
2023

devotional journal

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)



august

2023
devotional journal

august

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DANIEL 7:27 (ESV)

memory verses | 2023

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.

senior pastors,

*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 disciplemaking roots through authentic discipleship and intentional disciplemaking 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

foreword

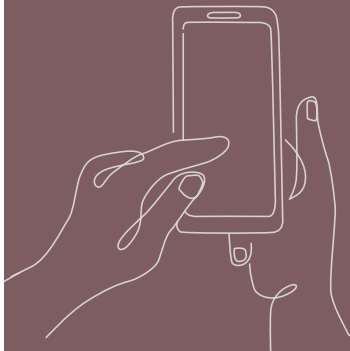
guide to using this devotional journal

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.

step one

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 two

pray for covenant efc as a missional force

“As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” At once they left their nets and followed him. Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.”

MATTHEW 4:18-22 (NIV)

Imagine the scene. Peter and Andrew, James and John... going about their ordinary jobs one day, fishing at the lake. Unbeknownst to them, their lives were about to change forever through *one* extraordinary encounter with Jesus. He called them with three simple words, “Come, follow me”. And spoke a transformative Word into their vocations that they knew so well, “...I will send you out to fish for people”. Immediately, they left their nets (livelihoods), their boat (resources) and their father (relationships)...to follow Jesus.

Today in our missions prayer focus, let's begin with God's missional force — you and I. Pray that as a church, our sending capacity will one day supersede our seating capacity.

- When have you encountered Jesus and responded immediately? Ask Him for a fresh encounter.
- What has it cost you to follow Jesus? Tell Him about what holds you back and surrender it to Him.
- How does the Lord want to transform your vocation for His Kingdom? Allow Him to show you.

The ministry of Christ and the missional journey of the disciples began with the same call He gives us today, “Come, follow me”. *Take a moment. Respond to these questions as an honest prayer.* Allow Him to stir up your heart to say “yes” to making Kingdom impact in your sphere of influence!

East Timor

In 2021, the Lord opened the door for Covenant EFC to be the anchor church for the District of Aileu in East Timor. Our vision is to see multiplying discipling communities by raising and uniting young leaders to experience and carry biblical transformation into every sphere of society.

Since then, the Lord has opened many doors through countless divine appointments for us to send our staff missionary, along with a team of two other Covenanters to be based in a rural village there. They are partnering with a local church and building foundations for the work ahead.

Pray for:

- Youth leadership training (weekly) – for the raising up of young leaders from the local church.
- Community kids club (weekly) – for the building up of youth leaders to influence and disciple community kids with biblical values. For the bridging of the church and community by addressing tangible needs.

pray for covenant etc as a missional force

- English courses (four times weekly) – for the building of foundation and character as well as inspiring God’s hope among the youth. English is an entry point into various spheres of society and an international language. Pray that many of the youth too may be sent in the future to make disciples of all nations!
- LoveTimor district anchor initiatives – for the uniting of churches in Aileu through initiatives like monthly prayer gatherings. Pray for the team as they connect with more local pastors.



To get prayer updates on East Timor, join the Telegram channel @ t.me/more4timor or simply click the image at the left.

NOTES

tuesday

01

Fall of Babylon: What's Next?

SCRIPTURE Daniel 7:1-3, 17; Ezra 4:1-6

OBSERVATION

What would it be like for the people of God after the fall of Babylon?

APPPLICATION

What does it mean for me if God does not fulfil His Word fully, but only partially?

PRAYER

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

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for pastors and staff: To anchor in the Word of God with faith and patience
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Daniel 5 records the death of Belshazzar and the collapse of the Babylonian Empire to Medo-Persia (Dan 5:26-31). The “first year” of Belshazzar’s reign, 550 BC (v.1), marked “the closing years of the Babylonian Empire”¹. This was “the year that Cyrus, king of Anshan, took over the Median empire and signalled the chain of events that would lead historically to Belshazzar’s death and Babylon’s fall”². It was in this geopolitical context that Daniel dreamed of the visions in Daniel 7.

By now, most of the exiles of Judah in Babylon were the second generation since the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC, and some of them very elderly, like Daniel. For them, the question was, “If Babylon’s dominance is coming to an end, what would be next?” It was “a time of mixed hope and anxiety”³. They witnessed God’s faithfulness in fulfilling His Word in the fall of Babylon (Jer 25:11-12; Dan 9:2) and their return to their land to rebuild the temple (2 Chron 36:22-23). This certainly encouraged their faith in God. But the great visions in Isaiah 40 to 55 of a glorious age of renewed security and prosperity in their land had yet to be fulfilled. And they faced great opposition in rebuilding the temple (Ezr 4:1-6). The visions in Daniel 7 reveal that “history will continue to be a like a troubled sea”⁴, out of which arise “four great beasts” – four beastly kings (vv.2-3, 17). “The end of exile in Babylon would not mean the end of suffering at the hands of hostile powers.”⁵ Severely testing times are ahead. This is biblical discipleship.

¹ Christopher J. H. Wright, *Hearing the Message of Daniel: Sustaining Faith in Today’s World* (Zondervan, 2017), 150

² John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, Word Biblical Commentary (Word Books, 1989), 183

³ Christopher J. H. Wright, 151

⁴ John E. Goldingay, 183

⁵ Christopher J. H. Wright, 151

wednesday

02

The Repeated Pattern of Four

SCRIPTURE Daniel 7:1-8; 2:36-43

OBSERVATION

How are the great statue made of four parts (Dan 2:35-43) and the four beasts in verses 4 to 8 related?

APPPLICATION

What are the discernible divine patterns that God used to direct me in my life?

PRAYER

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

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for leaders
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for the Nations: That God will fulfil His sovereign purpose for Singapore
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

When Daniel dreamed of the visions, he could not understand their meaning, as he needed a divine being to make known to him the interpretation (Dan 7:15-16). But even before Daniel received the interpretation, his mind went back to Nebuchadnezzar’s dream almost fifty years ago (Dan 2).⁶ “Perhaps Daniel was now reflecting on that statue with its four metallic empires succeeding one another” and discerned a connection with his visions of four beasts: “The pattern of four repeats itself.”⁷ In the Bible, repeated literary patterns are a divine pattern that shows a theology: God is in sovereign control. God does use discernible patterns in directing our lives as we walk with Him faithfully.

Daniel was reflecting on the current geopolitical scene with Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (Dan 2) and his visions (Dan 7) in mind: “The Babylonian Empire was clearly drifting to its extinction, what was to follow?”⁸ The great statue of four kingdoms, representing superpowers in world history, does not show any evil as do the four kingdoms represented by the four beasts. Daniel was “a man close to the heart of the imperial government of Babylon”, and he “doubtless had profound insight at a purely human and political level into the likely international outcomes if Babylon fell. He is not likely to have been lounging on a bed of illusions and false optimism. On the contrary, it may have been a well-warranted fear of the longer future that prepared his mind for the visions that he now begins to recount [in Dan 7].”⁹ That frightening “longer future” is a world ruled by beastly leaders that devour people.

⁶ Christopher J. H. Wright, 152

⁷ Christopher J. H. Wright, 152

⁸ Christopher J. H. Wright, 152

⁹ Christopher J. H. Wright, 151

thursday

03

Leaders Can Become Beastly Leaders (1)

SCRIPTURE Daniel 7:1-8

OBSERVATION

What is the significance of the content of Daniel's vision in verses 2 to 3?

APPPLICATION

How do I look at and live in the contemporary geopolitical situation?

