

A Dream of a Tree

Teacher's Notes

King Nebuchadnezzar ruled one of the greatest kingdoms on earth and thought that he was greater than everyone else. He had a vision in which he was great tree towering over all and touching heaven. The tree was felled and he became like an ox, being restored to himself only when he lifted his eyes to heaven. When we think we are the greatest we become like animals. To be truly human we must look to the Lord.

Daniel 4 Lesson Plan		Materials Needed
1. Welcome Activity (2-3 minutes)	People and Animals Are Different pp. 1-2	(dangerous) wild animal toy, toy dog or cat
2. Focus on the Word (5-7 minutes)	Read Daniel 4 and discuss p. 2	shortened version of text included on p. 3
3. Learn by Doing Choose 1-2 activities (15-20 minutes)	Make a Tree Mural pp. 4-8	brown paper or fabric; scissors; stapler, tape or thumb tacks (drawing pins); crayons or markers; green paper; stuffed animals and birds
	Growing a New Tree p. 9	seeds (see options on p. 9); soil; small stones; water; containers such as a plastic bags, plastic cups or small plant pots; <i>OR</i> a seedling tree to plant at your church
	Picture to Color p. 10	crayons or markers
4. Recitation & Closing (2-3 minutes)	Recitation and Closing p. 11	Parent Note p. 12

New Church Concept

People and Animals

In themselves people are no different from animals. Their senses, appetites, natural desires, and affections are similar. So are their good loves such as loving companions, offspring, and married partners. However, people are superior to animals because they have an inner life which animals do not have. That life is the life of faith and love from the Lord. If the life of love and faith from the Lord were not present, a person would not be human. See *Arcana Coelestia* 714

Welcome: People & Animals Are Different

Materials Needed: wild animal toy, toy dog or cat

The New Church teaches that animals and people are different. People can learn about the Lord, do what He teaches and so be raised up into heaven and conjoined with Him. Animals act only from instinct. They may appear to think, but they cannot think *spiritually* or raise their minds to heaven. People sometimes act like animals—act without thinking.

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People & Animals Are Different continued

1. *Show a dangerous wild animal* (e.g. lion): Would you feel safe near a (lion)? Why are lions dangerous? Have you met a person who makes you feel like that? Animals correspond to our loves. Have you ever felt like a (lion)?
2. *Show a domesticated animal* (e.g. dog): Would you feel safe with this animal? Why? Could this animal be dangerous? What good qualities does this animal have? Have you ever acted like (a dog)?
3. How are you different from an animal? (Encourage discussion. People can read, think, and learn new ideas; animals can learn, but cannot raise their minds to heaven.)
4. Today's story is about a man who became like a wild animal because he thought he was so great. Find out what happened and how he became like a man again.

Focus on the Word

Read: Daniel 4. A shortened version is included on page 3. For young children you may wish to summarize some of the story and read aloud the sentences printed in **bold**.

1. **What did king Nebuchadnezzar see in his dream?** A tree reaching to heaven. **Can you think of something else in Babylon that was built to reach heaven, much earlier in the Word?** The tower of Babel. **Both stories are about believing you can get to heaven *by your own power, without the Lord*—which is why the Lord stopped the people building the tower and cut down the tree.**
2. **Did the watcher order the tree to be completely destroyed?** No, he ordered the roots and stump to be left so it could grow back.
3. **Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar that he was the tree, and that if he didn't change his ways he would be cut down. Did Nebuchadnezzar listen to Daniel?** No.
4. **He did not like what Daniel said, so a year later the dream came true and he became like an ox. Nebuchadnezzar thought he had built the greatest kingdom on earth *by his own power!* Can a person do anything by their own power?** No, the Lord has all power! **The Lord gives us our bodies and our talents. The power to use these gifts comes from Him as well. We couldn't do anything without Him.**
5. **Just as we might pretend not to hear an adult telling us what we should do, King Nebuchadnezzar didn't listen to Daniel. He continued to act like he was the greatest of all. What happened to him?** He became like an ox and lived apart from people for seven years.
6. **How are animals and people different?** People can know the Lord; animals cannot. **When do people act like wild animals?** When they care only about themselves and not about the Lord or other people.
7. **How did king Nebuchadnezzar become himself again?** He lifted his eyes to heaven. We lift our eyes to heaven when we remember the Lord and treat others the way He says to. This may take time—just as it took Nebuchadnezzar seven years to do.
8. **By obeying commandments we become like beautiful trees, a home for good thoughts and loving actions.**

