
2023

devotional journal

*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



march

2023
devotional journal

march

*He changes times and
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DANIEL 2:21

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

southeast asia field workers

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”

GALATIANS 6:9-10 (NIV)



PRAY FOR

1. Our missionary in Sumba, Indonesia

Covenant EFC has the privilege of welcoming, discipling and sending domestic helpers back to their home country as Associate Missionaries. Ekawati, a former domestic helper in Singapore, is currently sponsored by Covenant EFC to be part of a team in Waingapu, Sumba in Indonesia – a small island in East Indonesia. She has been serving in Sumba for the last three years.

a. Church Planting. Ekawati is part of the Love Sumba Team, from Jemaat Kristen Indonesia (JKI), which has

planted six small churches in East Sumba. Ekawati helps pastor two of the new church plants.

b. Radio Broadcasting. During the pandemic, Ekawati set up a local radio broadcasting station to bring the Word of God to the local community. Many communities in Sumba are unable to read the Bible and the radio broadcast is an effective way of proclamation and discipleship. Pray for this ministry.

c. Pre-school Project. Sumba is one of the poorest islands in Indonesia, with many children unable to read or write. Ekawati plans to plant a Christian pre-school to disciple the next generation.

2. Our new missionary team in Timor-Leste

Sarah Chan is our first staff missionary in Timor-Leste. She moved to Timor-Leste in November 2022. In February 2023, she will be joined by two missionary interns, Hazel Tan and Keziah Soh, for a one-year attachment. The team will be partnering with St. Paulus Church in Remexio, Alieu in Timor-Leste – which is about an hour outside the capital.

a. The Team's Housing. The team will be stationed in a small village outside the capital, where housing is very basic and water supply sporadic. Pray for the current renovation works on the home to install a Western-style bathroom and simple kitchen.

b. The Team's Cultural Adjustment. For the team to adjust to Timor-Leste culture, especially picking up the local language, Tetum.

c. The Team's Ministry. For the team's plans to set up English courses and discipleship for the church youth leaders. The church is full of young people, but many of them cannot read the Bible.

d. The Team's Unity. For a sense of unity, purpose and mutual encouragement among the team. This is the first time that these three young adults will be living and serving together.

wednesday

01

The King Is Demanding

SCRIPTURE Daniel 2:1-9

OBSERVATION

What does Nebuchadnezzar's action in verses 4 to 9 tell us about him?

APPLICATION

How do I respond to unreasonable demands made on me?

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 the Nations: That God will raise up governments of integrity in the nations
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Kings get to ask the impossible. When Nebuchadnezzar ordered the wise men in his court to interpret his dreams, he made an **unreasonable demand** on them. With “royal dreams in Babylon, there was a protocol that allowed for interpretation. It required the king to inform the professional interpreters of the content of his dream”¹. But Nebuchadnezzar refused to follow the protocol: He commanded the wise men, “Declare the dream and its interpretation”, otherwise they would be severely punished (v.5); if they succeeded, they would be greatly rewarded (v.6).

People above us may make unreasonable demands on us. There are three kinds of expectations: Our own expectations, people's expectations and God's expectations. Only God's expectations are always true and reasonable, and He knows whether we can meet them or not. God's expectations could be His commandments that we are to actively obey, or trials according to His will that we are to passively endure. Our own expectations and people's expectations can at times be higher than God's.

The wise men appealed to the king to change his order, but he refused (vv.7-9). Behind Nebuchadnezzar's unreasonable demand was a **reasonable distrust** in these men. He knew that they were stalling for time (v.8), and had “conspired to tell me lies, hoping I will change my mind” (v.9, NLT). It was “as if Nebuchadnezzar suspected all along the emptiness of the diviners' alleged ability to foretell the future and was determined to put them to test”².

Unbeknown to anybody, behind this royal unreasonableness and stubbornness stands the divine intention, which we only know as the story unfolds.

¹ Tremper Longman III, *Daniel*, The NIV Application Commentary (Zondervan, 1999), 77

² Iain M. Duguid, *Daniel*, Reformed Expository Commentary (P&R, 2008), 20-21

thursday

02

A Truth Is Declared

SCRIPTURE Daniel 2:7-11

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make from the wise men's answer to Nebuchadnezzar in verses 10 to 11?

APPLICATION

How do I respond to difficulties that are humanly impossible to be resolved?

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 grow in waiting for God alone in times of utter helplessness
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Now, what if Nebuchadnezzar followed the Babylonian protocol concerning royal dreams, and made known to his wise men his dreams, and he trusted them and let them interpret his dreams? They would be deceitfully giving him a wrong and false interpretation (v.9). However, this scenario will never happen. The invisible sovereign hand of God was in this situation. It was God who gave the dreams to Nebuchadnezzar to serve His own purposes. And therefore, the interpretation of the dreams must be according to God. So, Nebuchadnezzar's unrelenting insistence on his wise men to make known to him both his dreams and the interpretation came from God. And it turned out to be an unprecedented, unreasonable and impossible demand from any king in history: "no great king or ruler has ever asked anything like this" (v.10). And what Nebuchadnezzar demanded was "difficult" and "there is no man on earth who could declare the matter to the king" (v.10). But Nebuchadnezzar was also stuck, with his dreams uninterpreted. His troubledness and anxiety only grew worse.

Out of this impasse a truth was declared: "there is no one else who could declare...except gods, whose dwelling is not with mortal flesh" (v.11). This pagan theology points to "There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries" (Dan 2:28). There are troubling times in our lives when we can trust in **no one else, but God alone**, who can do anything: "For **God alone** my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from Him. **God alone** is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken" (Psa 62:1-2, 5-6).

friday

03

The King Is Destructive

SCRIPTURE Daniel 2:10-13

OBSERVATION

What does Nebuchadnezzar's behaviour tell us about anger?

APPLICATION

What do I do when I am very angry?

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 grow in patience and gentleness, and not be easily angered
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

The wise men had pointed out to Nebuchadnezzar concerning his impossible demand that “there is no one else who could declare... except gods, whose dwelling is not with mortal flesh” (v.11). But didn't the Babylonians have their own gods? And why didn't the wise men seek their gods to reveal the matter to them? The wise men were “diviners and not prophets”³. The prophets of Israel had access to God to inquire of Him and He would speak to them, like Micaiah (1 Kin 22:7, 19-23). But Babylonian diviners “sought to discern patterns in events and dreams that foreshadowed the future, but they claimed no access to the minds of the gods”⁴. In Christ we can “come boldly and confidently into God's presence” by His blood (Eph 3:12, NLT; Heb 10:19). However, many of us fail to appreciate this privilege and neglect in spending time with God. We can seek God for our security, but we choose not to, and work out our own ways instead. We can seek God's Word to know God's mind, but do we?

Nebuchadnezzar became “indignant and very furious” and “gave order to destroy all the wise men of Babylon” (v.12). A dream was enough to make Nebuchadnezzar lose control of himself and act like an insane man. Here is anxiety out of insecurity, leading to extreme reactions to unexpected events. Fury can lead to folly. Nebuchadnezzar would have foolishly destroyed all his “political consultants, trend spotters and religious gurus”⁵, and lost the best people who could assist him to rule His Kingdom. It would be foolish self-destruction.

