etc.

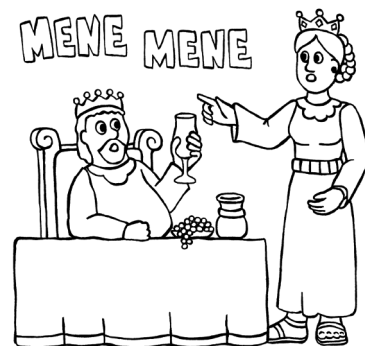
Invite kids to study the chart, and then, to write a message on their paper using only numbers as laid out by the chart. Ideally, they will write a message that has to do with today's lesson.

Next, divide the class into pairs and have them exchange papers. Each pair will be tasked with decoding the message that their partner has written. When everyone has finished this, invite kids to share the message they uncovered with the class.

Today's story was about a message that appeared on the wall and puzzled a king. Was it a happy message? (No, it was a message of warning to the king.) Only Daniel, who served the Lord God, could decipher the meaning behind the words. Why? Because Daniel looked to God, and God helped him with this task.

May we always stay close to God, as Daniel did, so we will be able to share God's truth and wisdom when needed.

A=1	I=9	Q=17	Y=25
B=2	J=10	R=18	Z=26
C=3	K=11	S=19	
D=4	L=12	T=20	
E=5	M=13	U=21	
F=6	N=14	V=22	
G=7	O=15	W=23	
H=8	P=16	X=24	



Worksheet Answer Key

Below are the answers to the children's worksheet for this week's lesson:

Handwriting on the Wall

a) How do you think God felt about that?
(God took offense at the misuse of holy vessels)

b) Mirror Reflection:

gniK eɹɹT	The King
ɹlobɪ bəpɪɹɹow	worshiped idols
:mɔɹt ɹbɹm	made from:
ɹɹɹɹ	G O L D
ɹɹɹɹɹ	S I L V E R
ɹɹɹɹɹ	B R O N Z E
ɹɹɹɹ	W O O D
ɹɹɹɹ	S T O N E

Which words on the wall were connected to these messages from God?

Mene = "You have been weighed in the balances and found wanting."

Parsin = "Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."

Tekel = "God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end."

Belshazzar ruled Babylon (land of the Chaldeans)

Darius the Mede replaced King Belshazzar

Biblical Map - Important Regions:



Vocabulary Word for the Week

Teachers may want to introduce the theme word for the week to help expand students' biblical vocabulary.

Judgment

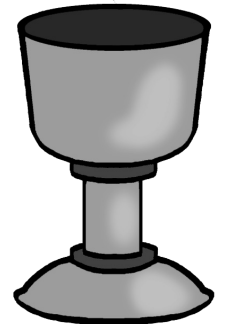
a ruling made by God

King Belshazzar worshiped false gods, and as a result, he received the real God's judgment.

Reflection for the Week Ahead

Today's story is about a king who, unlike Solomon, did not care about God or what God thought. Because of this, he thought nothing of using the cups and vessels from God's temple for his own feasting. He worshiped gold. As the story made clear, his careless decisions led to judgment.

We often make unwise choices when we don't consider God. When we are led by our own selfish desires, we can easily go astray. How do we avoid this and stay on track? By trying to honor God (First Commandment) in all we say and do, by looking to him for guidance and asking for help, and when we do fall (for we are sinners and imperfect), by not being too proud to ask for forgiveness. For the Lord is merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love (Psalm 86:15), and he forgives when we admit our failures and repent.



Talk about a time when you did something wrong and learned a hard lesson from it. What might have happened if you had not changed your ways?

The Practice of Prayer

Write a prayer thanking God for his wisdom and for teaching us his Word. Ask God to show you what he would have you do and for the courage to do it. Pray that God would help you share his message with others.

Practice using the ADTRC Prayer Form: Address, Description, Thanks, Request, Conclusion.