
2023
devotional journal

*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)



september

2023
devotional journal

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DANIEL 9:19 (ESV)

I
2023
memory verses**JANUARY**

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

Daniel 1:8 (ESV)

FEBRUARY

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

Daniel 1:17 (ESV)

MARCH

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

Daniel 2:21 (ESV)

APRIL

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

Daniel 3:17-18 (ESV)

MAY

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

Daniel 4:3 (ESV)

JUNE

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

Daniel 6:27 (ESV)

JULY

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

Daniel 7:14 (ESV)

AUGUST

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

Daniel 7:27 (ESV)

SEPTEMBER

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

Daniel 9:19 (ESV)

OCTOBER

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

Daniel 10:12 (ESV)

NOVEMBER

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

Daniel 12:2 (ESV)

DECEMBER

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

Daniel 12:3 (ESV)

from daniel

senior pastors,

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

foreword

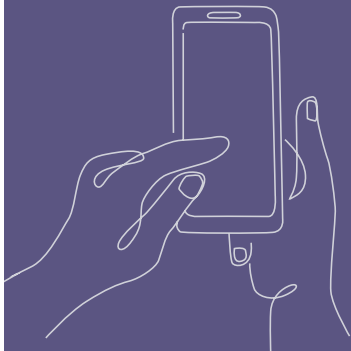
guide to using this devotional journal

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 e-missions

“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.”

PSALM 1:1-6 (ESV)

The first of the collection of Psalms begins with a picture of the righteous person. The imagery the Psalmist uses is of a tree that draws from streams of water, bearing fruit and life. In verse 2, the Psalmist reveals the secret of the righteous person’s blessedness – “his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night”. As I reflected on the picture, I found myself asking this question: What is my delight and what do I meditate on day and night?

If I can be totally honest with myself, I am on devices throughout most of my day. If it's not work, it's social media; if it's not social media, it's Netflix. My consumption, more often than not, is from the digital platforms that I'm on and I confess that my meditations are much more on the various online content that I so readily consume than on God's Word.

In this current age, the assault against the righteous person comes and seeks to replace our meditations with worldly content that distorts our worldview and perspectives. I'm sure you have heard before that Satan loves a distracted Christian. Our Adversary's schemes are all the more insidious and effective in this world that rewards one for consuming worldly content. How then can we become the blessed man or woman in Psalm 1 unless we make regular meditation on God's Word our delight?

E-Missions focus on the digital space as a missions field where people can encounter Jesus, learn about the truth and hear the Gospel. In a world that continues to devour digital content with an insatiable appetite, the work to point people to Christ and free people from this bondage cannot stop. Let us join our hearts to intercede for those who spend most of their waking hours in the digital world.

Pray:

- For the turning of people's hearts to the truth and to the Gospel
- Against the schemes of the Adversary in the digital space, that people will be set free from the bondage of digital addiction
- For the E-Missions team as we continue to experiment with strategies that focus on discipleship pathways in the digital space
- For like-minded brothers and sisters to step up to serve in E-Missions
- For wisdom and clarity to go to where God directs us

friday

01

45 Years of Faithfulness!

SCRIPTURE Psalm 77:10-20; Isaiah 60:22

OBSERVATION

As the Psalmist recalled the Lord's wonderful works in the past, what was he thankful for (see vv.14-15, 19-20)?

APPPLICATION

In my time at Covenant EFC, what am I thankful for? Take some time to give thanks to God for His blessings.

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: That the Lord will greatly bless them for their faithful and sacrificial service to the members under their care and leadership
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Covenant EFC will be celebrating her 45th year this Sunday! Praise the Lord! This church is about Jesus – who He is and what He has done to redeem sinners like us. We praise God for all the blessings He has graciously poured out on us, and for what He is going to do in and through us in the coming years! Our mission continues to be: 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 story has been about spiritual multiplication in Singapore and other nations! In 1978, there were only 17 members seeking to reach one local area with the Gospel.¹ Throughout our 45-year history, by the Lord's grace, many people have been saved, disciplined and transformed from the inside out. Many Covenanters have grown spiritually as they pursued godliness in living life with reference and deference to God. We continue to hold closely our values of 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 and Brokenness centred upon the Way of God.