Nebuchadnezzar Dreams of a Tree

⁴ **I, Nebuchadnezzar, was in my palace.** ⁵ **As I was lying in bed, the visions of my head troubled me.** ⁶ **So I commanded that the wise men of Babylon be brought to interpret the dream.** ⁷ **When the wise men came, I told them the dream, but they could not interpret it.** ⁸ **Finally, Daniel (Belteshazzar) came and I told him the dream.**

⁹ **I said, “Belteshazzar, the Spirit of the Holy God is in you, and no secret troubles you. Explain my dream and its interpretation.** ¹⁰ **These are my visions: Before me stood a tree in the middle of the land. Its height was enormous.** ¹¹ **The tree grew large and strong and its top touched the heavens; it was visible to the ends of the earth.** ¹² **Its leaves were beautiful, its fruit abundant, and on it was food for all. Under it animals found shelter, and birds lived in its branches; from it every creature was fed.**

¹³ **“I saw a watcher coming down from heaven.** ¹⁴ **He called: ‘Cut down the tree and cut off its branches; strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the animals get out from under it and the birds from its branches.** ¹⁵ **But let the stump and its roots remain. “Let him be wet with the dew of heaven, and let it live with the animals among the plants.** ¹⁶ **Let his heart be changed from a man and be the heart of an animal, till seven times pass by.**

¹⁷ **“The decision is the decree of the watchers so that the living may know that the Most High rules over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of people.’** ¹⁸ **“Now, tell me what the dream means, for none of the wise men can interpret it. But you can, because the Spirit of the Holy God is in you.”**

¹⁹ **Daniel (Belteshazzar) answered, “O King, the tree you saw, which grew large and strong—²²you are that tree! You have become great and strong; your greatness has grown until it reaches the sky, and your dominion extends to end of the earth.** ²³ **“The king saw a holy one coming down from heaven and saying, ‘Cut down the tree and destroy it....’**

²⁴ **“This is the interpretation, and the decree the Most High has issued against the king: ²⁵You will be driven away from people and live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like the ox and be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High reigns over all kingdoms on earth.** ²⁶ **The command to leave the stump with its roots means that your kingdom will be restored to you when you acknowledge that Heaven rules.** ²⁷ **Therefore, O King: Renounce your sins by doing what is right. It may be that then your prosperity will continue.”**

²⁸ **All this happened.** ²⁹ **Twelve months later, as King Nebuchadnezzar was walking on the roof of the palace ³⁰he said, “Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?”** ³¹ **A voice came from heaven saying, “King Nebuchadnezzar: Your kingdom has been taken from you.** ³² **You will be driven away and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like the ox. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High rules over all kingdoms on earth.”**

³³ **Immediately King Nebuchadnezzar was driven away and ate grass like the ox. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird.**

³⁴ **At the end of that, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me.**

³⁶ **At the same time my sanity was restored and I was restored to my throne.** ³⁷ **Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because all His works are truth and His ways just.**

(Daniel 4:4-37 adapted from the NIV)

Make a Tree Mural

Materials Needed

several copies each of *Leaves* p. 6 printed on green paper and *Fruit* p. 7 printed on white paper; a copy of *Correspondences* p. 8; scissors; stapler, tape or thumb tacks; brown paper or fabric, e.g. grocery bags, to create trunk and branches; crayons or markers to color fruit; stuffed animals and birds

Prepare in Advance

Identify a place to build a tree—a wall, bulletin board, window or door. Gather materials and supplies. Print pages. *Optional:* To save time, create a trunk and branches on the wall before the lesson begins

Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of a tree that reached to heaven. While the tree appeared beautiful to him, it was not really good. It only pictured how great he thought he was. When we don't recognize that our talents and energy are a gift from the Lord, we too can think the things we've done show how great we are. This selfish attitude in us has to be completely removed—just as Nebuchadnezzar's tree was cut down—if we are to enter heaven. A new and completely different tree can then grow in its place. The Lord forms the new tree from the stump that is left. This beautiful tree is described in the Word in Psalm 1, verses 1-3:



**Blessed are those who walk not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor stand in the path of sinners,
Nor sit in the seat of the scornful;
But their delight is in the law of the Lord,
And in His law they meditate day and night.
They shall be like trees
Planted by rivers of water,
That bring forth their fruit in its season,
Their leaf also shall not wither;
And whatever they do shall prosper.**

Children will make a mural of a fruitful tree and label it with the human qualities that correspond to the parts of the tree.

