



STORY 45

Writing on the Wall

DANIEL 5

BEFORE THE LESSON

- *Read Daniel 5.*
- *Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is, what he has done, and how they should respond to him.*
- *Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.*

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

Do you remember Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? Of course you do! How about Daniel? He was only mentioned once in the last lesson. But that lesson and this lesson (and the next lesson) all come from the book of Daniel, a book that he wrote about life in Babylon. Today we will learn about him and his God-given wisdom. We will also learn about another king, the grandson of King Nebuchadnezzar. At times Nebuchadnezzar was a mean ruler. He was the one who ordered the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of the Jews. He also had Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego tossed into a fiery furnace because they would not bow before his ridiculous golden idol. But other times Nebuchadnezzar did right. After God sent an angel to rescue the three men from the furnace, Nebuchadnezzar said that the Lord was the true King. He said the

1
Read

2
Teach

same thing after God humbled him by making him crawl and eat grass like an animal. But his grandson, King Belshazzar, was different. Belshazzar was also a mean ruler, but unlike his granddad, he never learned to humble himself before the Lord of heaven. So God taught him a lesson he would never forget: God is against the proud.

TELL THE STORY

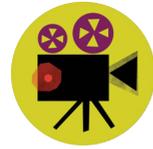
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the Bible passage together



Read from *The Biggest Story Bible Storybook*



Play *The Biggest Story* video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
God is so powerful that he controls kings and kingdoms.

Thousands of lords and ladies gathered for King Belshazzar's great feast. It's usually fun when people gather to celebrate. But at this party, something bad happened. The king used the holy vessels that had been stolen from the temple in Jerusalem to drink from. (Back in Jerusalem, only the holy priests in the temple were allowed to touch these vessels during worship!) It got worse. All the lords and ladies used those stolen vessels to toast their idols and say, "Praise the gods of gold!"

God saw what they did. (God sees everything we do!) He acted right away. On the wall appeared the fingers of a human hand that wrote "MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN" (5:25). Spooky, huh? Belshazzar was completely spooked. His face turned white. His knees knocked. His heart raced. His legs gave way beneath him. He was terrified! He was also confused. Those four words meant nothing to him. They weren't words in his language. So he called his wise men and asked "What does this mean?" They had no idea. The queen, however, knew someone who would. "Daniel can help," she told the king. "He helped your grandfather interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems" (see 5:12).

When Daniel arrived, the king promised him great gifts if he would read the writing on the wall. Daniel said, “Keep your gifts. God’s wisdom is for free.” Then he explained the words. “MENE, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end; TEKEL, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting; PERES, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians” (5:26–28). What does all that mean? It means that because Belshazzar was so proud and acted in such an unholy way, his days as king were over. In fact, “that very night” the “king was killed” (5:30), and Darius the Mede took over his kingdom. Wow! Can you believe that? What does that teach us? It teaches us that God is against the proud. It also teaches us that God is so powerful, that he “rules the kingdom of mankind” and he decides who will be king (5:21).

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

Twice in the New Testament we find the sentence “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Those words (at least the first part of the sentence) are a perfect summary of what happened at King Belshazzar’s feast. God was against that proud king. The second part of the sentence serves as a perfect summary of what happens when we humble ourselves before God. God gives grace!

The apostle Peter knew this. One night (all night long!) he was fishing with fishermen friends. They caught nothing, not even a goldfish. When they came back to shore, Jesus told them to go back out and try again. Out they went. This time they caught so many fish their nets were breaking. When Peter saw what happened, he could have thought, “I’m so great! Look at all the fish I caught!” But instead, “he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, ‘Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord’” (Luke 5:8). To fall before Jesus in humility is the right way to respond to King Jesus, and Peter knew that. That is why Jesus gave God’s grace to Peter and called him to be much more than a fisherman: Jesus told him, “From now on you will be catching men” (Luke 5:10). Jesus forgave a sinful man and sent him out to tell others the good news of God’s grace in Jesus. That is what he offers to us too—if we humble ourselves like Peter.

3

Engage

Memory Verse
God opposes
the proud but
gives grace to
the humble.

JAMES 4:6

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** What do you remember about King Nebuchadnezzar? How was his grandson King Belshazzar like him? How was he different? How did God show King Belshazzar that he would no longer be king?