PRAYER

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

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for Outreach/Missions/New Life leaders: To lead in gentleness of wisdom
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

In his exposition of Daniel 7, Bible scholar and pastor, Gordon Wong, focuses on leaders and leadership, which he entitled, “When ‘Monsters’ Rule.”¹⁰ Daniel 7 “begins by relating a vision of four kinds of leaders, four kinds of kings” (vv.4-8), and “we are meant to recognise in these figures the different kinds of kings or kingdoms, leaders and governments, which rule on earth”¹¹. These are human beings, but they are portrayed as animal-like figures: “lion”, “bear” and “leopard” (vv.4-6) that are “morphed into mystical monsters”¹². And the “fourth beast” is not even likened to any other animal (vv.7-8). These are human beings who become beastly leaders, with some being more monstrous than others.

The number of beasts – “four” (v.3) – represents “a symbol of completeness rather than a particular number of world empires”¹³. The number “four” symbolises “all” the superpowers in history. The message of Daniel 7 is that “life in this present age will always be this way until the end of the age. It is striking that the superpowers of our own age still customarily represent themselves by predatory animals, such as the Russian bear, the Chinese dragon and the American eagle. The beasts of this present world order may change their shape as the centuries pass, but their violence and lust for power continues”¹⁴.

Daniel 7 shows us how to **look at** and **live in** our contemporary geopolitical situations. The “four great beasts” come up from the sea when “the four winds of heaven” stir up the sea (vv.2-3). The “four winds” come from **“Heaven that rules”** (Dan 4:26).

¹⁰ Gordon Wong, *Faithful to the End: The Message of Daniel for Life in the Real World* (Genesis, 2006), 92

¹¹ Gordon Wong, 92

¹² Christopher J. H. Wright, 156

¹³ Iain M. Duguid, *Daniel*, Reformed Expository Commentary (P&R, 2008), 111

¹⁴ Iain M. Duguid, 111

friday

04

Leaders Can Become Beastly Leaders (2)

SCRIPTURE Daniel 7:4-8

OBSERVATION

What do the portraits of the four beasts tell us about human beings?

APPPLICATION

How do I relate with people with beastly character?

PRAYER

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

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for SGI leaders: To grow to be gentle and humble in heart
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Fallen human beings, including those who are redeemed, can become beastly leaders – in government and corporations, as employers and bosses, in the family and church. It can be us becoming such leaders, or us being under such leaders.

The powerful but humane leader (v.4)¹⁵: The “lion” with “wings of an eagle” is powerful on land and in the air. But its wings are “plucked” and it is brought down to earth. The leader is humbled and becomes more human, “standing like a man” with “a human mind.” **The hungry for success leader** (v.5)¹⁶: With three ribs already in its mouth, the never satisfied bear wants to “devour much meat”. People under a leader who is always hungry for more success are driven beyond proper limits to do more, to accomplish more and to achieve more for him. **The rising fast and high leader** (v.6): The “leopard” with “four wings of a bird” suggests “swiftness and speed”¹⁷. This leader rises quickly high and above all others with swift success and advancement. However, it can be too fast and too high too soon. **The “just a monster” leader** (vv.7-8): Who is “dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong” and egocentrically “devoured and crushed and trampled down” all who stand in the way.

We may not be able to stop, change or be saved from beastly leaders. But one thing we must ensure: “Though you cannot change the ‘monsters’, do not succumb to them. Even if you cannot change them, you must not let them change you. Do not succumb to becoming one of them.”¹⁸

¹⁵ Gordon Wong, 92

¹⁶ Gordon Wong, 93

¹⁷ Gordon Wong, 95

¹⁸ Gordon Wong, 99

saturday

05

Leading in the Spirit of Jesus

SCRIPTURE John 13:1-7; 20:17

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about Jesus as a leader – as “the Lord and the Teacher”?

APPPLICATION

What changes do I need to make in my perspective and posture as a leader?

PRAYER

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

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for Church Board: To lead in the way Jesus leads
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Christian leaders – in whatever settings – are to lead as followers of Jesus. That means, follow the way Jesus leads. **Jesus leads at three levels simultaneously and holistically.**

Leading as the Highest: In John 13, when did Jesus wash His disciples’ feet? It was when Jesus “knowing that the Father has given all things into His hands” (v.3). It was when He was “conscious of the universal sovereignty conferred on Him by His Father, fully aware of His heavenly origin and destiny”¹⁹. Jesus washed His disciples’ feet as “the Lord and the Teacher” (Jn 13:13-14). God endows authority on Christian leaders to lead, such that their followers must submit to them (Heb 13:17). That’s top-down leadership.

Leading as the Lowest: Jesus, knowing that He is the highest (v.3), He does the lowest: He washed His disciples’ feet (v.4). “Foot washing was normally carried out by a servant, not by those participating in the meal, and certainly not by the one presiding at the meal.”²⁰ Jesus washed His disciples’ feet in six condescending steps (vv.4-5). That’s bottom-up leadership. But Jesus’ disciples “saw a rare unfolding of the authority and glory of the incarnate Word, and a rare declaration of the character of the Father Himself”²¹. Jesus can be at the highest and at the lowest at the same time.

Leading as an Equal: Jesus, who is “the Lord and the Teacher” of His disciples (vv.13-14), is also their Brother. After His resurrection, He called them “My brethren”, for His Father and God is their Father and God (Jn 20:17; cf. Heb 2:10-17).

¹⁹ F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Eerdmans, 1983), 280

²⁰ Colin G. Kruse, *John*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (IVP, 2003), 280

²¹ F. F. Bruce, 280

—
sunday
06

Sunday Journal

SCRPTURE

OBSERVATION

APPPLICATION

PRAYER

the past week



review

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

What gave me life and what drained me?

How was the Spirit of God at work?

the past week



reflect

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



respond

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



Week 1

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

Jesus is real.

Memory Verse

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."
– Luke 19:10 (NIV)

1 Bottom Line

Knowing who Jesus is helps us to be better Christians.*

2 Bible Story

Luke 2:51-52 – Jesus as a Kid



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

3 Activity

Childhood

Props: A big piece of paper and marker pens.

Ask your family members to talk about what they did during their childhood. What is one childhood memory that makes you smile? Get everyone to draw or write their thoughts on a piece of paper.

Invite everyone to share how our childhood experiences are different from Jesus' childhood.

Say, "Jesus had a different childhood. He spent his time learning God's word. When we constantly read God's word, we are learning more about who He is. This knowledge of God will help us know how to live our lives better according to His ways. The more we know God, the more we will have the character of Jesus in us.

4 Talk About It

- How do you know that Jesus is real? Share some experiences.
- How can we experience more of what we have learned about Jesus?
- How does knowing more about Jesus' life encourage you to be a better Christian?

Parents: Talk about how knowing Jesus' life, death and resurrection encourages you to be a better Christian.

5 Prayer

Dear God, thank you for sending Jesus to us. Guide us to be more like Jesus, such as making wise choices and getting along with others.

*<https://open.life.church/resources>
Adapted by JoshuaWong/CEFC/August 2023

monday

07

Ultimate Reality: God the Judge

SCRIPTURE Daniel 7:1-10

OBSERVATION

What does Daniel's vision in verses 9 to 10 tell us about God?

APPPLICATION

What does it mean for me in my discipleship journey that God is “the Ancient of Days”?

PRAYER

O Lord, my God, You reign over heaven and earth forever. You have established Your throne for judgment. You rule the world in righteousness and judge the peoples with equity. Lord, You are a refuge for the oppressed and a stronghold in times of trouble. Those who know Your name trust in You, for You, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek You.²²



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

deeper reflection

It is wisdom that we live our lives in terms of ultimate reality. Ultimate reality is the reality that is fundamental and final, that transcends all other realities. It is the reality that is ultimately true and real – implying that there are realities that are false and are just illusions. Ultimate reality is a reality that we cannot escape from. That reality is there, whether we are conscious of it or not, like it or not and want it or not. There are only two ultimate realities: **God** and our **hearts** – what we truly and really are.

