God wants us to pray when we’re in trouble.

Bible Verse
“Never stop praying” (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Growing Closer to Jesus
Children will
- learn about Daniel's trust in God;
- discover that God wants us to pray when we're in trouble or afraid;
- help Pockets verbalize her fears; and
- express their fears, and understand that God helps them when they pray.

Teacher Enrichment

Bible Basis
Darius, the king of Babylon, has been unable to find a way to reverse his ruling and is forced to have Daniel thrown to the lions. Interestingly, the king asks that God save Daniel from the lions. Darius doesn't even bother praying to his own gods about the matter!

The "den" where Daniel was thrown to the lions was likely a cave that had two openings: one at the side, where animals could be let in, and the other at the top, through which victims were thrown. The side entrance was likely blocked by a stone and sealed so that it wouldn't be opened except upon the king's authority.

Our Bible passage doesn't tell us directly that Daniel prayed when he was put in the den of lions. But it does tell us that he trusted God (Daniel 6:23), and from Daniel's previous history, we can pretty much expect that Daniel was praying to God as he was lowered to the lions. In fact, we might speculate that his prayer was something like that of his three friends when they were put into the fiery furnace: "If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. But even if he doesn't, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods" (Daniel 3:17-18a).

God did miraculously protect Daniel from the lions and answer his prayers as well as the prayer of the king.

Prayer
- Read Psalm 142:1-3.
- Consider how you generally respond when a crisis hits. What mode do you immediately shift into?
- Pray: God, thank you that you are always there with me when I face trouble. Help me to always turn my troubles over to you. Help me be aware of the situations that cause worry and fear in the children I guide, and let me be a comfort to them.
**Before the Lesson**

- Collect the necessary items for the activities you plan to use. Refer to the Classroom Supplies and Learning Lab Supplies columns to determine what you’ll need.
- Make photocopies of the “Today I Learned…” handout (at the end of this lesson) to send home with your children.
- Pray for the children who will be attending your class.

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**This Lesson at a Glance**

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<td>Welcome!—Receive name tags, and be greeted by the teacher.</td>
<td>“Heart Name Tags” (p. 23), markers, pins or tape</td>
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<td><strong>Direct children to one or more of the optional activities until everyone arrives.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Option 1: Zoo for You</strong>—Make funny or ferocious zoo animals from modeling dough.</td>
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<td><strong>Option 2: In the Den</strong>—Create a lions’ den, crawl inside it, and pray.</td>
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<td><strong>Option 3: Lion in a Cage</strong>—Create exciting pictures of lions’ dens.</td>
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<td>Sing a song, bring out the Bible, and pray together.</td>
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<td><strong>Hear and Tell the Bible Story</strong></td>
<td>Join Daniel in the lions’ den as they act out Daniel 6:16-23.</td>
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<td><strong>Do the Bible Story</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Hear a Fear</strong></td>
<td>Help Pockets learn to tell her troubles to God.</td>
<td>“Lions ’n’ Angels” pattern (p. 175), scissors, markers, 4 sheets of white paper, transparent tape</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Lions ’n’ Angels</strong></td>
<td>Learn that when we give our “lions” to God, he helps us.</td>
<td>“Lions ’n’ Angels” pattern (p. 175), scissors, markers, 4 sheets of white paper, transparent tape</td>
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*See the end of this lesson for extra-time ideas and supplies.*
Welcome Time

**SUPPLIES:** “Heart Name Tags” (p. 23), marker, pins or tape

- Bend down and make eye contact with children as they arrive.
- Greet each child individually with an enthusiastic smile.
- Thank each child for coming to class today.
- As children arrive, ask them about last week’s lesson or take-home page. Use questions such as “Did you pray for anyone else?” and “How did praying for someone make you feel?”

- Say: **Today we’re going to learn that God wants us to pray when we’re in trouble.**

- Hand out the heart name tags children made during Lesson 1, and help them attach the name tags to their clothing. Have extra heart name tags on hand for children who weren’t in class last week or to replace damaged name tags.
- Direct children to the Let’s Get Started activities you’ve set up.

Let’s Get Started

Set up one or more of the following activities for children to do as they arrive. After you greet each child, invite him or her to choose an activity.

Circulate among the children to offer help as needed and to direct their conversation toward today’s lesson. Ask questions such as “What are some things you are afraid of?” or “What can you do when you’re afraid of something?”

