
2023

devotional journal

*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)



June

2023
devotional journal

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)

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)

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

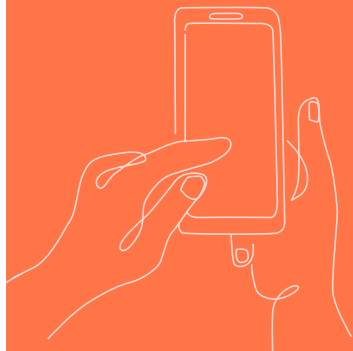
guide to using this devotional journal

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 south asia

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.”

LUKE 4:18 (ESV)

In times like this when we hear of wars and rumours of wars, floods and famines, persecutions and testing of our faith, we are sadly reminded of the inevitable – that such things must happen. But let us stand firm to the end, for the Lord has shown us what is good and what is required of us. As we humbly bring South Asia before Him, may we know this God who loves mercy and who will act justly over the nations.

Pray for:

1. Bangladesh:

- a. A land of 169 million people, about one-third of whom are youths and 13 million diasporas.
 - i. For God to bless this people group and their next generation, whether those who are residing in the country or working overseas.
- b. Less than 0.5% of the population are Christian, with many places without any churches or Christian witnesses, especially rural areas.

- i. For God to strengthen the Church in Bangladesh, enabling her members to be the salt and light wherever they are.
- c. Outreach in Bangladesh – whether through charity organisations or missions – is gradually helping to shape the future of the nation, especially its poor communities.
 - i. For God to continue to send labourers into His harvest field, to serve the poor and share the Good News with those who need hope.

2. Sri Lanka

- a. Economic mismanagement, coupled with the effects of COVID-19 have pushed Sri Lanka into a severe financial crisis. The International Monetary Fund's US\$3 billion bailout will not help immediately, especially when inflation is at 50%, income taxes are up 36% and power tariffs have risen 66%. Families are forced to reduce the food portions they feed their children and many are leaving the country out of sheer necessity.
 - i. For God-fearing, righteous and wise government, and for hope in God to dawn upon this nation.
- b. 7.4% of the population are Christians, mostly in Colombo and in the northwest.
 - i. For unity of the churches, regardless of denominations; for repentance and humility to work together that they may bring salvation to all the people of Sri Lanka in this time of crisis.

3. India

- a. India's political agenda: The government has made strong moves to push India out of secularism and promote the country as a Hindu nation. This is causing communal disturbances and riots in many places.
 - i. For political development towards increased religious freedom and peace in the land.

pray for south asia

- b. India's religious upheaval: We are seeing much turmoil and fear among the minority religions. There is active persecution, churches have been attacked and church members arrested after false accusations of conversion cases against them.
 - i. For the Christians to take courage in the Lord and be strengthened in their resolve to stand firm in the faith.
- c. India's youth concerns: 50% of the country's population is between the ages of 25 and 65. There is high unemployment and many are losing hope in life. Criminality, drug usage and suicides have seen a huge increase among the youth.
 - i. For the young people to find their identity, belonging and life purpose in Jesus Christ.

NOTES

thursday

01

Paradigm for Theocentric Personal History

SCRIPTURE Daniel 5:18-21

OBSERVATION

What is the significance of Daniel interpreting the inscription on the wall for Belshazzar by starting with telling a story of his ancestor, Nebuchadnezzar?

APPLICATION

How do things that happened in the past help me to live in the present?

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 constantly keep God as the centre of their lives
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Daniel began his interpretation of the inscription on the wall for Belshazzar by telling a story of his ancestor, Nebuchadnezzar – a particularly significant episode in his life (vv.18-21). Daniel began with history. History is valuable for living life. This value of history is seen in three dimensions: past, present and future. We can glean insights from the past through knowledge, understanding and reflection to form perspectives for living in the present and gain wisdom for living in the future. One very important history is our personal history: the story of our life journey. But do we see significance in our personal history? What gives the significance is God and when God writes our personal history.

The significant episode in Nebuchadnezzar's life that Daniel pointed Belshazzar to forms a paradigm for understanding our personal history in two dimensions. **A journey that reveals who God is (vv.18-19):** God revealed Himself to Nebuchadnezzar as “the Most High God” who “granted sovereignty, grandeur, glory and majesty” to kings of the earth (v.18). God reveals Himself in our life experiences, as He did to Nebuchadnezzar, which will result in us knowing God personally. And as we grow and mature in our theological journey, people can see God in our lives. **A journey that reveals the ways of God (vv.20-21):** For Nebuchadnezzar, it was how God humbled him in his pride. God works in our lives with different strokes for different folks. We are to “recognise” (v.21) the ways of God in our discipleship journey. But our discipleship motto must be “Have Thine own way, Lord”.

friday
02

A Picture of Practical Discipleship

SCRIPTURE Daniel 5:18-23

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about Belshazzar's conduct?

APPLICATION

How can I guard myself against not living by the truth despite knowing the truth?

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 truth and live by the truth
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

A picture of practical discipleship – in three ways, can be formed from the speech of the godly Daniel to the godless Belshazzar (vv.18-23).

Careful Use of Words: Note the difference in approach and tone that Daniel used in talking to Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar over the same issue of pride. Daniel spoke to Nebuchadnezzar with “pastoral warmth, a reluctant but truthful interpretation of the dream”¹ (Dan 4:19), and earnestly advised him to repent of his sins to avert God’s judgment (Dan 4:27). But he confronted Belshazzar with “a more characteristically prophetic message, a direct word of outrage, divine justice and holiness to a man who was deliberately mocking God”² (vv.22-23). In both cases, Daniel spoke with “an apt answer” and “a timely word” (Prov 15:23).

Grateful Use of Gifts: Belshazzar refused to acknowledge that his reign and everything that came with it were sovereign gifts from God. As a result, “those very gifts became his downfall”³. With the spiritual gifts endowed on them, the Corinthians regarded themselves as spiritually superior; and thinking that they were inherently gifted, they “boast as if you had not received it” from God (1 Cor 4:7).

Faithful Use of Truth: Belshazzar exalted himself against God, “even though you knew” the theological truth and historical fact of God’s sovereignty in humbling the prideful Nebuchadnezzar (vv.22-23). God has given us His truth in Scripture, for we are to “live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Deut 8:3). Faithful use of truth means we diligently seek to know and understand God’s Word rightly and consciously live by it.

¹ Christopher J. H. Wright, *Hearing the Message of Daniel: Sustaining Faith in Today's World* (Zondervan, 2017), 116

² Christopher J. H. Wright, 116

³ Christopher J. H. Wright, 118

saturday

03

Walking Humbly in God's Hand

SCRIPTURE Daniel 5:22-31

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about God in this passage?

APPLICATION

What aspects of God do I need to align my life with?

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 know God's heart and align their hearts to it
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Daniel's words to Belshazzar, "You have not humbled your heart... but you have exalted yourself" (vv.22-23a), point to a reality: We are either humble or proud. We cannot be not humble and not proud at the same time. Pride is not just self-exaltation, but self-exaltation "against the Lord of heaven", which also means we "have not glorified God" (v.23). God is always in the picture of humility and pride. Central in true humility is God being glorified. Three theological realities give us the impetus to walk humbly before God.

