
2023
devotional journal

But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank. Therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself.

DANIEL 1:8



january

2023
devotional journal

january

But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank. Therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself.

DANIEL 1:8

2023

memory verses

JANUARY

But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank. Therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself.

Daniel 1:8 (ESV)

FEBRUARY

As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

Daniel 1:17 (ESV)

MARCH

He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding

Daniel 2:21 (ESV)

APRIL

If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.

Daniel 3:17-18 (ESV)

MAY

How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endures from generation to generation.

Daniel 4:3 (ESV)

JUNE

He delivers and rescues; he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, he who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions.

Daniel 6:27 (ESV)

JULY

And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

Daniel 7:14 (ESV)

AUGUST

And the kingdom and dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.

Daniel 7:27 (ESV)

SEPTEMBER

O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name.

Daniel 9:19 (ESV)

OCTOBER

Then he said to me, "Fear not Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard and I have come because of your words."

Daniel 10:12 (ESV)

NOVEMBER

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Daniel 12:2 (ESV)

DECEMBER

And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

Daniel 12:3 (ESV)

from daniel

preparing to meet king jesus: into your hands

Since 2021, our theological burden and impetus towards Vision 2028 & Beyond is Preparing to Meet King Jesus. Every year, we also ask God to show us a specific spiritual emphasis that we must pay attention to as we continue in our mission. For this year, it is

Preparing to Meet King Jesus: Into Your Hands.

Hence, we will be studying the Old Testament book of Daniel this year.

The phrase “Into Your Hands” was inspired by Daniel 6:26-27, which reads: “I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end. He delivers and rescues; he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, he who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions.”

As the lyrics of the song “Ancient of Days” by CityAlight declares, “Though the nations rage, kingdoms rise and fall, there is still one King, reigning over all. So I will not fear for this truth remains: That my God is the Ancient of Days.” Indeed, just as every king and every kingdom are ultimately in the sovereign hands of God, we entrust ourselves into the hands of God.

As we entrust **ourselves** – every leader, child, marriage, family and every generation – into God’s Hands, let us also entrust **our mission** to make disciples into His hands.

Salvation is no small thing. We have a mission to be witnesses and we must act with a sense of urgency. Will we be found sleeping on our watch? May we not forget our call and mission as the Church – to be witnesses for Christ.

May you entrust yourself into His sovereign hand daily as you prepare to meet King Jesus!

Into His Hands: We Pray and Obey

As disciples of Christ, how do we submit our lives, our families and our mission into the sovereign hand of God? We follow His leading, as we simply pray and obey. Whatever circumstance we are going through – in our family or work – let’s pray and obey the Lord’s leading. Whatever sphere of influence that we can be salt and light, let’s pray and obey the Lord’s leading. Whoever God brings across our path to share the Gospel, let’s pray and obey the Lord’s leading.

Based upon our core values, may we fulfil our mission through the 3 Faith Exploits anchored on Jesus’ Great Commandment (Matt 22:36-40) and Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20)!

Our Core Values:

- Truth centred upon the Word of God
- Community centred upon the worship of God
- Stewardship centred upon the will of God

- Balance centred upon the wisdom of God
- Brokenness centred upon the way of God

Our Mission:

Returning the Church to its discipling roots through authentic discipleship and intentional discipling so as to reproduce disciples of a certain kind and to multiply them to win the world for Christ!

Our 3 Faith Exploits:

1. Disciple the Generations
2. Disciple Singapore
3. Disciple the Nations

This Devotional Journal is designed to help you walk daily with God and experience the transforming power of His Word and Spirit as you reflect, pray and obey. May you entrust yourself into His sovereign hand daily as you prepare to meet King Jesus!

In Christ,

Rev Tan Kay Kiong and
Rev Tony Yeo

senior pastors,

foreword

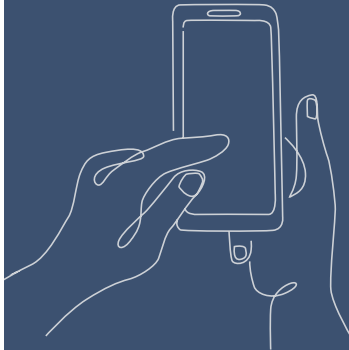
guide to using this devotional journal

PREPARE YOUR HEART IN GOD'S PRESENCE

- Select a fixed time (preferably in the morning before you begin your day) and a quiet place where you can be alone and undisturbed.
- Observe a moment of silence as you acknowledge God's presence. Centre down.
- Begin with a song of worship. Meditate on the lyrics even if you are unfamiliar with the tune.
- Ask God to open your heart to hear Him.

SOMETHING TO PONDER

Examining your life is essential in your faith journey. Your redeemed life as a disciple of Christ deserves careful examining. May you take root and bear fruit in Him!



You can continue to type in the PDF copy of the Devotional Journal using your digital device as we have allotted fillable boxes for you to journal your thoughts and prayers without space constraints.

ALLOW GOD TO S.O.A.P. YOU WITH HIS WORD AND SPIRIT

- **Scripture** - Take your time to meditate on the Scripture passage for the day. Pause and mull over words and phrases that stand out to you.
- **Observation** - Jot down significant insights and reflections from the passage you have read. You may use the guiding questions provided. The "Deeper Reflection" section is to aid your contemplation of the Scripture. It is not to replace your own observation, for the Holy Spirit illuminates the Scripture to you as you seek Him earnestly.
- **Application** - Note down a specific and practical commitment to God's Word for you. Is there a command to obey, a sin to avoid, an example to follow, or a principle to live out? Where appropriate, share your devotional entry with someone.
- **Prayer** - Bring your heartfelt response to God in prayer.

+ PRAYER POINTERS FOR 2023

We have provided prayer pointers for Pastors and Staff every Tuesday and for one of the 3 Faith Exploits (Disciple the Generations, Singapore and the Nations) every Wednesday. Every Thursday, a prayer pointer is included for Outreach/Missions/New Life Leaders. On each Friday, there is a prayer pointer for SGI Leaders (e.g. Zone Mentors, CG Leaders and Assistant CG Leaders). A prayer pointer for Church Board Members is included every Saturday. Please pray for each group as well as any specific individuals whom God may bring to your mind.

step one

step two

pray for covenant efc missions

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.”

PROVERBS 3:5-6 (ESV)

2023 could see the world living with COVID-19. In many ways, it may feel that we are returning to the way life was before the pandemic. However, geopolitical challenges such as the Ukraine–Russia war and economic woes including rising inflation indicate that the future is uncertain. How can we live as Christ’s disciples amidst such uncertain times? Proverbs 3:5-6 provides a needed compass.

- Trust in the Lord and not on our own understanding and ways. We need to learn to trust in the Lord with our hearts first and he will make straight our paths. This is an **inside-out** movement: we trust in the Lord first and trust that He will direct our ways.
- In Hebrew, the “ways” mentioned in verse 6 refer to well-travelled roads, and in short, a known way. What we know of God is the starting point for us to navigate amidst these uncertain times. We know God’s attributes, God’s power and God’s ways. When we lean on what we know of God, the paths will be clear.

- In contrast, the “paths” mentioned in verse 6 refer to uncharted roads, unknown pathways. If we anchor our ways on what we know of God (“your ways” in v.6a), God will make straight the uncharted roads and unknown pathways. This means that when we trust the Lord, we can have confidence in where He is taking us even when we walk into the unknown.

Let not the uncertain times paralyse you. Lean on God and we lean on what we know of Him to navigate the uncertainty. In light of this, let us pray boldly for the Lord’s mission to grow and prosper under His hand:

PRAY FOR

1. The church, to seize the opportunities to move the people to deeper discipleship, deeper prayer and a deeper walk with the Lord!
2. New pathways for evangelism in the communities in Singapore and beyond.
3. More and younger missionaries to enter the harvest field.
4. Covenant EFC missions, which is pivoting more partners towards church planting efforts, to prosper in these endeavours.
5. Disciplemaking movements to take shape in various countries.
6. Disciples to keep proclaiming the Gospel even when the circumstances become more difficult and even when we cannot see the harvest coming.
7. More disciplemaking churches plants (DCPs) in 2023 and more urgency in planting DCPs.
8. Safety and protection as more mission trips will be taking place amidst the open borders and open skies.
9. Reengagement with Covenant EFC’s partners whom we have not met face-to face for almost three years.

sunday

01

Sunday Journal

SCRIPTURE

OBSERVATION

APPLICATION

PRAYER

the past week

review

What was my high point and my low point for the week?

