

## Session 3—Texas Sabal Palm

### Standing Tall

in

### Prayer

**Scripture Text:** Daniel 6

**Bible Verse:** “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful, But his delight is in the law of the LORD and in his law doth he meditate day and night, And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” (Psalm 1:1-3).

**Aim:** To teach the value of a consistent prayer life.

**POWER Line:** I will pray every day.

### Supplies

- Headphones
- Large posterboard flash cards
- Small machine oil bottle

**Preparation:**

- Create the character flash cards using lots of color and art if possible. You will need a card for Daniel, King Darius, princes, presidents, decree scroll, and lions.
- Practice worship choruses with the musicians and praise leaders.
- Practice the attention getter sketch with Andy the Arborist.
- Write Psalm 1:3 on the white board.

## **Schedule**

### **I. *POWER* of Worship**

#### A. Welcome/Worship

- Scripture Reading: Psalm 96
- Song: "Trees of the Field"

#### B. Skit: Andy the Arborist—Texas Sabal Palm

### **II. *POWER* of the Word**

#### A. Bible Memorization

#### B. Illustrated Sermon

- Praying through the Storm

#### C. Invitation and Prayer

## ***POWER* of Worship**

### **Welcome/Worship**

Ask one or two students to read a portion of Psalm 96 from beginning to end as you start this session.

**Did you notice that the next to the last verse says, “Then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice”? If I remember correctly, Isaiah 55 also said the trees of the field would clap their hands for joy. So, let’s sing this chorus with joy and hand clapping.** Use the following chorus or any others you may be familiar with to rejoice in song and hand clapping.

*The trees of the field shall clap their hands, (clap, clap)*

*The trees of the field shall clap their hands. (clap, clap)*

*The trees of the field shall clap their hands, (clap, clap)*

*As you go out with joy. (clap, clap, clap, clap)*

## **Skit**

The tree of the day is the Texas Sabal palm (*Sabal texana*). The Sabal palm is also in the class of evergreen. The palm has a deep root system that helps it stay rooted in the soil during strong winds. It is able to tolerate salt spray and occasional sand blasting.

**I’m going to put on headphones today so Andy’s chainsaw won’t startle me if he comes in. He has made me jump the last two times, but today I’m prepared!**

Begin showing the flash cards to students, explaining that they will be used in the Bible story and you will be asking for volunteers to help her. Do not give the names of the characters yet, but ad lib as much as possible keeping your back to the door. Andy slips in while your back is turned, without the chainsaw running. He has a small bottle of oil sticking out of his pocket.

Andy: **Hello, Sister (name)!**

Teacher: Does not respond because of the headphones and continues as if Andy has not spoken.

Andy: **Sister (name)? Hello?**

Teacher: Still does not respond and remains oblivious to Andy's presence.

Andy: Taps teacher on the shoulder

Teacher: (*Jumps, gasps, and removes headphones*) **Andy! You startled me!**

Andy: **Oh, I'm so sorry, but you didn't seem to hear me.**

Teacher: (*sheepishly*) **Well, I put these headphones on so your chainsaw wouldn't startle me. Guess that wasn't a good idea after all. Say, why isn't your chainsaw running?**

Andy: **Well, it's time for some routine maintenance. Do you mind if I use one of your tables to set it on while I oil it?**

Teacher: **Oh, not at all. Is there something wrong with the chainsaw?**

Andy: (*sets chainsaw on table and pretends to oil it and check for problems*) **No, ma'am. But, if I don't clean and oil it on a regular basis, it might quit and leave me out on a limb, so to speak.**

Teacher: **Well, that would certainly uproot your business. Uproot—get it?**

Andy: **Yes, ma'am. But, I intend to be like a *Sabal texana*.**

Teacher: **A what?**

Andy: **Oh, that's the scientific name for the Texas Sabal palm tree—another type of evergreen. I want to be like one because they have deep roots and can stand lots of wind and storms. Don't see many of them uprooted, even after a hurricane!**

