



5. The writing on the wall

Age range: Primary

Theme: We gather as a community for collective worship that is **inspiring, invitational and inclusive**, reflecting the fact that we are a part of a diverse school family and the wider church community, serving the needs of our unique school communities. We begin this new term, and 2026, with a new story-saga theme, based on the story of Daniel and how he dared to be different. Whilst we recognise that all these stories contain challenging themes, and imply that standing up for your beliefs could mean certain death, we take the positive messages from each story in how Daniel and his friends were such a contrast to the leaders they served. In our world today, we want to inspire resilience in our pupils to be confident in who they are and what they stand for, just like Daniel, and to be positive role models in your school community, even when it might be difficult. **This week, we continue our new series in the saga-story of Daniel, and find out about the next proud king to follow Nebuchadnezzar – and the warnings about leadership that came his way in a rather strange form!**



How does this link to your school’s Christian vision & values?

This week, encourage pupils to think / talk about how Daniel’s actions stood out in contrast to the King’s, and, as a contrast, to reflect on positive messages we might ‘leave’ for others to encourage them this week.

Resources:

- **Please remember that the resources that we provide should be adapted where needed, to suit the context of your own school and your own pupils.**
- **This term, in addition to our usual gathering and sending slides, we are including a slide at the very start to help to ‘still’ pupils, and help them to enter into the ‘sacred’ space of collective worship, ready to think, reflect, talk or pray. You might also want to use this in your class to change the ‘mood’ for any class-based worship. Take this at whatever pace seems necessary for your pupils. It ends with a visual ‘timetable’, setting out some of the elements that will be included in our time together, which we hope may help some pupils. You can also find these as cards to print out to use in other collective worship if this helps you.**
- As always, there are also some ideas for **reflective activities / ideas** to ponder for use in your reflective areas for this term, listed at the end of the script along with a handy wall chart to print each week for your reflective area. You can find all these as a separate file in our resources area, which may make it easier for teachers to print and use in their classrooms.
- The PowerPoint slides are numbered with a point in the script so you can find your way, and the parts in **bold** show you where to click on to activate the next slide or animation. There are slides to go with today’s script, but you could quite easily use some of this collective worship without the PowerPoint if you preferred.
- **This week, there are 2 versions of the story:** one is on slides in the PPT, the other is a more reflective story with props. You can find this script on p.4, and will need to make a double-sided card as one of them from the template on p5.
- **You will also need a large whiteboard, or a flipchart** on which to model the messages of encouragement together. You will turn these into a prayer as part of the reflection part of this script.
- **Reflective prayer activity:** you will need to create an interactive message wall somewhere in your classroom, or leave out whiteboards for pupils to use to leave their positive messages for others to find. This could remain a feature for the rest of the half term if space allows. If you want to do this large-scale, why not leave playground chalk out at playtimes and encourage children to leave messages on the playground as well / instead?!

Gathering:

Slide 1: Twinkling stars stilling exercise

Use the stilling slide if desired: the suggested words should be spoken slowly, leaving pauses inbetween to create a sense of stillness.

As you sit quietly, watch the stars twinkle....[PAUSE]

Now practise slower breathing.....in.....and out.....in.....and out.....keep this going as you continue to look at the stars....[PAUSE]

You maybe notice that you are feeling calmer and more relaxed....[PAUSE]

We come into this special / sacred space and time to be still....to think deeply.....to be together as a school community.....

In our time together today, we will **do a quiz together, share the next part of our story, talk together and then think together.**

But first, let’s welcome one another as we begin....

Slide 2:

Leader: As we gather together today....



ALL:we bring our thoughts and our hearts into this sacred space.

Here are BSL actions for some of the words:

Leader's words:

Gather: <https://www.signbsl.com/sign/gather> (1st video)

Today: <https://www.signbsl.com/sign/today> (1st video)

Pupils' response:

Thoughts: <https://www.signbsl.com/sign/thoughts> (1st video)

Hearts: <https://www.signbsl.com/sign/heart> (1st video)

Engaging:

Slide 3: First, we're going to have a quiz about messages.

On the screen, you will see some messages – you need to work out what they are and how they might help the person receiving the message. *[Many are deliberately open-ended, to aid discussion]*

Let's start with what we can see here....you may have to look really carefully at the shapes of each hand to work out the message! (It's LOVE by the way)....What might this message remind someone about?

Slides 4-9: talk about each image; there are some suggestions on the notes for each slide.

Slide 10: We're going to continue now with Daniel's story.....There is a message for the new King of the Babylonians in today's instalment.....

Slide 11: Last week, we heard how King Nebuchadnezzar learned that 'pride comes before a fall' – and thought about how different he was to Daniel. So, let's find out if the new king will be an improvement.....

