

4.4 Large Group Lesson | Preschool



Uh Oh Topher

Daniel in the Lions' Den

BIG IDEA: God's way is the best way.

BIBLE BASIS: Daniel 6

KEY VERSE: "God's way is perfect. The LORD's word doesn't have any flaws." Psalm 18:30 (NirV)

SCHEDULE

2S & 3S CLASSES

ARRIVAL & PLAYTIME

10:30-10:55

2S & 3S LARGE GROUP

10:55-11:10

SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES

11:10-12:00

PRE-K & K CLASSES

SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES

10:30-11:15

PRE-K & KINDER LARGE GROUP

11:15-11:40

REVIEW ACTIVITIES

11:40-12:00

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LEADER DEVOTIONAL

The famous basketball coach John Wooden once said, “The true test of a man’s character is what he does when no one is watching.” Our politicians are experts at smiling, shaking hands, and kissing babies when the cameras are rolling, but sadly, many prove to be amateurs when it comes to character. This was the case in biblical times as well.

In the story of Daniel and the Lions’ Den, politicians tricked the king into making a law that nearly killed one of his most trusted advisors. We are only told of a few flawless biblical characters; Daniel was one of them. From the time of his youth, when he was snatched away from his family and brought to Babylon, through the reign of three Kings, Daniel showed himself to be a man of integrity. When the corrupt politicians tried to dig up dirt on him, Daniel 6:4 tells us, “They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent.” Deviously, they got the king to pass a law prohibiting prayer to anyone but the king himself. Daniel’s downfall would be his faithfulness to God.

Faith is putting trust into action. By refusing to follow the corrupt crowd, Daniel demonstrated his trust in God. We know the end of this famous story, but Daniel didn’t know it as he was being tossed into the lions’ den. Daniel was willing to follow God’s plan even when it proved to be most difficult. And because of that, Daniel experienced the power of God to shut the mouths of lions.

As you prepare to teach this lesson, pray that your children would experience the power of God in their lives. Pray they would resist doing what is wrong. Pray they would follow the way of Jesus. Reflect on where you have seen God’s power in your life. Where have you acted like Daniel by walking away from the crowd to follow God? Children need more than good Bible storytellers — they also need good role models.

Dan Huffman
GO! Contributor



LARGE GROUP SKILL BUILDING

Five Steps to Becoming a Master of Group Management

There's a fine line between being a Large Group teacher and a zookeeper. If you make a few untimely missteps, it can start to feel like you're losing control of the room and slipping into the wild kingdom. Don't fret, though! We've all been there! And fortunately, there are a few things you can do to prevent your kids' wild side from breaking out.

Get some help: Hopefully you've got some dynamic adult helpers in the room who are willing and able to help you. They can be your first line of defense. Talk to them ahead of time and ask them to sit among the kids (as opposed to the back of the room). Encourage them to intervene any time they see distracting behavior.

Separate the fire and gas: Some kids just make for explosive combinations. If there are two (or more) kids seated together that historically have trouble being around one another, don't be afraid to separate them from the beginning.

Involve the kids: If you're too much of a "talking head," kids can start to zone out and get fidgety — especially preschoolers! Be sure to involve the kids in as much of the lesson as you can. Bonus points if you can get the kids moving physically. Fortunately, the GO! lessons are chock full of these kinds of interactive opportunities!

Don't get stale: Fidgety kids can also be an indication that it's time to move on to something different. If you're overly verbose and spend too much time on the same thing, you can start to lose the room. Again, the GO! lessons are written with this in mind, so the more you can stick to the script, the better!

Put your body and voice into it: Often, when a communicator is beginning to lose the attention of the entire room, the first response is to call for quiet and "eyes up here." There's a better way, though. By changing what you do with your body and voice, you can regain the kid's attention in a way that doesn't interrupt the flow of the lesson. For example, if you're standing, try sitting or kneeling near the kids for a moment. Resist the urge to talk over the kids. Instead, begin speaking in a quiet voice, just above a whisper. This body/voice combination can do wonders for regaining attention.

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UNIT DESCRIPTION

That mischievous little gopher has done it again! Topher the Gopher has burrowed his way into the preschool room while we weren't looking. He got his paws on the story pictures from the true Bible story and hid them around the room. But the story must go on! It's up to the kids to find the hidden pictures so the story can be told. During the silly search, kids will learn that God takes care of them and His way is the best way.