Teacher: **I remember seeing some pictures of palm trees bending over in the wind, but they were still in the ground.**

Andy: **Exactly! And, they can even take occasional sand blasting when the wind whips it up. But, only because they have planted their roots down deep.**

Teacher: **Well, people don't have roots. We can't just stand in one place all the time!**

Andy: **I know that, but we can have spiritual roots.**

Teacher: **Oh, you mean like praying every day and reading God's Word. That is certainly one way to stand tall against storms of life and the occasional sand blasting of people's hurtful words.**

Andy: **Right!** (*pockets bottle of oil and prepares to fire up the chainsaw*) **Praying every day is like oiling this chainsaw regularly. It keeps on working and won't "leaf" you up a tree!**

Teacher: **Now that's something to wave your branches about! Children, let's stand, wave our arms to Jesus, and sing "Glory, Glory, Wave Your Branches."**

Lead students in a couple of rounds of the chorus before moving to the Bible Memorization segment.

### ***POWER* of the Word**

#### **Bible Memorization**

Review Psalm 1:1-2 using the motions and rebus/flash cards before beginning on verse 3. Write the third verse on the white board in front of students. Divide students into sections in various categories (boys/girls; dark hair/light hair; red clothes/blue

clothes, or any other variation you choose). The first section stands and reads the first phrase and is seated. The second section stands and reads the next phrase and is seated. Continue this choral reading pattern until the verse is completed. Switch sections and repeat several times until the children can quote it completely and smoothly.

Optional: Add motions for each stanza as follows:

*"And he shall be like a tree"*—students pose arms like branches.

*"Planted by the rivers of water"*—students make a waving motion with hands.

*"That bringeth forth his fruit in his season"*—use hands to pick invisible fruit.

*"His leaf also shall not wither"*—place left hand horizontally with right hand standing up on it like a tree; wave the hand as a leaf.

*"And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper"*—move hands, palm up, from center of body in an upward sweeping motion as hands separate and move to the sides.

## Illustrated Sermon

### Praying through the Storm

You will need flashcards for each character in the story: Daniel, King Darius, princes, presidents, decree scroll, and lions. There are two options for telling the story.

**One:** For smaller groups, hang the flashcards on a line and stand one student behind them; as you tell the story he moves behind each character as it is mentioned.

**Two:** For larger groups, ask for six volunteers and seat them in chairs facing the other students. Each holds a character card and when it is mentioned the corresponding student stands and holds the card up high until the next character is mentioned.

**We have been talking about Daniel and his three Hebrew friends the last two sessions. They have stood tall like red cedar evergreens in icy conditions, and like redwoods the fiery furnace couldn't harm them. So, today we will find out how they are like the Texas Sabal palm tree.**

Instruct volunteers to begin the flashcard activity now and encourage the audience members to watch for mistakes and bring them to your attention. This will ensure everyone is focused on the story. This is one of the rare times you will need to read the story from the text to emphasize the changes of characters. Be sure to go at a slower pace to give time for students to react. If someone misses his cue, repeat the line.

**Some time after Daniel and his friends had been in Babylon, a new king, named Darius, came into power. Darius had so much work to do that he decided to appoint 120 princes over the whole kingdom. And to supervise these princes, Daniel and two other men were made presidents. Of the presidents, Daniel was liked the best of all. Do you know why? It was because Daniel had an excellent spirit.**

**King Darius was so impressed with Daniel that he thought about making him a ruler over the whole kingdom. Well, the princes and presidents didn't like that idea at all! They were so jealous. In fact, those princes and presidents started blowing a lot of hot air and blasting Daniel with some pretty salty comments. But no matter how hard those princes and presidents tried to find something wrong with Daniel, they couldn't find any fault with him. Daniel continued to stand straight and tall like a palm tree against those windbags!**

King Darius had made a good selection. Daniel was faithful and didn't make any mistakes. This made the presidents and princes even angrier and they determined to find something that would make King Darius dislike Daniel.