We cannot escape from God: "the God in whose hand are your life-breath and all your ways" (v.23). We can commit our lives into God's hand and be secure that "My times are in Your hand" (Psa 31:5, 15a). But even when we choose not to entrust our lives into God's hand, we are in His hand regardless, for better or for worse before God. **God examines our hearts:** "you have been weighed and found deficient" (v.27). We are not to be proud or boastful, because God is "a God of knowledge, and with Him actions are weighed" (1 Sam 2:3). We need to come to a point where we can meekly say as Jeremiah, "You know me, O Lord; You see me; and You examine my heart toward You" (Jer 12:3). **God can end anything anytime:** "God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it" (v.26). It is foolish to withhold anything from God, as if we can. God is God enough to take away anything from us as He pleases.



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

FAITH:

Trusting in what you can't see because of what you can see.

Memory Verse

"Faith is being sure of what we hope for. It is being sure of what we do not see."
– Hebrews 11:1 (NIRV)

1 Bottom Line

Knowing Jesus changes how you see things.*

2 Bible Story

Acts 9:1-9 – Paul Becomes a Believer

3 Activity

I Am a Believer

Props: A big piece of paper and marker pens

Draw a spider's web on the piece of paper and write "believer" in the centre. Get everyone to write down questions about what it means to be a follower of Jesus (refer to the diagram). After the activity, invite everyone to share their thoughts.

Say, "Before he knew Jesus, Saul disliked the Christians. He was nasty to them. But he transformed into a better man after he decided to follow Jesus. He became one of the apostles who talked about Jesus boldly. God wants us to be transformed too. He wants us to be Christ-like so that others do not only see the goodness in us, but also the greatness in God."



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

4 Talk About It

- What makes someone want to follow Jesus?
- How would you have felt if you met Jesus the way Saul did?
- Have you heard things about Jesus that you are unsure if they are true? What are they?
- Where do you go to find answers or who do you talk to when you have questions about Jesus?

Parents: Talk about how knowing Jesus changed your life. What were you like before? What changes did you make after knowing Jesus? What challenges did you face after becoming a believer and how did you overcome them?

5 Prayer

Pray for determination to follow Jesus even when it is hard. Ask God to help us see things the way He sees them and to trust Him no matter what.

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monday

05

Serving from Babylon to Persia

SCRIPTURE Daniel 5:17, 25-31; 6:1-2

OBSERVATION

What is the significance of Daniel serving in the Babylonian and Persian courts successively?

APPLICATION

How do I relate God's call for me in drastic changes of my life situations?

PRAYER

Lord, I believe You have a calling for my life which You have intended to be distinctive for me. I want to live my life with a deep sense of answering Your calling. Help me to walk with You faithfully, knowing that as I do so, You will unfold Your plans for me in that calling. Grant me wisdom and understanding to discern Your calling for my 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 word to Belshazzar that He would "put an end" to his kingdom and give it "over to the Medes and Persians" was fulfilled immediately – "that same night" (v.30) – after Daniel's interpretation of the inscription on the wall (vv.25-31). God can fulfil His Word immediately or after a long time. Whatever time God may take to fulfil His Word, He is "trustworthy in all His promises and faithful in all He does" (Psa 145:13b, NIV).

The demise of the Babylonian hegemony was not just a historical event, but primarily a theological one. Nebuchadnezzar was "My servant" whom God raised to judge His unfaithful people in the seventy-year Babylonian exile (Jer 25:8-9, 11). When God had accomplished His purpose through Babylon, "I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation" (Jer 25:12). This is how God deals with arrogant and evil nations: "And Babylon, the beauty of kingdoms, the glory of the Chaldeans' pride, will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah" (Isa 13:19).

The end of Babylon does not mean an insecure future for Daniel. However drastically our circumstances may change, God's call for our lives remains when we walk with Him faithfully. We are secure in God's call, because it is **God's** call. Daniel became one of "the three commissioners" in Persia (Dan 6:1-2). It wasn't that having lost his job Daniel applied to serve the Persian king. Daniel couldn't do that. It was purely by royal appointment. But behind the "It seemed good to Darius to appoint" (Dan 6:1) was God's call for Daniel to serve Him from Babylon to Persia.

tuesday

06

Discipleship in a Dog-Eat-Dog World

SCRIPTURE Daniel 6:1-9

OBSERVATION

What do Daniel and his fellow-commissioners and the satraps in the passage tell us about discipleship in the world?

APPLICATION

How do I face the discipleship challenges in living 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 serve God to please Him and not people
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

God has created humans to work, just as He worked in creating the universe (Gen 2:2-3, 5, 15). So, vocation has become a major aspect of our lives under the creation order. But we work in a fallen, highly competitive dog-eat-dog world, where people will do whatever it takes to be successful, even if that means harming others. We ought to, then, work in such a world consciously as faithful followers of Jesus. And Daniel is such a model.

Daniel's Competency: Daniel “possessed an extraordinary spirit” (v.3), which he already had while serving in the Babylonian court (Dan 5:12). The principle here is, God does give us certain gifts and abilities for competency in the vocation that He calls and directs us to. But God-given gifts and abilities do not rule out hard work. God does not intend the gifts and abilities to be always “extraordinary”. For Daniel, the “extraordinary” was a divine necessity in his vocation. And because of his “extraordinary spirit”, Daniel “began distinguishing himself” among his equals and his subordinates (v.3).

Daniel's Character: Daniel “was faithful, and no negligence or corruption was found in him” (v.4). We may not distinguish ourselves in terms of competency, but we must distinguish ourselves in character. Character is fundamental and is more important than competency. For one can be so competent as to make great and successful accomplishments, but corrupt in character. Such competency and accomplishments are “wood, hay, straw” in the light of ultimate reality (cf. 1 Cor 3:12-13). Daniel's character was formed through living by “the law of his God” (v.5).

wednesday

07

Consistent Daily Devotion to God

SCRIPTURE Daniel 6:1-10

OBSERVATION

What does verse 10 tell us about Daniel?

APPLICATION

How can I cultivate a consistent daily devotion to 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 leaders
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for the Generations: That young people will seek to be devoted to God consistently
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

For Daniel’s distinguishing competency and character, and commitment to ensuring that the king suffered no loss in his empire, Darius “planned to appoint” him “over the entire kingdom” (v.3). But out of jealousy, Daniel’s fellow-commissioners and the satraps attempted to accuse him of “negligence or corruption” in “government affairs” (v.4a). They could find nothing, because Daniel was “faithful” (v.4b). So, they planned to make accusation against him “with regard to the law of his God” (v.5). And they maliciously instigated Darius to establish a law that “anyone who makes a petition to any god or man” besides the king “for thirty days, shall be cast into the lion’s den” (vv.6-9).