1. In what ways are trees useful? They make oxygen, grow fruit, provide lumber, are a habitat for birds and animals, provide shade and shelter, etc.
2. The Word often compares people with trees. Sometimes trees in the Word represent people who lead lives based on the Word.

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New Church Concept People and Trees

In the Word a person is compared to a tree. The truths of faith are compared to leaves, and forms of the good of charity to fruit; the seeds from which new trees grow correspond to truths which spring from good, or to faith which springs from charity. See *Arcana Coelestia* 8326

Make a Tree Mural continued

3. Sometimes they represent people who are selfish. In this story the beautiful tree is a picture of the great height of Nebuchadnezzar's selfishness. He thought he was doing fine all by himself—that he didn't need the Lord.
4. When Daniel warned him to change his actions he did not listen or change, and so the dream came true. He was cut off from his life and became like an animal.
3. A new tree would grow from the roots and base of the trunk, which were left in the ground. This is like the change that happens in us when we turn away from being selfish and turn towards the Lord in His Word.
4. We are going to make a tree mural that shows how we can grow in the Lord. Read Psalm 1:1-3 from the previous page.
5. Start by creating the trunk and roots. Crinkle and twist the paper before fixing it to the wall or bulletin board with tape, staples or thumb tacks to make the finished tree look as if it has bark and is three dimensional. If using grocery bags, cut them open and tape into long strips.
6. Hand out scissors and copies of the *Leaves* (p. 6) printed on green paper. Stack several pieces of paper on top of each other before cutting the leaves out to make things go faster. Attach the leaves to the branches.
7. Distribute copies of the *Fruit* (p. 7). Color and cut out the fruit and attached them to the branches.
8. Arrange stuffed animals and birds on or around the tree.
9. Cut apart the *Correspondences* (p. 8) and fasten the signs to the tree near the part of the tree they describe.