One day, as one of the presidents happened by Daniel's window, he heard Daniel praying to Jehovah God. The president didn't think much about it at the time and walked on. But, when he happened to pass by the next day at the same time, Daniel was again praying. This gave the president an evil idea. He ran to find the princes and other president. "Listen!" he told them. "I've discovered something that I think can create a storm strong enough to knock Daniel down from his place with King Darius. Did you know that Daniel prays to his God three times every day?"

After telling the princes and president his plan, they all traipsed over to see King Darius. "Oh, King, live forever," they said. As they began to tell the king how wonderful he was, one of the presidents said, "Your majesty, you are such a mighty king. We think you should make a decree that no one can ask anything from any other man or God for the next thirty days, except you. And if they do, they should be thrown into the lions' den." King Darius stroked his beard and thought for a moment. He was a pretty great king after all, so why not?

One of the presidents added, "To be sure this decree is enforced, you should make it according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be changed by anyone." King Darius agreed and he signed the decree.

By now, Daniel had seen the storm approaching in the distance. If the insults of the princes and presidents had been like wind-blown salt in his face,

this was going to be a hurricane! But, he knew he was rooted deep in Jehovah God. So, the next day, just like all the other days before, Daniel opened his window and began to pray to God. Sure enough, the princes and presidents were waiting outside to catch him. Off they ran to King Darius.

“Oh, King!” they said in sly voices. “Already someone has broken your decree.” The king's face became stormy and he demanded to know who would dare to defy his decree. Whoever it was would be thrown immediately into the lions' den!

“It's Daniel,” said one of the princes. King Darius' face clouded over. Daniel? The one who has such an excellent spirit? Then suddenly King Darius realized he had been tricked. Before him stood the princes and presidents, so pleased with their plan and knowing that King Darius could not go back on his decree.

Daniel was summoned to King Darius' court. Sadly, he ordered that Daniel be bound and thrown into the lions' den, just like the decree said. ‘Oh, Daniel!’ said King Darius, as Daniel was being led to the lions' den. “I know your God will deliver you.” Then Daniel was tossed into the pit.

All night long King Darius paced up and down the palace halls. The presidents and princes were beside themselves with joy, thinking they had managed to blow Daniel away with their plan. Why, tomorrow there would be nothing left of him. Surely the lions would finish him off.

Meanwhile, Daniel had landed with a thud in the lions' den. This was the strongest storm of his life. Warily he looked at the lions, waiting for them to

attack. Their hot breath blew in his face, but not one time did they try to bite him. God had locked their jaws! Daniel lay down and slept all night.

The next morning, King Darius rushed to the lions' den and demanded that the stone be moved away. "Oh, Daniel!" he shouted. "Did your God deliver you?" As the princes and presidents listened in disbelief, Daniel shouted back, "King Darius, live forever! My God has shut the lions' mouths because I have done no wrong."

Wow! Daniel had bent over in prayer during a hurricane of jealousy and envy, but now he was standing tall as a palm, waving his arms in praise to God.

And those princes and presidents who had tricked King Darius into making the wicked decree in the first place were thrown into the lions' den and destroyed.

Give your volunteers a round of applause and ask them to be seated.

### Invitation and Prayer

Wow, that was a lot of fun moving back and forth, wasn't it? But do you know that if Daniel had not been praying to God each day, he might not have been delivered. Remember Andy and his chain saw? He said in order for it to keep working he had to clean and oil it regularly. That is just like our Christian life. In order for us to keep working and living for Jesus, we have to keep our hearts clean from sin and oiled with the Holy Spirit. We do that by praying each day.

Talking to God on a regular schedule makes it easier to stand tall against the storms of life. Satan can blow a lot of hot air at us, tempting us to give in to

**sin; but if we are rooted in the Word of God we can bow down in prayer and  
Jesus will help us bounce right back up straighter and taller than ever.**

Lead students in consecration and committing to pray each day.