What gave me life and what drained me?

How was the Spirit of God at work?

the past week

reflect

What is one key thing that God said to me this week in light of what has happened?

respond

What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying? Commit in prayer.



Week 1 FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

KNOWLEDGE:

Learn something new so you can be better at whatever you do.

Memory Verse

"The Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth comes knowledge and understanding."
– Proverbs 2:6 (NIV)

1 Bottom Line

Never stop searching for what's true.*

2 Bible Story

Matthew 2:1-12 – Wise Men Visit Jesus

3 Activity

Powerful Common Verses

Props: The Bible

Hold a contest among your family members to find out who has the best knowledge of Bible verses. Name a few common verses from the Bible, for example John 3:16. The first person to recite the entire verse correctly wins the contest. Participants may search for the verses in the Bible or recite them from memory.

Discuss:

- The importance of remembering Bible verses
- What each verse means
- Where is the only source of truth when we need it

Say, "Unlike the three wise men in the olden days, we can't see Jesus in person but we can find Him and His Words in the Bible. We learn about God and find answers about how we should live as Christians through the Bible. When we are unsure of what to do when we face problems, we can seek God's answers and truth or find comfort from the Bible."

4 Talk About It

- Why is it important to continue searching for knowledge about what is true?
- What are some things that are true about Jesus? How does knowing these truths help you to follow Jesus and reflect His love to others?
- What did you learn today that surprised you?
- What did you learn about God or Jesus?

Parents: Share a bible verse which carried you through good and bad times, and give an example of how it helped you. How does the truth in this verse motivate you?

5 Prayer

Pray for a heart that longs for the Truth. Pray that God will open our hearts and ears to listen and obey His Word.



Click or scan this QR code for this week's Bible story video!

monday

02

Generations Out of His Hands: Our Problem

SCRIPTURE Nehemiah 9:26-31

OBSERVATION

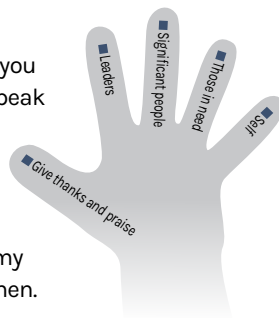
What caused God's people to fall into the enemies' hands?

APPLICATION

What spiritual weaknesses do you need to confess to the Lord at the start of this year?

PRAYER

Dear patient and gracious Heavenly Father, thank you for Your mercies. Lord Jesus, through Your Word, speak difficult things to me so that my human pride will be submitted to You. Holy Spirit, convict my heart so that my attraction to sin will wane. By Your grace and mercy, deliver me from evil so that I may follow you wholeheartedly. Breathe life into my spirit as I walk as Your disciple. In Jesus' name, amen.



prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for leaders
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

The walls were broken. God's generations were in exile. Why? One proud and arrogant generation started rebelling against the ways of God as their lustful eyes were keenly attracted to sin. They wriggled away from the ways of God. One generation disciplined the next in evil ways that were both subtle and seductive. No one stemmed the decline and the generations spiraled downward, until they fell into the hands of their enemies. Then a new generation cried out for mercy, and the Lord responded graciously. Alas, the next generation repeated a lifestyle of spiritual rebellion. The Lord waited patiently for their repentance, but they persisted in sin. This led to their eventual defeat and exile at the hands of the Babylonians.

Sin made the Israelites prisoners in a foreign land. The ruined walls of Jerusalem were a physical picture of the broken relationship the generations had with the Lord.

Perhaps such a somber story is not quite your idea of an uplifting Word from God at the start of a new year. However, such a grim reminder of our human problem of sin might just be the spiritual awakening we need at the start of 2023. The Lord is coming again soon! As His Church, we must prepare our hearts to meet King Jesus. Thus, I invite you to begin this brand new year with a prayer of repentance so that we as a Church can say, truthfully and humbly: "By God's grace, we are the generations in God's hands."

tuesday

03

Interceding for the Generations: Our Prayer

SCRIPTURE Nehemiah 1:1-11

OBSERVATION

How did Nehemiah pray for the generations who were far from God?

APPLICATION

Will you place your life back into God's hands?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for pastors and staff: To live lives of surrender and devotion unto the Lord
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

The generations of God's people were disciplined in sin. Yet God in His mercy raised up Nehemiah, a leader for His people. The cupbearer to the Persian king, weeping on his knees, cried out to the Lord to free and restore the generations. Nehemiah saw that what broke the heart of God was not broken walls, but God's broken people who wilfully broke His laws. The generations were chained to sin and prisoners in a foreign land. Yet, even as they lived in exile, the Lord desired that they would return to Him.

For the generations to return fully into God's hands, they had to humble themselves and repent. Repentance is the antidote to spiritual rebellion. It is the prayer of our chief intercessor, the Lord Jesus Christ (Heb 7:25), that the generations of His people are found in His life-giving hands today! That they would be totally surrendered to Him and be completely willing for the Lord to transform them in whatever way He desires. And when we have that spiritual posture, that **we will see as He sees and do as He says.**

In these last days before Jesus' return, the generations live in uncertain and trying times. As disciples of Christ, it is paramount that we become the generations in His hands, different from the world because we have a certain hope in Christ, and able to see God's world through the eyes of His compassion and love.

wednesday

04

Rebuild the Broken Walls Among the Generations: Our Participation

SCRIPTURE Nehemiah 2:9-20

OBSERVATION

How did Israel respond to Nehemiah's leadership to rebuild the broken walls of Jerusalem?

APPLICATION

How is God leading you to rebuild the "broken walls" among the generations in Church and society?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for leaders
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for Singapore: That the fault lines between the generations will be healed by the Prince of Peace
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

God's people from all walks of life responded to Nehemiah's call to rebuild the walls so they could be protected from their enemies. Rebuilding the broken walls required a concerted effort. Today, there are many "broken walls" and fault-lines between the generations, in our society and even within the church (young and old; married and singles; working adults and retirees). For instance, the elderly who live with their families may face social isolation, emotional disengagement and loneliness.¹ Let us pray that godly generations will bridge these relational divides, empowered by the love of God.

Studies in Singapore found that one in three young people reported internalising mental health symptoms such as sadness, anxiety and loneliness.² Let us pray that the generations will experience the *shalom* (fullness and flourishing) that only God can provide, because they know the love of God and the loving fellowship of God's people.

According to Singapore's Department of Statistics, the rate of divorce and annulment rose by 13.4% from 2020. Let us pray for God's protection over the generations and families.

God loves the generations and desires us to rebuild the "broken walls" in our land so that the generations would not be defenceless against the enemy.

¹ The Straits Times, Elderly people may feel lonely, isolated even while living with family: Study, 27 Aug 2021.

² The Straits Times, About 1 in 3 young people in Singapore has mental health symptoms: Study, 20 May 2022.

thursday

05

The Generations on Our Knees: Our Real Fight

SCRIPTURE Nehemiah 4:1-9

OBSERVATION

How did Nehemiah (vv.4, 9) and God's people (vv.6, 9) respond to the opposition, intimidation, threats and challenges of rebuilding the broken walls of Jerusalem?

APPLICATION

How should you respond to the opposition, intimidation, threats and challenges of building the generations in the Church and in society?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for Outreach/Missions/New Life leaders: To lead our church to proclaim the Gospel wherever God plants us
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Seeing the concerted efforts of God's people in the rebuilding project, Sanballat became very angry and fired five derisive questions to discourage them from continuing the work.³ Nehemiah responded to the opposition with prayer. Nehemiah's prayer (v.5) did not stem from the desire for revenge but was uttered for the honour of God, who was the real object of the enemies' insults.⁴ Facing fierce opposition, the rebuilding project should have been thwarted. Yet the faithfulness, diligence and resilience of God's people enabled them to finish rebuilding the walls. They were deeply anchored in their faith in God.⁵

Today, building the "broken walls" among the generations within the church and in society requires all of us to lean on God, pray unceasingly and continue the work faithfully. The evil one will oppose the Church with division, deception, discouragement and distraction. So let us get on our knees in humility, stand firm in faith and move forward in love to rebuild the "broken walls" among the generations for His glory.