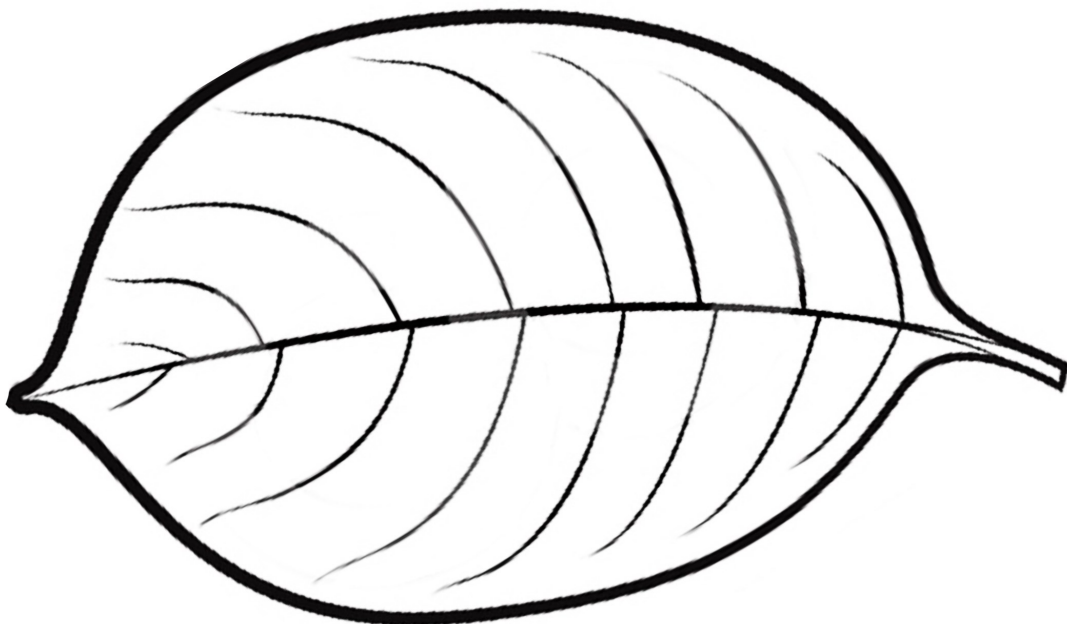
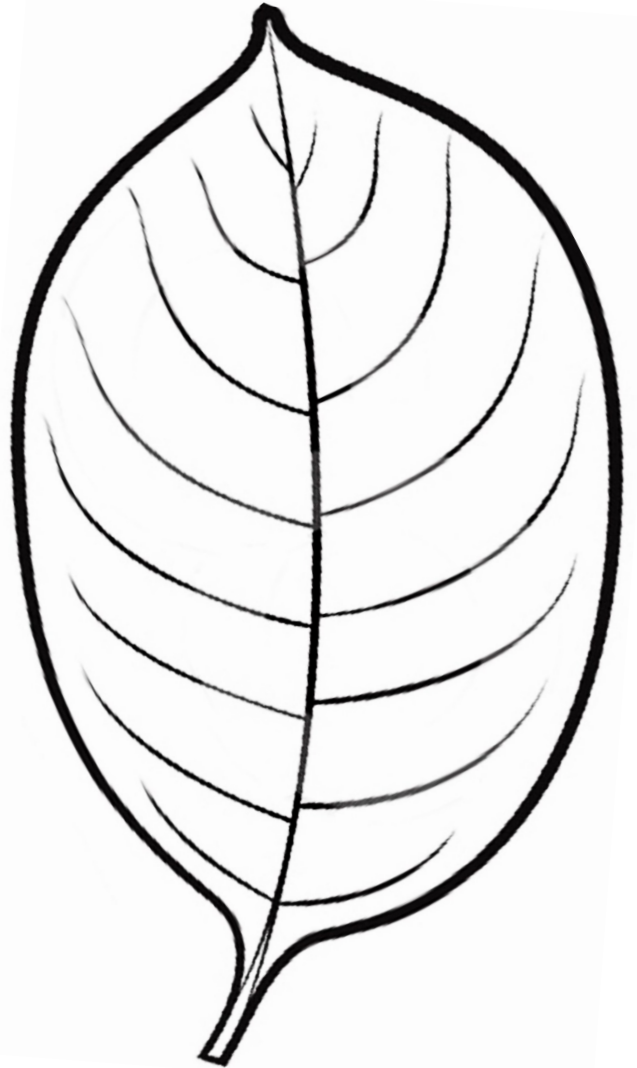
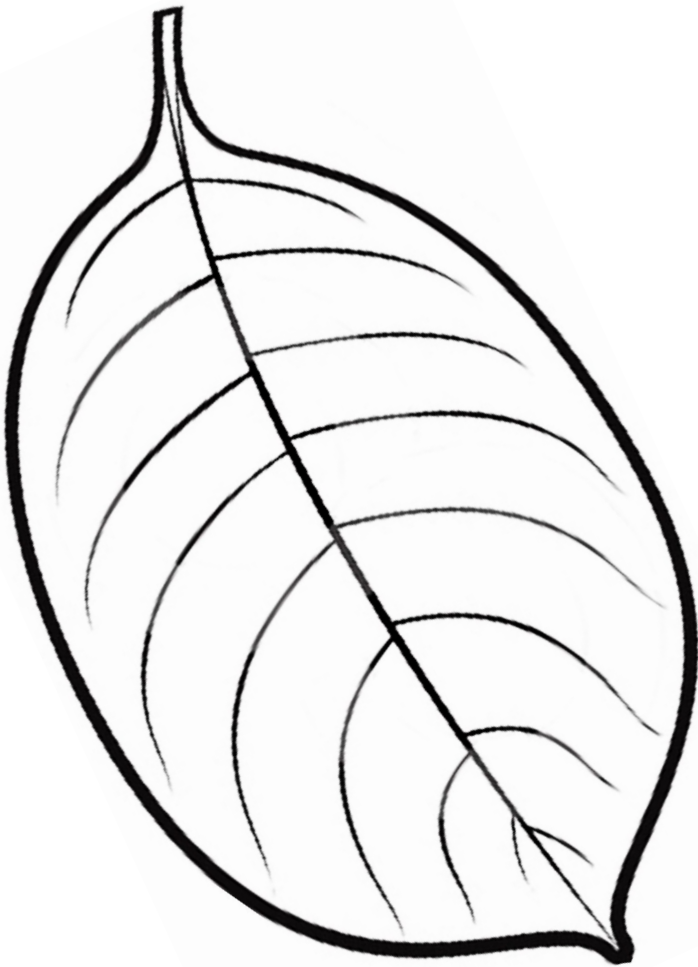
New Church Concept Trees

