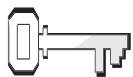


Handwriting on the Wall



References

Daniel 5; *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 522–532



Memory Verse

“But the LORD said to me, ‘Do not say, “I am too young.” You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you’ ” (Jeremiah 1:7, NIV).



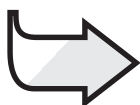
Objectives

The children will:

Know that God wants us to be His messengers.

Feel useful to God.

Respond by listening to what God wants us to do, and doing it in love.



The Message

I serve God when
I help others
understand His Word.

Monthly Theme

We serve God wherever we are.

The Bible Lesson at a Glance

Belshazzar, now king of the Babylonian Empire built by Nebuchadnezzar, knows about the great image. He knows that the empire will fall, but he seemingly does not care. Even as Cyrus with an army of Medes and Persians is besieging the city of Babylon, Belshazzar makes a “great feast to a thousand of his lords,” which becomes “a riotous orgy.” He commands that the silver and gold vessels taken from the temple in Jerusalem be brought to the feast and those in attendance eat and drink from them. At the height of the revelry a bloodless hand writes on the wall. No one can read the words. Belshazzar’s mother remembers Daniel and suggests that Belshazzar send for him. Daniel comes and explains the message: “God says your kingdom is finished, you are found wanting, and your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.” Thus the Medes and Persians capture the Babylonian Empire.

This is a lesson about service.

Daniel faithfully served God. He also faithfully and honestly served the kings of Babylon. He was not afraid to deliver God’s messages to them, even when they were not easy for the king to accept. God calls us to be His servants and share His words with others.

Teacher Enrichment

“When the revelry was at its height, a bloodless hand came forth, and traced upon the walls of the palace characters that gleamed like fire—words which, though unknown to the vast throng, were a portent of doom to the now conscience-stricken king and his guests.

“Hushed was the boisterous mirth, while men and women, seized with nameless terror, watched the hand slowly tracing the mysterious characters. Before them passed, as in panoramic view, the deeds of their evil lives; they seemed to be arraigned before the judgment bar of the eternal God, whose power they had just defied. Where but a few moments before had been hilarity and blasphemous witticism, were pallid faces and cries of fear. When

God makes men fear, they cannot hide the intensity of their terror.

“Belshazzar was the most terrified of them all. He it was who above all others had been responsible for the rebellion against God which that night had reached its height in the Babylonian realm” (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 524).

Room Decorations

See Lesson 5.

Program Overview			
Lesson Section	Minutes	Activities	Materials Needed
Welcome	ongoing	Greet students at door; hear pleased/troubled	none
1 Readiness Activities	up to 10	A. <i>Unknown Language</i> B. <i>Disappearing Ink</i> C. <i>Party Cups</i>	words in a foreign language or a mixed-up message lemon juice, water, cotton swabs, lamp, paper plastic cups, stickers, glitter, glue, markers
Any Time Prayer and Praise*	up to 10	Fellowship Songbook Mission Offering Prayer	none <i>Sing for Joy</i> <i>Children's Mission</i> offering container from Lesson 5 2 or 3 large sheets of paper, markers
2 Bible Lesson	up to 20	Experiencing the Story Memory Verse Bible Study	table set for party, cups from Readiness C (or other disposable cups), sheet, light Bible, paper, lemon juice, lamp Bibles, study paper for each child (see p. 96)
3 Applying the Lesson	up to 15	<i>God's Messages</i>	Bibles, paper, pencils
4 Sharing the Lesson	up to 15	<i>Good News</i>	balloons, string, VOP (or other correspondence school) cards

***Prayer and Praise may be used at any time during the program.**

TEACHING THE LESSON

Welcome

Welcome students at the door. Ask how their week has been—what they are pleased/troubled about. Encourage them to share any experiences from last week's lesson study. Have them begin the readiness activity of your choice.



Readiness Activities

Select the activity most appropriate for your situation.

You Need:

- words in a foreign language or
- mixed-up message

A. Unknown Language

In advance, put up a large paper with words in a different language on the wall, with clues as to their meaning. Ask: **Can you find out what the message on the wall says? Use the clues to help you.**

Or

Mix up letters/words of "You are weighed in the balance and found wanting!" and put them on the wall. Ask: **Can you figure out what the message on the wall says?**

Debriefing

Ask: **What does the message say? What do you think it means? How hard was it to figure out what it said? What were you thinking when you could not understand what it said? How would you feel if someone said that about you?** Say: **Today in our story we are going to learn about a king who heard this message. Daniel had to interpret it for him and explain what it meant. God wants us to give His message to others too. Today's message is:**



I SERVE GOD WHEN I HELP OTHERS UNDERSTAND HIS WORD.