Slide 12: Belshazzar's Feast

This is the story of King Belshazzar, who took over the reign of the Babylonian Empire after King Nebuchadnezzar. *[Read on in the script & PPT slides or use props and the script on p.4]*

Slide 13: King Belshazzar thought his kingdom would last for ever. He believed he was so powerful that no-one could defeat him, that he was unbeatable. And he wanted to celebrate how great he was.

Slide 14: So, he decided to throw the biggest party anyone had ever seen to celebrate his success and invited a thousand very important guests! Money would be no object – he was determined to show off how important, how rich and how great a King he was.

Slide 15: But, of course, it was his servants who were left with all the preparation – at least one thousand of everything!

Slide 16: Vast amounts of food and wine soon began arriving at the palace.

Slide 17: The day of the party came and all the guests arrived. They were very excited to see this new king, who was treating them to such a lavish and extravagant party. He had promised them the best of everything – and they were not disappointed!

Slide 18: As he watched his guests enjoying themselves, King Belshazzar had a very wicked idea. He remembered that they had taken all the sacred gold and silver cups out of God's holy temple when the Babylonians had captured Jerusalem. The cups were beautiful and had been made to use during worship in the Temple. They would be perfect for his party, King Belshazzar thought, and so he sent for them to be brought up from the treasure store.

Slide 19: The guests filled up all the cups with wine and partied late into the night. This party, like Belshazzar's reign, would go down in history!

Slide 20: Suddenly there was a dazzlingly bright light – and out of nowhere.....

Slide 21: a hand appeared, as if from heaven.

Slide 22: The finger wrote some very strange words: 'Mene Mene, Tekel, Upharsin.' *[menay menay tekel you-parsin]* No-one at the party had any idea what they had meant or who had written them. Belshazzar sent for all his wise men, but none of them could tell him either.

Slide 23: But then the Queen remembered Daniel and told Belshazzar to send for him.

Slide 24: 'God can help me tell you the meaning of these words, which are a warning to you.' Daniel replied. 'Mene means "numbered", Tekel means "weighed" and "upharsin" means divided.' God has weighed your



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actions and because of your wickedness and cruelty, your days as king are coming to an end, and your great kingdom will be divided.

Slide 25: And that very night, it happened just as God had said it would: King Belshazzar was removed as king and the kingdom fell to King Cyrus of Persia. I wonder what kind of a leader he will be?.....

Slide 26: Responding and words for worship

We've heard today about the strange writing on the wall; the warning to the King about his actions – and a reminder to us that it matters how we treat other people....

Warnings are sometimes still needed in certain circumstances, but we often prefer to be encouraged! So today, this is where we will begin our time of reflection together....

....I wonder what we might learn from today's story?....

....I wonder what messages of encouragement might remind us to live well together?....

....I wonder how our school's vision and values might help us too?....

....I wonder how God might view *our* actions?....

[We recommend that you talk together about this before moving on to the prayer, as it will help to set the scene for your class-based reflection spaces this week.]

As a way of turning our thoughts into prayers now, I'm going to collect some words from you about ways you think we should treat each other. I'll collect them onto our message board here – which you will also be able to do in your classrooms this week.... *[Gather children's ideas for some positive messages that they might 'leave' to encourage others – and explain how this will work for your setting e.g. on whiteboards / walls (and how!) or in playground chalks]*

Slide 27: Prayer

Use some of the words of encouragement that you have just collected into a prayer, or read some out and invite children to turn the ideas into their own silent prayer....



Slide 28: Amen.

Sending: Slide 29

Leader: As we leave this place & time and go into the day ahead...

All: *May we shine like stars!*



Pupils' response:

Shine: <https://www.signbsl.com/sign/shine> (4th video)

Stars: <https://www.signbsl.com/sign/stars> (4th video)

To listen to / sing:

Choose a song from the selection for the first half of term e.g. [Shine](#) (NBD) or [Let our love show](#) (NBD) or [Build up](#) (BBC)



Slide 30: Reflective areas

Create a writing wall in your reflective area – or place small whiteboards and pens in the area for the week.

Think: What message might encourage someone to 'live out' your school's vision or values this week?

Do: Write or draw this message onto the class message wall* this week.

Talk: At the end of the week, talk together about the difference that the messages might have made to your school community.