³ Iain M. Duguid, 21

⁴ Iain M. Duguid, 21

⁵ Tremper Longman, 77

saturday

04

A Captive with Discretion

SCRIPTURE Daniel 2:7-16

OBSERVATION

What contrasts can you observe in the narrative of verses 7 to 16?

APPLICATION

How can I grow in discretion and discernment?

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 lead the church with wisdom and discernment from Above
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Daniel's service to Gentile kings in exile spanned over some seventy years (Dan 1:1, 21). What was Daniel's daily life like? "Much of that time was probably not very interesting at all. During those years, as far as we know, nothing special happened. There was just the difficult routine of Daniel's faithfulness in a faraway land, trying to balance the demands of his two masters, the Babylonians and the Lord."⁶ But Scripture recorded the special times in Daniel's life that God was working in and through his life in special ways.

A special time came. It was Nebuchadnezzar's order to "destroy all the wise men of Babylon" (vv.12-13). Apparently, the killing had already started⁷, and now it came to Daniel and his friends (v.13). They had been preserved out of the holocaust of the destruction of Judah and then miraculously protected in not eating the king's choice food (Dan 1:1-16), and now they were condemned to death because of an insecure king's unreasonableness. When we go through such a roller coaster experience, we may find it disorientating, unsettling and confusing with regards to God. But not so for Daniel.

Daniel acted "with discretion and discernment" (v.14) – in stark contrast to the desperate and helpless Babylonian king and wise men. Anchoring in his God, Daniel had the wisdom from Above (Prov 2:6-7) to navigate through the complexities of life. When he asked the king to "give him time" (v.16), he was not accused of "buying time" (v.8). God was on Daniel's side. For now, Daniel has no answer for the life-threatening crisis, but he will...

⁶ Iain M. Duguid, 18

⁷ John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, Word Biblical Commentary (Word Books, 1989), 33



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

FORGIVENESS:

Deciding that someone who has wronged you doesn't have to pay.

Memory Verse

"Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."
– Colossians 3:13 (NIV)

1 Bottom Line

Everyone needs forgiveness.*

2 Bible Story

Luke 7:36-50 – Woman Anoints Jesus' Feet

3 Activity

Weight of Unforgiveness

Props: One dice, backpacks, masking tape and books

Mark a start point and end point on the floor in your living room. Ask your family members to carry a backpack each.

Get everyone to take turns throwing the dice and take steps forward according to the number shown. Each time everyone moves, add two books to their backpack. The backpack will get heavier as the game progresses. After the game, get everyone to share their experiences.

Say, "Every book represents unforgiveness in our hearts. Our bag gets heavier and it gets harder to walk to the end point. When we choose not to forgive others and keep holding on to unforgiveness, it feels like the heavy bag we are carrying. We become unhappy and angry all the time, and we lose friends because of the anger in our hearts. We can unload our bags by forgiving. Jesus has the power to let go of our heavy bag so that we can be free!"

4 Talk About It

- What does God say about forgiveness?
- Why is it hard to forgive someone when they have wronged you?
- How did it feel to be forgiven when you had wronged someone?
- Why does everyone need forgiveness?

Parents: Share an experience in which you were forgiven or you forgave someone who hurt you. How did it feel to be forgiven or to forgive someone wholeheartedly? What did God do to help? What did you learn from it?

5 Prayer

Thank God for reminding us that everyone needs forgiveness. Ask God to give us strength and generosity to forgive others who hurt us, and forgive ourselves for the mistakes we have made.

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

monday

06

Calm Wisdom Facing Consuming Wrath

SCRIPTURE Daniel 2:12-18

OBSERVATION

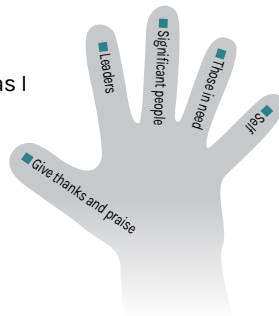
How did Daniel respond to the crisis triggered by Nebuchadnezzar?

APPLICATION

How do wisdom and prayer come into place when I go through trials?

PRAYER

O God, teach me and help me to grow in wisdom, as I read and meditate on Your Word, for knowledge, understanding and wisdom come from Your mouth⁸; and as I reflect on the experiences of life in walking with You. And help me to relate with people, especially difficult people, in the gentleness of wisdom and humility of heart.⁹



prayer pointers

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

deeper reflection

As we live in a world that is hostile to God's ways, we will face stress daily. In Daniel 2, we see two people who faced stress in totally opposite ways: Nebuchadnezzar with **consuming wrath** (vv.12-13) and Daniel with **calm wisdom** (vv.14-18). As for God, His wrath is the wrath of the only wise God (Rom 1:18; 16:27).

Nebuchadnezzar, together with the wise men in his court, symbolise the power of the mightiest human being and the wisdom of the smartest humans. But all this crumbles just because of a dream. Unable to know the meaning of the dream, the most powerful man became utterly powerless and helpless, and all he can do is be angry and destructive (v.12). But one who is "slow to anger" "rules his spirit", and is "better than the mighty" and "captures a city" (Prov 16:32). Patience is power.

Daniel responded to the difficult and dangerous situation with "discretion and discernment" (v.14). We do not know what Daniel said and how he spoke to Nebuchadnezzar such that he was willing "to give him time" to declare his dreams and interpretation (v.16). It was an act of wisdom. However, this act of wisdom of Daniel was inadequate. It did not have the answer to Nebuchadnezzar's problem. At times, wisdom enables us to see the big picture; sometimes, it is step by step. Having "the ability to keep calm under severe shock and pressure, to think quickly and exercise faith in a moment of crisis"¹⁰, Daniel moved from discretion before the king (vv.14-16) to dependence on God (vv.17-18).

⁸ Proverbs 2:6

⁹ James 3:13; Matthew 11:29

¹⁰ Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (IVP, 1978), 89

tuesday

07

Trusting in the Lord Alone

SCRIPTURE Daniel 2:17-18

OBSERVATION

What can you learn about undergoing severe trials?

APPLICATION

What does it mean for me when I have to trust in God alone and nothing else?

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 God as their trust
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Trusting in God alone – when all human means of support have been knocked out, when no mere human wisdom can deliver us from our predicament, when there is complete absence of earthly signs of God’s favour – is never a comfortable situation to be in. Daniel and his friends were in such a situation, where their only recourse is prayer – dependence on God. Perhaps, the most difficult part in this kind of situation is, “What if God does not answer our prayer?” Daniel and his friends sought God “concerning the mystery”, which only God and God alone, is able to reveal (v.18). And if God does not reveal the mystery to them, they would be “destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon” (v.18). How then are we to trust in God? Trusting in God is trusting in God who Himself is our trust (Jer 17:7).