**Option 1: Zoo for You**

**SUPPLIES:** modeling dough, animal-shaped cookie cutters, vinyl place mats

Spread vinyl place mats around a table. Set out various colors of modeling dough and animal-shaped cookie cutters. Encourage children to think about their favorite funny or ferocious zoo animals. Have each child make an animal either by using a cookie cutter or by shaping it by hand. Have the other kids guess what animal it is. Tell the children that today they’ll hear a Bible story about a den full of wild lions.

**Option 2: In the Den**

**SUPPLIES:** large blanket, table

Turn one corner of your room into a lions’ den or cave by draping a blanket over three sides of a table. Encourage children to crawl around and pray inside the den. Tell them that today they will hear how God wants us to pray when we’re in trouble.

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X-TRA IMPACT

To make a lions’ den, you can also use large appliance boxes set on their sides with a large circular opening cut into one side of each box. Bring in rocks to set around the entrance to the den you make. Children could also sponge paint gray paint on the outside of an appliance box to make it appear more like a cave.

BIBLE POINT

Daniel Faces Death and Still Prays
Option 3: Lion in a Cage

**SUPPLIES:** small paper plates, markers, scissors, black construction paper, stapler

Set out paper plates, scissors, markers, black construction paper, and a stapler. Tell children they'll have a chance to make a lion in a cage. Let each child use the *lion stamp* to make one or two prints on a paper plate. Children can then color the prints with the markers. Have children cut strips of black construction paper and lay them on the paper plates to look like cage bars. Staple the ends of the construction paper strips to the edge of each paper plate.

As children work, ask questions such as “How would it feel to be in a cage filled with lions?” and “Who’s in control of all the wild animals? Explain.”

When everyone has arrived and you’re ready to move on to Bible Story Time, encourage the children to finish what they’re doing and get ready to clean up.

Pick Up Our Toys

**SUPPLIES:** CD player

Lead children in singing “Pick Up Our Toys” (track 2) with the CD to the tune of “Skip to My Lou.” Encourage children to sing along as they help clean up the room.

If you want to include the names of all the children in the class, sing the song without the CD, and repeat the naming section. If you choose to use the CD, vary the names you use each week.

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**Bible Story Time**

Setting the Stage

**SUPPLIES:** “Express Yourself” cards (p. 174), scissors, small bag

Before you begin this activity, make a photocopy of the “Express Yourself” cards. Cut out the expression cards, and put them in a bag.

Tell children you’ll clap a little rhythm to get their attention. Explain that when you clap, children are to stop what they’re doing, copy the rhythm you clapped, and focus on you. Plan to do a couple of clapping rhythms each time so children will have to listen carefully in order to copy what you clapped. Practice this signal a few times. Encourage children to respond quickly so you’ll have time for all the fun activities you’ve planned.
Gather children with you in a circle on the floor. Say: There are many ways to tell someone how you’re feeling. One way is to say it in words.

Ask: • What are some words that tell how you might feel? (Scared; sad; happy; worried; confused.)

Say: Another way is to show it on your face. In my bag I have some pictures of people whose faces are showing their feelings. I want someone to draw out one of the pictures, and without showing the picture to the rest of the children, act out how the person in the picture is feeling. You can’t use any words.

Choose a volunteer to draw a card from the bag. After he or she acts out the expression, allow the child to call on someone to guess the feeling. The child who correctly guesses gets to draw the next card. Continue until everyone has had a turn, reusing the cards if necessary.

Say: You did a good job of showing your feelings. Being afraid is a feeling that is hard to deal with. Today we’re going to learn about what to do when we’re afraid or having trouble.

Ask: • Who can tell about a time you were afraid? (I was afraid at night; I was scared of a dog on my street.)

• When you told someone about it, how did you feel? (I told my mommy and she helped me; I told my baby sitter, and I felt safer.)

• Why is it important to let others know how we’re feeling? (So they can help us feel better if we’re sad; so they won’t tease us if we’re mad; it helps us feel better.)

Say: When we tell someone we’re afraid or worried, it helps us feel better. God also wants to know when we’re scared or having trouble. When we pray, we can talk to God about how we’re feeling. God wants us to pray when we’re in trouble. And because God loves us, he’ll hear our prayers and help us.

Say: You know, Jesus understands how we feel. And he often prayed to God. One night, he even stayed awake all night long in a garden praying to God.

Ask: • Do you ever have trouble going to sleep at night? (I don’t like to be in the dark; I always go right to sleep.)

• Who is right there with you if you can’t sleep? (Jesus; God; the angels; my mommy.)