TAKEAWAY: God is so powerful that he decides who rules over the kingdoms of the world.

2. **QUESTION:** What did King Belshazzar and his lords and ladies do with the holy vessels from the temple? What were those vessels supposed to be used for? Did King Belshazzar and the lords and ladies worship God with the holy vessels? What happens when we're proud and think we know better than God what to do?

TAKEAWAY: God is against those who are proud.

3. **QUESTION:** When Peter realized that Jesus had power over fish and seas, what did he do? What did Jesus say in response to Peter's humility? What does God do when we humble ourselves and let him be the boss of our life?

TAKEAWAY: God gives grace to those who humble themselves before him.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Build a Tower Relay

Supply List: blocks, baskets (one per team), tape measure

Before Class: Gather supplies. Set up baskets of blocks and building areas.

Divide the children into teams. Explain that the goal of the relay is to build the tallest tower as a team in four minutes. On "Go," the first child from each team

should run to the basket of blocks, choose one, run to her building area, set the block down, and run back to her team. The next child repeats the process. The children continue rotating through their team members, stacking the blocks to form a tall tower. If the tower falls, the team must start again. After 2 minutes, have a teacher measure each tower. The team with the tallest tower wins. Remind children that God builds up and gives grace to those who are humble.

Option 2: Mene Mene Tekel Parsin

Supply List: masking tape

Before Class: Divide play area into three sections with tape.

Explain that King Belshazzar was having a party when fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote “MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN” on the wall. Daniel told the king the meaning of these mysterious words. Tell children the room is divided into three sections: “Mene, Mene,” “Tekel,” and “Parsin” (show children which section is which). The leader calls out one of the section names and all children must run to that section. The child who arrives last is out and sits down. Continue to call out sections until only one child remains.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Penny on the Chinny

Supply List: pennies (one per child)

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Ask the children, “If I give you a penny, how long do you think you could keep it from dropping to the ground?” Children will think this is easy and declare they could do it for a long time. Give each child a penny and tell them they must keep it on their chin without touching it while completing the actions you announce (walking, shuffling from side to side, twirling, etc.). If a child drops or touches her penny, she is out and must sit down. Continue play until one child remains. Explain that we are sometimes proud like King Belshazzar, but God rewards the humble.

Option 2: Cup Stacking Relay

Supply List: large plastic cups (ten per team), tables (one per team)

Before Class: Gather supplies. On one side of the room, set up one table per team.

Divide the class into teams of five to ten children and distribute ten cups per team. Tell children the goal of the relay is to build a pyramid-shaped tower using their cups (four on bottom, three next level, two next level, and one on top). On “Go” the first child should run to his table, place a cup upside down to begin the pyramid, and run back to his team. The second child then runs, adding a cup to the pyramid. If the tower falls at any point, the child at the table must rebuild the tower before returning to the team. Some children may have two turns and will run twice. Continue play until a team finishes the pyramid and wins. Remind children that God builds up and gives grace to those who are humble.

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Trust God Art

Supply List: white cardstock paper, white crayons, watercolor paints, paintbrushes, cups (one per table), wipes

Before Class: Gather supplies. Fill cups one-third full of water. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a piece of white cardstock, a white crayon, and a paintbrush. Set paint and water on each table. Have children write the words “Trust God” on their paper, pressing hard with the crayon to make thick, clear letters. Then have children paint the paper to reveal the words. Provide wipes to clean fingers as needed.

Option 2: Humble Garland

Supply List: colored paper, string, scissors, hole punch, markers/crayons

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut colored paper into triangles (six triangles per child). Cut string into 3-foot sections (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child six triangles and a string. Set crayons/markers on each table. Have children write one of the letters of the word *humble* on each triangle (point side down) and then decorate. Help children punch two holes at the top of each triangle, then string and tie triangles onto the string in the right order (tying each triangle to the string to hold it in place). Space the triangles out by at least an inch. Tell children this garland can remind them that God rewards the humble.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Message from God

Supply List: paper, scissors (one per child), glue sticks (one per child), magazines and newspapers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print out the Big Truth (place one on each table as a reference). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a piece of paper, scissors, and a glue stick. Have children search through magazines and newspapers to find letters that are in the Big Truth. Have them cut out individual letters and glue them to their paper to spell out the Big Truth.

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