Daniel’s friends are mentioned by their Hebrew names (v.17) rather than the more familiar Babylonian names in Daniel 3. In their present distress, they were to remember and trust in God’s grace (Hananiah – “Yahweh is gracious”), God’s uniqueness (Mishael – “Who is what God is?”) and God’s willingness to help them (“Azariah – “Whom Yahweh helps”).¹¹ They requested God’s “compassion” (v.18). Why particularly God’s “compassion”? God in the Babylonian exile is a God whose “compassions never fail...they are new every morning” and such is the exiles’ “hope” (Lam 3:21-23). In Job’s severe trials, “the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful” (Jas 5:11). God answers our “pleas for mercy” “in Your faithfulness, in Your righteousness” (Psa 143:1).

¹¹ Iain M. Duguid, 23

wednesday

08

Then the Mystery Is Revealed

SCRIPTURE Daniel 2:17-20

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about prayer?

APPLICATION

What changes do I need to make with regards to 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 leaders
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for the Nations: That God will fulfil His redemptive purposes for every nation
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Daniel and his friends, in a small but powerful fellowship of prayer (cf. Matt 18:19-20), **appealed to God** to help them “concerning the mystery” (vv.17-18). Then came the **answer from God**: “the mystery was revealed to Daniel” (v.19a). Four persons sought God together, but God revealed the mystery to only one person, Daniel. There were no protests from Daniel’s friends, complaining out of envy and jealousy, “Why to Daniel only?” Nor was there any sense of spiritual superiority and pride on Daniel’s part. Unity, fervency, humility and God’s glory marked this fellowship of prayer. The temptation to compare and compete in Christian ministry is great. Aaron and Miriam (Num 12:1-2) and the sons of Korah (Num 16:1-3) are clear biblical examples.

The wise men of Babylon were only half-right that “no one else could declare” the dream and its interpretation “except gods, whose dwelling place is not with mortals” (Dan 2:11). Babylonian gods were inaccessible to mortals, but not “the God of heaven” whom Daniel and his friends prayed to (vv.18, 19). This God “humbles Himself” toward mortals (Psa 113:5-6) and “revealed the mystery” to them. This God is “the high and exalted One” who “dwell[s] on a high and holy place” and “also with the contrite and lowly of spirit” (Isa 57:15).

The answer from God leads to **adoration of God**: “Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven” (v.19). We are to “bless” God “every day” – good days and bad days (Psa 145:1-2). Job’s first response to the terrible things that happened to him was: “he fell to the ground and worshiped” (Job 1:20-21).

thursday

09

The God Whom Daniel Knows

SCRIPTURE Daniel 2:19-21

OBSERVATION

What can you learn about God and Daniel?

APPLICATION

What does it mean for me to know God?

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 grow in deeper experience of God
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Daniel's worship to God reflects his personal knowledge of God. What Daniel mentions about God is not unrelated to his experience. His exaltation of God comes out of his experience of God.

We will consider four divine characteristics. **The name of God:** "Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever" (v.20). More than God's distinguishing title, "God", the "name" of God stands for the very person of God – His character, significance and commitment. When Jesus says, "I have manifested **Your name**" (Jn 17:6), He means that He has revealed God in Himself (see Jn 1:18; 14:7). God's faithful people who "walk in darkness and have no light" are to "trust in **the name of the Lord**" (Isa 50:10). That is, trust in the person of God. **God's wisdom and power:** "wisdom and power belong to Him" (v.20). God acting in wisdom means He knows what to do and He knows what He is doing. Divine wisdom and divine mystery go together: God's wisdom is unsearchable and unfathomable (Rom 11:33). Trusting in God's wisdom is something we need to grow in. Knowing what to do (wisdom) necessitates the ability to do it (power). God has both. God manifests His power both visibly – like signs and wonders – and invisibly – like "we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing" (2 Cor 4:7-8).

Political powers are prime movers and key actors in human history. But behind it all is the silent and unseen **sovereignty of God**: "It is He who **changes** the times and the epochs; He **removes** kings and **establishes** kings" (v.21).

friday
10

God of Darkness and Light

SCRIPTURE Daniel 2:19-22

OBSERVATION

What is your understanding of God in verse 22?

APPLICATION

How do I respond to the “profound and hidden things” of God?

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 know the God who is unfathomable
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

As we walk with God faithfully, we should expect times when we will “walk in darkness, and have no light” (Isa 50:10), confused by the shocks of life and wondering what is going on and why. What we experience in such times are “the profound and hidden things” and “what is in the darkness” (v.22). The “only wise” God (Rom 16:25) is the source of these things, who “knows” what they are, and “reveals” them (v.22). And we are to trust in God that He knows what we do not know, and wait on Him to reveal to us in His time and in His way according to His wisdom. And meanwhile, we continue our journey in “the darkness” of “profound and hidden things”, but walking with “God is light” (1 Jn 1:5) – “the light that dwells in Him” (v.22), and “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8, 16). When darkness overwhelms us and the light around us becomes night, we are to know that “Even the darkness is not dark to You, and the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to You” (Psa 139:11-12).

The God who filled His temple with His glory is the God who “would dwell in thick darkness” (2 Chron 5:14-6:1). While we now have “the fuller access to God afforded by the work of Christ, there must ever be the sense of mystery associated with God. It is a feature of traditional Jewish theology to stress that from an intellectual standpoint – but not from a spiritual one – God is unknowable”¹².

¹² Leslie C. Allen, *1 & 2 Chronicles*, The Preacher's Commentary (Nelson, 1987), 206

saturday

11

Union and Communion with God

SCRIPTURE Daniel 2:19-20, 23-24

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about the wisdom and the power of God?

APPLICATION

What does it mean for me to have God giving me His wisdom and power?

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 grow deeper in continual communion with God
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

A parallelism in Daniel's twofold praise of God for His wisdom and power in verses 20 and 23 is significant: "wisdom and power belong to Him" (v.20) and "You have given me wisdom and power" (v.23). The "wisdom and power **belong to Him**" moves to "**You have given me** wisdom and power." What belongs to God, God gives to us. What divine grace in condescension! This is possible because of God's relationship with us – our union and communion with God. Our union with God is called "**in Christ**", and our communion with God is called "**with Christ**". The Psalmist calls it "Lord, You alone are my portion and my cup" (Psa 16:5, NIV). This union and communion with God is "Abide in Me, and I in you" (Jn 15:4) – a mutual abiding that must be ongoing and "on-growing" in depth. Is your relationship with God like this?

Exalting God for His unsearchable and unfathomable wisdom, Paul asks rhetorically, "Who has known the mind of the Lord?" (Rom 11:33-34). The answer is "No one". In another place, Paul asks the same rhetorical question with the same obvious answer. But Paul adds something to it: "But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor 2:16). Mark the words, "**we have**". To "have the mind of Christ" is to think and see things like Christ – "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:3). Is your mind "the mind of Christ"? And in our union and communion with Christ we can "know Him and the power of His resurrection" (Phil 3:10).

—

sunday

12

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 2

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

FORGIVENESS:

Deciding that someone who has wronged you doesn't have to pay.