Say that with me.

You Need:

- lemon juice
- water
- cotton swabs
- lamp
- paper

B. Disappearing Ink

In advance, mix lemon juice with a few drops of water. Form pairs and give each pair cotton swabs and paper. Say: **I have some very special ink. Dip a cotton swab in this lemon water and write a secret message to your partner. Exchange papers and bring them to the lamp. Hold the paper by the lamp to see the message.** Allow time for all to participate.

Debriefing

Ask: **What happened to your message when you wrote it?** (It disappeared.) **What happened when you held the message near the light?** (It reappeared.) Say: **In our story today a message that no one understood suddenly appeared on a wall. The king sent for Daniel to tell him what it meant. Daniel read God's message to the king. And God wants us to read and share His messages with others, too. Our message says:**



I SERVE GOD WHEN I HELP OTHERS UNDERSTAND HIS WORD.

Say that with me.

C. Party Cups

Say: **Today we are going to make a cup fit for a king.** Allow the children to decorate the cups using available art materials.

Debriefing

Say: **Show us your cup. Tell us what makes it special, and why it is fit for a king.** Allow time. **When does your mother use her best dishes?** (When you have visitors.) **In our story today a king took some special cups and used them for a party. That party was interrupted with a message from God. Daniel had to help the king understand it. God wants us to give His messages to others too. Today's message is:**



I SERVE GOD WHEN I HELP OTHERS UNDERSTAND HIS WORD.

Say that with me.

You Need:

- plastic cups
- stickers
- glitter
- glue
- markers

Prayer and Praise



Fellowship

Report the students' joys and sorrows (pleased and troubled) as reported to you at the door (as appropriate). Allow time for sharing experiences from last week's lesson study and review the memory verse. Acknowledge any birthdays, special events, or achievements. Give a special, warm greeting to all visitors.



Suggested Songs

- "Dare to Be a Daniel" (*Sing for Joy*, no. 116)
- "Trust and Obey" (*Sing for Joy*, no. 113)
- "Teach Me, Lord" (*Sing for Joy*, no. 110)
- "Whisper a Prayer" (*Sing for Joy*, no. 96)



Mission

Share a story from *Children's Mission*. Emphasize that serving God means sharing the good news about Him with everyone.



Offering

Say: **One way that we can help spread the good news of salvation is by giving our offerings.**

You Need:

- offering container from Lesson 5



Prayer

Fix the large sheets of paper to the wall. Say: **In our lesson today we will learn about a message written on a wall. We can write our prayer requests on our prayer wall.** Discuss and list the children's requests. Be sure to include them in your prayer.

You Need:

- 2 or 3 large sheets of paper
- markers

2

Bible Lesson

You Need:

- table set for a party
- cups from Readiness C or other disposable cups
- sheet
- light

Experiencing the Story

Character: Daniel

Invite the person who played Daniel in Lesson 7 to return and tell the story.

Have the children sit around a table (or tables). During the part about the writing on the wall, use the sheet and the light to create a shadow hand writing on the wall.

Introduce “Daniel” to the children. Let’s listen as Daniel tells us his story.

Read or tell the story.

Many years have passed since I told Nebuchadnezzar his dream. Some years after he died, his son* Belshazzar became king. Belshazzar did many bad things. He just liked to please himself and have everything his own way. One day he planned a big party at the palace. Come over to my table, and I will tell you all about that evening. *[Lead the children to the table.]*

Belshazzar invited a thousand people to a party in honor of the idols of Babylon. He likely had heard and seen how the true God works in people’s lives, but he just dismissed it.

For months the Persian general, Cyrus, had been fighting the Babylonian army and winning most of the battles. People tried to pretend that they were not worried, but deep down everyone wondered how much longer the Babylonian army could hold out. The Persian general was camped a few miles away from Babylon, along the river Euphrates, but Belshazzar and his guests were determined to forget him. They were sure that they were safe in

the city with its thick walls and strong gates. They thought that the enemy could not cross the great Euphrates River. There was no way for them to get into the city.

Belshazzar’s party began in the morning and lasted all day. It was supposed to be in honor of their idols, but people were only interested in enjoying themselves.

Belshazzar did not honor the true God. He was prideful and did the opposite of what God wanted. He showed disrespect for God. God saw all this. It made Him very sad. God wanted Belshazzar to change.

As Belshazzar grew more and more drunk, his wickedness became greater. He called for the sacred vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem. *[Give out cups children made during Readiness C or other cups.]* He filled them with wine and made offerings to the gods of Babylon.

Can you imagine that? Those vessels, which were once used for worship, were now filled with wine and used to honor idols!

