

Teen Devotion

Year A – Reformation

The Time In Between



One truth shared: When you feel you're in a lion's den, our Savior was devoured (so to speak) in the ultimate lion's den to ultimately deliver us from every single one of ours.

Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help. So they went to the king and spoke to him about his royal decree: "Did you not publish a decree that during the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or human being except to you, Your Majesty, would be thrown into the lions' den?"

The king answered, "The decree stands—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed."

So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!"

A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel's situation might not be changed. Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep.

At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?"

Daniel answered, "May the king live forever! My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, Your Majesty."

The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

Daniel 6:10-12, 16-23

In the Midst of Lions

Thirty teeth. That's what you'll find in the mouth of the average lion: 12 incisors, 4 canines, 10 premolars, and 4 molars. Add to that a bite force that is four times stronger than yours (650 pounds per square inch to be exact). And that's just *one* lion. Now imagine an entire den full of them—and they're eyeing *you* up as a chew toy. Daniel didn't have to imagine: he was in the midst of lions.

But Daniel was "in the midst of lions" even before he was tossed into a lions' den. Long before lions would attempt to tear him up, his employees were attempting to tear him down. Daniel's employees were out for blood—*his* blood. But they had nothing on Daniel. In fact, Daniel had distinguished himself to the king by his trustworthiness, integrity, and other exceptional qualities. His employees couldn't find any dirt on Daniel. All they had to work with was his evident faith in his God—the LORD.

So, they came up with a plan: they would flatter the king, and then convince him to decree that everyone in his kingdom had to flatter him, too—by worshiping him and him alone. "Anyone who prays to any god or human being... except you, your majesty, shall be thrown into the lions' den." The king loved the sound of that—until his irreversible decree

landed Daniel in the lions' den. Because Daniel loved and trusted in the LORD God above all things—and his faith landed him in the midst of lions.

But he wasn't alone.

Centuries earlier, King David describes how he felt as he was being persecuted. "I am in the midst of lions; I am forced to dwell among ravenous beasts—men whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords" (Psalm 57:4). Maybe you've felt the bite for being a Christian. Maybe your social circle has snapped at you for saying "no" to something you know isn't right. Maybe you've felt surrounded by people who seem out to get you—all because you cling to a crucified God for comfort.

But you're not alone.

God was with Daniel. God sent his angel to shut the powerful jaws of every lion surrounding his prophet. God delivered Daniel from that lions' den—just as your God continues to deliver you from yours. That isn't to say the time between now and eternity will be free of pain or persecution for our faith. But what we can't say is "God has abandoned me." Because he hasn't. He's will always be with you. He will never leave you or forsake you. And how do we know that?

Because your God doesn't just stand *with you* in the midst of lions; your God would stand *for you* in the midst of lions. "Roaring lions that tear their prey open their mouths wide against me," your Savior Jesus would say of his suffering on the cross. "They pierce my hands and my feet" (Psalm 22:13,16b). But your Savior wouldn't just be devoured by the mistreatment, abuse, and mockery of the world for you. Your Savior would endure the bite of God's justice to free you from the jaws of death. And three days later, your Savior emerged victorious from the den of death—proving he has rescued you from sin and death as well.

So, let the lions roar. The Lion of Judah (Jesus) roars with you—and for you.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I give thanks to you that you truly are with us always—through thick and thin—to the end of the age. By your Spirit and through your Word, calm my anxious mind and still my troubled heart. For you, O Lord, are with me. You, dear Jesus, will never leave me nor forsake me. Amen.

Foundation Teen Facilitators Guide

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In the Midst of Lions

Starting the Discussion: *This first section is intended to be light and easy, to engage and get the conversation going. Have a little fun with these questions.*

- Have you experienced any of the following scenarios? (Story sharing is welcome—but optional)
 - You got separated from your parents as a kid while shopping.
 - Your car broke down in the middle of nowhere and you had no cell reception.

- You joined a new school in which you didn't initially have any friends.
- Your friends forgot to invite you to a social outing.
- Your parents forgot to pick you up from school or practice.
- What common feeling(s) do these scenarios create inside of us when we experience them?

Connecting: *This section serves as a bridge between the opening conversation and the body of the study/discussion. It should get the group thinking about the topic/text even before they've looked at it.*

- Put yourself in Daniel's shoes. What feelings might you have if you were one of just a few Christians working in a Christian-hostile environment?
- What feelings might you have as people are conspiring against you because you're a Christian?
- What feelings might you have as you're being thrown into a lions' den for being a Christian?

Digging In: *Here we want to dig into some texts or the text for the day and see what Scripture says. The questions are meant to be open ended to give a beginning of a scriptural conversation. These are a guide for a spiritual and scriptural conversation.*

- Review Daniel 6:4,5. Then take a look at 1 Peter 3:15,16.
 - In what ways does this passage from 1 Peter play out in the story of Daniel?
 - How does 1 Peter 3:15,16 give guidance to how we live our own lives as Christians?
- Read Daniel 6:25-28.
 - In what ways did God clearly reinvent a bad situation for good?
 - Read John 18:33–19:19. In the suffering and death of Jesus, people struggled to see how that day we call "Good Friday" was good. Does the fact that Jesus suffered, died, and rose to rescue you change the way we face suffering and death? How so?

Conclusion: *Here we want to wrap up the discussion, perhaps circling back to the "connecting question" above.*

Read 1 John 3:1. How does this verse influence our feelings when we're attacked for our faith? What assurance do you have regardless of what our world might say about you?