Say: Jesus is a great friend, and he knows how you feel. He will be right there with you when you are feeling scared and worried, even though you can’t see him with your eyes.
Bible Song and Prayer Time

SUPPLIES: Bible, construction paper, scissors, CD player, basket or box

Before class, make surprise cards for this activity by cutting construction paper into 2x6-inch slips. Prepare a surprise card for each child plus a few extras for visitors. Fold the cards in half, and then stamp the lion stamp inside one of the surprise cards. Bookmark Daniel 6:16-23 in the Bible you’ll be using.

Have children sit in a circle. Say: Each week when we come to our circle for our Bible story, I’ll choose someone to be the Bible-bringing person. The Bible person will bring me the Bible marked with our Bible story for that week. Then I will choose other children to do other things for me. Each of you will get a chance to be the Bible person. Before I choose today’s Bible person, let’s learn our Bible song. As we sing, I’ll pass out surprise cards. Don’t look inside your surprise card until the song is over.

Lead children in singing “Read God’s Book” (track 3) with the CD to the tune of “The Muffin Man.” As you sing, pass out the folded surprise cards.

Now it’s time to read God’s book,
Now it’s time to read God’s book.
Let’s hear a Bible story.
(Repeat 3x.)

After the song, say: You may look inside your surprise cards. The person who has the lion stamped inside his or her card will be our Bible-bringing person for today.

Identify the Bible-bringing person. Ask the Bible person to bring you the Bible. Help the Bible person open the Bible to the marked place, and show children where your story comes from. Then have the Bible person sit down. Choose other children to be the surprise card collector, the Bible-replacer (to put the Bible away when you are finished), and helpers for various other little jobs you might have around your room.

Say: [Name] was our special Bible person today. Each week, we’ll have only one special Bible person, but each one of you is a special part of our class! Today we’re all learning that God wants us to pray when we’re in trouble.

Let’s say a special prayer now and ask God to help us talk to him whenever we’re afraid. The helper will pass around this basket. When the basket comes to you, put your surprise card in it and say, “God, please help me pray when I’m afraid.”

Have your helper pass the basket or box. When you’ve collected everyone’s surprise card, set the basket aside, and pick up the Bible. Lead children in this prayer: God, thank you for the Bible and for all the stories in it. Teach us today that God wants us to pray when we’re in trouble. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Keep the surprise cards for next week.
Hear and Tell the Bible Story

SUPPLIES: Bible, CD player

Set the Learning Mat: Daniel and the Lions’ Den in the center of the circle. Have the children gather around it with you.

Ask: • Do you think you’d be in trouble if you were surrounded by hungry lions? (Yes, I’d be afraid the lions would eat me.)

Say: Facing hungry lions would be a lot of trouble! Our Bible story today is about how Daniel faced a den full of ferocious lions. You can help me tell the story. When I say the name “Daniel,” kneel and put your hands together like you’re praying. When I say “lion,” growl and scratch the floor with pretend claws. And when I say “angel,” flap your arms like wings.

Practice the actions a few times until the children are comfortable with them. Then read the following story, pausing each time you say the words Daniel, lion, or angel.

Say: The king had made a new law that said everyone had to pray only to him, King Darius. But Daniel prayed only to God. The king was Daniel’s friend, but because the law couldn’t be changed, he had to punish him anyway. Soldiers put Daniel into a den of mean, hungry lions!

Have the children jump to the center of the Learning Mat and sit down. Say: Just for a moment, pretend you’re Daniel in the lions’ den.

Ask: • How do you think Daniel felt as he faced ferocious lions? (Scared; afraid; he wanted to get out; he was afraid he’d be eaten up.)

Continue with the story, reminding children about the actions. Say: Daniel must’ve been frightened with all those lions, but he was also smart. He knew that God wants us to pray when we’re in trouble. So Daniel prayed. God heard his prayers and sent an angel to close the mouths of the lions. Daniel was safe!

King Darius hadn’t slept at all that night because he was worried about his friend Daniel. The king hurried to the lions’ den first thing the next morning, and he ordered the soldiers to pull Daniel from the den. When Daniel told King Darius how God’s angel had closed the mouths of the lions, the king was happy. Daniel said he respected the king and hadn’t done anything wrong.

Gather children around the edge of the Learning Mat.

Ask: • How do you think Daniel felt when God answered his prayers? (He felt happy; he was surprised an angel came; he was excited; he felt thankful.)

• Why do you think Daniel was wise to give his troubles to God? (Because God helped him; because God wants us to pray.)