Memory Verse

"Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."
– Colossians 3:13 (NIV)

1 Bottom Line

When you forgive others, it can change them.*

2 Bible Story

Luke 19:1-10 – Zacchaeus

3 Activity

Change for the Better

Props: Scratch art kits

Provide your family members with a scratch art kit. Ask everyone to draw what forgiveness means to them. After the activity, invite everyone to share what they drew.

Say, "The black layer on the scratch paper is like our sins. When we confess our sins to God and choose to repent, God can create new things in our lives, just like the beautiful drawings on our scratch paper. Our lives change for the better when we let God come into our hearts. Likewise, we show God's compassion and love to others when we choose to forgive them when they have wronged us. Their lives may change for the better too."

4 Talk About It

- How did Zacchaeus' life change after Jesus forgave him?
- Will forgiveness always change people? Why or why not?
- Has anyone ever asked for your forgiveness? How did you respond?
- Do you ever spend time asking God for forgiveness? Why or why not?

Parents: Share an experience in which you asked God for forgiveness. What happened? How did God help you? How did the experience change the way you behave or treat others? What did you do to sustain the change?

5 Prayer

Thank God for forgiving our sins and reminding us how important it is to forgive others. Ask Him to transform us as we forgive.

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monday

13

Knowing the Things of God

SCRIPTURE Daniel 2:24-30

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about knowing the things of God?

APPLICATION

How can I know the things of God?

PRAYER

Grant me, O God, to know and grasp the mind of Christ, that I may grow to think like Christ and look at and live in reality like Christ. Fill me with the Spirit of wisdom and revelation that I may know You better. Enlighten the eyes of my heart to behold the things of God, as I set my mind on the things above, and not the things on earth.¹³

prayer pointers

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

deeper reflection

The Aramaic verb, *yeda* – to know, to make known – is a key word in Daniel 2. The word is repeated 11 times in referring to knowing and making known Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and its interpretation.¹⁴ But Nebuchadnezzar’s dream consists of “mysteries” (vv.27, 28, 29, 30) – “the profound and hidden things” of God (Dan 2:22). And no one can know these things of God unless the God “who reveals mysteries” reveals and makes them known (vv.27-29).

There are “the secret things” that “belong to” the infinite God that will remain concealed, but there are “the things revealed” by God to us in “the words of His law” that “belong to us” for us to live by (Deut 29:29). But what God has revealed in the Scriptures requires us to know and understand them. And just like Daniel, we cannot know and understand what God has revealed in His Word by “any wisdom residing” in us (v.30). We may, consciously or unconsciously, attempt to know and understand God and the things of God with human and worldly wisdom. When we do so, we will not only be unable to know and understand, but understand wrongly or falsely. We need the Lord to “open the Scriptures to us” and “open” our “minds to understand the Scriptures” (Lk 24:27, 32, 45). When the Lord does that “our hearts [will be] burning within us” (Lk 24:32). Is your reading of the Scriptures “burning” or boring? We need God to give us “the Spirit of wisdom and revelation” to enlighten us to know God and the things of God (Eph 1:17-18).

¹³ 1 Corinthians 2:16; Ephesians 1:17-18; Colossians 3:1-2

¹⁴ Daniel 2:5, 9 [two times], 22, 23 [two times], 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 45

tuesday

14

God's Plan of the Future

SCRIPTURE Daniel 2:27-29

OBSERVATION

What is the significance of God making known to Nebuchadnezzar “what would take place in the future”?

APPLICATION

How do I live my life in the light of God's plan for world history?

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 filled with the knowledge of God's will
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Through Daniel, God “has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days” – “what would take place in the future” (vv.28-29). What God has revealed is His plan for world history from the time of Nebuchadnezzar's supreme reign until the end of history.

Who did God reveal His plan to? God “has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar” His plan (v.28). Nebuchadnezzar? Shouldn't God have revealed it to one of His own people? He didn't. Not even to Daniel. God spoke to Nebuchadnezzar in his dream and Daniel was there only to interpret the dream. It is quite puzzling that God chose to speak to the man who had deported Daniel and his friends, and who, in the near future, would destroy Jerusalem and God's temple, and deport most of the population to Babylon (2 Kin 25:8-11). But this underscores the sovereignty of God. It is simply God chose Nebuchadnezzar. Period. It is purely God's prerogative.

Why did God reveal such a plan? While God chose to speak to Nebuchadnezzar to reveal His plan, Nebuchadnezzar was not God's primary audience. God's primary audience was His people who were ruled over by Gentile superpowers for centuries, living under their totalitarian claims and suffering increased persecution, as Daniel 7 to 12 shows. Knowing “what would take place in the future” as revealed by God assures them that He is in sovereign control and is at work in history fulfilling His purposes. And the fact that God chose to reveal His plan to Nebuchadnezzar, it shows that God controlled this “king of kings” (Dan 2:37).

wednesday

15

A Theology of Human Power

SCRIPTURE Daniel 2:28-33, 36-43

OBSERVATION

What does the great statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream tell us about human power?

APPLICATION

How do I view human power?

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 the Nations: To recognise the fragility of human power and turn to God
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

God revealed to Nebuchadnezzar “what would take place in the future” (vv.28-29) through the statue of “extraordinary splendour” and “awesome appearance” in his dream (v.31). The statue is “a single great statue” with four parts made of different materials. It represents the human kings and kingdoms in world history. Daniel 2 presents to us, “not a timetable, but a theology of history”¹⁵.

The statue from its head of gold to its feet of iron and clay mixture does not mean that superpowers in history grow from stronger to weaker. Historically, the kingdom that arose “after” Babylon was “inferior” Persia (v.39). But ironically, it was this “inferior” kingdom that toppled golden Babylon. The “third kingdom of bronze” “will rule over **all the earth**”, which would be as expansive as the Babylonian and Persian kingdoms, if not, more (v.39). The “fourth kingdom” made of “partly iron” and “partly clay” is both “strong” and “brittle” (v.42). But it “crushes and shatters **all things**” with its “iron” power (v.40).

The statue is to be understood as a whole. It reveals the character of human power – in politics, the workplace, and possibly, the church. It is “a mixture of shining glory and crazy instability. It was full of inner contradictions by being made partly of costly and useful metals, but partly of a stupid and impossible mixture of metal and pottery. And the weakest part was at the place where it most needed to be strongest – at its feet; all that gleaming glory above, but on a fragile, crumbling base below”¹⁶. Human power is so unstable and insecure.

¹⁵ Gordon Wong, *Faithful to the End: The Message of Daniel for Life in the Real World* (Genesis, 2006), 25

¹⁶ Christopher J. H. Wright, *Hearing the Message of Daniel: Sustaining Faith in Today's World* (Zondervan, 2017), 53

thursday

16

Kingdoms Rise and Kingdoms Fall

SCRIPTURE Daniel 2:31-38, 44-49

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about kingdoms?

APPLICATION

What changes do I need to make in my perspectives on the kingdoms of the 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 Outreach/Missions/New Life leaders: To live by the values and power of God's Kingdom
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

What will most easily and naturally get attention: a great statue of “extraordinary splendour” and “awesome appearance” or an ordinary stone? Obviously, the great statue. In speaking to Nebuchadnezzar in his dream, God chose “a stone” (v.34) to represent His Kingdom – “a kingdom which will never be destroyed” and “will itself endure forever” (vv.44). God’s choice of “a stone” reveals His ways of subversive wisdom.