Then, “when Daniel knew that the document was signed...he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously” (v.10). This was Daniel’s spiritual discipline with a structure of regular “three times a day”. He kept it daily. We can say that Daniel never missed his quiet time. The most important words in the verse may be “**when Daniel knew** that the document was signed”. They indicate the context of Daniel’s spiritual discipline: A discipleship challenge where his life was at stake. Daniel’s spiritual discipline was no mere religious ritual and routine. He could have skipped his quiet time “for thirty days” and be safe. He didn’t. Daniel’s spiritual discipline manifested his consistent daily devotion to “his God”: “he continued...three times a day...as he had been doing previously.” At the heart of this spiritual discipline was Daniel’s relationship and fellowship with “**his God**”.

thursday

08

Costly Daily Devotion to God

SCRIPTURE Daniel 6:1-17

OBSERVATION

What can you learn about the cost of discipleship from Daniel?

APPLICATION

What is the cost of discipleship that I sense the Lord is calling me to pay in following Him?

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

deeper reflection

When the world seeks to falsely accuse faithful followers of Jesus of wrong, even when they are innocent, we should not be surprised that it succeeds. When the religious leaders brought false accusations against Jesus before Pilate, for three times Pilate's response was: "I have found no guilt in this man" (Lk 23:4, 14, 22). But Jesus was crucified, anyway. "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master," says the Lord Jesus (Matt 10:24).

Daniel's enemies succeeded in their false accusation against him through their malicious scheme (vv.4-13, 16-17). We may label Daniel's discipleship story in Daniel 6 as "Daniel's costly quiet time". We are not permitted to think of biblical discipleship without counting the cost of discipleship (Lk 14:28-29). It can be an ongoing cost that we are paying. Or a cost we are confronted with: Devotion to the Lord or den of the lions?

Consciously or unconsciously, our Christianity has been influenced and shaped, at both the church and individual levels, by Christianity in the West, which we often embrace uncritically. Hence, we may find that what commentator Iain Duguid says about Christianity in the West is also true of us: "...in the prosperous and supposedly tolerant West we have come to expect our lives as Christians to run smoothly and successfully, at least if we are faithfully following the Lord. We think that the slogan 'God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life' means that our lives should be protected by God from any form of unpleasantness. This is a false belief, however."⁴ Is this true of you?

⁴ Iain M. Duguid, *Daniel*, Reformed Expository Commentary (P&R, 2008), 93

friday
09Walking Toward
the Lions' Den

SCRIPTURE Daniel 6:10-17

OBSERVATION

What do you think Daniel might have been thinking and feeling as he was led to the lions' den?

APPLICATION

How do I deal with my feelings of fear and anxiety in going through difficulties 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 SGI leaders: To fix their eyes on God, and not on the circumstances, in difficult times
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

It is one thing to be prepared to pay the cost of discipleship, but quite another to actually pay it, especially when the cost is very high. What was going through Daniel's mind and how was he feeling as he was being led to the lions' den?

Before Daniel was thrown into the lions' den, Darius said to him, "Your God whom you constantly serve will Himself deliver you" (v.16). Daniel's thought might be, "God is speaking to me through the king. I am very certain about it", or "Perhaps, God is speaking to me through the king. I am not sure". Surely, Daniel recalled God's miraculous deliverance of his three friends in Daniel 3. Would Daniel be expecting God to likewise deliver him? I believe Daniel held the same conviction as his three friends: God can and will deliver, but He may not deliver (Dan 3:17-18). Walking by faith is a certainty accompanied by "not knowing where he was going" (Heb 11:8).

I doubt that Daniel was cool and steady with an absence of any feeling of fear or anxiety. Jesus journeyed to the cross with "I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished" (Lk 12:50). This mysterious divine-human distress was real. But there was the peace of God in Jesus (cf. Isa 26:3). However, "Biblical peace is not often a general tranquility but rather a rightness at the centre in the midst of much turmoil."⁵ That "rightness at the centre" is the persevering steadfast faithfulness to the faithful God enabled by God's all-surpassing power (2 Cor 4:7).

⁵ Dale Ralph Davis, *1 Samuel*, Focus on the Bible (Christian Focus, 2000), 213

saturday

10

Yesterday's Covenant Loyalty Wasn't Enough

SCRIPTURE Daniel 6:1-17; 1:8-16

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about Daniel's faith journey when he was old (vv.3-10) and as a youth (Dan 1:8-16)?

APPLICATION

What are some significant landmarks in my faith 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 be faithful to God until the end
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

The Book of Hebrews teaches three kinds of faith, which can be encapsulated in Hebrews 11:35: exploits faith, endurance faith and eschatological faith.⁶ I have been a Christian for 50 years. The faith in my faith journey has been mainly endurance faith. And such is our present faith journey in having a special-needs son, whom we love, with the daily emotionally draining challenges that we face, and asking from time to time, "How long, O Lord?" (Psa 13:1). At times, I asked, "Lord, have I not endured enough?"

On my 66th birthday (14 March 2023), I had a prostate biopsy done. And on 30 March, I discovered that I have prostate cancer. I don't usually follow the Devotional Journal to read what I have written. But God directed me to read the entry of 30 March, entitled, "The Heat of Adversity Increases." It seems that what I have written, God has meant it for me. I think, it is God's answer to my question, "Lord, have I not endured enough?"

By Daniel 6, Daniel was a very old man, who was subjected to a severe test of his faithfulness to God (vv.3-17), more searching than the one he faced as a youth (Dan 1:8-16).⁷ "That Daniel faced this challenge to his faith in old age is a sobering lesson. There never comes a time in life when we can sit back and think that our faithfulness to God is so well established that it will never be challenged or tested again."⁸ "Yesterday's covenant loyalty was not enough. Today calls for a fresh choice."⁹

⁶ I have written on this in *Covenant EFC's Devotional Journal* 2013: 18, 19, 20 March.

⁷ Christopher J. H. Wright, 125

⁸ Christopher J. H. Wright, 125

⁹ Christopher J. H. Wright, 126

sunday

11

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

FAITH:

Trusting in what you can't see because of what you can see.

Memory Verse

"Faith is being sure of what we hope for. It is being sure of what we do not see."
— Hebrews 11:1 (NIRV)

1 Bottom Line

God can help you face your fears.*

2 Bible Story

Acts 9:10-31 – Ananias Helps Paul

3 Activity

Trust in God

Props: Any YouTube video on "The Seed Who Was Afraid to Be Planted"

Watch the video as a family and discuss:

- What did you learn from the story?
- What are you afraid of?
- Who will you turn to when you face fear?

Say, "Everyone has fears. It could be about the upcoming exams or something small like being in dark places. God is capable of helping us face our fears. We can put our trust in God, just like the man who planted the seed. God has a plan for everyone and He will guide every step we take."

4 Talk About It

- Do you think fear can be a good thing? Why or why not?
- What is one fear that you wish you didn't have? How might God help you face that fear?
- If someone is scared or nervous, does that mean they don't have faith?
- What are some things you know about God that can help you face your fears?

Parents: Share one thing that you are fearful of. What did you do to overcome it or why you have yet to overcome it? What can you do to overcome this fear? Who or where do you go to when you face your fears?

5 Prayer

Pray that God will help us to trust Him when we feel afraid. Thank God for being bigger, stronger, closer and greater than anything we fear.



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monday

12

Trust Not in Powerful People

SCRIPTURE Daniel 6:14-20

OBSERVATION

What is the significance of the repeated word “deliver” in the passage (vv.14, 16, 20)?