For we (**the generations**)⁶ do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places (Eph 6:12).

³ Kenneth L. Barker and John R. Kohlenberger III, ed., *Old Testament, vol. 1 of NIV Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 709.

⁴ ESV Bibles by Crossway, *ESV: study Bible: English standard version*, ESV ed. (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2008), 831

⁵ ESV Bibles by Crossway, *ESV: study Bible: English standard version*, ESV ed. (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2008), 831

⁶ The words in parentheses were inserted by the writer of today's entry.

friday
06

Generations Passing on the Gospel: Our Responsibility

SCRIPTURE Nehemiah 3:1-4; 2 Timothy 1:1-8, 12b-14

OBSERVATION

Use your imagination and visualise the generations working alongside each other, rebuilding the wall.

APPLICATION

Will you pass the Gospel into someone else's hands?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for SGI leaders: To be found in God's hands and to pass the Gospel into someone else's hands
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

It was backbreaking work under the hot sun! Eliashib the high priest rolled up his sleeves and constructed the Sheep Gate. Next to him were the men of Jericho, next to them was Zaccur, next to him were the sons of Hassenaah and then the list went on and on. Generations laboured next to each other to rebuild the walls. They passed on an important legacy to future generations so they could be protected from their enemies.

The devil comes to steal, kill and destroy. Jesus came so that generations of disciples may have abundant life. The Gospel was passed on from Timothy's grandmother, Lois, to his mother, Eunice, and then to him. Timothy's heart was captivated by the Word of God handed down through the generations and God's abundant life lived out faithfully through the generations.

The Lord Jesus is coming again soon! There is an urgent need for the Gospel to be proclaimed and lived out boldly in the nations, so that all generations will be saved and disciplined! As a result, there are many movements birthed by the Spirit where generations move out to unreached and unengaged peoples so that they are saved and disciplined. This work continues all over the world. "Broken walls" are being rebuilt and more generations are returning to God's hands!

Will you pass the Gospel into someone else's hands?

saturday

07

Generations In or Out of His Hands: Our Choice

SCRIPTURE Nehemiah 13:15-18; Luke 1:46-55

OBSERVATION

According to Luke 1:50, who does the Lord show mercy towards?

APPLICATION

Are you in or out of His hands?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for Church Board: To live fully in the hands of God
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Despite the mercy and grace shown by the Almighty God. Despite the immense efforts to rebuild the walls. Despite all the consecration, the intercession, the worship and the dedication of the walls, the cycle of spiritual rebellion would continue among His people. Generation after generation of Israelites would be disciplined in the wrong way and led terribly astray.

No good work would be adequate, and no burnt sacrifice would be sufficient to save the generations from the hand of evil and the consequences of our sins. However, “The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love” (Psa 145:8).

God chose to send His one and only Son to a spiritually hostile world in the most perplexing and supernatural way! He chose a soon-to-be-married virgin, Mary, to conceive Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit and to give birth to Him in an unsanitary environment where animals slept. Jesus grew up in an obscure village, but during his three years of ministry, He mesmerised large crowds, healed the sick, confounded His critics and raised the dead to life! He faced a miscarriage of justice, was brutally tortured, was force-marched shamefully through the streets and violently crucified on the cross. This mysterious and magnificent sacrifice would save generations upon generations from the penalty of sin! But Jesus chose not to remain buried. By the Father’s power, Jesus was resurrected, and offers eternal life for generations who choose to fear Him and be in His hands. Will you choose Him today?

—
sunday
08
Sunday Journal

SCRPTURE

OBSERVATION

APPPLICATION

PRAYER

the past week

—
review

What was my high point and my low point for the week?

What gave me life and what drained me?

How was the Spirit of God at work?

the past week

reflect

What is one key thing that God said to me this week in light of what has happened?

respond

What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying? Commit in prayer.



Week 2 FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

KNOWLEDGE:

Learn something new so you can be better at whatever you do.

Memory Verse

"The Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth comes knowledge and understanding."
– Proverbs 2:6 (NIV)

1 Bottom Line

Knowing God is the most important thing.*

2 Bible Story

Luke 2:41-52 – Boy Jesus at the Temple

3 Activity

Portrait drawing

Props: Writing or drawing tools and paper

Ask your family members to draw a portrait of a person whom they know very well. Get everyone to discuss:

- What do you know about this person?
- What did you do that helped you know this person well?
- Why is knowing this person well important to you?

Say, "When we know God well, we will be able to hear and follow His Word. We learn to do the right thing when we put God's teachings first in everything we do. We make fewer mistakes and we will be a blessing to others. When we are in trouble, we know that God's goodness and promises – that are written in the Bible and through experiences – will carry us through the hard times."

4 Talk About It

- Why is knowing God the most important thing to do every day?
- What are some ways that we can know God better?
- How does knowing God help you to trust Him?

Parents: Share how your knowledge about God helped you or others in times of need. How did it motivate you or others? How did it help you to trust God?

5 Prayer

Praise God for His unchanging character and love for us. Pray that we will seek Him and put our trust in Him more each day.

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Click or scan
this QR code for
this week's Bible
story video!

monday

09

All Nations in God's Hands

SCRIPTURE Psalm 2; Isaiah 40:12-18**OBSERVATION**

What observations can you make about God in relation to the nations in these passages?

APPLICATION

As we pray for Singapore and seek the *shalom* of this city and nation, we take heart that God is the true King of the Nations who reigns over all.

PRAYER

I will praise you, Lord, among the nations; I will sing of you among the peoples. For great is your love, reaching to the heavens; your faithfulness reaches to the skies. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth.

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for leaders
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

This week, we will explore the theme “Singapore in God’s hands” in our Devotional Journal entries. To understand how Singapore is in God’s hands, we need the global perspective that all nations, large or small, are in the hands of God the true King.

We turn therefore to Psalm 2, a psalm that was probably sung in conjunction with the coronation of an Israelite king. The background of Psalm 2 may be foreign to us because we do not live under a monarchy. Three parties speak in this psalm: (1) the kings of the earth (v.3); (2) the Lord in heaven (v.6); and (3) the Lord’s king on earth (vv.7-8). In those days the anointed king was understood to be God’s representative and even called the “son of God” (vv.2,7,12).

The sovereignty of God over the nations is evident in Psalm 2, as it is in Isaiah 40:12-18. Isaiah 40:17 does not mean that nations and civilisations are completely worthless. Rather, we see a comparison in Isaiah 40:18 – the greatness of God far transcends the glory of the nations. A recent song by CityAlight sums it up well:

“Though the nations rage, kingdoms rise and fall
There is still one King reigning over all
So I will not fear for this truth remains
That my God is the Ancient of Days

None above Him, none before Him
All of time in His hands
For His throne it shall remain and ever stand
All the power, all the glory
I will trust in His name
For my God is the Ancient of Days.”



**SCAN OR CLICK
TO LISTEN TO
THE SONG!**
Ancient of Days
by CityAlight

tuesday

10

Singapore in God's Hands: Pray for Singapore

SCRIPTURE 2 Chronicles 7:11-22; 1 Timothy 2:1-4; Matthew 6:7-13

OBSERVATION

What is the broader context of Solomon's prayer?

APPLICATION

Spend some time today reading the local news and praying for Singapore, and end your devotional time with the Lord's prayer.

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for pastors and staff: To know the leading and power of God afresh as we embark on a new year of ministry and mission
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Verse 14 is often used out of context, especially in prayer meetings. Firstly, this is God's response to Solomon's prayer in 2 Chronicles 6:36-39 at the dedication of the temple. Secondly, this response is given in the context of God's covenant with David. Third, God's response relates to a specific place (Jerusalem) where God chose to dwell with the Israelites. Singapore is not biblical Israel, so we need to be careful how we apply it in our context.

This doesn't mean that verses 11 to 22 are irrelevant to us. Jesus has come as the greater heir to David's throne, fulfilling the Davidic covenant and establishing the New Covenant. The promise of God's chosen land has been expanded to include the whole earth. Now, God's presence dwells not in a specific temple in Jerusalem, but in the Church as the temple of God through the Holy Spirit. As we pray in Jesus' name, He promises to hear and answer our prayers.