The statue and the stone show a contrast. The contrast confronts us with the issue of **appearance** and **reality**. In appearance, the stone looks ordinary, but not so in reality. The stone is “cut from a mountain, but not by human hands” (v.34, NLT), unlike the great statue that is designed by the human mind and built by human hands. Jesus, who embodies the Kingdom of God and is Himself the true King, came to earth as “Jesus of Nazareth” (Jn 1:45-46). And Nazareth was a town “considered totally insignificant”¹⁷. By appearance, Jesus was “totally insignificant”. But Jesus is “that stone...on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust” (Lk 20:17-18), just like the stone that “struck” and “crushed” the human kingdoms of the statue “so that not a trace of them was found” (vv.34-35).

In history, kings and kingdoms **rise and fall**. Kings rise because “the God of heaven has given” them “the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory” (v.37). And God can easily and effortlessly “put an end to all” human kingdoms (v.44) and “all at the same time” (v.35). God’s people in exile can rest in this God.

¹⁷ Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary* (Eerdmans, 1997), 88

friday
17

“Shall I Crucify Your King?”

SCRIPTURE John 12:12-15; 19:13-20

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about “Behold, your King” in John 12:12-15 and in 19:13-15?

APPLICATION

How do I understand Jesus as King?

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 determine to know nothing else, except Christ and Him crucified
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

The vision of the “stone” in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream which represents the everlasting Kingdom of God that will crush all the kingdoms of the world (Dan 2:31-35, 44-45) finds its fulfilment in Jesus Christ, when He came to earth and declared, “The kingdom of God is at hand” (Mk 1:15).

Jesus entered Jerusalem as “the King of Israel” (Jn 12:12-13). But little did anyone know that this King would be a crucified King. The glorious “Behold, your King” which is from God (Jn 12:14-15) became the inglorious “Behold, your King!” declared by Pontius Pilate, who asked the people, “Shall I crucify your King?” (Jn 19:14-15).

We must not miss God revealing Himself in Jesus as King on the cross, which John is pointing to us. What kind of King is Jesus? Jesus is a **Humble King**. The King on the cross is “Jesus the Nazarene” (Jn 19:19). While the inscription on the cross was evil in nature, we must not miss the irony in John’s theological twist. “Jesus the Nazarene” is in reality the only true King. To Nathaniel who sceptically asked, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?”, “Jesus of Nazareth” revealed Himself as “the King of Israel” (Jn 1:45-49). Jesus is a **Humiliated King**. The cross is a humiliation from the world. Suffering the humiliation is the **Hidden King**. The King remains hidden until He returns, even though He is now the King of kings (Rev 17:14). Until then, we follow this King loyally in His humility, His humiliation and His hiddenness, in a world that says, “We have no king but Caesar” (Jn 19:15).

saturday

18

Do You See the Cross?

SCRIPTURE Psalm 2:1-6; Acts 4:21-28

OBSERVATION

How is the crucifixion of Christ seen in verses 1 to 6 (Acts 4:24-27)?

APPLICATION

What does it mean for me to follow the Lord who rules through the cross?

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 boast in nothing, except the cross of Christ
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

The great statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream symbolises the full range of mighty kings of powerful kingdoms of the world (Dan 2:31-33, 36-43). In Psalm 2, these "kings of the earth take their stand...against the Lord and against His Anointed" (v.2), wanting to have their own sovereign freedom (v.3). But God "laughs" and "scoffs" at them for their foolish and futile attempts (vv.1, 4).

Psalm 2 reveals a God of absolute sovereign power, who can make an easy clean sweep over all human powers. But then, do you see the cross in Psalm 2? The psalm itself does not show the cross...until the New Testament. The persecuted early church worshipped God triumphantly with Psalm 2 (Acts 4:21-28). The "kings of the earth" that "take their stand together against the Lord and **against His Anointed**" in Psalm 2 were in the New Testament "both Herod and Pilate" who, with the Gentiles and Israel, "gathered together **against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed**" (Acts 4:25-27). How did "Herod and Pilate", with the Gentiles and Israel, gather together against Jesus the Christ? By crucifying Him – in whom they found no guilt (Lk 23:1-11, 20-25). God in Jesus was crucified by His enemies. This is how God wins. The cross is the Lord's conquest and the Lord's crown. God in Jesus is sovereign through His own suffering. The Lord lords over His enemies by "losing" to them. The Lord shows His power by being "powerless" in His enemies' hands. God "laughs" and "scoffs" at His enemies through the cross. This is the glory of God!



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 3 FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

FORGIVENESS:

Deciding that someone who has wronged you doesn't have to pay.

Memory Verse

"Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."
– Colossians 3:13 (NIV)

1 Bottom Line

Forgive others because God forgives you.*

2 Bible Story

Matthew 18:21-35 – The Unmerciful Servant

3 Activity

Forgive Seventy-Seven Times!

Props: Pencils, erasers and paper

Ask each of your family members to scribble on a piece of paper with a pencil. Then get everyone to pass it to another person, who will then use an eraser to rub out everything on the paper. After the activity, relate it to forgiveness and get everyone to discuss how it felt to erase the scribbles.

Say, "The scribbles represent the misdoings that others do unto us. Erasing the scribbles is like having to forgive over and over again. In Matthew 18:22, Jesus says that we are to forgive at all times. The good news is He can help us. He is like a giant battery who gives us the strength and a big heart to forgive others."

4 Talk About It

- How does it affect you when there's someone you need to forgive, but you're not willing to do so?
- What keeps you from forgiving? When is it difficult to forgive?
- What do you do if you've forgiven someone for the same thing multiple times?

Note: Forgiveness doesn't mean we allow someone to hurt us repeatedly. We can seek help from a trusted person or the authorities too (e.g. the police).

Parents: Share an experience in which you chose to forgive someone. How did that experience affect you? Did the relationship improve? What did you learn about forgiveness?

5 Prayer

Pray for God's wisdom when we face challenging people at home and in school. Ask the Lord for the strength to forgive others like how God forgives us for the wrongs we have done.



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monday

20

Was the Babylonian King Converted?

SCRIPTURE Daniel 2:46-49; 3:1-2

OBSERVATION

How is it shown that the Babylonian king was converted or not converted to worshipping the true God?

APPLICATION

How do I go about discerning if a pre-believer's conversion is genuine?

PRAYER

O Lord our Saviour, I pray for the salvation of the pre-believers in my family and among my relatives and friends. Remove from their minds the spiritual blindness, that they may see the truth, and open their hearts to be receptive to the Gospel and Your salvation. Draw them to the Lord Jesus that they may come to Him and receive eternal life.

prayer pointers

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

deeper reflection

God's call for Daniel in exile to Babylon was missional in nature. And his missional call was shaped by where he worked and who he worked for: the Babylonian king in his royal court. His call was to interpret the Babylonian kings' dreams and visions that came from God (Dan 2, 4, 5), and by this he bore witness to God. More importantly, Daniel's life, transformed by his faithful walk with God, was a witness for God before the Gentiles.