APPLICATION

What will I do to shift from my tendency to put my trust in human power for security to putting my trust in God?

PRAYER

Lord, I dare not trust in human power, for the best-equipped army cannot save a king and a horse is a false hope for victory. But I trust in You and hope in Your unfailing love. You are my help and my shield, and my security is in You who rescue me from death and keep me alive in times of famine.¹⁰

prayer pointers

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

deeper reflection

King Darius occupies a prominent place in the story of Daniel being thrown into the lions’ den for his faithfulness to God. Much was said about him. When he was forced to throw Daniel into the lions’ den, because he had established and signed an edict which by “a law of the Medes and Persians” cannot be changed, he was “greatly distressed” (vv.14, 15, 17). He knew that his most trustworthy servant was innocent. So, he “set his mind to **deliver** Daniel” and he “kept asserting himself to **rescue** him” (v.14). But he could not. No matter how favourable Daniel was before Darius, this king just could not deliver him. This king was now powerless. But there is an intended contrast in Darius’ powerlessness: God “**will Himself deliver** you” (v.16) and God is “**able to deliver** you from the lions” (v.20).

Through this helplessness of the most powerful person in the Persian Empire, the writer is “doing a little ‘preventive theology’”¹¹. He seems to be saying to the people of God, “You may have rulers or others in high places who are well-disposed toward you; but don’t rest in them as your trump card, for even they for all their apparent power can prove as helpless as Samson without hair [Judg 16:17].”¹² When we put our trust in powerful people for security rather than God, we may make them into idols. The writer here “is trying to bash idols before they become idols”¹³. “Don’t put your confidence in powerful people, there is no help for you there” (Psa 146:3, NLT).

¹⁰ Psalm 33:16-19

¹¹ Dale Ralph Davis, *The Message of Daniel*, The Bible Speaks Today (IVP, 2013), 90

¹² Dale Ralph Davis, 90

¹³ Dale Ralph Davis, 90

tuesday

13

Seeing Myself in Christian Service

SCRIPTURE Daniel 6:16-20

OBSERVATION

What do what Darius said to Daniel in verses 16 and 20 tell us about Daniel?

APPLICATION

How do I see myself in Christian service?

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 a servant of God like Jesus
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

How do we see ourselves in Christian service? This vision of oneself is important and it must be in our dominant consciousness, so that we will have clear thinking and strong conviction with regards to centrality, purpose, meaning, significance, impetus and pursuit in Christian ministry. Otherwise, Christian ministry becomes mere activism, or just going through the motion or serving by convenience, rather than by commitment. We ought to see ourselves in Christian service in two ways.

I see myself as serving God constantly: “your God whom you constantly serve” (vv.16, 20). The key word here is “constantly”. Doubtless, this is what God requires of us. It means that the day I stop serving God is the day I die. It means I will not quit serving God. It means having put the hand to the plow, there is no “looking back” (Lk 9:62). The temptation to be like Demas is great. Demas was one of Paul’s “fellow workers” in the Gospel among the likes of Mark and Luke (Philem 1:24). But years later, Demas left the team, “having loved this present world” (2 Tim 4:10-11).

I see myself as a servant of God: Daniel was a “servant of the living God” (v.20). Being a servant of God is fundamental and is foundational to serving God. We cannot serve God without first being a servant of God. We can be involved in Christian ministry without being a servant of God, because being involved in Christian ministry does not necessarily mean serving God. Jesus says, “If anyone **serves Me**, he must **follow Me**” (Jn 12:26).

wednesday

14

Daniel Lived Out the Gospel

SCRIPTURE Daniel 6:3-5, 14-22

OBSERVATION

What do the acts and words of Daniel's enemies (vv.3-5) and King Darius (vv.14, 18-19) toward Daniel tell us about him?

APPLICATION

What do people see and say about my life?

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 Generations: That older believers will live out the Gospel and model it for young people
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

In Daniel 6, apart from his daily personal prayer (Dan 6:10), we know nothing about Daniel's personal or religious life. We don't know if he was involved in any kind of social or religious good causes, or if he went around evangelising the Babylonians.¹⁴ We see Daniel mainly in his daily secular work, serving a pagan government. But one thing is clear: Daniel lived out the Gospel.

People see Daniel's life. Daniel's enemies found him to be "faithful" and without "negligence or corruption" when they attempted to make accusations against him on government affairs (v.4). But a good testimony for God is not always attractive to pre-believers. The effect could be the opposite instead, as in Daniel's case (v.5). Darius' response to his casting Daniel into the lions' den by his mistake (vv.14-15, 18-19) shows how highly he valued Daniel for his commitment to the state's well-being. Perhaps, what Daniel could say about himself is of great significance: "I was found innocent before God" (v.22). Daniel walked with God in such a way that he could have such confidence about himself with humble honesty.

People see Daniel's God. For Darius, the God of Daniel was central in Daniel's crisis that he had caused: "Your God" (vv.16, 20). Darius saw Daniel's God in the latter's life, not just his integrity. We do not know how Darius saw God in Daniel's life. But we know he saw the reality of God in Daniel. It must be that this reality was manifested in how Daniel lived his life and did his work.

¹⁴ Christopher J. H. Wright, 129

thursday

15

How Daniel Trusted in God

SCRIPTURE Daniel 6:16-23

OBSERVATION

How did Daniel show that he had trusted in his God (v.23)?

APPLICATION

What changes do I need to make regarding trusting in God 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 trust in God with all their hearts
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

When Daniel was taken up out of the lions' den at Darius' orders, "no injury was found on him, because he had trusted in his God" (v.23). God delivered Daniel miraculously because Daniel trusted in Him. How did Daniel show his trust in God?

It is possible that God spoke to Daniel personally or through Darius (v.16), before he was led to the lions' den that He was going to deliver him, and he trusted in God to keep His word. It would be like Paul in Acts 27, when God spoke to him that he was safe in the dangerous storm-tossed sea voyage, that Paul could say, "I have faith in God that it will turn out exactly as I have been told" (Acts 27:23-25). But the text in Daniel 6 does not tell us anything like that.

Daniel's act of trusting in God is: "**when Daniel knew** that the document was signed", **he continued** his daily practice of praying to God (Dan 6:10). God's miraculous deliverance of Daniel in Daniel 6 corresponds to that of Daniel's three friends in Daniel 3. Daniel was like his three friends, "who **put their trust in Him...and yielded up their bodies**" (Dan 3:28). Yielding our lives to God, especially in difficult and uncertain times, is trusting in God. It is like the Psalmist: "I trust in You, O Lord...My times are in Your hands" (Psa 31:14-15a). And note the repeated "his God" and "your God" (Dan 6:5, 10, 11, 16, 20, 23), which point to Daniel's **close relationship** with God that is marked by **mutual commitment**.

friday
16

Lord of the Lions' Mouths

SCRIPTURE Daniel 6:19-24

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about God and the lions?

APPLICATION

How do I live in the "lions' den" 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 SGI leaders: To find strength and courage in God to live in the "lions' den" of the world
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

When you face the lions – literally or figuratively – do you see the lions or the Lord?

