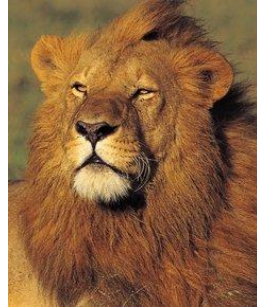


An article for children:

The Worst Sleep-Over Ever

Have you ever gone to a sleep-over at a friend's house? Lots of children enjoy the adventure of being away from home for a night, playing with a friend until bedtime and waking up to start playing all over again! But sometimes being away from home can be scary, like when you can't sleep at night and the house makes creaking noises that you aren't used to. As scary as that might be, compared to the sleep-over the prophet Daniel went on, a creaky house is nothing! He went on the worst sleep-over ever.

Long ago, many years before Jesus was born, Daniel lived in the land of Judah. Even as a young boy, Daniel loved God, trusted that God was good and powerful, and learned how to please Him.



Daniel went right on trusting God when the Babylonian army attacked and defeated Judah. Daniel was captured and taken to live in Babylon, far from home. But because God blessed Daniel and gave him wisdom, the Babylonian kings gave him important jobs in their kingdom.

When Daniel was an old man, another army attacked Babylon and won. The new king, Darius, made Daniel one of the three top rulers in his kingdom. Because God was still helping Daniel, he was the best of the three rulers. The king planned to make him the boss of the other two top rulers.

How angry those two men were at this news! They jealously began plotting to find a way to make Daniel look bad before the King. They looked carefully at Daniel's life. Perhaps they thought "Maybe Daniel is stealing from the King." But no, Daniel was honest. "Maybe Daniel says unkind things about the King in private." But no, Daniel was loyal. "Maybe Daniel is lazy at his job." But no, Daniel was faithful. Try as they might, the men couldn't find anything about Daniel that would get him in trouble.

So instead, the two rulers went to King Darius and asked him to make a law that no one in the country could pray for 30 days. Instead of asking gods for things, they should ask King Darius instead.

The King liked that idea. He wanted all the people to look at him as the one who provided what they needed. If anyone was hungry, King Darius wanted them to ask *him* for food. If anyone was frightened, King Darius wanted to be the one they asked for protection. King Darius foolishly wanted the people to think of him like a god, so he signed the order that said for 30

days, anyone caught praying would be thrown into a pit filled with lions. And once the law was signed, even Darius himself could not take it back.

When Daniel knew the document had been signed, he went into his house, opened the windows so everyone could see him, and began praying to God. Obedient, faithful Daniel openly disobeyed the King! Even if it cost his life, Daniel would worship God, and no one else.

The wicked men found Daniel praying, just as they expected, and told King Darius. Oh, how sorry the King was for signing such a foolish law! But the law could not be taken back. Daniel would have to be thrown into a pit of lions.

King Darius tried all day to find a way to save Daniel, but he failed. Finally, at sunset, Daniel was brought before him. The King said, "Your God, whom you constantly serve, will Himself deliver you." Daniel was thrown into the pit with hungry lions, and the king went home, sad.

The king had an awful night. He didn't eat or sleep, and as soon as it was dawn he ran to the pit. "Daniel, servant of the Living God, has your God whom you constantly serve been able to deliver you from the lions?"

What do you think? Was God powerful enough to keep lions from eating Daniel during the worst sleep-over ever? Of course He was!

Daniel answered the King, "My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me." Wasn't it kind of God not only to keep Daniel safe, but also to send an angel to keep him company?

King Darius then said, "I make a decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel. . . He delivers and rescues and performs signs and wonders in Heaven and on Earth."

Did you know that God still delivers and rescues children just like you? Perhaps you will never have a sleep-over in a pit full of lions, but the Bible says we have an enemy, Satan, who prowls around just *like* a roaring lion, looking for someone to harm. And this enemy isn't trying just to hurt your body, he wants to hurt your soul by making you doubt God or do wicked things. But God still delivers and rescues those who keep trusting Him. Won't you trust God today?

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