Say: It’s important for us to know that God is bigger than any problems, worries, or fears. Like Daniel, we want to remember that God wants us to pray when we’re in trouble.

Open your Bible to 1 Thessalonians 5:17. Say: In fact, our Bible verse tells us to pray no matter what is happening to us, whether we’re happy or sad, busy or resting, worried or peaceful. Our Bible verse says, “Never stop praying.” Have children repeat the verse several times. Say: Let’s sing a song to help us remember that God wants us to never stop praying. Sing “Pray About Everything” (track 12) to the tune of “Battle Hymn of the Republic.”

This Bible story is featured in the new My First Hands-On Bible™. Order several now for your ministry at group.com.
Don't worry about anything.
Instead, pray about everything.
(Repeat.)

Return the Learning Mat to the Learning Lab box.

**Do the Bible Story**

**SUPPLIES:** blanket

Spread the blanket out on the floor. Have kids kneel around the edge of it.

Say: *God protected Daniel in the lions' den, didn't he?*

Ask: • *How do you think Daniel felt when they threw him in with the lions?*  (Afraid; sad; angry.)

• *What did Daniel do in the lions' den?*  (He prayed; he waited for help.)

• *Why did Daniel pray?*  (He knew God wanted him to; he wanted to talk to God.)

Say: ►*God wants us to pray when we're in trouble. Let's play a game to help us remember this.*

Hold up the kaleidoscope. Ask if anyone recognizes the toy and can explain how it works. Let a volunteer explain, or demonstrate yourself if no one can. Give each child a turn to look through the kaleidoscope.

Say: *Because I have to look toward the light and because I see beautiful things when I use this kaleidoscope, it reminds me of God in his beautiful heaven, and it makes me want to talk to God. While we play this game, Daniel will look through this kaleidoscope whenever he prays.*

Choose someone to play Daniel. Let this child hold the kaleidoscope. Then choose a few children to play the Governors, a few to play Lions, and one to be an Angel.

To re-enact the story, have the Governors gently nudge Daniel toward the center of the blanket, which represents the lions’ den, and sit down, still holding the kaleidoscope. Have the Lions circle Daniel slowly on their hands and knees, growling as they move closer. When Daniel remembers to pray, he can use the kaleidoscope to show that he is doing so. Then the Angel can enter the lions’ den and gently calm the Lions down. If Daniel forgets to pray, let children who are not playing roles whisper to remind him. Repeat the activity until every child has a turn to play Daniel, a Governor, a Lion, or an Angel.

Ask: • *What did Daniel do when the Governors threw him in the lions' den?*  (He looked through the kaleidoscope; he prayed.)

• *What's a time of trouble when you can pray?*  (When I’m scared at night; when I fight with my sister.)

• *Why does ►God want us to pray when we're in trouble?*  (He loves us; he can help us.)

Say: *Let's take turns telling God that you will pray to him when you're in trouble.*

Pass the kaleidoscope around the circle as each child responds. Encourage the children as they look through the kaleidoscope to think about God in heaven.
Say: The best time to pray is any time! God loves it when we take the time to talk with him. Let’s talk with him now.

Ask for a volunteer to close in prayer, thanking God for allowing us to come to him in prayer not just when we are in trouble but at any time of day or night.

Then say: I wonder what Pockets is doing. Let’s ask Pockets what she does when she’s feeling troubled or afraid.

Closing

Hear a Fear

SUPPLIES: none

Bring out Pockets the Kangaroo, and go through the following script. After you finish the script, put Pockets away and out of sight.

Pockets: Oh, my! Oh, my! (Yawns.) I’m so tired and worried.
Teacher: Hello, Pockets. Is something the matter?
Pockets: (Yawning again) I haven’t been sleeping well at all, but I don’t think there’s anything you can do to help me.
Teacher: Well, Pockets, today we’ve been learning that it helps to tell someone when we’re troubled or afraid. Children, can you tell Pockets what we’ve learned about giving our troubles to God? (Allow time for kids to share their ideas with Pockets.) You see, Pockets, when we tell God we’re afraid, he’ll help us. Why don’t you share with us why you’re afraid? It’ll help you feel better—and maybe we can help.

Pockets: (Yawns and talks in a little voice.) I’m scared of the dark, and I can’t go to sleep.
Teacher: Oh, Pockets, we’re glad you came today! Children, let’s tell Pockets how God helped Daniel when he was scared and prayed to God. (Let a few children briefly tell about the Bible story.)

