

### **KEY POINT**

As God's people, we are invited to trust in God's presence even in difficult times. We can trust in God's faithfulness. We can celebrate that God's actions are not dependent on whether we are faithful—God is always faithful! Daniel knew he could pray to God even when facing a den of lions, because of God's faithfulness.

### **KEY VERSE**

Daniel 6:22  
My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths so that they would not hurt me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no wrong.

# Advent

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FAITH FORMATION FOR CHILDREN | YOUTH | FAMILY | ADULT

Week 1 of Advent - Come into our Darkness!

### **OPENING PRAYER**

Begin your time together with this, or another, prayer:

Faithful God, you are hope when hope has fled. Be with us today as we study your Word. Help us to encounter you in the story and to see you reflected in one another as we talk together. In your name we pray. Amen.

### **READ**

Daniel 6:6-14, 16-23

### **ABOUT THE STORY**

The story of Daniel in the lions' den takes place after the rise of Persia and the return to Jerusalem, when King Darius ruled the Persian Empire, about 20 to 40 years after Cyrus. Daniel himself is a folk hero character who served in the court of the king, even rising to the level of a sarkin, a trusted adviser.

When Daniel proves to be the most competent, the king plans to give him authority over the whole kingdom. The other two sarkins conspire against both Daniel and the king. They devise a law that defies the king, a common practice in the Ancient Near East. But they know that Daniel, as a Hebrew, could never obey this law. When they spy on Daniel and find him praying to the Hebrew God, they tattle on him to the king and demand punishment.

The king finds himself entrapped by his own law. Although he determines to save Daniel, the law is out of his hands once it has been signed. Daniel must be thrown to the lions.

Darius obeys his own law to the letter, to the point of sealing the stone over the lions' den with his own signet ring. The King cannot be faulted if the punishment does not work. But he is clearly distraught over it. Darius fasts and keeps vigil all night, and rushes to the lions' den the next morning. His anxious cry as he comes near demonstrates his hope in the power and faithfulness of God, and this hope is vindicated when Daniel replies that all is well. When Daniel is found completely unharmed, Darius realizes that he has been tricked. The perpetrators and all their families are thrown to the lions, and without the God of Israel to protect them, they perish.

Daniel's rescue from the lions' den is a reminder to future generations that God is always faithful. While human law is willing to sacrifice even those held dear, God will go to great lengths to protect and save God's people.

## SHARE

- Have you ever been on a tour of a cave, or had another opportunity to experience complete darkness? Even the darkness of a midnight awakening is enough to bring out our fears and worries as we lie in bed running through the anxieties that occupy our heads, waiting for the morning light to surface. If you have experienced the total darkness of a cave, share what you remember. What did you see, hear, and feel?
- What are some of the troubles that keep you awake at night? How do you cope with them? If you feel comfortable doing so, share your responses with the group.

## PRAY

Faithful God, you are with us always, even in the darkness. Help us to see you in the gathering of our community. Help us to find comfort in the unity that you have called us to. Help us to be your light for one another in our darkest days. In your name we pray. Amen.

## BLESS

Share this verbal blessing with one another: The God who makes all things new is with you. Amen.

## FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION AT HOME:

- There are many people living in exile in our own communities. Learn about the refugees and immigrants in your area. Where are they from? What made them leave their homes?
- Read news about local, regional, or national political leaders. Reflecting on how King Darius was entrapped by his own laws, consider How might elected leaders find themselves entrapped by their own laws like King Darius? Pray for each one as you go.
- Read Isaiah 11:1-10. Compare and contrast this imagery of lions living in peace with their prey with the portrayal of lions in Daniel 6:22 and Daniel 6:24. What can we learn about what God most wants for us? How do our actions work toward or against God's desires?