The world has a long, long history of prevailing oppressive injustice. Human kings and judges, however just and powerful they are, are unable to stop this seemingly unending evil. Our only hope is **God is the Judge** – “the Ancient of Days” in Daniel’s vision, who was sitting on the central throne when thrones were set up for judgment (vv.9-10). His white as snow clothing symbolises His “uncompromising and radiant purity”²³. His white as wool hair symbolises “purity” and “the wisdom that comes with great age”²⁴. His chariot-throne flamed with fire and its wheels blazed represents the Divine Warrior’s holy presence and fearsome power to destroy His enemies.²⁵ God is the Judge who “has the wisdom to sort out right from wrong, the purity to choose the right and the power to enforce His judgments”²⁶. The “myriads and myriads” of angelic attendants around the throne “speak of the instant executive power of the one on the throne; any whisper of His will finds a messenger or agent for any task, anywhere, anytime”²⁷.

²² Psalm 97-10 (NIV)

²³ Iain M. Duguid, 115

²⁴ Iain M. Duguid, 115

²⁵ Christopher J. H. Wright, 155; Iain M. Duguid, 115

²⁶ Iain M. Duguid, 115

²⁷ Christopher J. H. Wright, 155

tuesday

08

Ultimate Reality: God Will Judge

SCRIPTURE Daniel 7:9-10; 1 Corinthians 11:27-32

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about the judgment of God?

APPPLICATION

How do I live my life in the light of God's judgment on my life?

PRAYER

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

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for pastors and staff: To live humbly in the light of God's judgment
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

God is the ultimate reality and this God is the Judge of humans created by Him. The end of a human life is not the end of reality. What follows is an ultimate reality: Judgment of God – “it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment” (Heb 9:27). In Daniel’s vision, it is “The court sat” (v.10). This is the eschatological Divine Court where God will execute His ultimate judgment on all peoples and nations “from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds” (Rev 20:12).

We ought to live our lives bearing in mind that God will judge us – for better or for worse. This is one critical way of living with the end in mind. Believers in Christ are “made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ”, and God has “freed us from the penalty of our sins” (Rom 3:22, 24, NLT), and delivered us from “the day of wrath and revelation of God’s righteous judgment” (Rom 2:5). However, God still judges us in how we live as believers in Christ. God judges us **in the present** – like He did to certain wayward Corinthian believers, “so that we will not be condemned along with the world” (1 Cor 11:30-32). And God will judge us **in the future** (Rom 14:10-12). Along with God judging us is us examining ourselves and judging ourselves rightly (1 Cor 11:28, 31). We judge ourselves rightly by the “living and active” Word of God that is “able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb 4:12).

wednesday

09

Ultimate Reality: The Divine Records

SCRIPTURE Daniel 7:1-10; Psalm 56:1-11

OBSERVATION

How does the Psalmist knowing that his sufferings are recorded in God's book affect him in his discipleship journey (Psa 56:1-11 – note v.8)?

APPPLICATION

How does knowing that my sufferings are recorded in God's book affect me in my discipleship journey?

PRAYER

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

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for leaders
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for the Nations: That Singaporeans will think of God in hard times
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Daniel saw in his vision “The court sat, and the books are opened” (v.10). “The books are opened” so that God the Judge “can see the full record of all that is done on earth and evaluate it according to God’s own standards and bring the story to the just and good resolution that only God can accomplish. The fate of the world will be decided not by the boastful claims and power of the beasts [vv.4-8] but by the will and purpose of God and His ultimate judgment on all that takes place in His world.”²⁸

The Psalmist was greatly afflicted “all day long”, but he anchored himself in a theological reality: “**You must have kept a record** of my misery; put my tears in Your bottle”²⁹ (Psa 56:1, 5, 8). These words were expressed against “the background idea of a divine ‘scroll of remembrance’ – God’s book about the behavior of the righteous [see Mal 3:16].”³⁰ With this “assurance that his condition has been recorded in the divine records, though there is no overt response yet from God”³¹, the Psalmist found encouragement and comfort to keep trusting in God and His Word (Psa 56:3-4, 10-11). God records means God remembers – though at times we feel that He has forgotten about us.

But there is the negative side of the divine records. For example, Jesus says, “Every careless word that people speak, they shall give an account for it in the day of judgment” (Matt 12:36). Our words come from our hearts (Matt 12:34-35). Let’s be careful in our hearts in what we say and do.

²⁸ Christopher J. H. Wright, 155

²⁹ Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol 20 (Word Books, 1990), 65

³⁰ Marvin E. Tate, 71

³¹ Marvin E. Tate, 70

thursday

10

Behold, a Son of Man...

SCRIPTURE Daniel 7:13-14

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about “the one like a son of man” in Daniel’s vision?

APPPLICATION

What does the vision of the “one like a son of man” mean to me?

PRAYER

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

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for Outreach/Missions/New Life leaders: To have a fresh vision of the glory of the Son of Man
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Daniel saw in his vision “one like a son of man” coming and was presented before the Ancient of Days (v.13). The description “one like a son of man” means that this being “appeared to be simply a mortal human being”³². Elsewhere in the Old Testament, this phrase “son of man” “often distinguishes mere mortals from God”³³ – as in “God is not man...nor a son of man” (Num 23:19). But Daniel saw in this figure “something more to his humanity than merely God appearing in human shape”³⁴, like God appearing to Abraham with His two angels as “three men” (Gen 18:1-2, 22). Daniel saw in this being both human and divine traits combined in one person.

This son of man comes “with the clouds of heaven” (v.13), which is “a clear symbol of divine authority”³⁵. In the Old Testament God alone rides on a cloud chariot: “Behold, the LORD is riding on a swift cloud” (Isa 19:1; see also Psa 68:4; 104:3). And the Ancient of Days gives to this son of man authority, glory and sovereign power (v.14). But this authority and sovereignty are not simply the kind that God gives to human kings like Nebuchadnezzar (see Dan 5:18), for “all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him” (v.14, NIV). And he is given an everlasting and indestructible dominion (v.14), “a sovereignty which belongs to God Himself”³⁶.

The God-man in Daniel’s vision who shares our humanity and also endowed with “the fullness of undiminished deity”³⁷ is Jesus – “the Son of Man...coming with the clouds of heaven” (Mk 14:62).

³² Iain M. Duguid, 117

³³ Iain M. Duguid, 117

³⁴ Iain M. Duguid, 117

³⁵ Iain M. Duguid, 117

³⁶ Iain M. Duguid, 117

³⁷ Iain M. Duguid, 117

friday
11

The Crown Through the Cross

SCRIPTURE Mark 15:16-20; Daniel 7:13-14

OBSERVATION

How was Jesus crowned as King?

APPPLICATION

What does God's way of crowning Jesus as King mean to me in my discipleship journey?

PRAYER

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

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for SGI leaders: To understand the way of the cross in discipleship
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Jesus Christ, the Son of Man in Daniel 7, is the only true and ultimate King, whose Kingdom is everlasting and indestructible. One must be crowned to be king. How was Jesus crowned? Not in the way any human king in the world is crowned.