Singapore may not be biblical Israel, but she is certainly part of God's plan for the world. Because of that, we must pray for restoration, revival and reconciliation in Singapore. Ask boldly that God's kingdom will come and His will be done in Singapore as it is in heaven. As Billy Graham said so beautifully: "We are to pray in times of adversity, lest we become faithless and unbelieving. We are to pray in times of prosperity, lest we become boastful and proud. We are to pray in times of danger, lest we become fearful and doubting. We are to pray in times of security, lest we become self-sufficient."

wednesday

11

Singapore in God's Hands: What Is Our True Citizenship?

SCRIPTURE John 18:33-37; 1 Peter 1:1-3; Hebrews 11:13-16

OBSERVATION

To which country are we called to belong and why?

APPLICATION

How might these passages help you to understand what it means to live as a citizen of God's kingdom and of Singapore, fulfilling your vocation in the marketplace, school or home that God has called you to?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for leaders
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for Singapore: That our leaders may govern with wisdom and integrity amidst the challenges we face as a nation. Pray that the Gospel may continue to proceed unhindered in Singapore, as Christians continue to transform society and culture to the glory of God.
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

The word “exiles” in 1 Peter 1:1 and “strangers” in Hebrews 11:13 come from the Greek word *parepidemos*, which is better translated as “resident alien”. There is a tension inherent in this term. To be “alien” is to acknowledge that we don't belong, because our citizenship is not of this world but of God's kingdom. Yet we are “resident”, because we are placed in the world and belong to an earthly country.

In a sense, we hold “dual citizenships”, but these “citizenships” are not equal. Having been baptised into the body of Christ and accepted into the kingdom of God, our fundamental allegiance must be to God, and our fundamental identity must be derived from God and His kingdom. This was seen in the life of our Lord. While submitting to Pilate's interrogation, Jesus made clear that there was another kingdom that took priority in His life and actions.

This has tremendous implications for us as Christians of Singapore. We seek to be faithful ambassadors of God in our spheres of influence, even if we must swim against the tide. We learn to live the ethics and values of God's kingdom, even if the world thinks we are foolish. We trust not in the strength of the financial system or the armed forces, but in God who raises the dead. We rest our hopes not in earthly peace and prosperity, but in a new heaven and new earth which King Jesus will bring when He comes again.

By doing these, we entrust Singapore and her future into God's hands. May our Kingdom pledge ever be: “We the **Christians** of Singapore...”!

thursday

12

Singapore in God's Hands: Render to Caesar

SCRIPTURE Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:11-17; Matthew 22:15-22

OBSERVATION

What posture does these texts encourage us to take toward earthly authority?

APPLICATION

Were there instances in your life where there was conflict between earthly authority and your Christian beliefs, and if so, how did you handle it?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for Outreach/Missions/New Life leaders: To bring God's light into the lives of the people they reach through acts of love and proclamation of the Gospel
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

The main message of Romans verses 1 to 7 is clear: **submit** to human authorities **because** God is the ultimate authority to whom all earthly authority must bow. Rulers that exist have been allowed by God (v.1). Submission to human authority is “for the Lord’s sake” (1 Pet 2:13). The teaching of this passage is balanced with other Scriptural texts. Moses, Samuel and Daniel **opposed** earthly authorities in order to remain faithful to God.

Jesus’ debate with the Pharisees presents an important principle. The Denarius of Tiberius (pictured)⁷ showed the image of the head of the Roman emperor Tiberius. Therefore, Jesus argued, since the emperor’s image was on the coin, the coin belongs to the emperor and his subjects ought to pay the tax.



However, Jesus added a higher principle, playing on the word “image”. Every well-schooled Pharisee knew that all humanity is created in the image of God (the same word *eikon* is used in Gen 1:26). Therefore, even though Caesar’s subjects owe him tax because Caesar’s image is on the coin used to pay the tax, all of humanity (including Caesar) owe themselves to God because we bear the image of God.

And so, we submit to the leaders God has placed over us in Singapore, and the bosses and supervisors in our workplaces. We should do good (v.3) and give respect and honour where these are due (v.7). When we are faced with ethical dilemmas that require us to push back against the leadership, may we pray for the grace to do so with wisdom and tact, so that God is glorified.

⁷ Emperor Tiberius Denarius, on Wikimedia Commons. Reproduced under GNU Free Documentation License.

friday
13

Singapore in God's Hands: Live Righteously

SCRIPTURE Proverbs 11:8-14; 14:24-35; Philippians 2:12-16

OBSERVATION

How is righteousness described in the Proverbs passages?

APPLICATION

In what ways have you personally seen Singaporean Christians “shining like stars” as they engage the world around them, and how can you do the same?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for SGI leaders: To exercise faith and discernment as they lead each CG to plan for the year ahead
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Proverbs falls into a genre called “wisdom literature”. Hence, it is not a collection of commands that we unthinkingly obey, nor of ironclad “promises” that certain blessings will come to us if we behave in particular ways. Rather, the book of Proverbs is a collection of reflections on life (in biblical times) and principles, that gives us the skill to live a flourishing and full life today.

In verses 8 to 14 and Proverbs 14:24-35, righteousness is described in very practical terms. Righteousness is **ethical** – it is about moral behaviour – and **relational** – how one deals with neighbours. Righteousness can also be understood from a **national** perspective – a righteous nation that carries its affairs well and looks after its people is a wise nation, and is blessed by God. Verse 11 tells us that a nation is blessed by the uprightness of its inhabitants.

As Christians, we promote the welfare of Singapore by living righteously. This means looking out for the needs of others around us, loving those who are weak and suffering, and living by God’s moral compass. Righteous living will sometimes require us to **discern** through God’s wisdom how to apply Scriptural principles to ambiguous situations and thereby **decide** on the best course of action. But as we commit to living righteously by the power of God’s Spirit, we will be a bright city on hill and shine like stars which stand out against the darkness of night.

“Commit your way to the LORD;
trust in Him, and He will act.
He will bring forth your righteousness as light,
and your justice as the noonday.”
Psalm 37:5-6 (ESV)

saturday

14

Singapore in God's Hands: Rejoice, the Lord is King!

SCRPTURE Psalm 33

OBSERVATION

How are the devotions this week reflected in Psalm 33?

APPLICATION

Take some time to worship the LORD who is our help and our shield, and rejoice in His steadfast love.

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for Church Board: To be united in love for God and each other, rooted in the Scriptures, empowered by the Spirit, attuned to the times and courageous in decision-making
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

As we end this week's series of Devotional Journal entries, let's look back on what we have learnt over the past few days. All the nations, including Singapore, are in God's sovereign and loving hands. This calls for a **response** of faith and obedience, in word and deed. But this response always flows from a **recognition of rejoicing in** who God is and what He has done. God always has the initiative and it is His glorious name that matters above all. As the hymnwriter Charles Wesley put it:

“Rejoice, the Lord is King:
Your Lord and King adore!
Rejoice, give thanks and sing,
And triumph evermore.
Lift up your heart,
Lift up your voice!
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!”

Psalm 33 begins with a set of imperatives in verses 1 to 3, calling all the righteous to sing and to praise the LORD. Praising God is what we were created to do – it is fitting! Thus, joy results when we praise God. We praise God because He is faithful (v.4). He is the awesome Creator (vv.6-9). He foils the plans and purposes of those opposed to Him (v.10), while causing His own plans and purposes to endure. It is this confidence that causes the Psalmist to wait in hope for the LORD, to place his trust in God's name (vv.20-22) and place his life in God's hands.

What will your response be today? Will you choose to rejoice in the Lord? Will you entrust Singapore, and your life and witness as a Christian in Singapore, into God's faithful hands?

sunday

15

Sunday Journal

SCRPTURE

OBSERVATION

APPPLICATION

PRAYER

the past week

review

What was my high point and my low point for the week?

What gave me life and what drained me?

How was the Spirit of God at work?

the past week

reflect

What is one key thing that God said to me this week in light of what has happened?

respond

What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying? Commit in prayer.