Our early childhood is like the sprout of the tree emerging out of the ground from its seed. Our youth and young adulthood are like that sprout growing into a trunk with slender branches. The earthly truths that we first take in are like the leaves. Our first steps into the marriage of what is good and what is true are like the flowers a tree brings forth. The good deeds done from a caring spirit are like the fruit. The propagation of wisdom from love is like the seeds. In the Word, we are described as trees, and our wisdom, arising from love, is described as a garden. See *Divine Providence* 332.3

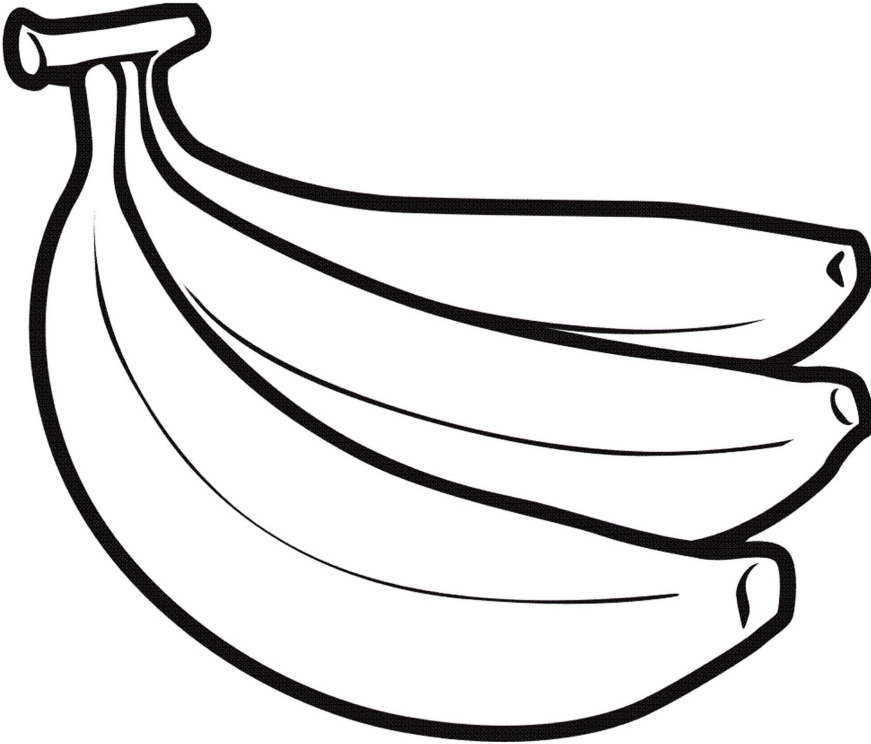
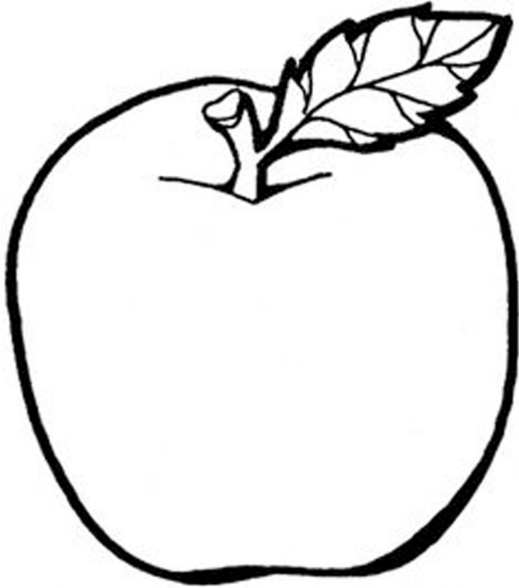
New Church Concept: The Stump

The stump of the roots which they should leave [in the ground] means the Word being understood as to the letter only, which is knowledge in the memory. The bands of iron and brass mean that the interior truths and goods are closed up and bound. When separated from interior things outermost things are falsities and evils. And since a person is then almost like a beast in understanding and will, for evils of the affections and falsities of the thoughts are dominant, it is said that his portion shall be with the beast, and that his heart shall be changed from man's, and the heart of a beast shall be given to him. This change took place because Nebuchadnezzar claimed to himself a right over holy things and over heaven. See *Apocalypse Explained* 650.32

Leaves



Fruit



Correspondences

Flowers

Happy thoughts from
the joy of useful service.
(See *Arcana Coelestia* 5116)

Fruit

Good actions we do because we
love the Lord and want to obey Him.
(See *Arcana Coelestia* 885)

Leaves

True ideas from the Word.
(*Arcana Coelestia* 885)

Roots

We must be rooted in the Lord's Word.
(*Doctrine of Life* 93)

Growing a New Tree

King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream in which he appeared as a tree. The Word often compares people with trees. Nebuchadnezzar's tree was cut down because it represented his great selfishness—he thought he was fine on his own and did not need to pay attention to the Lord.