SET-UP INSTRUCTIONS

- Place a stuffed animal lion in the storytelling area.
- Print the "Uh Oh Topher" story pictures on 8½" x 11" cardstock paper. Hide the pictures around the room in locations that are at least partially visible from where the children will be seated. You can make some of the pictures a little harder to find than others.
- Create a "Super Duper Bible Box" and place your storytelling Bible inside. This box will be used every week. See the Resource Folder for details on how to make the "Super Duper Bible Box."
- If using the non-video options for the Topher segments of the lesson, print the Topher's Story Time Rules signs and Topher's Big Idea signs on 8½" x 11" cardstock paper and place in the story time area. See "Getting Started" in the Resource Folder for the printable signs and for more instructions on how to perform the non-video options.
- Note: Any media repeated throughout the unit, such as the Topher videos and the title slide, is located in the Lesson 1 Resource Folder only.

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★ LARGE GROUP LESSON

WELCOME AND MUSIC

Music: Play one or two upbeat worship songs

BIG IDEA AND BIBLE VERSE

Large Group Leader: Hello, everyone! Are you ready to have a wonderful day at church? *(Children respond.)* I hope so, because that's *exactly* what we're going to have. I think we should start our wonderful day by looking for Topher the Gopher. Does anyone see where our furry friend is hiding? *(Allow children time to look for Topher. If they have trouble finding him, give them clues. Once Topher is found, remove him from his hiding spot.)*

Say: Great work! This is Topher the Gopher. Once again, Topher has taken our Bible story pictures and hidden them around the room. In a little bit, we'll work together to find the pictures so we can tell our Bible story.

Say: Today's true Bible story is going to teach us that **God's way is the best way**. That's our Big Idea for the day. Let's say it together. *(Repeat Big Idea with children.)* **God's way is the best way.** It's true: **God's way is the best way.** In fact, that's what our memory verse from the Bible tells us. Let me teach it to you.

*"God's way (walk in place)
is perfect (two thumbs up).
The LORD'S word (cup hands around mouth like you're calling out)
doesn't have any flaws (brush hands off).
Psalm 18:30 (extend hands like you're holding a book)."*

Say: Let's do that together. *(Repeat memory verse with children two or three times.)*

STORY TIME RULES

Say: Wow — nice job! I think you are ready for the Bible story. Before we get started, though, I think we should go over our three story time rules.

Video: Play "Topher the Gopher Story Time Rules" video

(Note: Play the "Topher the Gopher Story Time Rules" video or use the Story Time Rules script found in the Resource Folder.)

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UH OH TOPHER INTRO

Say: I want to introduce you to someone. (*Take out stuffed lion.*) This is my pet lion. He's very sweet. I can shake his paw. (*Shake paw.*) I can pet him. (*Pet lion.*) I can even hug him. (*Hug lion.*) What else do you think I could do with my pet lion? (*Take suggestions. Act them out if possible.*)

Say: There's one more thing about my pet lion — he's not real. He's just a stuffed animal. Do you think we could do all of those things with a *real* lion? (*Children answer.*) No way! Real lions are dangerous. If we tried to hug a real lion, it might try to eat us.

Say: In today's true Bible story, there's a man named Daniel who gets thrown into a den full of lions. Not stuffed lions like this (*hold up stuffed lion*), but *real* lions. Do you think the lions eat Daniel? (*Children respond.*) Let's find out. If you're ready to hear today's Bible story, let me see you wiggle your fingers in the air like this. (*Wiggle fingers with children.*) Great! First, let's get our Bible out of the Super Duper Bible Box. Then we can look for the missing story pictures. (*Move to Bible Box.*) I need your help getting the Bible out, though. We need to say our special Bible words together. Repeat these special words after me: It's true, it's true, the Bible is true!

Slide: Show the "Daniel in the Lions' Den" slide

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BIG BIBLE STORY — DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN

(Note: Ahead of time, hide the story pictures around the room in locations that are at least partially visible from where the children will be seated. You can make some of the pictures a little harder to find than others.)