Suddenly there was a stir. *[Use a shadow hand to “write” on the wall.]* Along a wall of the palace a mysterious hand began to write—a hand that wasn’t connected to a body. Belshazzar stared with horror.

This frightened Belshazzar. The Bible says, “His legs became weak and his knees were knocking.” What did it mean? He had to find out. He called to his magicians and astrologers, the priests who served the idols he had just made offerings to. “If anyone can tell me what these words mean, I will give him a gold chain and make him the third highest ruler in Babylon,” he said.

When none of his wise men could

interpret the words, Belshazzar became even more afraid.

Finally his mother remembered me, and they sent a messenger to ask me to come at once. When I came into the banquet hall, the king pointed out the mysterious writing. "If you can explain this, I will clothe you in scarlet and place a gold chain around your neck, and make you the third ruler in my kingdom."

God told me what the message meant. I knew immediately that the message was not one the king would be happy to hear. I prayed silently to God that He would help me find the right words. Then I told Belshazzar: "I do not want or need your honors, but I will interpret the message from God. MENE means that God is soon going to end your reign. TEKEL means that God has judged you and found you guilty of many sins. UPHARSIN means that your enemies, the Persians, will conquer Babylon."

Even though I had said that I did not want his honors, Belshazzar put the gold chain around my neck and promoted me to the third highest ruler in Babylon. While he was doing this, God's words came true. The Persian army commanded by Cyrus sneaked into the city and conquered it. Belshazzar died that night.

Once again God had given me a message for a king. It was not easy, but I knew I had to serve God first. I hope you will always serve Him too.

*Although the Bible says Belshazzar was the son of Nebuchadnezzar, the Hebrew word translated as "father" also means "grandfather" or "ancestor." Nebuchadnezzar's daughter was Belshazzar's mother. Belshazzar was Nebuchadnezzar's grandson. See *Prophets and Kings*, p. 522, and *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, pp. 799-802.

Debriefing

Ask: **What were Belshazzar and his guests doing? Why?**

How did they act when they saw the hand writing on the wall? How do you think they felt? (terrified)

Would you be able to tell the leader of your country that God was angry with him? Who gave Daniel the courage to explain the handwriting on the wall? (God)

Say: **Sometimes it can be scary to be God's messenger, to tell others about Him. But God promises always to be with us. Let's say today's message together:**



I SERVE GOD WHEN I HELP OTHERS UNDERSTAND HIS WORD.

Memory Verse

In advance, use lemon juice to write the phrases of the memory verse on sheets of paper. Give papers to the children to hold near a lamp until the words appear. Say: **Look up Jeremiah 1:7 and put the words in the right order.**

Repeat the Memory Verse several times, using the following actions, until the children know it.

But the LORD said Point to heaven.

to me, Point to self.

"Do not say, Shake head.

'I am too young.' Point to self; then act as if rocking a baby.

You must go to everyone Point away from self, then to others.

I send you to and say Point to lips.

whatever I command you." Point up, then to self.

Jeremiah 1:7 Palms together, then open.

You Need:

- Bibles
- paper
- lemon juice
- lamp

You Need:

- Bibles
- study paper for each child

Bible Study

In advance, make copies of the study paper, one for each child.

Distribute the study papers (see below). Say: **Let's follow the events at Belshazzar's party. Read the text and the question; then choose the best answer.**

Ask for volunteers to read the Bible reference and give the answer.

Debriefing

Ask: **Did Belshazzar have a chance to learn about God?** (Yes. He knew about Nebuchadnezzar's dreams. He knew that one day the kingdom would be conquered by someone else.)

Why was it wrong to use the gold and silver dishes from the temple for his party? (They were dedicated to God. Belshazzar used them to worship false gods.)

Why was Daniel able to interpret the writing? (God was with him. He tried to follow what God wanted him to do.)

How would you feel about giving bad news to the leader of your country?

Say: **Remember, when God asks us to do something, He is always with us. Let's say our message together:**



I SERVE GOD WHEN I HELP OTHERS UNDERSTAND HIS WORD.

1. Daniel 5:1. Belshazzar gave a party for: A. 100 nobles. B. 1,000 nobles. C. 10,000 nobles.

2. Daniel 5:3. Belshazzar commanded the gold and silver dishes from the temple to be brought out so: A. He could worship God. B. He could admire them. C. He could drink from them.

3. Daniel 5:5, 6. When the king saw the writing on the wall, he: A. Thought it was a good trick. B. Ignored it. C. Was afraid.

4. Daniel 5:7. The king said whoever could interpret the writing on the wall would: A. Be made the third highest ruler. B. Be made second in command to him. C. Would be put to death.