Week 3 FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

KNOWLEDGE:

Learn something new so you can be better at whatever you do.

Memory Verse

"The Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth comes knowledge and understanding."

– Proverbs 2:6 (NIV)

1 Bottom Line

When you discover something new, it can change you.*

2 Bible Story

John 1:19-42; 3:22-36 – Jesus' Baptism

3 Activity

Renewed

Props: Craft tools and recyclable materials, for example boxes or empty bottles

Provide each family member with a piece of recyclable material. Ask everyone to create something new with what they were given. After the activity, get everyone to share what they created.

Discuss:

- What "new" features did you add to the recyclable material to make it "new" again?
- What change would you like to make about yourself?
- Why is it important to make good changes?

Say, "Jesus is the biggest gift God has given us. When we include Jesus in our lives, we decide to be "new" again. This means that we decide to keep our old selves away and become a follower of Christ. For example, when I get frustrated, I no longer vent my anger on others like I used to. Instead, I choose to pray and calm down. I learn to forgive."

4 Talk About It

- How should knowing Jesus change the way you treat people?
- How can God's wisdom change how you respond when you are frustrated?
- What steps can you take if you want to know more about Jesus?

Parents: Share how you were like before you knew Christ and what changes you experienced after you discovered Jesus. How did you feel about it? What changes did others notice about you?

5 Prayer

Pray for a heart that is always excited to learn and know more about God. Ask God for His wisdom to be more like Him so that others can see God in us.

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Adapted by JoshuaWong/CEFC/January 2023



Click or scan
this QR code for
this week's Bible
story video!

monday

16

The Gospel of God

SCRIPTURE Romans 1:1-6; Ephesians 3:1-7**OBSERVATION**

How is the Gospel of God described in verses 1 to 6?

APPLICATION

Spend time today giving thanks to God for all that He has done for you in Christ.

PRAYER

Our Father in Heaven, Your Gospel is a glorious and gracious gift to us. Help us to never ever take our salvation for granted. May we marvel more and more at the unsearchable riches of Christ, and be those who make Christ known wherever You place us. Empower us to live boldly and faithfully for Your eternal purposes. Amen.

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for leaders
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

The upcoming Lunar New Year celebrations give us an excellent opportunity to proclaim the Gospel in both word and deed. In our Devotional Journal series this week, we will be taking a deeper dive into the significance of the Gospel.

What exactly *is* the Gospel? Some will say, it's the message of the Four Spiritual Laws, Bridge to Life or the Three Circles. These are concise presentations of the Gospel, which are great to learn and share. But they are not the Gospel itself.

The word "Gospel" is derived from the old Anglo-Saxon word "godspell" which means "good story". It is translated from the Greek word *euangelion* which means "Good News". Why is the Gospel Good News? Mainly because, as we learn in verse 1, it is the Gospel **of God!**

The Gospel of God shows God's **purpose** through the generations – He promised the Gospel through the prophets (v.2) long before it was fully revealed. The Gospel of God also demonstrates God's **power** – in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (v.4). Even today, God miraculously gives life to the spiritually dead! The decaying and dark parts of our lives can receive His wholeness and healing. That's great news!

Because the Gospel is from God and accomplished by God, it is a Gospel of **grace**. By grace, we Gentiles (non-Jews) are included within the Gospel (Eph 3:6) and get to be part of God's family. By grace, we are now ministers of the Gospel (Eph 3:7), who welcome others into the family. What a glorious Gospel!

tuesday

17

The Gospel of God's Kingdom

SCRIPTURE Matthew 4:23-25, 9:35-38

OBSERVATION

As Jesus proclaimed the Gospel of the Kingdom, how did the lives of His hearers change?

APPLICATION

Pray for yourself and others to live more fully under God's kingly rule.

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for pastors and staff: To be fully submitted to the Lordship of Christ in their lives and to lead the church to do the same
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

The Christian Gospel is not just the Gospel of God, but the Gospel of His **Kingdom!** In the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) the proclamation of the kingdom of God was central to Jesus' mission. The Greek word *basileia* ("kingdom, rule and domain") is used a whopping 121 times in these books (Matthew 55 times; Mark 20 times; Luke 46 times).⁸

It can be difficult for us to relate to the idea of a **kingdom**. After all, Singapore does not have its own king! In the Scriptures, the "kingdom of God" refers to God's sovereign rule and the blessings that we enjoy when we live under it.⁹ Citizenship in God's kingdom has its benefits!

Matthew the Evangelist points out some of these benefits. As Jesus went through Galilee, he healed every disease and affliction (v.23). Those oppressed by demons were delivered (v.24). Wherever there was death and darkness, Jesus ushered in the life and light that accompany God's rightful reign!

All of us love God's blessings and benefits – emotional and psychological well-being, flourishing relationships and so on. However, isn't it often the case that we want Kingdom blessings without the rule of the King? We want God to fill our fuel tank while keeping our own hands on the steering wheel of our lives! When God's Kingdom makes demands on us, when obedience is painful or costly, and when the King calls us to surrender control and let Him lead, we often resist or turn away. May we choose to bow the knee before our King today, fully delighting in Him and His gracious care for us.

⁸ J. B. Green, J. K. Brown, & N. Perrin (Eds.), *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, Second Edition* (p. 468). Nottingham, England: IVP Academic

⁹ G. E. Ladd, *The Presence of the Future* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974]

wednesday

18

Enemies of the Gospel

SCRIPTURE Romans 11:28, Philippians 3:18-19

OBSERVATION

What are some of the reasons that people might be enemies of God's Gospel?

APPLICATION

Pray for at least one person you know who is an enemy of God's Gospel and ask for the Lord to bless, touch and convict this person.

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for leaders
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for Singapore: That Covenant EFC will effectively partner with other churches in Singapore to win over many enemies of the Gospel and welcome them into God's family
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Depending on the receiver, good news can appear quite bad. In May 2022, my family (all Tottenham Hotspur fans) was joyfully celebrating the good news that they had beaten arch-rivals Arsenal by a convincing score of 3-0. Only thing is, I support the other team.

The Christian Gospel wasn't good news to most Jews in Paul's day. When Paul wrote the letter to the Romans, most of traditional Judaism was hostile to the movement which sprang from the Messiah Jesus.¹⁰ In particular, the Jews rejected Jesus' claim to be God (e.g. Matt 26:65). Hence, Paul characterised them as enemies of the Gospel (v.28).

In the epistle to the Philippians, Paul mentions a different kind of enemy of Christ: those who oppose the cross of Christ in their pursuit of self-indulgence (Phil 3:18-19). Paul describes these people as having their stomach as their god, which is a metaphor for embracing "unbridled sensuality, whether gluttony or sexual licentiousness"¹¹. The ultimate reason for their rejection of the Gospel, Paul says, is that their mind is set on earthly things. They fail to see the glory and goodness of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Bible tells us that there will be enemies of the Gospel, so we shouldn't be surprised when we meet them. God's grace **can** be resisted. He respects our freedom so much that He allows any one of us to reject His blessing of salvation, should we so choose. Today, if we know those who oppose God and His ways, let's view them not with condescension, but compassion. Let's weep together with Paul (Phil 3:18) and intercede for the lost.

¹⁰ Dunn, J. D. G. (1988). *Romans 9-16* Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

¹¹ Hansen, G. W. (2009). *The Letter to the Philippians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans

thursday

19

Obstacles to the Gospel

SCRIPTURE 1 Corinthians 9:11-16, 2 Corinthians 4:3-4

OBSERVATION

Why did Paul not make use of his “rightful claim” (v.12)?

APPLICATION

How might our character and conduct reflect the Gospel and attract people to Christ?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for Outreach/Missions/New Life leaders: To prayerfully discern ways to lead the church to overcome obstacles to the Gospel that are present in our culture
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

In football, a player commits the foul of “obstruction” when he/she moves into an opponent’s path to block or slow him/her down, when the ball cannot be played by either player. In the spiritual arena, the progress of the Gospel can be also be obstructed.

In 1 Corinthians 9, the Apostle Paul explains to the Corinthian Christians that he has laid down his rights to making a living from the Gospel and to take a Christian wife. These rights sound like good and necessary aspects of life. So why does Paul give them up? Not to prove he’s holier than everyone else or to make life difficult for himself, but for one purpose alone: to ensure that there would be no **obstacle** to the progress of the Gospel (v.12).