Jesus, who embodied the Kingdom of God (Mk 1:15), was crowned in God's way. The mocking of Jesus was His enthronement and the cross was His throne.³⁸ Being dressed up in a "purple robe", Jesus was crowned with a "crown of thorns" and hailed as "King of the Jews" (vv.17-18). Here is an irony. Jesus was mocked as a pretender when He was in fact the real King. Capture here the subversiveness of the God of reversal. This is also God's way for the followers of this King who will reign with Him (Rom 8:17; 2 Tim 2:12). The soldiers "kept beating" and "kept spitting" at Jesus while they "kept bowing" before Him (v.19). Spitting was meant to shame and demean.³⁹ "Kneeling and bowing" before Jesus and "beating" and "spitting" at Him were two sets of incongruent acts. But they were meant to sharpen and intensify the mockery. In this divine way of enthronement, we hear the voice of the obedient Servant of the Lord in fulfilling the Scriptures: "**I offered** My back to those who beat Me, My cheeks to those who pulled My beard; **I hid not** My face from mocking and spitting" (Isa 50:6).

The kingship of the Son of Man is characterised by utter humility and total self-giving servanthood. This is God's kind of politics.

³⁸ James A. Brooks, *Mark*, The New American Commentary (Broadman, 1991), 253

³⁹ Mark L. Strauss, *Mark*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Zondervan, 2014), 658

saturday

12

One Whole Integrated Reality

SCRIPTURE Daniel 7:7-14

OBSERVATION

What is the significance of verses 11 to 12 sandwiched by verses 9 to 10 and verses 13 to 14?

APPPLICATION

How do I respond to the boastfulness of arrogant people?

PRAYER

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

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for Church Board: To relate with boastful arrogant people with wisdom and patience
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

The high point of Daniel’s vision of the four great beasts was a “little horn” that rose out of the “ten horns” of the “dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong” “fourth beast” (vv.7-8). The “ten horns” of the fourth beast are “symbols of violent, aggressive power in all directions”⁴⁰. The little horn takes on human features, including the ability to speak, with “a mouth uttering great boastful words” (vv.8, 11).

Literary structure shapes theological message. The vision of the Ancient of Days (vv.9-10) and the vision of the Son of Man (vv.13-14) **sandwich** the vision of the boastful little horn (vv.11-12). Daniel saw the glory of God while at the same time hearing the little horn boasting. Here are two realities – “the world of rampaging beasts” (vv.11-12) and “the world of the heavenly court” (vv.9-10, 13-14) – that are “not totally separate and independent”⁴¹. The two realities are “ultimately one whole integrated reality” with two perspectives.⁴² We see one reality by sight and one by faith. But we must by faith see the total reality.

The sandwich structure shows God’s total sovereign control over arrogant powerful nations. The great boasting of these nations – or any arrogant powerful person – will not last forever. It has an “**until**”: “until the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given to the burning fire” (v.11). This “until” is a divine “until”. The verbs in passive voice, “slain”, “destroyed” and “given” point to the Divine Passive, underscoring the sovereignty of God. We rest in God’s sovereignty and wait for the divine “until” with perseverance and patience.

⁴⁰ Christopher J. H. Wright, 153

⁴¹ Christopher J. H. Wright, 154

⁴² Christopher J. H. Wright, 154

—
sunday
13

Sunday Journal

SCRPTURE

OBSERVATION

APPPLICATION

PRAYER

the past week



review

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

What gave me life and what drained me?

How was the Spirit of God at work?

the past week



reflect

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



respond

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



Week 2

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

Jesus is real.

Memory Verse

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."
– Luke 19:10 (NIV)

1 Bottom Line

Jesus is stronger than anyone and anything.*

2 Bible Story

Matthew 4:10-11 – Jesus, versus Satan in the Desert



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

3 Activity

Case Study

Props: Case study cards

Get your family members to pick a case study card. Give everyone some time to think of the actions they would do for each case. Guiding questions for all to reflect on the right thing to do in each case:

- What would you do to stay away from temptation in this situation?

| Case 1 | Case 2 | Case 3 |
|---|--|---|
| Joe will be sitting for a test two days later. He chooses to spend his time playing online games. | Grandma gave Rita \$50 as pocket money. Happily, she decides to use the money to buy another Barbie doll. She already has a collection of five Barbie dolls. | Kayln loves food. She just ate her breakfast and she is asking for food again. Kayln eats many meals every day and this has caused her health to deteriorate. |

Say, "Jesus is stronger than anything. When we face temptations, we must remember how Jesus resisted Satan for 40 days. Jesus refused to succumb to Satan's temptations. He uses the Word to rebuke Satan. When we fall into temptation, we are likely to sin. Sins pull us away from God.

4 Talk About It

- How did Jesus defeat Satan?
- What did Satan finally do after Jesus kept speaking God's Word?
- How can giving in to temptations hurt our relationship with God?
- What are some of the temptations you face every day? What would you do to resist temptation?

Parents: Talk about an incident in which you fell into temptation. How did you overcome it?

5 Prayer

Dear God, we thank you for constantly reminding us of the wrong things we do. Help us to be strong against temptations.

*<https://open.life.church/resources>
Adapted by JoshuaWong/CEFC/August 2023

monday

14

Ruling Over Creation Like Beasts

SCRIPTURE Daniel 7:11-18; Genesis 1:24-28

OBSERVATION

How did the heavenly being interpret the vision of “one like a son of man” (vv.13-14) to Daniel (vv.16, 18)?

APPPLICATION

What does it mean for me to be among “the saints of the Highest One”?

PRAYER

God, You have created humans in Your own image to rule over all the earth under Your divine kingship. But since the fall of humans to sin, stronger humans dominate over weaker fellow humans in beastly ways, rather than helping and supporting them. Help me to be careful to be truly human like the Son of Man, who came not to be served, but to serve others.⁴³

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

deeper reflection

Daniel did not understand the vision of the four great beasts, the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man (Dan 7:1-14), for he asked the heavenly being standing beside him for “the exact meaning of all this” and the “interpretation” was “made known” to him (vv.15-16).

In the interpretation, the “one like a son of man” who is given an everlasting kingdom (vv.13-14) is representative of “the saints of the Highest One” who will receive an everlasting kingdom (v.18).⁴⁴ While Jesus rightly sees Himself as this Son of Man (Matt 26:64; see Rev 1:7, 12-13), “Daniel 7 is not a simple prediction about Jesus. It is a message from God about us”⁴⁵ – “the saints of the Highest One.” But, theologically, this “son of man” is in corporate solidarity with the ultimate Son of Man.

We need to begin with creation. God has created man to rule over all the earth (Gen 1:26-28). After man had fallen into sin, man also rules over fellow human beings and with violence (cf. Gen 6:11). Man who is created to rule over beasts (Gen 1:24-26) rules over fellow human beings like beasts (Dan 7:3-8). The Daniel 7 vision shows a contrast: humans who rule like beasts and humans who will rule with humanness – “like a son of man.” This rule with humanness is the everlasting kingdom that “the saints of the Highest One” will receive from the Ancient of Days. But in the already-and-not-yet Kingdom of God, we can relate with people with humanness like the gentle and humble Son of Man (Matt 11:28-30).

⁴³ Mark 10:45

⁴⁴ Gordon Wong, 102; Christopher J. H. Wright, 157

⁴⁵ Gordon Wong, 102

tuesday

15

Ruling Over Creation as Humans

SCRIPTURE Daniel 7:13-18; Hebrews 2:5-10

OBSERVATION

How will the possession of an everlasting kingdom by “the saints of the Highest One” happen according to Hebrews 2:5-10?

APPPLICATION

What does being “crowned with glory and honour” by God mean to me?