5. Daniel 5:10. Who remembered Daniel? A. The king. B. The queen. C. The wise men.

6. Daniel 5:17. How did Daniel respond to Belshazzar's promise of gifts? A. Gratefully accepted them. B. Gave them to someone else. C. Said he did not want them.

7. Daniel 5:22, 23. Why was Belshazzar being punished? A. Because he followed Nebuchadnezzar's example. B. He did not humble himself before God. C. He followed God.

8. Daniel 5:26. *Mene* means: A. Your reign is at an end. B. You will continue to be king. C. You will reign for a long time.

9. Daniel 5:27. *Tekel* means: A. You are a good man. B. You have been found to lack what is needed. C. You will be given another chance.

10. Daniel 5:28. *Peres* means: A. You will beat the Medes and the Persians. B. The Medes and Persians will become your allies. C. The Medes and Persians will conquer you.

3

Applying the Lesson

God's Messages

If all the children have their own Bibles, you can help them underline the verses. If they do not, make small booklets and help them to copy the verses.

Say: **There are times when God uses us as messengers. Let's think of some of them.** Allow time.

Let's choose some of God's promises from the Bible and put them in our book to remind us to be His messengers too. Use the following or others that are appropriate to your situation.

1. What message can you give to a friend who is sad? John 14:1
2. What message can you give to someone who is afraid? Joshua 1:9
3. What message can you give to a

friend who tells a lie? Exodus 20:16

4. What message can you give to a friend who is lonely? Psalm 23

5. What message can you give to someone who has a problem and does not know what to do? Psalm 23:1; Proverbs 3:5, 6

You Need:

- Bibles
- paper
- pencils

Debriefing

Ask: **Is it always easy to share God's messages?** (There are times when sharing God's words is fun and easy, and other times when it is scary and difficult.)

Say: **We are all God's messengers while we are here on earth. We can be sure that when we deliver His words to others, He will be with us and help us. Let's say our message together:**



I SERVE GOD WHEN I HELP OTHERS UNDERSTAND HIS WORD.

4

Sharing the Lesson

Good News

Give each child a Bible correspondence school card and have them write "Jesus loves you" on the card, then tie it to a balloon. With your parents permission give the balloon to your postman, the clerk at your local store, gas station attendant, teacher, or friend, etc.

Debriefing

Ask: **What other ways can we share God's words this week?** Allow discussion time. Help the children make

a specific plan. **Let's say our message together:**



I SERVE GOD WHEN I HELP OTHERS UNDERSTAND HIS WORD.

Closing

Gather in a circle and ask God to bless the person who will receive the card.

Pray that God will give us all opportunities to serve Him and share His words in the week ahead.

You Need:

- balloons
- string
- Voice of Prophecy correspondence school cards (or cards used by your church)

Handwriting on the Wall

References

Daniel 5; *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 522–532

Memory Verse

“But the LORD said to me, ‘Do not say, ‘I am too young.’ You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you’ ” (Jeremiah 1:7, NIV).

The Message

I serve God when I help others understand His Word.

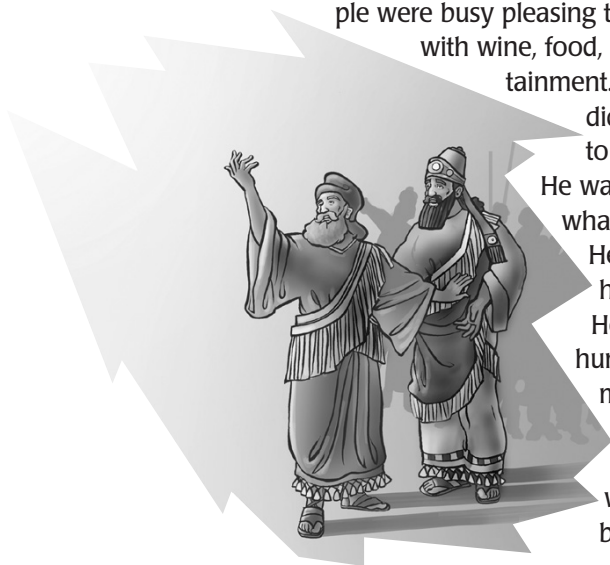
Have you ever seen words scribbled on a wall? It does not look very nice. How would you feel if you saw writing appear on a wall, but could not see who was writing it or understand what was being written? That is just what happened at a king’s party.

“There’s going to be a party at the palace!” Word spread rapidly through the city.

Belshazzar, King Nebuchadnezzar’s grandson, was the present king of Babylon. He had chosen a day to honor the idols of Babylon with a huge festival.