When Daniel was thrown into the lions' den, God "shut the lions' mouths" and the result was the lions "have not harmed me" (v.22). While Daniel was in the lions' den, he was actually in God's hands and so were the lions. The lions' mouths were shut toward Daniel, but not his malicious accusers when they were thrown to the same lions (v.24). Why? Because God is Lord of the lions' mouths.

However, this experience of Daniel is not a promise for all people at all times, that when we are in a lions' den, God will always "shut the lions' mouths" and it will always be "they have not harmed me". If the lions' mouths are not shut, does that mean that the lions are not in the hands of God? No. Whether the lions' mouths are shut or not, God is Lord of the lions' mouths.

There are God's people who "by faith" "shut the mouths of lions...escaped from the edge of the sword" (Heb 11:33-34). But there are "others" who are no less "by faith", are "put to death with the sword" (Heb 11:37). By the same faith, one escapes from "the sword" and another is killed by "the sword". We must be bifocal in faith: By faith, we escape from the sword, and by faith, we are killed by the sword. The object of faith is not faith itself. It is God, who is Lord of the sword, in whichever way we may experience the sword.

saturday

17

It's All About God's Glory

SCRIPTURE Daniel 6:25-27

OBSERVATION

What is the significance of the story in Daniel 6 ending with verses 25 to 27?

APPLICATION

How do I relate the glory of God to trials 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 seek to live a life in which God is glorified
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

We can view Daniel 6 as a paradigm of our discipleship journey or of a particular adversity we go through in our faith pilgrimage. Trials are normal in biblical discipleship (Rom 5:1-5; Heb 10:32-36; Jas 1:2-4; 1 Pet 1:6-9). In trials, we are tested if we will follow the Lord faithfully, serve Him constantly and trust in Him steadfastly, at all costs, even if it means to be thrown into the lions' den and whether God shuts the lions' mouths or not (Dan 6:10, 16, 23).

Daniel 6 concludes with the glory of God as a crescendo (vv.25-27). This is always the divine intention for all our discipleship trials – but contingent on us passing the test and being approved by God (Jas 1:12). Discipleship trials are for the glory of God and are all about the glory of God. So, we make the glory of God as central in our trials. This divine glory is seen in the **revelation of God**. God revealed Himself through Daniel's faithfulness to Him and His deliverance of His servant. God revealed Himself as "the living God", the everlasting God – "enduring forever", the reigning God – "His kingdom...His dominion" and the saving God – "He delivers and rescues" (vv.26b-27). And God's deliverance was manifested in three dimensions: by "signs and wonders", "in heaven and on earth" and "from the power of the lions" (v.27). God does not reveal Himself in abstraction, but in real life, in tangible ways. The revelation of God is a reality to be experienced. So, we see God in our trials and God shines in our trials.



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

FAITH:

Trusting in what you can't see because of what you can see.

Memory Verse

"Faith is being sure of what we hope for.
It is being sure of what we do not see."
– Hebrews 11:1 (NIRV)

1 Bottom Line

God can change the way you view others.*

2 Bible Story

Acts 10 – Peter Goes to the House of Cornelius

3 Activity

Different Views

Props: An apple, drawing board paper and pencils

Place the apple on a table and get your family members to draw it.

After the activity, get everyone to share their drawings and discuss:

- Do all the drawings of the apple look the same (e.g. some may have drawn a cross-section while others drew its exterior)?
- What do our drawings indicate about us?
- Does it mean that we have to dislike each other just because we hold different views? Why or why not?

Say, "God creates us differently for His unique work in His Kingdom. We are told to value harmony and treat others with love and respect. We drew the apples from different perspectives and we can choose to see the beauty of each picture. Likewise, we should learn to appreciate and help others who are different from us. This is what God sees in us. Everyone is wonderfully made and beautiful in God's eyes."

4 Talk About It

- As a believer, should you view others differently when they don't know Jesus? Why or why not?
- Why do you think it's hard to accept or love people who are different from you?
- Have you ever treated someone better even though they are different from you in some way, just because you believe God made them and loves them?

Parents: Talk about an interaction with a person who is or was different from you. What changed your view about this person? What challenges did you face when you interacted with him or her?

5 Prayer

Pray that we can be more like Jesus in the things we do and the way we treat others.



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monday

19

Jesus Christ and Christian Service

SCRIPTURE Mark 10:42-45; John 13:12-17

OBSERVATION

What do you learn about Christlike service from Christ's example in these two passages?

APPLICATION

In what specific context(s) do I need to imitate Christ's example of service to others?

PRAYER

Thank You, Lord Jesus! You willingly suffered and died on the cross as the atoning sacrifice for my sins. I know in my heart that I am an unworthy sinner. I do not deserve Your love and sacrifice for me. But I am so grateful for the redemption that I have received through the shedding of Your precious blood. You are my risen Saviour, and I will praise and follow You all my days! Amen.

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 leading up to Step Up Sunday, we will reflect on Christian service and ask the Lord to lead and guide us in our thoughts and actions to better serve Him in the days ahead.

Christian service first and foremost is service to God. In serving God, Christians serve the people amongst whom God puts or sends them. Christian service is to be modelled after Jesus' example. He is both the Son of God and the Son of Man – fully God and fully man. Jesus took on human flesh without ceasing to be God the Son.¹⁵ Since Jesus is God, He could rightly have required to be served by all people – creatures whom God created in His image. However, Jesus came among people “**not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many**” (v.45). Jesus is the most striking example of humility and He expects His followers to imitate His way in their lives. Indeed, **humble service to others** is the path to greatness in the sight of God.

Jesus' supreme act of service to humankind was to give His life as an atoning sacrifice on the cross for the sins of the world. A person's sins are fully forgiven if and when that person believes in Jesus – who He is and what He has done to make that forgiveness possible. A person thus forgiven by God is considered righteous by God and accepted into God's family of redeemed sinners. The child of God, grateful for God's mercy and grace, willingly submits to the Lordship of Jesus and joyfully follows Him in obedience.

¹⁵ Jesus is God the Son, the second divine Person of the Triune God, Creator of the heavens, the earth and all living things (Gen 1; Jn 1:1-18; Phil 2:5-11). Here is a helpful, concise article to help us better understand the Triune God or the doctrine of the Trinity: <https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/spiritual-growth/core-christian-beliefs/understanding-the-trinity.html>

tuesday

20

Christian Service and Love

SCRIPTURE 2 Corinthians 5:12-15; Matthew 22:34-40; Romans 13:8-10**OBSERVATION**

From these three passages, what motivates and sustains a lifetime of loving service to God and therefore to your neighbour?

APPLICATION

How will I live for my Lord Jesus Christ in the coming months and years?