PRAYER

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

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for pastors and staff: To lead with the human touch of God
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

The “one like a son of man” who is given an everlasting kingdom in Daniel’s vision (vv.13-14) is representative of “the saints of the Highest One” who will receive an everlasting kingdom (v.18).⁴⁶ Fallen humanity corrupts their God-intended dominion over all the earth (Gen 1:26-28) “into domination and ends up creating power structures like the empires of Daniel’s vision, which are ‘bestial.’ The investiture of this ‘son of man’ [vv.13-14] restores the rightful rule of humanity, which, in the true image of God, will be ‘humane’.”⁴⁷

Psalm 8 speaks of the restoration of the rightful rule of humanity (Psa 8:4-8), which the writer of Hebrews calls “the world to come” (Heb 2:5). But God’s crowning of man “with glory and honour” with “all things in subjection under his feet” is a reality that “**now we do not yet see**” (Psa 8:5-6; Heb 2:8). Psalm 8 is eschatological, which is interpreted Christologically in Hebrews: “**But we do see Him** who was made for a little while lower than angels, namely **Jesus**” who was “crowned with glory and honour” (Heb 2:9). How was Jesus crowned? Through “**the suffering of death**” (Heb 2:9). It is through the cross that Psalm 8 will be fulfilled in us – “the saints of the Highest One” (v.18): “in bringing many sons to glory” through the “sufferings” of Christ (Heb 2:10). We belong to the already-and-not-yet Kingdom of God, in which we reign with Christ in His glory through suffering with Him (Rom 8:16-17), which is unpacked in Daniel 7:19-27. Indeed, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).

⁴⁶ Gordon Wong, 102; Christopher J. H. Wright, 157

⁴⁷ Christopher J. H. Wright, 157

wednesday

16

A Recurring Pattern in History

SCRIPTURE Daniel 7:15-20

OBSERVATION

What is your understanding of the “fourth beast” and the “little horn” in Daniel’s vision?

APPPLICATION

How is my understanding of the “fourth beast” and the “little horn” relevant to me in my discipleship journey?

PRAYER

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

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for leaders
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for the Nations: That God will keep Singapore in His hand amidst the turbulent geopolitical situation
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

The great statue with four different metallic parts in Daniel 2 and the four great beasts in Daniel 7 carry the same symbolism of four kings and kingdoms, with Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon represented by the golden head (Dan 2:37-38) and the first lion-like beast (Dan 7:4).⁴⁸ In Daniel 7, the identity of the second and third beasts (Dan 7:5-6) is “less clear and actually does not matter much” and they “function to create space between” the present Babylonian Empire and the “more distant future” fourth beast.⁴⁹

Various historical interpretations of the “fourth beast” and the “little horn” have been made. But there are several such interpretations that “suggests that it is right to see here not so much a single unique historical point of reference but **a recurring pattern**”⁵⁰. In history, human empires rise and fall, overlapping each other, going to war with each other, and at different times “especially vicious regimes arise that seem to concentrate evil to its most potent virulence”⁵¹. The “fourth beast” with its climactic “little horn” “represent such ultimate manifestations of evil, anti-God, anti-human forces that exude arrogance, breathe out violence, and wreak devastation and destruction on an enormous scale causing intense suffering to the people of God at such times.”⁵² The picture of the “fourth beast” and the “little horn” is a **theological picture** (rather than a historical one) and **paradigm** that “fits more than one regime or individual tyrant in the long history of Jews and Christians”⁵³.

It is wisdom to observe theologically and reflectively such recurring evil human powers in history, and be discipleship-ready for their new recurrence.

⁴⁸ Christopher J. H. Wright, 158

⁴⁹ Christopher J. H. Wright, 158

⁵⁰ Christopher J. H. Wright, 159; emphasis mine

⁵¹ Christopher J. H. Wright, 159

⁵² Christopher J. H. Wright, 159-60

⁵³ Christopher J. H. Wright, 160

thursday

17

Persevering Faithfulness in Spiritual Warfare

SCRIPTURE Daniel 7:19-22

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about the horn and the saints of the Highest One in verses 21 to 22?

APPPLICATION

What will I do when the enemy overpowers me in spiritual warfare?

PRAYER

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

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for Outreach/Missions/New Life leaders: To persevere in faithfulness to God in spiritual warfare
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

One important theological and discipleship theme in Daniel 7 is spiritual warfare: “that horn was **waging war** with the saints” (v.21). The biblical theology of spiritual warfare begins at Genesis 3:17 – right after the first humans were deceived by the serpent and fell into sin and came under God’s judgment. It was God who initiated the war: “**I will put enmity** between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed.” This points to the sovereignty of God in spiritual warfare. In this war, there is the divinely assured win: “He shall bruise you on the head.” However, the **win** in the **war** includes **wounds**: “you shall bruise him on the heel.” The high point of the war-win-wounds of Genesis 3:17 is the cross.

We do see the war-win-wounds of Genesis 3:17 in the spiritual warfare in Daniel 7. In “waging war” against God’s people the horn was “**overpowering** them” (Dan 7:7): the “wounds” in the war. It appears that God’s people are losing in the war. In this war, a choice must be made: **commitment** to God or **compromise** with the enemy. We lose in the war when we compromise. Commitment to God is persevering faithfulness to Him at all costs. We are to be faithful “**until** the Ancient of Days came”, which is “**the time arrived** when the saints took possession of the kingdom” (v.22). Thus, perseverance is critically necessary for faithfulness. How we need to pray to be “strengthened with all power according to His glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience” (Col 1:11, NIV).

friday
18

Where Are the Beasts Today?

SCRIPTURE Daniel 7:21-25

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about the “fourth beast” in verses 23 to 25?

APPPLICATION

What will I do when the enemy wears me down in spiritual warfare?

PRAYER

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

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for SGI leaders: SGI leaders: To stand firm in the Lord no matter how the enemy wears them down
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

The “fourth kingdom” (“fourth beast”) is “**different** from all the other kingdoms” (v.23). The “little horn” that “arise[s] after” the “ten kings” is “**different** from the previous ones” (v.24).

They are “different” in terms of the increase in intensity and extent of their beastly power: they “devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it” (v.23).

The increased intensity of beastly powers is manifested in blasphemous arrogance: they “speak out against the Most High” (v.25). The arrogant wicked “curses and spurns the Lord”, because “all his thoughts are, ‘There is no God’” (Psa 10:3-4). When beastly powers “wear down the saints of the Highest One” (v.25) in “waging war” and “overpowering” them (v.21), they may feel or wonder, “Where is God in this?” These beastly powers “make alterations in times and in law” (v.25) that results in “social and moral upheaval and chaos.”⁵⁴

The beasts today can be persecutors of God’s faithful people: terrorists who blow up innocent people; oppressive capitalism that treats human beings as commodities to be used, and discarded when they are no longer useful; and powerful nations that “exploit the political weakness of developing countries in order to maximise their own profits”⁵⁵.

The sovereignty of God is described as God’s people “**will be given**” **by God** “into his [“little horn”] hand” (v.25). While we suffer in “his hand”, we are actually secure in God’s sovereign hand. And we are in “his hand” only “for a little while” (1 Pet 1:6-7) – “for a time, times, and half a time” (v.25).

⁵⁴ Christopher J. H. Wright, 160

⁵⁵ Iain M. Duguid, 118-119

saturday

19

Saints of the Highest One

SCRIPTURE Daniel 7:15-28

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about “the saints of the Highest One”?

APPPLICATION

How can I live with confidence and courage as a saint of the Highest One?

PRAYER

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

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for Church Board: To live with confidence and courage as God's holy people
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Daniel 7 highlights a special interest and concern of God: His people – “the saints of the Highest One” (repeated four times in vv.18, 22, 25, 27). The context is these “saints” living in a world of “kings” who are “great beasts” from whom they cannot escape (vv.17-18). Beastly kings consider themselves as the highest ones on earth and so does the world that they rule. So, it is theologically intentional that God’s people are described here as belonging to “the Highest One” – the true and ultimate highest one. We need to capture this theological vision by faith, in order to live rightly, securely and triumphantly in the world of beastly kings.