Everyone was ready for a party. For months Cyrus’s army had been winning battles against the Babylonian army. People were worried because the Persian general was camped very near the city of Babylon. Everyone wanted to enjoy themselves and forget about the fighting.

Belshazzar’s party began in the morning and lasted all day. He may have had dancers and storytellers to entertain his guests. This party was supposed to honor the idols of Babylon. But most people were busy pleasing themselves with wine, food, and entertainment. Belshazzar did not want to follow God. He wanted to do what he wanted. He did not honor God. He was not humble. This must have made God sad. God would have been happy



if Belshazzar had changed, but Belshazzar wanted his own way.

As Belshazzar grew more and more drunk, his wickedness became greater. He called for the sacred vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem. He and his guests filled them with wine and made offerings to their gods.

Can you imagine that? Those vessels were once used for worship in God’s temple. They were dedicated to God. Now they were filled with wine and used to worship idols!

Suddenly there was a stir. Along one wall of the palace a mysterious hand began to write—a hand that wasn’t connected to a body. Belshazzar stared with horror.

This frightened Belshazzar. The Bible says, “His legs became weak and his knees were knocking.” What did it mean? He had to find out.

He called for his magicians and astrologers. He called for the priests who served the idols Belshazzar had honored. “If anyone can tell me what these words mean, I will give him a gold chain. And I will make him the third highest ruler in Babylon,” he said.

But none of his wise men could interpret the words. Belshazzar trembled! He became even more afraid.

Finally, his mother remembered Daniel. “Send for Daniel,” she said. “He interpreted your grandfather Nebuchadnezzar’s dreams. Maybe he can help now.” So Daniel was brought before the king and shown the mysterious writing.

Daniel’s words were respectful as he told the king the bad news. “You have been too proud,” he told Belshazzar. “You insulted God, so He sent this message to you.” Daniel then read the message: “MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.”

Daniel interpreted the message. “MENE means that God will soon end

your reign. TEKEL means that God has judged you and found you guilty of horrible sins. UPHARSIN means that the Persians will conquer Babylon.”

Even as Belshazzar put a gold chain around Daniel’s neck and promoted him to third highest in Babylon, God’s words came true. The Persian army commanded by Cyrus sneaked into the city and conquered it. Belshazzar died that night.

Sometimes serving God doesn’t make people happy with us. God will make us strong—strong enough to take His message to anyone who needs to hear it. Will you be God’s messenger and tell others about Him?

Daily Activities

Sabbath

- Ask your family to go for a walk with you. Share some good news with people you meet. Give them a tract or a Bible correspondence school card. Or you could give the card and balloon from Sabbath School to someone now. Then read your lesson together.
- Teach your memory verse to your family. (Use motions.) Then read your lesson together.
- Ask God to help you always to speak the right words.

Sunday

- Read and discuss Daniel 5:1–4 for family worship. What special trays and glasses are used in your church? When? Why?
- Cover a paper cup with foil. Write your memory verse on paper, including the reference, and cut the words apart. Put them in the cup and shake it. Then spill the words and try to put them in the right order. Do this every day this week.

Monday

- During family worship, read and discuss Daniel 5:5–9. Ask each family member to draw around their hand, write an encouraging message from God on it, and cut it out. Glue the hands on paper to make a “good news” poster. Who has the largest hand? the smallest? Sing a song about hands. Then thank God that you can learn to read and write.

Tuesday

- Read and discuss Daniel 5:10–17 during family worship. What messages had Daniel delivered to King Nebuchadnezzar? Why did Daniel say

he didn’t want any gifts?

- Use lemon juice and a cotton swab to write a good news message for your family. Show them how to use a lamp to read it.
- Share a good news message about Jesus with someone today. Ask God for courage to share His words with others.

Wednesday

- During family worship, read and discuss Daniel 5:18–24. Who sent the hand to write on the wall? Why?
- Make a print of your hand in clay or play dough. Keep it to remind you to use your hands to serve God.
- Write a good news message and give or send it to someone today.

Thursday

- Read and discuss Daniel 5:25–31 with your family. What was God’s three-part message to Belshazzar? What does “weighed in the balances and found wanting” mean?
- Are all God’s messages bad news?
- As a family, find and write an encouraging Bible message. Add a note and send it to someone you know.

Friday

- Before worship, draw a picture of Belshazzar’s face as he saw the hand writing on the wall. During family worship, read Daniel 5:5–9 again.
- Show your picture to your family. Ask each person to tell about a time they were really afraid. Then read Psalm 56:3, 4 together.
- Sing praise songs together. Then thank God for always being with you.