If we were to examine our lives closely, might we find that we unknowingly obstruct others from believing the Gospel? It may be that the way we live our lives makes it **harder** for people to believe the Gospel, rather than **easier**! Let’s reflect on the way we speak: are our words gracious or do they tear people down (Eph 4:29)? And our workplace ethics: do we work wholeheartedly and with integrity, or selfishly (Eph 6:5-7)?

Satan actively obstructs people from receiving the light of the Gospel by blinding them (2 Cor 4:3-4). He is literally hell-bent on preventing as many as possible from seeing Christ’s light. Knowing the enemy’s tactic, will we therefore live as a light unto the world (Matt 5:14) and pray that the enemy will himself be obstructed?

friday
20

Stewards of the Gospel

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 2:1-4; 1 Corinthians 9:16-23**OBSERVATION**

What was Paul's motivation to declare the Gospel boldly to the Thessalonian church in verses 1 to 4?

APPLICATION

B.L.E.S.S. a non-Christian in your circle of influence and build a bridge that will lead that person closer to the Gospel.

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for SGI leaders: To be role models to the church on how to live as stewards of the Gospel
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

One of CEFC's core values is stewardship. What do you instinctively associate with the idea of stewardship? My guess is that it would be the stewardship of **resources**, such as time and money.

Surprisingly, in the New Testament – and especially the epistles – stewardship is more often linked with the **Gospel**, rather than money or time. Stewardship, according to the Merriam Webster dictionary, is the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care. The words “entrust” / “entrusted” occur 14 times in the Epistles; and 12 of these times, they are associated with the Gospel!¹²

Now, if we are entrusted with the Gospel, how do we fulfil that trust placed upon us? Answer: we proclaim the glorious Gospel of God. How do we do this? First, with **urgency**! May our hearts resonate with the cry of Paul: “Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!” (1 Cor 9:16b). Second, with **humility**. Paul affirms that he has no basis to boast when he proclaims the Gospel (1 Cor 9:16a). The Gospel is utterly humbling because none of us deserve to receive it or pass it on to others.

Finally, we are to proclaim the Gospel with **charity**, out of the desire that others may come to share in the blessings of the Gospel (1 Cor 9:23). In order to proclaim the Gospel, Paul builds relational bridges with different kinds of people and reaches into their world (1 Cor 9:19-23). He becomes all things to all people, so that he may save some (1 Cor 9:22). May we learn to be selfless stewards of the Gospel like Paul!

¹² This is based on a lexical search in the English Standard Version Bible.

saturday

21

Worthy of the Gospel

SCRIPTURE Philippians 1:27-28, 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

OBSERVATION

What do the Scriptures teach about living worthy of the Gospel?

APPLICATION

Identify one area of your life in which you can live more worthily of the Gospel and take it to the Lord in prayer.

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for Church Board: To be continually guided by the wisdom of the Lord in discerning the times and directing the affairs of the church
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

In verse 27, Paul stresses that the **one essential thing** for the Christian is to live in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ.¹³ Being worthy doesn't mean that we need to earn the Gospel, but that we are to live in a way that matches the Gospel that we have received by grace.

How do we live worthy of the Gospel? Let's dig a little deeper in the text. The first clause of verse 27 can also be translated "only **show yourselves to be good citizens**, worthy of the gospel of Christ"¹⁴. Through believing in the Gospel, we Christians become citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem (see Rev 21:2-3). To live worthy of the Gospel means that we live in a manner that fits this heavenly city. The sons and daughters of the King must display His likeness and character. Ponder this for a minute – isn't it breathtaking that God has chosen to demonstrate His majesty through us, the humble and fallible Church? What an undeserved privilege!

It is impossible, in our own might, to live in a manner worthy of the Gospel. Hence Paul tells the Thessalonian church that he prays that God would **consider them worthy** of His calling and fulfil their work of faith **by His power** (2 Thess 1:11). It is God Himself at work, from first to last, calling us to Himself and enabling us to follow Him all the way to the end. May we earnestly pray for ourselves and each other, that we may all be empowered to be radiant witnesses of God's glorious Gospel!

¹³ Hawthorne, G. F. (2004). *Philippians*. Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

¹⁴ Ibid.

sunday

22

Sunday Journal

SCRIPTURE

OBSERVATION

APPLICATION

PRAYER

the past week

review

What was my high point and my low point for the week?

What gave me life and what drained me?

How was the Spirit of God at work?

the past week

reflect

What is one key thing that God said to me this week in light of what has happened?

respond

What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying? Commit in prayer.



Week 4 FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

KNOWLEDGE:

Learn something new so you can be better at whatever you do.

Memory Verse

"The Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth comes knowledge and understanding."
– Proverbs 2:6 (NIV)

1 Bottom Line

Remembering what's true can help you make wise choices.*

2 Bible Story

Luke 4:1-13 – Jesus Was Tempted in the Desert



Click or scan this QR code for this week's Bible story video!

3 Activity

Make a Wise Choice

Props: The movie clip from "Inside Out" where Riley decided to run away from home



Click or scan this QR code to watch the movie clip

Watch the clip that shows Riley, an 11-year-old girl from Minnesota, who was happy until her parents decided to move the whole family to San Francisco. She did not like the new place at all and decided to run away.

Discuss:

- What do you think of Riley's decision to run away from home?
- What pushed her to make the decision?
- What would you do if you were Riley?
- How does knowing God help us to make wise choices in situations like Riley's?

Say, "The only way to know God better is by praying and reading the Bible every day. When we pray or read the Bible, we build a strong relationship with God. We will know how God thinks and what is right in God's eyes. We will not be influenced by the devil's lies and do things that will hurt others or ourselves."

4 Talk About It

- How did Jesus battle the distractions from the devil?
- What happened when the devil realised that Jesus was focused on the Scriptures?
- How does this story help us to make wise choices?
- What are some potential consequences of an unwise choice?

Parents: Share an experience in which you made an unwise choice. What consequences did you face? How did you overcome the temptations? How did God help you?

5 Prayer

Pray that God will guide our paths and keep our eyes on Him at all times. Pray that our actions and thoughts will always be anchored on His Word so that the devil's lies will not tempt us.

monday

23

Maker of the Nations

SCRIPTURE Genesis 9:1,18-19; 10:1,32; 17:4-6

OBSERVATION

In what ways do these verses reveal the LORD as “Maker of the nations”?

APPLICATION

How does the LORD being “Maker of the nations” affect my personal discipleship?

PRAYER

Praise be to You, O Most High God! When You assigned lands to the nations, when You divided up the human race, You established the boundaries of the peoples according to the number in Your heavenly court. May the nations praise You, O God, yes, may all the nations praise You! Let the whole world sing for joy, because You govern the nations with justice and guide the people of the whole world. Amen.¹⁵

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for leaders
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

This week’s theme is “The Nations in God’s Hands”. The LORD God, who is Creator of heaven and earth, is also Maker of the nations — the nations were **formed by God’s hand!** Following God’s command to be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth (v.1), Shem, Ham and Japheth “went forth from the ark”, and from them “the people of the whole earth were dispersed” (v.19). Genesis 10 (the “Table of Nations”) follows. It traces the origin of the nations (*goy*, meaning peoples; see Gen 10:5,20,31)¹⁶ back to the genealogies of Noah’s three sons.

God preserved Noah’s family during the flood, and through him, repopulated the earth, person by person, forming the nations. “The nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood” (Gen 10:32), and “cover parts of Asia, Europe and Africa, from the Iranian plateau in the east to the Mediterranean coastlands in the west, from the Black Sea in the north to Somalia in Africa.”¹⁷

The nations are also **blessed by God’s hand.** Nine generations after Shem, the LORD covenanted with Abraham, making him the father of a multitude of nations (Gen 17:4-6). Just as He had formed the nations through one man (Noah), the Maker of the nations also blessed the nations through one man (Abraham). Abraham was to “surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him” (Gen 18:18; cf. 12:2-3; 22:18; 26:4). This alludes to the coming of the Messiah thousands of years later! Right from the very beginning of His divine salvific plan, God had intended to bless the nations!