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 joyfully and faithfully live a life of loving service to God and the people whom He entrusts to them
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Our service to God should be **motivated by our love for Him** (v.14). Do you know how much Jesus loves you? He loves us beyond what we can humanly comprehend. The magnitude of His love – its breadth, length, height and depth – can only be known (albeit still in part) by us through God’s enabling.¹⁶ Jesus’ love saw Him willingly suffer and die on the cross for our sake.¹⁷ The sinless One willingly bore our sins in His body.¹⁸ The righteous One chose to die for the unrighteous.¹⁹ God’s righteous wrath and just punishment fell upon Jesus instead of us.²⁰ He was forsaken by the Father so that we do not have to be abandoned by God.²¹ **So great is Christ’s love for us and the salvation that we have in Him!** He is our glorious Lord and risen Saviour, worthy of all our worship! **“Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all!”**²²

Only love for God, overflowing from a grateful heart, can motivate joyful worship and a lifetime of loving service to Him and therefore to your neighbour. Our love for Christ leads us to live for Christ. Our love for self leads us to live for self. Our hearts are naturally oriented towards the self. The Holy Spirit works in the Christian to produce a God-oriented heart. The process is lifelong and can often be painful because it involves the surrender of one’s heart and reorientation of one’s soul. Let us yield to the Holy Spirit, so that our hearts will increasingly love the Lord, and therefore people in His name and for His sake.

¹⁶ Ephesians 3:16-19.

¹⁷ Hebrews 12:2.

¹⁸ 1 Peter 2:24.

¹⁹ 1 Peter 3:18.

²⁰ Isaiah 53:4-6.

²¹ Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34.

²² The final two lines of the sublime hymn, “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross”, written by Isaac Watts and first published in 1707.

wednesday

21

Christian Service and Humility

SCRIPTURE Acts 20:17-21; Philippians 2:1-11; 1 Peter 5:1-5

OBSERVATION

From these passages, what do you learn about humility in the context of Christian service?

APPLICATION

In what specific ways do I need to grow in humility towards “serving the Lord with all humility” (v.19a)?

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 Generations: To grow in humility so that we can better relate to and serve one another across the generations
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

With full integrity, the Apostle Paul described his ministry to the Ephesian Christians as one of “**serving the Lord with all humility**” (v.19a). Paul was confident that the church elders could testify that this was his consistent conduct throughout the two years that he spent with them (vv.17-18; cf. Acts 19:1, 8-10). Paul had put the interests of the Ephesians and the other residents of Asia before his own interests. Boldly and persistently, he proclaimed the Gospel to the locals and visiting businesspeople in public places and private homes (vv.20-21). Consequently, many Jews and Greeks heard the Word of the Lord. It was hard work requiring much humility. Paul experienced considerable heartache, sacrifice and personal suffering as a result of serious opposition: “with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plot of the Jews” (v.19b). Paul was **imitating the Lord’s example of self-emptying humility** (Phil 2:5-8). In Paul’s letter to the church in Philippi, he exhorts the Christians to “**do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.**” (Phil 2:3-4).

The Apostle Peter, too, understood humility in Christian service from Christ’s example of suffering for the sake of His people (1 Pet 5:1). Peter urged church elders to shepherd the people of God in a worthy manner – **serve willingly, eagerly and humbly as examples** to church members (1 Pet 5:2-3). All the believers were to relate humbly with one another, for “**God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble**” (1 Pet 5:5).

thursday

22

Christian Service and Stewardship

SCRIPTURE Micah 6:8; Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; 2 Corinthians 5:8-10

OBSERVATION

What do these Bible verses teach us about our stewardship of life before the Lord our Master?

APPLICATION

In what specific ways do I need to grow in my stewardship of life – my time, abilities, money and the people I have been entrusted with?

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 their stewardship of life to always serve the Lord with gladness and faithfulness
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

God has entrusted to us various resources like time, abilities and money, as well as certain people (under our care and leadership) for whom we are responsible to varying extents. These may include our younger siblings, elderly parents, children, subordinates at our workplaces and followers in our church community. **For Christians, our stewardship of life ought to matter a great deal to us because Jesus Christ is our Master and Lord in life.**

Stewardship means there is a trust relationship between the master and the steward. The master is the owner, not the steward. The master possesses rights, the steward responsibilities. Thus, the steward is to carry out his duties **in accordance with the master's instructions and in furtherance of the master's interests**. The steward cannot do as he wishes or deems fit without reference to the master. The steward must act in ways consistent with the master's character and values; she must not act in ways that bring the master's name into disrepute.

Micah 6:8 tells us that God has certain basic requirements for His people to **"to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God"**. Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 tell us that everyone has a duty to **"fear God and keep His commandments"**, and that **God will judge every deed we have done**, including every secret thing. 2 Corinthians 5:9-10 tell us that God's people are to **"make it our aim to please Him"**, because we will one day appear before the judgment seat of Christ to **account for everything** that we have done in our lifetime and **receive our dues**.

friday
23

Christian Service and Spiritual Gifts

SCRIPTURE 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 1 Peter 4:10-11

OBSERVATION

What do you learn about spiritual gifts from these two Bible passages?

APPLICATION

How can I be a better steward of the spiritual gifts that God has given 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 faithfully develop and use their spiritual gifts to serve and glorify God, both within and beyond the local church
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Spiritual gifts are ministry abilities given and empowered by God's Spirit in each Christian. The Apostle Paul described such abilities as "**the manifestation of the Spirit**" (v.7). There are four key truths to note. **First, spiritual gift(s) are given to each Christian as a matter of God's gracious choice** – "to each is given" (v.7) by the Holy Spirit "who apportions to each one individually as He wills" (v.11). Since these gifts of "God's varied grace" (1 Pet 4:10) are given to Christians by God's gracious choice, we should not compare or compete with one another. Instead, we should **celebrate one another** and our respective gifts.

Second, there are various spiritual gifts. The lists of gifts found here and elsewhere in the New Testament²³ are non-identical, differently categorised and non-exhaustive. While each Christian has at least one gift, none has all the gifts. Therefore, we need one another. With mutual respect and honour, let us **collaborate with one another** using our complementary gifts to serve God.

Third, spiritual gifts are empowered by God (vv.6, 11). Christians cannot properly exercise their gifts independently from God. We must **prayerfully depend on God**; His Spirit provides us the needed words, wisdom, knowledge, faith, power, discernment and strength.

Fourth, spiritual gifts are to be used for God's purposes and glory – "for the common good" (v.7), "to serve one another" (1 Pet 4:10) and "in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 4:11).²⁴ To be "good stewards" (1 Pet 4:10) who **serve and glorify God**, we must use our gifts to build up God's people and proclaim Christ to unbelievers.

²³ See also Romans 12:4-8; Ephesians 4:11-13.

²⁴ Spiritual gifts are never meant for personal gain through the pursuit of wealth, fame, power, authority, or glory for self or family. For all glory and dominion rightfully belong to God alone forever and ever (1 Pet 4:11).

saturday

24

Christian Service and the Gospel

SCRIPTURE Luke 4:16-21; John 20:21-22; Matthew 28:18-20

OBSERVATION

What has Jesus sent His Church (comprising His disciples throughout all generations) to do as God's mission in the world?