Looking back, there have been various moments and memories – celebration, laughter, tears, mourning, exuberant praise, heartfelt worship, making mistakes and learning from them, confession, intense prayer, fundraising, community blessing and much more. Through it all, God has been faithful and good to us! Let us celebrate the past, and by faith embrace a magnificent future in the Lord together!

¹ In the early days, God gave our then Senior Pastor, Reverend Edmund Chan, a promise from Isaiah 60:22, which was fulfilled on 10 Sep 2000 when we started our first Worship Service at our first Worship Centre (10 Jelapang Road) and the congregation size exceeded 1,000 people.

saturday

02

Faith for the Future!

SCRIPTURE Hebrews 12:1-2

OBSERVATION

Who do the great “cloud of witnesses” (v.1) refer to (see Heb 11)?

APPPLICATION

How can I run with endurance the race set before 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 Church Board: That the Lord will greatly bless and encourage them in their leadership
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

We need to dare! Dare to dream! Dare to love! Dare to share Christ! Dare to take our stand for the Lord! Dare to believe that the Lord can and will transform us and others! Imagine a great “cloud of witnesses” (v.1) cheering us on. **“Throw off the weight of sin! Run with endurance! Run the race of faith! You can do it! Dare to press forward!”**

The opposite is that we choose to cruise along and become comfortable. Choosing the easy path, we trade the “dare to run with endurance” for “don’t believe”, “don’t run” and “don’t get involved”. If we do that, we will become a church that rather stays in our own church bubble than to do faith exploits for God.

We read in Hebrews 11 a list of commended people who acted in faith. They had eyes to see, faith to believe and courage to act! By faith in the Lord, they faced the unknown, various challenges, multiple adversities, wicked enemies, violent threats and cruel treatments! They dared to run with endurance the race that was set before them!

As Covenant EFC turns 45 years old, let us head into the future by faith! Dare to disciple the generations, Singapore and the nations! Dare to be unashamed of the Gospel! Dare to take our stand against the hostilities of spiritual and human opposition. Dare to reach out and love the outcasts and the unclean the way Jesus did. Dare to engage and evangelise the unreached people groups in the world! Dare to exercise faith as we prepare to meet King Jesus!



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

Being God's Child

Memory Verse

"Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
 – John 14:6 (NIV)

1 Bottom Line

Jesus loves kids like you.*

2 Bible Story

Matthew 19:13-14 – The Little Children and Jesus

3 Activity

Jesus Loves You and Me!

Props: Shoelaces, heart-shaped cards and a hole puncher

Provide each family member with a heart-shaped card. Have them punch holes along the edge of the cards. Weave shoelaces in and out of the holes and tie a bow at the end. Write a message on the card "Jesus loves ____ (name of a family member)!" After the activity, invite everyone to talk about what it means to be a child of God.



Say, "Jesus loves everyone regardless of our size, height, race or colour, including all adults and children. We are extremely important to God because we are children of God. God knows what we need and He wants to bless us. All He wants from us is our listening ear and to build a relationship with us."

4 Talk About It

- How do you think Jesus feels about you when you read Matthew 19:13-14? Why?
- How does it feel knowing that you are a child of God?
- What does Jesus do to show that He loves you?

Parents: Talk about your identity as a child of God through Jesus. How does being God's child affect how you live your life every day?

5 Prayer

Dear God, thank you for choosing us to be your children and loving us unconditionally. Teach us to be good followers of Christ and shine our love to others far and wide.

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



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

monday

04

Turning to the Scriptures Naturally

SCRIPTURE Daniel 9:1-2

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about Daniel and the Word of God?

APPLICATION

What changes do I need to make in using the Scriptures in my life?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, Living Word of God, grant me to know the reality of the spoken and written Word of God is life and Spirit.² Grant to me that “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God”³ to be a central principle in my life, and that I will consciously ask in all life situations, “What does the Scripture say?”⁴



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

deeper reflection

In 539 BC, Darius the Mede, who was “likely a subordinate ruler of Cyrus of Persia”⁵, killed Belshazzar and “was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans [Babylonians]” (v.1; Dan 5:30-31). And at this particular historical moment, Daniel **turned to “the Scriptures”** (v.2). “The Scriptures” “suggested the existence of an identifiable collection of authoritative religious writings, though this need not imply a precisely defined and closed ‘canon’”⁶. And Daniel “understood from the Scriptures... the word of the LORD to Jeremiah” that Babylon’s fall to the Persians signaled “the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem”, and the end of the “seventy years” of exile to Babylon (v.2): “When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfil My good word to you” (Jer 29:10).