In Daniel 7, there are two **divine giving** for “the saints of the Highest One”. One is, God in His sovereignty gives His people into the hand of the most evil beastly king, symbolised by the “little horn”: “they will be **given** (*yehab*) into his hand” (v.25) and God’s people suffer in his hand. The other divine giving is, “the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be **given** (*yehab*) to” God’s people (v.27). This means “the right and power to govern throughout the whole earth will be given to the people of God”⁵⁶. This is part of being in the everlasting Kingdom of God. I cannot imagine what this is going to be like: Me ruling “all the kingdoms under the whole heaven” with God’s people – who are “the poor in spirit” and “theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5:3).

⁵⁶ Christopher J. H. Wright, 161

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sunday
20

Sunday Journal

SCRPTURE

OBSERVATION

APPPLICATION

PRAYER

the past week



review

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

What gave me life and what drained me?

How was the Spirit of God at work?

the past week



reflect

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



respond

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



Week 3

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

Jesus is real.

Memory Verse

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."
– Luke 19:10 (NIV)

1 Bottom Line

Jesus calls you and me to be His disciples.*

2 Bible Story

Luke 5:8-11 – Jesus Calls Peter



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

3 Activity

One-Minute Speech

Ask every family member to tell the story of Jesus in one minute to another family member in their own words. Vote for the speech that is the most convincing and accurate, according to the Scriptures.

Say, "As Jesus' followers, we are to share the Good News about Jesus with others. Sharing the Gospel is a way of showing love to another person. We want others to share and experience the love and peace from God too. We can't keep the Good News to ourselves."

4 Talk About It

- Why do you think Peter asked Jesus to "go away" from him at first?
- What does it mean to go and "fish" for people?
- Have you ever shared who Jesus is with someone? What did you say?
- How does this story help us to be confident that we can "fish" for people too?

Parents: Talk about a past experience where you shared the Gospel with someone and the person accepted Christ. How did you feel? How did the incident encourage you?

5 Prayer

Dear God, give us the courage to share your story with others. Give us the right words when we speak to others.

*<https://open.life.church/resources>
Adapted by Joshua Wong/CEFC/August 2023

monday

21

It Always Looks like Almighty

SCRIPTURE Daniel 8:1-4, 20

OBSERVATION

What does Daniel's vision of the ram tell us?

APPPLICATION

How do I deal with the human tendency of doing things as I please?

PRAYER

God, the flesh in me wants to follow the way of the world, to have power and do things as I please. But Your way for me is the way of the cross, even to be weak. For it is in weakness that I can experience Your all-sufficient grace and Your indwelling power mightily working within me, that I may know what "When I am weak, then I am strong" means.⁵⁷

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

deeper reflection

In Daniel 8, Daniel had a vision (Dan 8:1-14), and as he “sought to understand it” (Dan 8:15-19), Gabriel came and gave him “an understanding of the vision” (Dan 8:20-27). Daniel saw a “ram” – “Media and Persia” (v.20) – “butting” at the nations in all directions – “westward, northward and southward” (v.4). The ram appears to be an almighty power, for “no other beasts could stand before him nor was there anyone to rescue from his power” (v.4).

Between 9 May and 22 June 1940, Germany under Adolf Hitler launched a remarkable assault, known as blitzkrieg – “lightning war”, on north-west Europe in the Battle of France. Blitzkrieg refers to a series of quick and decisive short battles to deliver a knockout blow to an enemy state before it could fully mobilise. And by this “lightning attack”, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Belgium fell into Hitler’s hand within seven weeks! Hitler seemed to be almighty then.

Every super-powerful nation or individual **always appears to be** all-powerful at its point of time in history. Then, egoistic presumptuousness creeps in. The “almightiness” is only appearance, not reality. This kind of “almighty” power results in “he did as he pleased” (v.4). So, every nation and people that had fallen to this ram were powerless and at his mercy. And inevitably, out of this comes arrogant self-glorification: “...and magnified himself” (v.4). The application in our discipleship is: Do not think more highly of myself than I ought to think; but to think with sound judgment, according to what God has called me to and given me (Rom 12:3).

tuesday

22

The “Almighty” Isn’t Forever “Almighty”

SCRPTURE Daniel 8:1-8, 20-22

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about the ram and the male goat in Daniel’s vision?

APPPLICATION

How do I look at people or nations that seem to be having the power to control almost everything?

PRAYER

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

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for pastors and staff: To be kept from presumptuous self-confidence in leading by God's power
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

We need to observe the contrasts between the ram and the male goat in Daniel's vision to capture a **theological irony** about great human power in history.

Earlier on, the ram was "butting **westward**" and nations in the west were toppled, along with those in the north and south (v.4). But now, "a male goat was coming from the **west**" (v.5) and "struck the ram and shattered" him (v.7). For the ram, there was a time when "no other beasts could stand before him" (v.4). But now, "the ram has no strength to withstand" the male goat (v.7). For the ram, once, there was not "anyone to rescue from his power" (v.4). But now, the male goat "hurled" the ram "to the ground and trampled on him" and "there was none to rescue the ram from his power" (v.7). The ram "magnified himself" (v.4), but the male goat "magnified himself exceedingly" (v.8).

The history of the rise and fall of human empires points to **one constant reality**. Every strong empire is also weak. It is weak because it will fall to another stronger empire. And this new stronger empire is also weak, because it will be overthrown by an empire stronger than it. Like the male goat, "**as soon as** he was mighty", his "large" power was "**broken**" (v.8). And this pattern in history keeps repeating itself. Why? Because "the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone He wishes" and "His dominion is an eternal dominion" (Dan 4:32, 34, NIV).

wednesday

23

The Exceedingly Powerful Small Horn (1)

SCRIPTURE Daniel 8:1-14, 21-26

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about the “small horn” in verses 21 to 25?

APPPLICATION

What are the sinful characteristics of the “small horn” that I need to guard against?

PRAYER

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

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for leaders
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for the Nations: That God will keep Singapore humble in her progress and prosperity
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Daniel is about God’s plan for world history under His supreme sovereignty, with a particular focus on human kingdoms, theologically represented by the great statue in Daniel 2 and the four great beasts in Daniel 7. In Daniel 7, particular attention is given to the “little horn” that arises out of the “fourth kingdom” – the “fourth beast” (Dan 7:7-8, 11-12, 19-28). Daniel’s vision in Daniel 8 was “subsequent” to the one in Daniel 7 (v.1). The “little horn” in Daniel 7 (Dan 7:8, 11, 20-26) is the “rather small horn” (v.9) in Daniel 8.

The “male goat” was Alexander the Great of the Greek Empire (vv.5-7, 21). After Alexander’s death, his empire was divided into four kingdoms among his four generals, one of which was the Seleucid Kingdom (vv.8, 21-22). In the second century BC, “a king will arise” – the “small horn” (vv.9, 23) – out of the Seleucid Kingdom: Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BC).

Antiochus IV is a **theological representative** of any anti-God figure in history and the final most evil one – Paul’s “man of lawlessness” (2 Thess 2:3-4). The evil days (cf. Eph 5:16; 6:13) under Antiochus’ reign of terror is an **eschatological paradigm** of “the final period of indignation” at “the appointed time of the end” (Dan 8:19). Antiochus was **destructive** and **deceptive**: “a ruthless king, skilled in intrigue” (v.23, CSB). He would “**destroy** to an extraordinary degree” (v.24) and “cause his **deceit** to succeed by his influence” (v.25). His target was God’s “holy people” (v.24). Likewise, in spiritual warfare, the enemy attacks us with **affliction** and **deception**.

thursday

24

The Exceedingly Powerful Small Horn (2)

SCRPTURE Daniel 8:9-14, 19-26

OBSERVATION

What is the transgression or rebellion mentioned in verses 12, 13 and 23?