APPLICATION

Recognising that doing God's mission is a whole-Church effort, how will I contribute to the accomplishment of God's mission where He has placed (sent) 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 Church Board: To faithfully serve God by leading the church to advance the Gospel in Singapore and the nations
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Jesus was clear about His mission. At the start of His public ministry,²⁵ Jesus went to the synagogue in His hometown Nazareth on the Sabbath day and declared that He was anointed by the Holy Spirit to proclaim Good News to the poor, liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour (vv.18-19). Jesus had been sent by God to proclaim the Good News of salvation to those who until then had no hope of deliverance from their dire situations and were in desperate need of the Lord in His mercy and grace to save them. The Good News, or Gospel, was of Jesus Himself, the Messiah who has come as the way of the Lord in the wilderness for the salvation of sinners.²⁶

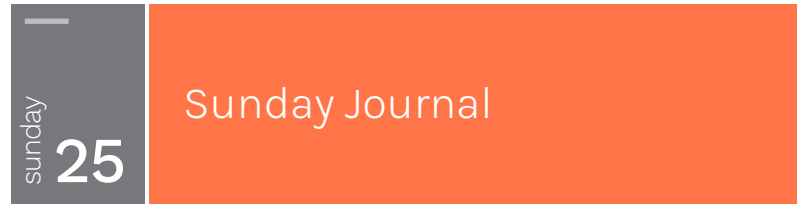
When the Church was likewise sent by Jesus to carry out God's mission in the world (Jn 20:21-22; Matt 28:18-20), the Lord's servants were likewise to be anointed and empowered by God's Spirit **to proclaim the Gospel to a dying world in need of the Saviour**.²⁷ Who will believe the Gospel and be saved? Those who humble themselves before God, confess that the godless way in which they have lived their lives in the past was sinful and wrong, believe in God's Son Jesus Christ as their Saviour, and follow Him as their Lord all the days of their lives, looking forward to His return at the end of the age to take them to be with Him forever to see and share in His glory.²⁸

²⁵ After Jesus returned from 40 days in the wilderness where He was tempted by the devil to jeopardise or abandon His mission: see Luke 4:1-13.

²⁶ Isaiah 40:3; 52:13-53:12.

²⁷ Luke 24:45-49; Acts 1:8.

²⁸ John 14:1-6; 2 Corinthians 5:15; 2 Timothy 4:8; John 17:24; 2 Thessalonians 1:10.



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

FAITH:

Trusting in what you can't see because of what you can see.

Memory Verse

"Faith is being sure of what we hope for. It is being sure of what we do not see."
— Hebrews 11:1 (NIRV)

1 Bottom Line

God is with you even when you feel stuck.*

2 Bible Story

Acts 12:1-19 – An Angel Helps Peter Escape from Prison

3 Activity

Faith

Props: Two sets of locks and keys, question cards and pens

Prepare at least five question cards. Write a question on each card on topics such as science or math. The questions shouldn't be too easy or difficult. Group your family members into two teams and give each team a lock. The first team to answer all the questions correctly within one minute wins the key to the lock.

Say, "It seems like a tough job to complete all the questions within a short time. What gives you the faith that you will be able to complete it? The faith comes from our team. We believe that with the help of able people, the team will be able to earn the key. God is more crucial than the people in our team. With Him, everything is possible. We can put our faith in God to help us in all situations."

4 Talk About It

- What would you say if someone asked you what it means to have faith?
- Why do you think that sometimes problems bring people closer to God, while other times it makes them pull away and ignore God?
- What challenges did you face when you were stuck in a difficult situation?

Parents: Share a past experience when you ran away from God. What made you return to Him?

5 Prayer

Pray that our faith will get stronger. Ask God to help us to remember that He has a plan for us and that God puts us in difficult situations to make our faith stronger.



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monday

26

Success and God's Presence

SCRIPTURE Genesis 39:1-5, 20-23; Joshua 1:7-8; Psalm 1:1-3

OBSERVATION

How did Joseph become successful at work?

APPLICATION

What can I do to experience more of the Lord's presence at my workplace?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank You for giving us Your Word and Your Spirit in our lives. As we meditate on Your Word day by day, guide us by Your Spirit in the work that we do every workday, so that we will prosper in our souls and be successful in representing You in our workplaces. May You be glorified in and through our lives. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, Your Son. Amen.

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 be reflecting on the theme of **Our Work in God's Hands** using Scripture texts taken from the Joseph narrative (Gen 37-50). Joseph was one of the twelve sons of Jacob.²⁹ When he was 17 years old, he was sold by his brothers into slavery. At the age of 30, he became the second most powerful person in the whole of Egypt. A story of a man's success despite major setbacks in life.

The Scriptures tell us clearly that the singular reason for Joseph's success at work was that **God was with him: the presence of the Lord**.

Two key principles to remember: **1. Success and God's presence go together.** When God is with a person, He delights in him and is pleased to grant him success. This was the case for Joseph. Likewise for King David.³⁰ After the Incarnation, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ, God the Father and God the Son sent God the Holy Spirit to live in everyone who believes in Jesus.³¹ Thus, God's presence is with every Christian to lead, guide and empower him to do God's will for God's glory.³² However, the Christian will need to submit to and obey the Holy Spirit for success and fruitfulness.³³ **2. Success comes from keeping God's Word.** His Word is truth and guides His people in His righteous ways. When God's people carefully obey His Word, they will experience God's favour, protection and blessing.³⁴ When we consistently live out God's attributes of steadfast love and faithfulness in our lives, we will enjoy favour and good success in the sight of God and man.³⁵

²⁹ Genesis 35:22-26.

³⁰ 1 Samuel 18:14.

³¹ John 14:12-18.

³² John 16:13-15; Acts 1:8; Ephesians 3:14-21.

³³ Galatians 5:16-25.

³⁴ Joshua 1:7-8; Psalm 1:1-3.

³⁵ Proverbs 3:3-4.

tuesday

27

Dealing with Sexual Temptations

SCRIPTURE Genesis 39:1-20

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about the way Joseph responded to Mrs Potiphar's sexual advances?

APPLICATION

How will I deal with sexual temptations in my workplace?

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 always be on guard against sexual temptations in the context of their ministry work wherever it may take place
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Mrs Potiphar's sexual advances were relentless. "Day after day" (v.10) she asked Joseph to sleep with her. Despite the constant pressure, Joseph refused to betray his master Potiphar's trust and would not sin against God, his ultimate Master. Joseph gave clear moral reasoning in his firm response to his master's wife (vv.8-9) and took wise precautionary measures to stay away from her presence at the workplace (v.10). When she finally managed to corner Joseph, he quickly fled from the person, place and situation.

How should we deal with sexual temptations at the workplace?³⁶

1. Simply flee from temptations. Don't entertain temptations – don't imagine the possibilities nor take any step towards them. Like Joseph, quickly turn and run away (v.12). Don't stay to rationalise or try to manage temptations, because we are prone to deception by self and the devil. Do a fast getaway from that person, place and situation. "Flee from sexual immorality" (1 Cor 6:18a). Such temptations are commonly faced, but each of us has a choice to flee and take the escape route that God provides (1 Cor 10:13-14). **2. "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.** Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." (Jas 4:7-8a). **3. Seek prayer intercession** by two or three close Christian friends whom you trust: "I'm facing these temptations... Please pray for me." We recall that when our Lord Jesus was experiencing great anguish and internal struggle shortly before going to the cross, He sought out Peter, James and John, and asked them to watch and pray with Him (see Matt 26:36-41).