¹⁵ Adapted from Deuteronomy 32:8 and Psalm 67:3-4, New Living Translation.

¹⁶ James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

¹⁷ John E. Hartley, *Genesis*, ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, *Understanding the Bible Commentary Series* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 116.

tuesday

24

King of the Nations

SCRIPTURE Isaiah 17:12-13; Job 12:23-25

OBSERVATION

In what ways do these verses reveal the LORD as “King of the nations”?

APPLICATION

How does the LORD being “King of the nations” affect my personal discipleship?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for pastors and staff: To yield their hearts totally to God’s direction for their lives and ministry
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Isaiah describes the nations using four consecutive metaphors (vv.12-13). The first pair of metaphors — the peoples **thunder** and the nations **roar**, like the terrifying roar of mighty waters — depicts the nations’ power and might. The next pair, however, portrays these same nations fleeing at the LORD’s rebuke: like **chaff** before the wind and **whirling dust** before the storm! The fearsome nations are completely **subdued under God’s hand** (cf. Psa 2:2-4; 46:6; 47:8). The LORD is King of the nations (Jer 10:7)!

While this oracle is directed at the Assyrians, whom God was using to judge His people, it is more broadly applicable to different nations of the world. God’s rebuke of the nations and their subsequent flight “puts the nations in their place”,¹⁸ revealing His sovereignty over them. God is in complete control of human affairs.¹⁹

All the nations of the earth are **ruled by God’s hand**. He is the true King who uplifts and prospers nations, and also the One who vanquishes and disperses them (Job 12:23). “Pretensions to world domination and control (by human leaders)...fade before the realities of God’s sovereign power.”²⁰

The King of the nations not only rules the nations, He rules their rulers (Job 12:24-25)! No human being, however powerful, can ever thwart the purposes of God.²¹ Even the mental faculties of earthly rulers are given by the LORD; without these, rulers become aimless, senseless and helpless. Even the king’s heart is in God’s hand, which He directs, as a water course, wherever He wills (Prov 21:1).

¹⁸ John Goldingay, *Isaiah*, ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, *Understanding the Bible Commentary Series* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 113-114.

¹⁹ Paul R. House, *Isaiah: A Mentor Commentary*, vol. 1, *Mentor Commentary* (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Mentor, 2018), 467.

²⁰ Gerald H. Wilson, *Job*, ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, *Understanding the Bible Commentary Series* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 131.

²¹ Daniel J. Estes, *Job*, ed. Mark L. Strauss, John H. Walton, and Rosalie de Rosset, *Teach the Text Commentary Series* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 77.

wednesday

25

Judge of the Nations

SCRIPTURE Psalm 59:5-9; 67:3-4; Joel 3:9-12

OBSERVATION

In what ways do these verses reveal the LORD as “Judge of the nations”?

APPLICATION

How does the LORD being “Judge of the nations” affect my personal discipleship?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for leaders
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for Singapore: That Singaporeans would acknowledge God's divine sovereignty over our land
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

The LORD is the impartial Judge of every nation (v.5; Psa 67:4). Both Israel **and** her enemies were **chastised by God's hand**, and suffered the punishment of His judgment. Other nations were used as **instruments in God's hand**, to mete out His discipline upon them.

For her persistent unfaithfulness and refusal to repent from sin (particularly idolatry), God chastised the nation of **Israel, His favoured nation** (1 Chron 5:25-26; 9:1). Shockingly, God used **Israel's enemy nations** as his chosen instruments to exact punishment on her. **Assyria** captured the Northern Kingdom of Israel and deported her people in 722 B.C. (2 Kin 15:29), while the Southern Kingdom of Judah fell to **Babylon** and her people were exiled in 586 B.C. (2 Kin 25:1-21).

Nevertheless, because they were excessively cruel towards Israel even as they executed God's judgment, God also chastised **Israel's enemy nations** (Joel 3:9-12; cf. Isa 2:4). Joel 3:12 depicts the LORD seated on His heavenly throne, exercising righteous judgment, “disposing of enemy nations by defeating them in war or by any means He chooses.”²²

And the LORD who judged Israel also delivered His people, as promised, after 70 years in exile. God used **another pagan nation, Persia**, as His instrument to release Israel from captivity. God chose Cyrus, the pagan king of Persia, to “fulfil all [His] purpose”, and even more astoundingly, called him “my shepherd” (Isa 44:28) and “His anointed...to subdue nations before him” (Isa 45:1)! Through Cyrus' decree, the divine Judge of the nations freed the Jews to return to Jerusalem and avenged God's wrath on the unbelieving nations.²³

²² Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, vol. 31, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1987), 269.

²³ John A. Martin, “Isaiah,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1099.

thursday

26

Hope of the Nations

SCRIPTURE Isaiah 42:1-7; Matthew 12:17-21

OBSERVATION

In what ways do these verses reveal Jesus as “Hope of the nations”?

APPLICATION

How does Jesus being “Hope of the nations” affect my personal discipleship?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for Outreach/Missions/New Life leaders: To lead the church to boldly proclaim Jesus, the Hope of the nations, to all nations
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Isaiah’s prophecy of Cyrus gave Israel hope of deliverance from exile. But Isaiah also prophesied an even greater hope — the Messiah, who would deliver not just the Jews but all people, and deliver not just from Babylon, but from the Kingdom of Darkness. He would be the Hope of the nations!

In the Old Testament, the LORD declares that His Chosen Servant will “bring forth justice to the nations (Hebrew: *goy*)” and be “a light for the nations (*goy*)” (vv.1,6). Matthew’s Gospel quotes this prophecy, identifying Jesus as God’s Chosen Servant. “He will proclaim justice to the Gentiles (Greek: *ethnos*)” and “in His name the Gentiles (*ethnos*) will have hope” (Matt 12:18,21). In the New Testament, the Greek word *ethnos* is most often translated as “Gentiles”, describing “all the individuals who do not belong to the chosen people (as distinct from the Jews or Christians).”²⁴ Jesus is the hope of the Gentiles!

Jesus is the hope of **all nations — both Jews and Gentiles** (Isa 49:6). Luke’s Gospel makes this explicit, identifying Jesus as the LORD’s salvation, that the LORD had prepared in the presence of “**all peoples**”; He was to be “a light for revelation to the Gentiles (*ethnos*) and for glory to your people **Israel**” (Lk 2:30-32, emphasis mine; cf. Acts 26:23).

Indeed, *ethnos* is also frequently translated in the New Testament as “nation(s)”, referring to “the people of the world...divided based on their constitution of a socio-political community”²⁵ (e.g. Matt 24:14; Matt 28:19; Jn 11:50, etc.). Jesus is Hope of the nations, because all nations — all peoples Jews and Gentiles — are **held in God’s hand**.

²⁴ Georg Bertram and Karl Ludwig Schmidt, “ἔθνος, ἔθνη,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 370.

²⁵ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 129.

friday
27

Saviour of the Nations

SCRIPTURE Luke 24:44-47; Romans 16:25-27**OBSERVATION**

In what ways do these verses reveal Jesus as “Saviour of the nations”?

APPLICATION

How does Jesus being “Saviour of the nations” affect my personal discipleship?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for SGI leaders: To lead their small groups to know Jesus, as He has revealed Himself and to make Him known
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

The Lord has “**made known**...His saving power among all nations” (Psa 67:2), “**made known** his salvation” and “**revealed** His righteousness in the sight of the nations” (Psa 98:2²⁶). The nations can know God’s salvation only because God has first revealed it; we may know the Saviour only because God has made Him known.

Paul refers to this as “the **revelation** of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been **disclosed** and...made known to all the nations” (Rom 16:25,26²⁷). And what is this “mystery”? It is the Gospel that was entrusted to Paul and the preaching about Jesus Christ (Rom 16:25). Jesus is Saviour of the nations because God has made Jesus known to the nations. This mystery, our salvation, has now been **revealed by God’s hand**.

Jesus, too, made known (“opened their minds to understand”) that everything written about the Christ in the Scriptures had been fulfilled in Himself. The repentance for the forgiveness of sins, that brings salvation, must be proclaimed in Jesus’ name. The name of Jesus must be proclaimed to all nations, without exception (vv.44-47)!