When Daniel gave Nebuchadnezzar the content and the meaning of his dream, and proved that his God is the "God in heaven who reveals mysteries" (Dan 2:28), the king acknowledged God: "Surely your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings" (v.47). Nebuchadnezzar's acknowledgement of God "can hardly be taken as an acceptance of monotheism"¹⁸. Indeed, "we must not be misled to think that Nebuchadnezzar is converted here. As a good polytheist, Nebuchadnezzar was more than willing to acknowledge the power of foreign deities. He could incorporate Yahweh into his pantheon and gave Him the credit due Him at the moment"¹⁹. In fact, Nebuchadnezzar's "acknowledgement of Daniel is more prominent than that of Yahweh"²⁰, in that he "fell on his face and did homage to Daniel" (v.46). And furthermore, Nebuchadnezzar "made a statue of gold" to be worshipped (Dan 3:1).

In evangelism, we need to discern if a conversion is genuine and not be too quick to celebrate. At a Passover, seeing Jesus' miracles "many believed in His name", but Jesus "on His part, was not entrusting²¹ Himself to them" (Jn 2:23-24).

¹⁸ Ernest C. Lucas, *Daniel*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary (Apollos, IVP, 2002), 80

¹⁹ Tremper Longman, 83

²⁰ John E. Goldingay, 52

²¹ The Greek word for "entrust" is *pisteuō*, usually translated as "believe". So here, while many "believed" in Jesus, Jesus on His part did not "believe" in them.

tuesday

21

God's History or Your History?

SCRIPTURE Daniel 2:36-39, 44-45; 3:1-2

OBSERVATION

What is the difference between the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan 2:31-33, 38) and the statue that Nebuchadnezzar made (Dan 3:1)?

APPLICATION

How do I deal with my not wanting to be just a "head of gold" but a "statue of gold"?

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 highly conscious of God's story in their lives
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Nebuchadnezzar's dream troubled him so much that he had sleepless nights (Dan 2:1). And he was so desperate to know its true meaning that he made an unreasonable demand on his wise men that was impossible to meet, and he would destroy them all should they fail in the task (Dan 2:5, 10-12). But now that Daniel had made known to him both the content and the meaning of his dream, it was a great **relief – given by God** – for the king.

After that, Nebuchadnezzar "made a statue (*selem*²²) of gold" (Dan 3:1). God had revealed to Nebuchadnezzar in his dream His plan of world history, which is symbolised by "a single great statue (*selem*)" (Dan 2:31). The statue is made up of a golden head, silver arms, bronze thighs, and iron legs with feet made up of a mixture of iron and clay (Dan 2:32-33). God said to Nebuchadnezzar clearly: "You are the head of gold" (v.39). But Nebuchadnezzar **rejected God's plan of world history**. He did not want to be just a "head of gold". He wanted to be a "statue of gold"! God said to him, "After you there will arise another kingdom", symbolised by the silver arms (v.39). As a "statue of gold", there is no such thing as "after you" for Nebuchadnezzar. And the shattering stone outside human control, representing God's everlasting Kingdom (vv.44-45), was ignored and forgotten. Nebuchadnezzar the "statue of gold" was **resisting the supreme kingship of God**. What foolish and futile arrogance!

Do you want God's history for your life or do you want to write your own history?

²² In Aramaic

wednesday

22

Under Pressure to Compromise Spiritually

SCRIPTURE Daniel 3:1-7

OBSERVATION

What is the significance of the expression, “Nebuchadnezzar the king”, being repeated six times in verses 1 to 7?

APPLICATION

What will I do if I am under pressure to compromise my Christian faith?

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 the Nations: That God will turn them from darkness to His Kingdom of light
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Nebuchadnezzar made a 90 feet high and 9 feet wide (60 x 6 cubits) “statue of gold” (v.1). It was “a stylised image of Nebuchadnezzar himself, or of his imperial empire” and “a huge monument to the Babylonian Empire itself, ‘The Spirit of Babylon.’”²³

Nebuchadnezzar ruled over a great mixture of “nations and peoples of every language” (v.7). He needed to stabilise and strengthen his relatively young empire, and his golden statue was intended to be “a symbol of the unity and strength of his empire.”²⁴ To build unity, there must be loyalty. And this loyalty to King Nebuchadnezzar was to be demonstrated by worshipping his golden statue (v.5). Nebuchadnezzar did not prohibit his subjects from worshipping their own gods. They could continue to worship their gods, “just so long as they gave priority to the official state gods of Babylon”, symbolised by Nebuchadnezzar’s golden statue.²⁵

For God’s people, there will be pressure from the world to compromise: to worship the true God and its gods. It can be **pressure from authority**.²⁶ To worship the golden statue was the king’s “command” that must be obeyed (v.4). “Nebuchadnezzar the king” is repeated six times in verses 1 to 7, out of eight times in Daniel 3. The repetition underscores the king’s authority. It can be **pressure to conformity**.²⁷ The whole range of the Babylonian civil service employees (vv.2-3) and “all the nations and peoples of every language” worshipped Nebuchadnezzar’s golden statue (v.7). For God’s faithful people who remain standing, “there’s a tremendous coercion that comes from being among a whole mob of flattened worshipers”²⁸.

²³ Christopher J. H. Wright, 67

²⁴ Christopher J. H. Wright, 67

²⁵ Christopher J. H. Wright, 67

²⁶ Dale Ralph Davis, *The Message of Daniel*, The Bible Speaks Today (IVP, 2013), 52

²⁷ Dale Ralph Davis, 52

²⁸ Dale Ralph Davis, 52

thursday

23

To Bow or Be Burned

SCRIPTURE Daniel 3:6, 8-11, 15

OBSERVATION

What does verse 6 tell us about Nebuchadnezzar the king?

APPLICATION

How do I respond to authority that uses harmful threats?

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 be empowered to pay the cost of discipleship
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

King Nebuchadnezzar's command to worship his golden statue was accompanied by a penal code: Whoever does not obey his command will be thrown into a "furnace of blazing fire" (v.6). This underscores that the government was serious. "Bow or burn! Toast to the king or toast yourself!"²⁹ For Nebuchadnezzar, "the state itself is the ultimate reality which governs the totality of the lives of its subjects and demands complete loyalty and obedience"³⁰.

For the people of God in exile, it was compromise or be consumed. At such times, what comes to the forefront is the cost of discipleship. But, if we take biblical discipleship seriously, the cost of discipleship will be in our dominant consciousness. Paul is a model par excellence of this discipleship dominant consciousness: "I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things" (Phil 3:8). In Paul's discipleship, the starting point is not the cost. It is "the **surpassing value** of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord," which makes whatever the cost worth paying.

We pay the cost of discipleship in active devotion – like burning bridges to follow the Lord – and in passive situations – like suffering persecution. When we remain faithful to God and endure and persevere in weaknesses, insults, distresses, persecutions and difficulties, we are doing so "for Christ's sake" (2 Cor 12:10). We are paying a cost of discipleship when we remain faithful no matter what.