Like Nebuchadnezzar we are born into the appearance that life is our own. This attitude can only change if we learn from the Word that the Lord is the source of all life. The first perspective must be cut down and removed. Then the Lord can give us a new heart and a new mind, so we truly grow into a new “tree”, motivated by love to the Lord and love for others. Choose whether to have children plant seeds in the classroom or transplant a seedling outside on church grounds.



1. Have you ever planted a tree? What was the seed like? How big is it now?
2. Trees produce thousands of seeds. Many never grow into trees. Some are eaten by people (e.g. nuts) or animals (e.g. acorns). Some grow near the tree they came from. If you look near a tall tree you may see small seedlings. People sometimes move seedlings to a place where they want a tree to grow. This is called *transplanting* a tree.
3. Today we are going to plant (or transplant) a tree. Continue with the directions below for planting seeds. Or see the directions *For transplanting a seedling tree* outside in the sidebar.
4. Gather children to look at the seeds. Ask questions such as, “What’s inside a seed?” “What do seeds need to grow?” “What part of the tree develops first?”
5. Give each child a seed, container, small stones and dirt. Start by putting stones in the bottom of the container to give the seed good drainage. Add a layer of dirt. Make a little hole in the soil with your finger and put the seed inside it. Cover the seed with more soil. Give the seed water.
6. Your seed will need sunlight and water to grow. Put it near a window and water it regularly. Once it has sprouted you can plant it outside.
7. Remind students that beautiful trees symbolize the new heart and mind the Lord plants in us when we turn to Him.

Materials Needed

For Planting Seeds in the Classroom

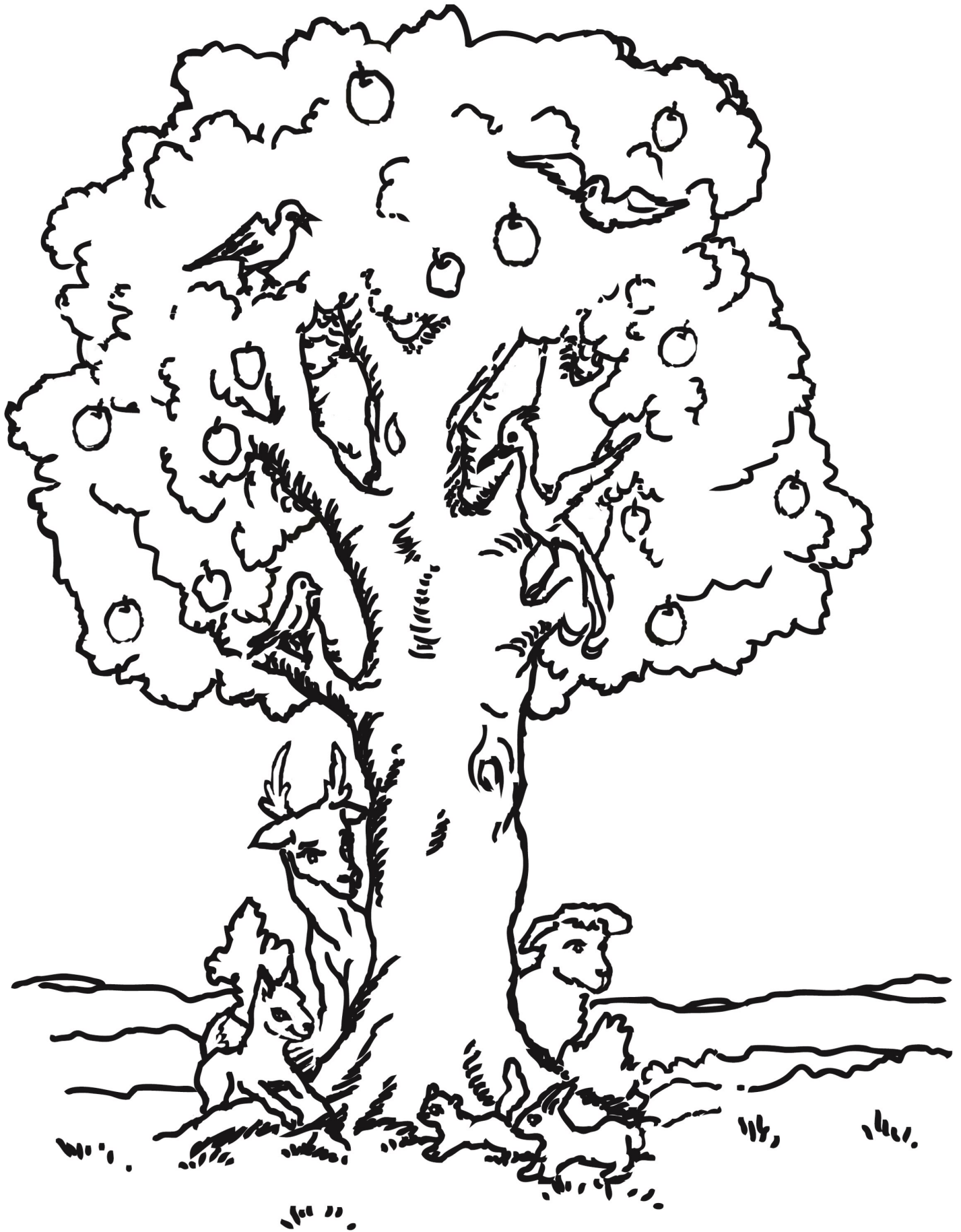
Seeds from a fruit tree such as apple, pear or orange, etc., or seeds from a tree where you live such as acorns, maple “wings”, pinecone seeds, etc.; soil; small stones for drainage; water; containers such as a sturdy plastic bags, plastic cups or small plant pots