APPPLICATION

How do I know that sin has reached its limit?

PRAYER

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

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for Outreach/Missions/New Life leaders: To be saved and kept from persistent wilful sinning against God
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Antiochus' reign of terror in “the final period of the indignation” (v.19) has three characteristics.

Self-magnification: The small horn “grew exceedingly great” until, in visionary language, it reached the heavenly realm and “threw some of the starry host to the earth and trampled on them” (vv.9-10, NIV). And it “magnified itself to be equal to the Commander of the host” – “Yahweh of hosts”⁵⁸ (vv.11, 25). Our pride in our being and doing great may not lead us to this blasphemous stage. However, when we put the self before God, we are no better. Both are idolatry of the self.

Opposition: Antiochus' arrogance made him think that he could defeat the God of Israel. He “banned circumcision”, “removed the regular sacrifice from Him [God]” (v.11) and placed “an object sacred to Zeus in the Holy of Holies”⁵⁹. And he “fling[s] truth to the ground” (v.12) by burning copies of the Scriptures.⁶⁰ God in His sovereignty does allow Himself to appear to be easily beaten by His enemies.

Transgression: This is “the transgression [that] causes horror” (v.13), which “refers to Antiochus' sacrilege”⁶¹ in God's temple. It also refers to “when sin is at its height” (v.23, NLT) – the rebellion of the Gentiles against God,⁶² as typified by Antiochus' sacrilege. God does allow “sin to reach an extreme form that necessitates radical punishment”⁶³. For God is kind, patient and forbearing to give sinners the opportunity to repent of their sins (Rom 2:4). The transgression also refers to the rebellion of God's people that paved the way for Antiochus to desecrate the temple (v.13).⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Ernest C. Lucas, *Daniel*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary (Apollos, IVP, 2002), 216

⁵⁹ Iain M. Duguid, 129

⁶⁰ Iain M. Duguid, 129

⁶¹ John E. Goldingay, 211

⁶² John E. Goldingay, 217

⁶³ John E. Goldingay, 217

⁶⁴ Iain M. Duguid, 131

friday
25

“The Time of the End”

SCRIPTURE Daniel 8:9-19

OBSERVATION

What does it mean that “the vision” of the small horn and his evil activities (vv.9-14) “pertains to the time of the end” (v.17, 19)?

APPPLICATION

What does it mean for me to live my life in view of “the time of the end”?

PRAYER

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

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for SGI leaders: To live life with the eschatological end in mind
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

The vision of the “small horn” (vv.9-14) is “the vision pertains to the time of **the end**” (vv.17, 19). What is this “the end”? The “small horn”, as a biblical type, had its initial fulfilment in Antiochus IV’s evil reign. But Antiochus’ evil reign was not “the end” as in the climactic end. The climactic end is Christ’s Second Coming. This “the end” is “the last days” (2 Tim 3:1; 2 Pet 3:3). And as a biblical-theological representative, this “small horn” “helps us to anticipate, understand and endure”⁶⁵ other last days “small horns” to come. The “small horn” evil days will last for “2,300” days (v.14) – “just short of seven years” – which is “a figurative representation of a significant but limited period of suffering”⁶⁶ for God’s people, who ask, “How long?” (v.13).

Old Testament scholar Christopher Wright observes reflectively today’s world through the prophetic-theological lens of “the end” in the Daniel 8 vision: “...it looks like we are in the midst of the slow collapse of the dominance and self-assured superiority of Western civilisation (predominantly European and North American) in the world. There are many signs of it. We still have an astoundingly arrogant and blasphemous worship of false gods of mammon and consumerism. We still sacrifice astronomical sums of money (and lives) on the altar of militarism, war and violence-meeting-violence. We heedlessly pursue unattainable levels of economic consumption and ecological carelessness that are leading to the destructive effects of climate change. And we are struggling to cope with the rise and assertiveness of new powers in the geo-political arena.”⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Christopher J. H. Wright, 181

⁶⁶ Iain M. Duguid, 132

⁶⁷ Christopher J. H. Wright, 181

saturday

26

God Has the Final Say

SCRIPTURE Daniel 8:1, 9-14, 23-26

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about God and the small horn in verses 9 to 14 and 23 to 26?

APPPLICATION

What aspects of God will enable me to face the powerful evil “small horns” in the world?

PRAYER

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

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for Church Board: To rest in the God who has the final say
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

By the “third year of the reign of Belshazzar the king” (v.1), the Babylonian Empire was weakening with the rise of Medo-Persia. God’s people were anticipating the end of the 70-year Babylonian exile (Dan 9:1; Jer 25:12) and looking forward to good times ahead as promised in the prophets. But Daniel 8 tells them that things are going to get worse. Yet, things getting worse is not the final word. It is simply because “it is Heaven that rules” (Dan 4:26).

The self-magnifying “small horn” “removed the regular sacrifice from Him” – from God Himself (v.11), and “trampled” “the holy place” with its unholy feet (v.13). But this arrogant blasphemous power is limited and short-lived. After “2,300” days, “the holy place will be properly restored” (v.14). God has the final say. No one can remove from God His things permanently. And the seemingly all-powerful “small horn” “will break without being touched”⁶⁸ by any human hand (v.25). It is like the Antichrist being slain by the breath of the Lord (2 Thess 2:8).

The “small horn” “will fling **truth** (*emet*) to the ground” (v.12) by destroying the Scriptures. But this is countered by “the vision...which has been told” – the Word of God – “is **true** (*emet*)” (v.26). The “vision” will be fulfilled. The Word of God never fails (Isa 55:10-11). In the post-truth world, however truth – even if it is God’s truth – is flung to the ground, the truth of God prevails. And “the church of the living God” is “the pillar and support of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15).

⁶⁸ John E. Goldingay, 195

—
sunday

27

Sunday Journal

SCRPTURE

OBSERVATION

APPPLICATION

PRAYER

the past week



review

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

What gave me life and what drained me?

How was the Spirit of God at work?

the past week



reflect

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



respond

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



Week 4

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

Jesus is real.

Memory Verse

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."
– Luke 19:10 (NIV)

1 Bottom Line

Jesus has the power to forgive and heal.*

2 Bible Story

Mark 2:10-12 – Jesus Forgives and Heals



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

3 Activity

Putting Things Together

Props: Paper and scissors

Provide each family member with a piece of paper and ask them to cut it into six pieces. Pass each set of paper pieces to the person beside you. Get the person next to you to piece the paper back together using their method of choice.

Discuss after the activity:

- What did the paper look like after it was pieced back together?
- How long did it take?

Say, "The paper is just like us, once torn, it is hard to piece them back together. Even when we piece them together, the paper could never return to its original look. However, Jesus has the power to heal. He can restore everything about the paper. He can restore everything, including us when we listen, repent and obey."

4 Talk About It

- What is sin?
- Why is it so important that Jesus is able to forgive our sins?
- How do you think the man's life changed after Jesus forgave and healed him?

Parents: Talk about a past incident in which God healed or forgave you. What happened? How did God reach out to you? How does this incident change your behaviour?

5 Prayer

Dear God, thank you for forgiving us so that we can be free. Thank You for healing the cracks and holes in our life.

*<https://open.life.church/resources>
Adapted by JoshuaWong/CEFC/August 2023

monday

28

Returning the Church to Its Disciplemaking Roots

SCRIPTURE Mark 3:13-15; Acts 4:13

OBSERVATION

What was Jesus' purpose in appointing the twelve apostles?