Pockets: I guess telling God about our troubles or fears does help. And look! I’m not yawning anymore…(Yawns.) Guess I’d better go take a nap. Thanks, boys and girls, for helping me see that God wants us to pray when we’re in trouble. See you next week.


**Lions ’n’ Angels**

**SUPPLIES:** “Lions ’n’ Angels” pattern (p. 175), scissors, markers, 4 sheets of white paper, transparent tape

Before class, photocopy the “Lions ’n’ Angels” pattern. Tape four sheets of white paper end to end to make one long sheet. Fold this sheet of paper in half lengthwise. Then fold it in half once more. Use the pattern to trace an outline onto your folded paper.

Gather children with you in a circle on the floor. Cut slowly along the outline on your paper as you say:

**We’ve talked about many kinds of feelings today. We heard how Daniel gave his troubles to God and how God helped him. Sometimes our worries and our troubles feel mean and growly like lions. But when we give our “lions” to God, God sends us angels!** Unfold your paper and hold it up to show children the shapes.

I’ll have one of you call out a fear or problem you want God to help you with. I’ll draw a face on one lion shape for that trouble. Then all of us will say, “God will help you!” and I’ll draw a face on an angel shape to show how God answers and helps us.

As children share fears and affirmations, draw faces alternately on the lion and angel shapes. When each shape has a face, say: **When we give our troubles to God, he always helps us. Let’s say a prayer thanking God for his help.**

Pray: **Dear God, thank you for loving us. Thank you for listening to our prayers. Help us remember that you want us to pray when we’re in trouble. In Jesus’ name, amen.**

If there are enough angel and lion shapes, cut them apart and give them to the children as they leave.

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**Growing closer to Jesus extends beyond the classroom.**

Photocopy the “Today I Learned…” handout (at the end of this lesson) for this week, and send it home with your children. Encourage parents to use the handout to plan meaningful family activities to reinforce this week’s topic.
Lively Learning: Singsong Sing-Along

Cue the CD to “Daniel’s Prayer Song” (track 14), and have a mini sing-along as you review this prayer song. You’ll find the words to “Daniel’s Prayer Song” on page 156. You may want to distribute the shiny streamers for children to wave and shake as they sing.

Make to Take: Bag Your Own Lion

Have your children create lion puppets. Give each child a small paper lunch sack and brown and yellow strips of construction paper. Show children how to curl paper strips by rolling them around a pencil. Then have children glue strips around the top of the sack for the lion’s mane. Let children use markers or crayons to decorate their lions’ faces. As children work, remind them that a den of lions wasn’t too much trouble for God, and that God wants us to pray when we’re in trouble. If there’s enough time, children may enjoy using their puppets to help act out the story of Daniel in the lions’ den.

Treat to Eat: Cave Mix

Let children make a fun, nutritious snack. Using a vegetable peeler, make long curly carrot strips. Give each child a bagel half spread with butter. Have each child place carrot curls around the edge of the bagel as a lion’s mane. Set out small bowls of raisins, carrot slices, dried apricots, and pretzels for kids to use for the rest of the lions’ faces. Pray: Dear God, thank you for foods that keep us healthy, and thank you for helping us with problems that seem like lions. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Story Picture: Daniel’s Guardian Angel

Give each child a copy of the “Today I Learned…” handout. Place white craft feathers, glue, and crayons or markers on a table. Let the children glue feathers onto the angel’s wings and then color the picture with the crayons. As children are working, remind them how God answered Daniel’s prayers with a guardian angel who closed the mouths of the lions.
Express Yourself
Lions 'n' Angels

Tape four sheets of white paper end to end. Fold them in half lengthwise. Fold them in half again. Using the pattern below, trace the outline onto your paper. Cut along the outline. Then unfold to make lion heads and angels.
Today your child learned that God wants us to pray when we’re in trouble. Children learned that God sent an angel to protect Daniel. They talked about telling God how they feel.

**Verse to Learn**

“Never stop praying” (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

**Ask Me...**

- How did God answer Daniel’s prayers in the lions’ den?
- What fear can you give to God?
- What troubles can our family give to God?

**Family Fun**

Using sugar-cookie dough, bake story cookies with your child. A Christmas-angel cookie cutter would be wonderful to create the angel who helped save Daniel. Use a cat cookie cutter for the lion and a gingerbread-man cookie cutter to make Daniel. Let your child decorate the cookies and tell you the story of Daniel in the lions’ den as he or she works.

**Daniel’s Guardian Angel (Daniel 6:16-23)**