Jesus clearly reveals God’s heart for the nations. In His last words, Jesus commissioned His disciples to “make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19). This comes as a stark reminder of His earlier revelation to them, that the Gospel of the kingdom must first have been “proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations” before He will come again (Matt 24:14). No nation must be left out. Instead, every nation must be **reached by God’s hand!**

²⁶ Emphasis is the writer’s²⁷ Emphasis is the writer’s

saturday

28

God of the Nations

SCRIPTURE Psalm 22:27-28; 86:8-9; Revelation 7:9-12**OBSERVATION**

In what ways do these verses reveal the LORD as “God of the nations”?

APPLICATION

How does the LORD being “God of the nations” affect my personal discipleship?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for Church Board: To seek to glorify God above all as they govern the church
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

In the beginning, the Maker of the nations was the One God of the nations. But the nations forsook the LORD, and instead worshipped gods that they had made. The Philistines had Dagon, the Ammonites worshipped Molech, the Greeks had Zeus and a pantheon of gods. We see the same idolatry today.

But the day shall come when “the Lord will...famish all the gods of the earth, and to him shall bow down, each in its place, all the lands of the nations” (Zeph 2:11). In faith, the Psalmist proclaims, “There is none like you among the gods, O Lord...All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you” (Psa 86:8-9). Once again and forevermore, there shall be but One God of the nations.

In his majestic vision of heaven’s throne room, John sees “a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages”, along with the entire heavenly entourage of angels, elders and living creatures, worshipping God in everlasting praise (Rev 7:9-12)! Every nation is gathered in His presence, **dwelling in His Hands**, bowing at His feet and worshipping before His throne. “The redemption of the human race, that ultimate purpose of God in creation, has at last been realised.”²⁸ All nations will come and worship the Lord God of the nations (Rev 15:3-4)! All nations!

Indeed, may all creation remember and turn to the LORD, and may all the nations worship the God of the nations (vv.27–28)! For we are in His hands alone.

²⁸ Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 163.

sunday

29

Sunday Journal

SCRIPTURE

OBSERVATION

APPLICATION

PRAYER

the past week

review

What was my high point and my low point for the week?

What gave me life and what drained me?

How was the Spirit of God at work?

the past week

reflect

What is one key thing that God said to me this week in light of what has happened?

respond

What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying? Commit in prayer.



Week 5 FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

KNOWLEDGE:

Learn something new so you can be better at whatever you do.

Memory Verse

"The Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth comes knowledge and understanding."
– Proverbs 2:6 (NIV)

1 Bottom Line

If you don't understand something, ask.*

2 Bible Story

Matthew 11:1-6 – John the Baptist in Prison

3 Activity

Questions

Props: Paper and pens

Provide each family member with a piece of paper. Ask everyone to draw a line in the middle to create two columns. Get everyone to label the left column "Answered Questions" and write down the questions that God has answered. Then, label the right column "New Questions" and write down new or unanswered questions for God.

Invite everyone to share what they wrote.

Say, "God listens to everything we ask of Him. He may answer some of your questions quickly while, for other questions, you may have to wait longer for an answer. This does not mean that God is ignoring you or does not care about you. He cares so much that He wants to make sure that we get our answers at the right time and only when we are ready to receive them."

4 Talk About It

- What questions would you ask Jesus if you were sitting next to Him?
- As you can't get an audible answer from God, who can you pose your questions to?
- How does knowing the truth about God help you when you have questions that are hard to answer?

Parents: Share some of the questions which you have asked God previously. How many questions did God answer you? Which questions were hard to answer? How did you feel about having to wait longer for God to answer some of your questions?

5 Prayer

Pray for patience to wait upon God's answers and the wisdom to ask the right questions.



Click or scan this QR code for this week's Bible story video!

monday

30

Where Is God in This?

SCRIPTURE Daniel 4:28-37

OBSERVATION

What can you learn about God from the passage?

APPLICATION

How do I look at the world and history through the sovereignty of God?

PRAYER

O Lord God Almighty, the only wise God, You have determined Your plan and purpose for the whole world, and Your sovereign hand is stretched out over all nations. For surely, as You have planned, so it will be, and as You have purposed, so it will happen. For the Lord God Almighty has purposed and who can thwart Him? His hand is stretched out and who can turn it back.²⁹

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for leaders
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Daniel calls us to look at **history** – past, present and future – **theologically**. Embedded in Daniel is the theology of history. Daniel is about the **sovereignty of God over human history**. The history in Daniel spans from Israel’s exile to Babylon (Dan 9:1-2) to the time Jesus announced, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand” (Mk 1:15; Dan 7:13-14), and beyond, until God’s people “reign forever and ever” with God (Rev 22:5; Dan 7:18).

Israel was ruled over by the Babylonians (586-539 B.C.), followed by the Persians (539-331 B.C.) and then the Greeks (331-143 B.C.). The Maccabees revolted against the Greeks (168-143 B.C.) and Israel became an independent nation under the Hasmoneans (142-63 B.C.) until Rome’s intervention in 63 B.C.³⁰ In this long history, God’s people faced “distinctive problems thrown up by the Exile, by consequent involvement with world powers and their totalitarian claims, and by the long delay in achieving political freedom after the return to Jerusalem. As successive empires engulfed Judea, opposition would bring increased persecution, not liberation. The question arose, **where was God in this?**”³¹

Daniel is God’s answer to this theological crisis – with four key focuses. Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in Daniel 2:31-33 and Daniel’s vision in Daniel 7:1-8 reveal the **superpowers in history**. God’s people will **suffer in godliness** in “a time of distress” under the rule of anti-God kings (Dan 12:1). But they are to rest in the **sovereignty of God** – “the Most High” who “is ruler over the realm of mankind” (Dan 4:25, 32) and remain **steadfast in faithfulness** to God (Dan 12:10-12).

²⁹ Isaiah 14:24, 26-27

³⁰ Harold W. Hoehner, *Between the Testaments, The Bible Expositor’s Commentary*, Vol. 1 (Zondervan, 1979), 184-189

³¹ Joyce G. Baldwin, Daniel, *Theology of, The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis* (Zondervan, 1997), Vol. 4, 502 (emphasis mine)

tuesday

31

Overt Sovereign Presence of God

SCRIPTURE Daniel 3:19-27; 6:16-23

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about God from these texts?

APPLICATION

What does it mean for me to trust in God as I live in this world?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for pastors and staff: To wait and trust in God for His intervention in challenging situations
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Daniel “exhibits more than one literary pattern”³². The book is commonly divided into two parts: chapters 1 to 6, which consist of stories, and chapters 7 to 12, consisting of visions. Another way to outline Daniel is chapters 1 to 7 and 8 to 12 which show certain theological perspectives of the book.

The sovereignty of God is central in Daniel. But Daniel presents two dimensions of the sovereign presence of God: God’s **overt** sovereign presence in Daniel 1 to 6, and God’s **covert** sovereign presence in Daniel 7 to 12. In both text and narrative, God is more prominent and thus more present in Daniel 1 to 6 than in Daniel 7 to 12.

Found in Daniel are eight divine titles that underscore the supremacy and sovereignty of God. They occur a total of 24 times, of which 18 times are found in Daniel 1 to 6, and six times in Daniel 7 to 12. The divine titles, “the God of heaven” (five times)³³, “the Most High God” (eight times)³⁴, “the great God” (2:45), “God of gods and Lord of kings” (2:47), “Heaven that rules” (4:26), “the King of heaven” (4:37) and “the Lord of heaven” (5:23), are found in the first half of Daniel. The divine titles mentioned in Daniel 7 to 12 are: “the Most High God” (7:25), “the Highest One” (four times)³⁵, and “God of gods” (11:36). And very distinctive in Daniel 1 to 6 is God’s miraculous deliverance of His people who face opposition: from the fiery furnace (3:24-27) and the lions’ mouths (6:19-23).

But the prominent presence of God and His miraculous deliverance in Daniel 1 to 6 tell only half of the theological story of Daniel. It is incomplete.

³² Joyce G. Baldwin, 499

³³ Daniel 2:18, 19, 28, 37, 44

³⁴ Daniel 3:26; 4:2, 17, 24, 25, 34; 5:18, 21;

³⁵ Daniel 7:18, 22, 25, 27

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