**You will need to edit this to suit your instructions e.g. 'on the playground in chalk.'*



The writing on the wall – a story with props

You will need to gather:

A long red cloth, which you need to roll up	A small crown	A party popper (pop it if it won't scare anyone!)
Some role play food	A small goblet – preferably metal	A small whiteboard and pen
The double-sided sign card (see next page for printout)		

This is the story of King Belshazzar [*lay down story cloth, unrolling it like a red carpet*] a proud and ambitious king who thought he ruled the world and believed that his kingdom would last forever. [*Lay crown onto red carpet*] I wonder what you think of this?....

He was so proud of all his achievements that he decided to throw a party [*place/pop party popper*] for a thousand of the most important people in his kingdom, so that they would all visit his magnificent palace.

For many days, his servants were hard at work, preparing all the food that a thousand important guests would need [*lay down role play food*].... It was, of course, far grander than this!

The guests were not disappointed, and it was while they were enjoying themselves that King Belshazzar had an idea. He sent down to the treasure store for the sacred gold and silver goblets [*place goblet*] that they had taken out of God's holy temple in Jerusalem. These had been set aside for worship, but King Belshazzar filled them full to the brim with wine for the party.....I wonder what you think of this?....

Suddenly, out of nowhere, a hand began to write on the wall of the palace..... [*use whiteboard and pen, to write*] **'Mene mene, tekel upharsin'**. King Belshazzar and all his guests were absolutely terrified.....

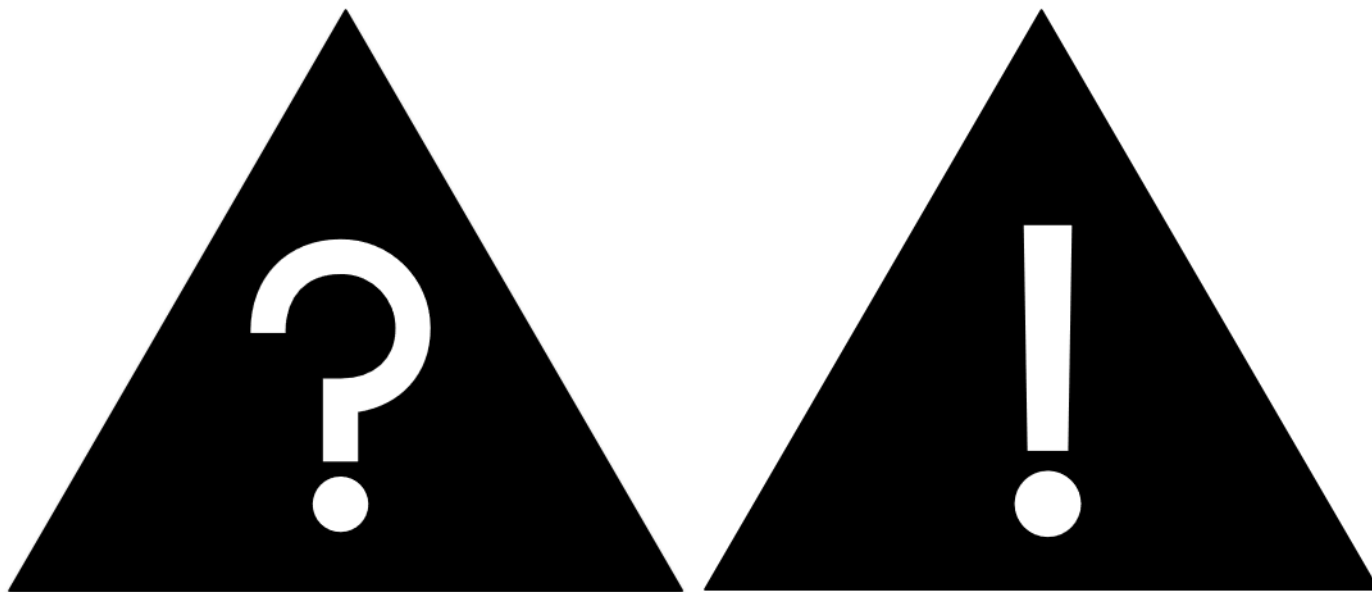
What could this mean? [*lay down the question mark card*] Not one of the King's wise men could tell him the answer.

Then someone remembered how wise Daniel had been and so he was summoned to see the writing on the wall. 'God has told me the answer that you seek.' Daniel said to the King. [*turn over question mark to show warning sign*] 'It is a grave warning to you: because of your wicked and cruel ways, your reign is about to come to an end.'

And it happened just as God said that it would. That very night, King Darius of Persia became King in Belshazzar's place. [*move crown from start to end of story cloth*]



Print these onto card and then fold down the centre so that they are double-sided. Trim as needed.



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Positive messages



What message might help others to 'live out' your school's vision or values this week?



Write or draw this message onto the class message wall this week.*



At the end of the week, talk together about the difference that the messages might have made in your school community.