³⁶ Reflecting on this episode from the angle of sexual harassment in the workplace, one commentator wrote: "Joseph's godliness did not rescue him from false accusation and imprisonment. If we find ourselves in a parallel situation, our godliness is no guarantee that we will escape unscathed. ...Knowing that we belong to the Lord and that he defends the weak will certainly help us to face difficult situations without giving up. This story is a realistic recognition that standing up to sexual harassment in the workplace may have devastating consequences. Yet it is also a story of hope that by God's grace, good may eventually prevail in the situation." (Theology of Work Project, Inc.: <https://www.theologyofwork.org/old-testament/genesis-12-50-and-work/joseph-genesis-372-5026/the-schemes-of-potiphars-wife-and-josephs-imprisonment-genesis-391-20/>)

wednesday

28

Stewarding Power and Authority

SCRIPTURE Genesis 41:14-57

OBSERVATION

What prepared Joseph for the reversal of fortunes in his life and how did he respond to God's gift of power and authority?

APPLICATION

How can I use the power and authority that have been entrusted to me by God to do good to the people of the land?

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 Generations: To always give credit and glory to God and be His instruments of righteousness to do good to the people of the land
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream with clarity. A very severe seven-year famine was coming after seven years of plentiful harvest. Joseph emphasised to Pharaoh that the interpretation was revealed by God, and not something Joseph could understand on his own (vv.16, 25, 28, 32). The Lord was also the source of Joseph's wisdom in his famine response proposal. This fact was clearly perceived by Pharaoh – so evident it was that God's Spirit was in Joseph (vv.37-38). Totally impressed, Pharaoh immediately promoted Joseph to be his second-in-command over “all the land of Egypt”³⁷ despite his not being an Egyptian³⁸ and his young age of 30!

What prepared Joseph for this meteoric rise from the prison to the palace, and promotion beyond all expectations to the second highest political office? One commentator insightfully wrote:³⁹

Before Pharaoh promoted him, Joseph knew that the Lord was with him and he had tangible evidence to prove it. **Repeatedly giving God credit was not only the right thing to do, but it also reminded Joseph himself that his skills were from the Lord.** Joseph was courteous and humble, showing a desire to do whatever he could to help Pharaoh and the Egyptian people. Even when the Egyptians were bereft of currency and livestock, Joseph earned the trust of the Egyptian people and of Pharaoh himself (v.55). Throughout the rest of his life as an administrator, Joseph **consistently devoted himself to effective management for the good of others.**

Joseph remained a humble servant of the Lord by **the consistent practices of giving credit to God and using power⁴⁰ to do good to the people of the land.**

³⁷ Repeated description emphasising Joseph's authority over the entire Egyptian kingdom in verses 41, 43, 44 and 46.

³⁸ It seems clear that this issue was prominent in Pharaoh's mind as he proceeded to give Joseph an Egyptian name and wife (v.45).

³⁹ Theology of Work Project, Inc.: <https://www.theologyofwork.org/old-testament/genesis-12-50-and-work/joseph-genesis-372-5026/josephs-promotion-by-pharaoh-genesis-411-45/> (emphasis added).

⁴⁰ Christian author, Andy Crouch, insightfully pointed out, “Why is power a gift? Because power is for flourishing. When power is used well, people and the whole cosmos come more alive to what they were meant to be. And flourishing is the test of power.”: Andy Crouch, *Playing God: Redeeming the Gift of Power* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2013), 13.

thursday

29

Forgiveness from the Heart

SCRIPTURE Genesis 50:14-21

OBSERVATION

What does this Scripture passage tell us about whether Joseph had fully forgiven his brothers for their sin committed against him in the past?

APPLICATION

In what way is the Lord leading me to fully forgive the sin that a particular person, for example my colleague, committed against me in the past?

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 receive grace from God and thereby be able to give grace to people who have caused them offence or hurt
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

This Scripture passage tells us that Joseph truly and completely forgave his brothers for their sin against him. It was not that Joseph restrained himself and treated them well for their father Jacob's sake while he was alive. The most telling words that reveal the depth of Joseph's forgiveness towards his brothers were these: "So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones (v.21)."

It was no small thing for Joseph to forgive his brothers for the betrayal and evil that they had committed against him in the past. The young Joseph suffered grievously when they threw him into a pit and thereafter sold him to Midianite traders, who brought him to Egypt and sold him as a slave to Potiphar (Gen 37:23-28, 36). Joseph must have been sobbing and shaking with distress as he begged his brothers for mercy and pleaded with them to let him go home.⁴¹ Joseph must also have experienced abject fear as he was forcibly restrained and taken away by the Midianite traders. He would certainly have suffered severe emotional trauma as a result of being separated from his parents, taken to a foreign land, not knowing what his captors will do to him and what will become of him in the future. During the harrowing journey to Egypt, young Joseph must have cried out again and again to the Lord for deliverance.

How could the adult Joseph not harbour anger and resentment in his heart towards his brothers nor seek revenge? Two key practices: (1) Joseph recognised God's blessings in his life;⁴² and (2) Joseph submitted himself to God's will.⁴³

⁴¹ Genesis 42:21.

⁴² Genesis 41:50-52.

⁴³ Genesis 45:4-8.

friday

30

The Sovereignty of God

SCRIPTURE Genesis 45:3-11; 50:18-21

OBSERVATION

Looking back on his life, how did Joseph see God's sovereign hand and good purpose in the way events panned out?

APPLICATION

How can I respond in a godly manner to the setbacks, disappointments and pain that I experienced in my working life?

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 recognise and rest in the sovereignty of God in their work and ministry
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

In our work life,⁴⁴ we need to recognise and rest in the sovereignty of God. God is in sovereign control over all of our lives.⁴⁵ It is not that we do not have the freedom to make choices in the course of our lives, but that God superintends our lives – and indeed all of human history – to bring things to pass in accordance with His sovereign will and purposes.⁴⁶

As Christians, recognising and resting in the sovereignty of God in our work will provide us many benefits, such as lesser fear and frustration, and lower stress and anxiety, when we encounter setbacks at work or when things are not turning out the way we would prefer or expect. Not only has God revealed Himself in the Scriptures as the Sovereign Lord of all creation, He has also revealed to us His attributes of steadfast love and faithfulness towards His covenant people.⁴⁷ We must by faith hold fast to the biblical beliefs that God loves us and has our best interests at heart, and that God alone has perfect knowledge⁴⁸ and the fullest perspective on our situations. Then we will be able to maintain our stability in the storms.

With the benefit of hindsight, Joseph recognised God's good hand upon his life over all the years, including all the times of pain and suffering that he had to go through. What Joseph had to previously hold fast by faith, now he could see clearly that God had a good and glorious purpose for the blessing of God's people through His servant, and bringing salvation to all the nations of the earth.

⁴⁴ According to one survey, an average person will spend about 13 years of his life at work: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/weve-broken-down-your-entire-life-into-years-spent-doing-tasks_n_61087617c4b0999d2084fec5

⁴⁵ Isaiah 40:21-26; 45:7-12.

⁴⁶ Isaiah 46:8-10.

⁴⁷ Exodus 34:6-7; Psalm 89:19-37.

⁴⁸ Isaiah 40:12-14.

NOTES

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