What cost of discipleship have you paid in following Jesus faithfully?

²⁹ Christopher J. H. Wright, 68

³⁰ Christopher J. H. Wright, 68-69

friday
24

The Fury of the Oppressor

SCRIPTURE Isaiah 51:12-16; Daniel 3:12-14

OBSERVATION

How did God want Israel to look at the “fury of the oppressor”?

APPLICATION

How do I respond to the anger of people in authority?

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 relate with difficult people in authority with wisdom and grace
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

King Nebuchadnezzar was filled with “rage and anger” when Shadrach, Mishaël and Abednego refused to worship his golden statue (Dan 3:12-13). This can be a very frightening and dangerous situation.

God’s people in exile faced “the **fury** of the oppressor” day in and day out, that they “**fear** continually all day long” (v.13). We do face difficult people in our lives that are like the Babylonian superpower, “an ever-present, ever-intimidating and ever-visible threat”³¹. And we feel troubled, anxious, overwhelmed and helpless because of them. We can be so overcome by fear that, like Israel, we “**forget**” God (v.13). To “forget” God is “to live without consciously holding in mind and memory who God is, what He has done and what He promises”³². It is “to live in defeat”³³ (cf. Psalms 78:9-11).

God’s response to His fearful people is: “**Who are you** that you are afraid...?” (v.12). Who are we? We are God’s people (“My people”, v.16), and God is our God (“your God”, v.15). Present with us in the midst of “the fury of the oppressor” is the **God of absolute sovereignty** over “the heavens” and “the earth” (v.13), and “the sea and its waves”, whose “name” is “Almighty LORD” (v.15). Present with us is the **God of covenant commitment** to His people: “I, even I, am He who comforts **you**” (v.12), because He is “the LORD **your** Maker” (v.13) and “I am the LORD **your** God” (v.15a). With this God present with us, we can say with Him: “Where is the fury of the oppressor?” (v.13).

³¹ Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, (Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 131

³² J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, Volume 20 (IVP, 1999), 367

³³ J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah*, 367

saturday

25

What God Can Deliver You?

SCRIPTURE 2 Chronicles 32:9-19; Daniel 3:13-15

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about the phrase “able to deliver” in Sennacherib’s speech to Hezekiah and Judah (vv.10-17)?

APPLICATION

What changes do I need to make regarding my perspective and attitude toward God’s deliverance in my discipleship journey?

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 trust and rest in God’s power of deliverance
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Nebuchadnezzar gave Shadrach, Mishael and Abednego a second chance to change their mind in refusing to worship his golden statue: “Now if you are ready...fall down and worship” (Dan 3:15a). We can be in adverse situations that such a second chance is hard not to take. But Shadrach, Mishael and Abednego were “ready” not to give in at all costs. And Nebuchadnezzar responded to this defiance with an arrogant assumption, “What god is there who can deliver you from my hands?” (Dan 3:15b).

Judah under Hezekiah’s reign was invaded by the much stronger Assyrian king (v.9). In a long speech, Sennacherib made a **theological challenge** (vv.10-17): Can God deliver His people from his hand? “Proven” in all his conquests, Sennacherib confidently made a fourfold **theological conclusion**:

- “**Were the gods** of the nations **able at all to deliver** from my hand?” (v.13)
- “**Who** was there among **all the gods** of the nations who **could deliver** from my hand that your God **should be able to deliver** you from my hand?” (v.14)
- “**No god** was **able to deliver** from my hand...**How much less** will your God **deliver** you from my hand?” (v.15)
- “**As the gods** of the nations **have not delivered...so** the God of Hezekiah **will not deliver** His people from my hand” (v.17)

These are powerful words of untruth and doubt that can shake and break our faith. Everything in our lives is fundamentally theological: It all has to do with God. In all our crises, we face the similar theological challenge as Hezekiah. But what is our theological conclusion?



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

FORGIVENESS:

Deciding that someone who has wronged you doesn't have to pay.

Memory Verse

"Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."
– Colossians 3:13 (NIV)

1 Bottom Line

God will always forgive you.*

2 Bible Story

Luke 15:11-32 – The Lost Son

3 Activity

God's Forgiveness

Props: Paper

Get each of your family members to crumple a piece of paper into a ball. Then, ask them to try to straighten it out. Relate the activity to a person's relationship with others.

Discuss:

- What does the activity tell us about our damaged relationships with others?
- What can we do to mend such relationships?

Say, "When we hurt another person, that person's heart is crumpled like a piece of paper. Deep hurts can still leave cracks in the heart just like wrinkled paper. Even if we try to straighten out the paper as much as possible, it's hard to get it back to its original state. But when we repent, God can heal the hurt with His forgiveness and replace our hearts with a new one, just like a brand-new piece of paper."

4 Talk About It

- Have you ever felt like you don't deserve to be forgiven? If so, why?
- When is it hard to ask for forgiveness?
- Why does God always forgive us?

Parents: Share an incident in which you felt inadequate to ask God for forgiveness. What made you think that God would not forgive you? What changed your view about God?

5 Prayer

Ask God to live in our hearts and help us to see only the truth – God will listen and forgive us. Hold on to God's promises as we learn to repent from the wrongs we have done.



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monday

27

All Ready to Be Burned

SCRIPTURE Daniel 3:13-16; Hebrews 11:35**OBSERVATION**

What is the significance of the reply of Shadrach, Mishael and Abednego to Nebuchadnezzar in verse 16?

APPLICATION

How do I know that my commitment to God is firm?

PRAYER

Lord, I acknowledge Your call to be faithful unto death.³⁴ But I confess that I am not sure if I will be all ready to be burned to death under persecution. I will know if I am ready when it happens. So, I pray, that You make me ready for such times. And meanwhile, establish my faithfulness and empower me in endurance and perseverance as I face the manifold trials.

prayer pointers

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

deeper reflection

When given the chance to change their mind on refusing to worship Nebuchadnezzar's golden statue and escape the blazing furnace, the immediate reply of Shadrach, Mishael and Abednego was, "We **have no need to** answer you in this matter" (v.16). They were all ready to be burned for their faithfulness to God. There was no "Let me think about it." No "Should I or should I not?" No "Worth it or not?" Their answer reflects their deep conviction and firm commitment to God. This is the character of those who know their God.

The Book of Daniel was an anchor for the faithful Jews who were severely persecuted by Antiochus IV Epiphanes during the Maccabean revolt against the Greeks (168-143 B.C.). Certainly, the steadfast faithfulness of Shadrach, Mishael and Abednego was a model and inspiration to the Jews who "by faith...were tortured, not accepting their release" (Heb 11:33a, 35).³⁵ When given the opportunity to be freed from torture if they compromised their faith, they rejected it.