For Transplanting a Seedling Tree Outside

Look for seedlings approximately 6-12” (15-30cm) tall. Woodlands often yield more seedlings than gardens. Woody-stemmed bushes (e.g. Rose of Sharon) may also be a good source for seedlings.

Dig up the seedling with a shovel, being careful to get all the roots. Keep the roots moist in a plastic bag. Re-plant the seedling near your church in an appropriate (sunny/shady/moist/drainage) spot. You will need a shovel, a large watering can and a place to wash hands afterwards. *Optional:* gardening gloves.

Note: This activity will be most successful in the spring or fall. Seedlings transplanted when it is very hot or cold often struggle.



Recitation and Closing

Each lesson in the Daniel series includes a recitation. The recitations are taken from prayers in the book of Daniel. Most of the sentences were spoken by Daniel after he received the power to explain Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Daniel 2). They are arranged in an order that reflects the story for each week. The sentence for lesson three was spoken by Nebuchadnezzar after he recognized the Lord as the true God (Daniel 4). We will be learning one sentence with each lesson, and building on each until all six sentences can be recited together.

Introduce the 4th sentence of the *Prayers in Daniel*, the recitation for this lesson: "He gives wisdom to the wise." Daniel was able to wisely interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream because the Lord showed him what it meant.

Try saying the sentence aloud and inviting the children to repeat it after you. Finish by repeating sentences 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Prayers in Daniel

1. Blessed be the name of God forever and ever.
2. He reveals deep and secret things.
3. How great are His signs!
- 4. He gives wisdom to the wise.**
5. He removes kings and raises up kings.
6. I thank You and praise You, O God.

Daniel 2:20-23; 4:3 adapted

Closing

King Nebuchadnezzar became himself when he lifted his eyes to heaven. We lift our eyes to heaven when we remember the Lord and treat others the way He tells us to in His Word. This may take time—just as it took Nebuchadnezzar seven years to do. When we obey the commandments again and again, we can become like a beautiful tree, a home for good thoughts and loving actions.

Give each student a *Parent Note* (p. 12) to take home.

Cut the Parent Notes apart and give one to each student.

Nebuchadnezzar's Madness

Dear Parents,

Today we learned about king Nebuchadnezzar's dream of being a huge tree that had to be cut down. Ask your child what Nebuchadnezzar had to do to so he could stop being an ox and be a person again.

We are learning one sentence a week from *Prayers in Daniel*. Please help your child remember the first four sentences this week. You could say them at meal time, bed time, or when you are brushing your teeth!

Thank you.

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