APPPLICATION

What can I do to be equipped with spiritual authority, wisdom and boldness for the work of making disciples?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, spending daily time with You transforms ordinary people to live extraordinary lives for Your sake. I want to make disciples for Your purposes and glory. But I know that I am unable to do so on my own. Please help me to spend daily time with You. Thank You for Your presence with me by Your Spirit. Give me understanding of Your Word and boldness to proclaim it to people around me. Amen.

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

deeper reflection

This Sunday we will celebrate Covenant EFC's 45th Anniversary! Over the next few days, let us reflect anew on our church mission, look back on the journey so far and look forward to the journey ahead. Our mission is: "Returning the Church to its disciplemaking roots, through authentic discipleship and intentional disciplemaking, so as to reproduce disciples of *A Certain Kind*, and to multiply them to win the world for Christ."

When we think about returning the Church (the global Church with a capital "C") to its disciplemaking roots, we remember the way that Jesus Himself disciplined the twelve apostles. Jesus' purpose of calling the twelve was clear – "**so that they might be with Him and He might send them out to preach**" (v.14). As the apostles lived and moved about with Jesus from day to day, He taught and instructed them by words and personal example in the context of real life situations.⁶⁹ Jesus' focus was laser-sharp: to preach the Good News to all peoples regardless of ethnicity, social status or background, beginning with the Jews, then the Gentiles.⁷⁰ After Jesus' ascension, the apostles, empowered by the Holy Spirit, continued Jesus' work of preaching the Gospel.⁷¹ They did so with much boldness and authority. The people who heard them were astonished and "**recognised that they had been with Jesus**" (Acts 4:13). This is the "with Him" principle. Jesus' disciples, having consistently spent time with Him, gained spiritual authority, wisdom and boldness to do God's work.

Beloved friends, have you been consistently spending time with Jesus? In your daily life, are you following Jesus and helping others to follow Him?

⁶⁹ See e.g. Mark 4:5; Matthew 10:5-42; Luke 6:20-49.

⁷⁰ See e.g. Mark 1:38; Matthew 10:7; 11:1, 4-6.

⁷¹ See e.g. Acts 3:12-4:12.

tuesday

29

Through Authentic Discipleship and Intentional Disciplemaking

SCRIPTURE 2 Timothy 3:14-17; 4:1-5

OBSERVATION

What are the various references in these passages to God's Word and the ministry of the Word?

APPPLICATION

How foundational and central is God's Word in my discipleship and disciplemaking?

PRAYER

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

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for pastors and staff: To keep growing in authentic discipleship and intentional discipling
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

The Apostle Paul was a great mentor and disciple Timothy with love and wisdom. However, there were two other very important persons in Timothy's life as he was growing up from a little boy into a youth and young adult. Consider Paul's words in his second letter to Timothy: "...knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings..." (vv.14-15). From whom did Timothy learn the Old Testament Scriptures since his early childhood? Paul was referring to Timothy's grandmother Lois and mother Eunice (2 Tim 1:5).

Paul probably first encountered Lois and Eunice during his first missionary journey to Lystra between AD 46-47.⁷² When the apostle taught the people there that Jesus was Israel's Messiah, Lois and Eunice believed and were converted. Thereafter they grew a "sincere faith" in Jesus (2 Tim 1:5). Theirs was an authentic discipleship! When Paul first encountered Timothy, the young man was already a disciple of Christ and showing much potential (Acts 16:1-2). Prior to Paul, who discipled Timothy? We can safely assume that they were his mother Eunice and grandmother Lois. Through their care and instruction at home, they ensured that from childhood Timothy knew the Old Testament Scriptures. After their conversion, Eunice and Lois would have taught the young adult Timothy how the Scriptures pointed to Jesus Christ, with the result that Timothy believed and grew in his knowledge of the Lord. The work of intentional discipling!

Timothy himself exemplified authentic discipleship (2 Tim 3:10-11a) and was to persevere in intentional discipling by faithfully preaching and accurately teaching God's Word in Ephesus (2 Tim 4:1-5).

⁷² See Acts 14:1-7 cf. 16:1; <https://www.esv.org/resources/esv-global-study-bible/chart-44-06/>

wednesday

30

So as to Reproduce Disciples of *A Certain Kind*

SCRIPTURE Luke 9:23-26; Galatians 5:16-25

OBSERVATION

What do these passages tell you about Christlike disciples?

APPPLICATION

In what ways do I need to grow in Christlikeness?

PRAYER

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

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for leaders
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for Singapore: To be governed by Christlike leaders who serve the people for the good of the nation and the glory of God
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

In making disciples of Christ, we must labour for their growth towards spiritual maturity, that is, Christlikeness. Our purpose in disciplemaking is to “present everyone mature in Christ” (Col 1:28). Reproducing spiritually mature disciples can be described as reproducing disciples of “a certain kind”. As Reverend Edmund Chan explains, “A certain kind is a **Christ-mastered kind** with depth in grace, growth and godliness, who seeks God’s empowering to fulfil God’s will in God’s timing, for God’s glory.”

Christ-mastered disciples fully follow the Lord Jesus Christ by **denying themselves and taking up their cross daily** (v.23). They willingly subordinate their own will to the Lord’s will. To live like that is supernatural! The work of the Holy Spirit is indispensable to developing a Christlike character and living in a Christlike manner. The Apostle Paul understood this and taught the Galatian Christians to “**walk by the Spirit**, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh” (Gal 5:16). If we submit ourselves to the leading of the Spirit and appropriate the desires of the Spirit, He will produce in us “**love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control**” (Gal 5:22-23).

If we do not walk by the Spirit, we will naturally do the things that our flesh craves to do, so as to gratify the desires of our flesh. Such desires and passions include “sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies” (Gal 5:19-21). Those who practise such things show that they are not followers of Jesus and therefore do not belong to Him and His Kingdom (Gal 5:24).

thursday

31

And to Multiply Them to Win the World for Christ

SCRIPTURE Matthew 28:16-20; 2 Timothy 2:1-2

OBSERVATION

How are we to multiply disciples in all the nations of the earth?

APPPLICATION

In which few people can I invest my life to make disciples who will go on to make disciples?

PRAYER

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

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for Outreach/Missions/New Life leaders: To receive a fresh empowering from the Holy Spirit for their work towards fulfilling the Great Commission
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Spiritual multiplication was Jesus' idea. Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He commanded His disciples to make disciples of all nations. New disciples were in turn to pass on Jesus' teachings to others, requiring their obedience to all His commands, which include discipling the nations. That process was to be repeated everywhere until Jesus returns at the end of the age. This discipling movement commissioned by Jesus – “the Great Commission” – was to be carried out throughout the whole earth, so that no ethnic group in any nation would be unreached.

The Apostle Paul understood and obeyed the Great Commission. Paul not only preached the Gospel and taught the Scriptures to many people, he also closely disciplined a few men. One of them was Timothy. Paul's instruction to Timothy was closely patterned after the Great Commission: “what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim 2:2). Paul's key concern was the continuity of the discipling movement.⁷³ He commanded Timothy to pass on Jesus' teachings to people who fit certain important criteria – faithful people who will themselves be able to teach others also. Do whatever it takes, Timothy – endure suffering, stay focused, run with discipline and work with diligence!⁷⁴

Will you personally receive Paul's instruction to Timothy? Will you invest your life in a few people to make disciples who will go on to make disciples? If your answer is “Yes”, then ask God today for a fresh empowering from His Spirit to do your part in the ongoing work of the Church to fulfil the Great Commission.⁷⁵

⁷³ Especially at that time when he was anticipating his imminent death: see 2 Timothy 4:6-9.

⁷⁴ The present writer's paraphrase of 2 Timothy 2:3-6.

⁷⁵ Acts 1:8.

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