2 Maccabees 7³⁶ tells the story of the martyrdom of a mother and her seven sons. They were "compelled by the king under torture with whips and thongs, to partake unlawful swine's flesh"³⁷ (cf. Lev 11:4, 7). But they remained faithful to God: "We are ready to die rather than transgress the laws of our ancestors."³⁸ One of the sons had his tongue, hands and feet cut off, and was fried alive in a heated pan.³⁹ But "the brothers and their mother encouraged one another to die nobly", fully assured that "The Lord God is watching over us"⁴⁰.

³⁴ Revelation 2:10

³⁵ Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Eerdmans, 2010), 443

³⁶ In the Apocrypha

³⁷ 2 Macc 7:1 (NRSV)

³⁸ 2 Macc 7:2 (NRSV)

³⁹ 2 Macc 7:3-5 (NRSV)

⁴⁰ 2 Macc 7:5-6 (NRSV)

tuesday

28

The Lord Is My Salvation

SCRIPTURE Daniel 3:13-17

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about God and the three Judahite youths in verses 15 to 17?

APPLICATION

How is my confidence in God's deliverance in crisis developed?

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 God deeply as their salvation
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Shadrach, Mishael and Abednego countered Nebuchadnezzar's theological challenge, "**What god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?**" (v.15), with their theological conviction, "**Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire**" (v.17a). In this crisis, there is a need – the need for deliverance. But the need for deliverance is not the centre of the crisis. The centre is **God** – "Our God".

What is the theological significance of "Our God"? "Our God" reflects our covenant relationship with God, in which God is our God and we are God's people (Exo 6:6-7; Jer 31:33). And in this covenant relationship with God is the covenant **commitment of God** to us. When God is committed to us, it means God is faithful to us. First things first. The first thing in the crisis of the three Judahite youths is not the **ability of God** to deliver them. It is God is committed and faithful to them to deliver them. And God's faithful commitment assures us of the **willingness of God** to deliver us: "He will deliver us" (v.17b). This is the theological significance of "Our God". Our covenant relationship with God is a two-way thing and so is the covenant commitment. Thus, it is "Our God **whom we serve**". As God's bondservants, we serve Him by following and doing His will.

God is not only "able to" and "will" deliver us, but He Himself **is** our salvation: "God is **my salvation**" – and for this, "I will trust and not be afraid" (Isa 12:2).

wednesday

29

Faith in the Blazing Furnace

SCRIPTURE Daniel 3:16-18; Isaiah 12:2

OBSERVATION

How do you understand God's deliverance in "But even if He does not deliver" in verse 18?

APPLICATION

What does it mean for me if God does not deliver me from my troubles?

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 the Nations: That God will mercifully deliver the people who suffer injustice
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

When we go through adversities and look to God for His deliverance, we need to recognise that there is always the possibility of "He does not deliver" (v.18a). Yes, God's Word tells us that "God is my salvation" (Isa 12:2a). However, when God does not deliver, it does not mean that God is no more my salvation. But rather, that it is still my firm belief and steadfast conviction that even when God does not deliver, He is still my salvation and I will still "trust and not be afraid" (Isa 12:2a). This is spiritual depth. And God builds spiritual depth in our lives in this manner.

When God does not deliver us, it can be that He does not deliver us now or sooner than we wish, or it can be that He does not deliver at all. Scripture calls us to view God's deliverance eschatologically. Ultimate and complete deliverance of God is eschatological. For the imprisoned Paul with execution awaiting him, his anchor is eschatological: "The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom" (2 Tim 4:18).

For Shadrach, Mishael and Abednego, "Our God is able to deliver us... and will deliver us" (v.17) reflects their **assurance** and **confidence** in God. But their "Even if He does not deliver" (v.18a) demonstrates their **allegiance** and **commitment** to their God – "we are not going to serve your gods" (v.18b). For them, worship to God has priority over and is greater than God's deliverance. Deliverance or no deliverance, worship to God will always remain.

thursday

30

The Heat of Adversity Increases

SCRIPTURE Daniel 3:19-23; Jeremiah 17:7-8

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about the heat of adversity in Jeremiah 17:7-8?

APPLICATION

How do I respond to an increase of troubles in my discipleship journey?

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 be strengthened in faith in facing adversities
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Nebuchadnezzar threw Shadrach, Mishaël and Abednego into the blazing furnace for adamantly refusing to worship his golden statue. And they “**fell** into the furnace of blazing fire” (v.23). The Aramaic word for “fell”, *nephal*, occurs seven times in Daniel 3 – with six times used in “**fall down** and worship” Nebuchadnezzar’s golden statue (Dan 3:5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 15). The writer makes the point on discipleship choice very sharply: *nephal* before Nebuchadnezzar’s golden statue or *nephal* into the blazing furnace. Which *nephal* will I choose?

“Filled with wrath”, Nebuchadnezzar commanded the furnace to be heated “seven times” more before throwing Shadrach, Mishaël and Abednego into it (v.19). There are times when the heat of our adversity increases. Four waves of devastating troubles fell upon Job one after another with this repeated report transition, “While he was still speaking, another also came and said” (Job 1:16, 17, 18). The fourth wave was very painful: the loss of Job’s beloved children (Job 1:18-19). Job worshipped God in his perplexing pains (Job 1:20-22). But little did Job know that the fifth wave was about to come... (Job 2:1-8). Nevertheless, Job endured, though not without tensions with God (Jas 5:11).

Discipleship adversity is like being in a forest fire. And we can be a tree that “when the heat comes, its leaves will be green”, not burned (Jer 17:8). That’s a miracle. That’s God’s power working mightily within us. But we must be “planted by the water” with our “roots by a stream” of the Word of God by which we trust in God (Jer 17:7-8; Psa 1:2-3).

friday
31

God's Presence in the Furnace

SCRIPTURE Daniel 3:24-27

OBSERVATION

What can you learn about God in verses 24 to 25?

APPLICATION

What does God's presence with me in my trials mean to me?

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 know God's presence with them in their trials
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

After throwing Shadrach, Mishael and Abednego into the fire, Nebuchadnezzar was “astounded” by what he saw in the furnace (v.24). In our furnace of adversity, we can be “astounded” by surprising twists from God.

A fourth person – a divine being – was “walking in the midst of the fire” with the three faithful youths and they were “unharmed” (v.25). It was a physical demonstration of God's presence with them. It is as God promised: “When you pass through the waters, **I will be with you...** When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched...” (Isa 43:2). God's presence with us in our pains and pressures is a strengthening, sustaining, shielding and saving presence of the Shepherd.

God's physical presence in the furnace found its richest fulfilment in Jesus Christ – “Immanuel” (Matt 1:23). But ironically, when “God with us” was in His blazing furnace, He cried out, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matt 27:46). On the cross, Jesus “felt the utter aloneness of total abandonment by God. When He passed through the waters, there was no one by His side. When the fire of God's wrath burned Him to the core and blazed unchecked over Him, He was entirely alone. There was no companion to share His burden, no angel sent to relieve His agony, no saving hand of God stretched down to preserve His faithful servant in His moment of greatest need”⁴¹. Jesus **must die** in His blazing furnace – for it was the will of God, so that we can freely enter God's Holy Presence with confidence **by His blood** (Heb 10:19-20).

⁴¹ Iain M. Duguid, 58

NOTES

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