Say: I think it's time to find our first missing picture. Does anyone see the picture of a **man**? *(Allow children time to look for the picture. Give clues if needed. Once found, remove the picture from its hiding place and hold it up for children to see.)* In the Bible, in the Book of Daniel, there was a man named Daniel who loved God very much. *(Refer to picture.)* Daniel worked for the king, and he was very good at his job. In fact, Daniel did a better job than any of the other leaders. Let's give two thumbs up for Daniel. *(Give thumbs up with kids.)*

Say: Let's see if we can find the next picture. Does anyone see **an angry face**? *(Children look for picture. Hold it up once it's found.)* The other leaders were mad at Daniel. They were jealous because the king liked him best, so they came up with a mean plan to get Daniel in trouble. On the count of three, let's shout, "That's not nice." *(Count with children and shout.)*

Say: Let's find another picture. Does anyone see a pair of **praying hands**? *(Children look for picture. Hold it up once it's found.)* The other leaders went to the king and told him to pass a new law. The law said that people could only pray to the king, not to God. The law said that people who prayed to God would be thrown into a den full of lions. But Daniel knew that was wrong, so he kept on praying to God. Can you show me what you look like when you pray to God? *(Children bow in prayer.)* That's probably what Daniel looked like.

Say: Let's see if we can find another picture. Does anyone see a **sad face**? *(Children look for picture. Hold it up once it's found.)* When the other leaders saw Daniel praying to God, they told the king. The king was so sad. Can you show me your sad face? *(Make sad face with children.)* He loved Daniel, and he didn't want him to get hurt, but the law was the law — Daniel had to be thrown into the den full of lions.

Say: Let's find one more picture. Do you see a **lion** anywhere? *(Children look for picture. Hold it up once it's found.)* Daniel spent all night in the lions' den. In the morning, the king ran to the den and shouted, "Daniel! Has God protected you from the lions?" Daniel shouted back, "I'm okay! God sent an angel to protect me. He shut the mouths of the lions so they couldn't eat me." The king was so happy. When Daniel came out of the lions' den, he didn't have a single scratch on him. On the count of three, let's shout, "Hooray!" to God for saving Daniel. *(Count to three and shout.)*

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MUSIC AND CLOSING

(Encourage the children to stand up. Lead them in a worship song of your choice. Following the song, use the rhyme from earlier to help the children sit down again.)

Music: Play one worship song

Say: In our Bible story for today, Daniel obeyed God even though he got in trouble for it. The mean leaders made a law saying everyone had to pray to the king, but Daniel said, “No way! To God I’ll pray!” Hey — that’s kind of catchy! When I point to you, let’s shout, “No way! To God I’ll pray!”

Say: Can you pray to the president (or prime minister)? *(Point to children and shout.)* Can you pray to my stuffed lion? *(Hold up lion, point to children and shout.)* Can you pray to the sun in the sky? *(Point to children and shout.)* Can you pray to other fake gods? *(Point to children and shout.)*

Say: God is the one true God, and only He can hear and answer our prayers. If someone ever tells you not to pray, you can just say *(point to children and shout)*, “No way! To God I’ll pray!” God says we should only pray to Him. And **God’s way is the best way!**

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TOPHER'S BIG IDEA

Say: Hey — that's our Big Idea for today! I think we should tell it to our parents when we see them. Maybe we should practice first. *(Appear to be thinking.)* Hmm...who could we practice telling? I know! We could tell our friend, Topher the Gopher. Let's see if we can find him.

(Play "Topher's Big Idea Video 1" or, for a non-video option, print out the "Topher's Big Idea Cards" ahead of time and hold up card #1. See the "Topher's Big Idea" document in the Resource Folder for more suggestions on how to perform the non-video option.)

Video: Play "Topher's Big Idea Video"

(Whisper.) Uh-oh. It looks like Topher is asleep. I think we should wake him up. When he wakes up, we can all tell him that **God's way is the best way**. On the count of three, let's all yell, "Topher the Gopher, wake up, wake up!" *(Count to three and yell with kids. Then play "Topher's Big Idea Video 2" or hold up card #2.)*

Topher: Hey, what's the Big Idea?

Children and Large Group Leader: **God's way is the best way.** *(Repeat the Big Idea several times. When finished, play "Topher's Big Idea Video 3" or hold up card #3.)*

Topher: Wow! That is a Big Idea! Thanks for telling me! Goodbye, kids. *(Encourage kids to wave goodbye to Topher as he disappears back into his hole.)*

Large Group Leader: Let's say a prayer together and ask God to help us do things His way. *(Encourage kids to repeat the following prayer after you.)*

Dear God,
Your way is the best way.
Thank You for hearing me
Whenever I pray.
I love You so much, God!
Amen.