Do we, like Daniel, naturally turn to the Scriptures in our life situations – good or bad situations? To naturally turn to the Scriptures is a spiritual habit to be cultivated and developed over time. Consciously asking the key question, “What does the Scripture say?” (Rom 4:3), is a mark of this spiritual habit. And we must be familiar with the Scriptures, such that we are able to **connect** Scripture to life situations and life situations to Scripture. This was exactly what Daniel was doing. Daniel “understood” the turn of the geopolitical events around him **“from the Scriptures”**. And he “understood” the situation through a specific “word of the LORD to Jeremiah” (Jer 25:11-12; 29:10). Here is a principle for application of Scripture: Apply **specific** Scriptures to life. This requires us to grasp the Scriptures sharply.

² John 6:63

³ Matthew 4:4

⁴ Romans 4:3

⁵ Tremper Longman III, *Daniel*, The NIV Application Commentary (Zondervan, 1999), 221; there have been much discussions among scholars over the identity of Darius the Mede

⁶ John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, Word Biblical Commentary (Word Books, 1989), 240

tuesday

05

Looking Upward and Looking Inward

SCRIPTURE Daniel 9:1-10

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about God and the people of God in verses 4 to 10?

APPPLICATION

What does God keeping His covenant and steadfast love for those who love Him and keep His commandments 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 be faithful to the faithful God until the end
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

In his book, *Answering God: The Psalms As Tools For Prayer*, the late Eugene Peterson defines prayer as “Answering God”. God has spoken in His Word and prayer is our response to God – answering God – in what He has spoken. Daniel 9:4-19 is a long prayer of Daniel. It is Daniel’s response to the Word of God: “I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures” (v.2, NIV) is followed by “I prayed to the LORD my God” (vv.3-4). Word and prayer are inseparably intertwined, that both together form our communion and conversation with God. But we begin with Scripture.

When Daniel prayed, he had in mind the Word of God: “When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfil My good word to you” (Jer 29:10). Daniel prayed by **looking upward** at God and **looking inward** at God’s people that he himself was part of. Out of the 16 verses in Daniel’s prayer, references to the intensive and extensive sinfulness of God’s people are made in 11 verses (Dan 9:5-11, 13-16). The sinful people of God include “men of Judah”, “inhabitants of Jerusalem”, “all Israel” those who were in exile “nearby” and “far away”, “our kings, our princes, and our fathers” (vv.7-8). But who among these people of God were “those who love Him and keep His commandments” for whom God “keeps His covenant and steadfast love” (v.4)? For Daniel, none was worthy of God’s covenant faithfulness. Will there then be the promised “I will visit you” (Jer 29:10)? The only hope is God’s “compassion and forgiveness” (v.9).

wednesday

06

The God of Covenant Curses

SCRIPTURE Daniel 9:4-14

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about Israel and the covenant curses (vv.11-14)?

APPPLICATION

How do I place the reality of God's judgment 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 put in their hearts an awareness of His righteous judgment
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

The prayer of Daniel in Daniel 9:4-19 is his confession of “my sin and the sin of my people Israel” (Dan 9:20). Daniel’s prayer of confession reaches a pivotal point: “Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses...have been poured out on us” (v.11, NIV). Daniel’s prayer reflects the long history of God’s covenant relationship with Israel, which began on the day when God “brought Your people out of the land of Egypt” (Dan 9:15). Scripture teaches that we must consciously and reflectively remember the history of our relationship with God. Foundational in God’s covenant relationship with His people is covenant faithfulness. In this covenant relationship, God promises blessings for faithfulness and curses for unfaithfulness (see Lev 26; Deut 28). On His part, God is always faithful and never unfaithful.

Persistent rebellion against God characterised Israel in their history. Observe the frequency of Daniel mentioning Israel sinning against God and disobeying His Word (vv.5-10). But this “great and awesome God” (v.4) in gracious condescension met Israel’s persistent rebellion with His **patient pursuit** of them: “I have sent you all My servants the prophets, sending them **again and again**”, warning them of His judgments and calling them to repentance (Jer 35:15). But “we have not listened to Your servants the prophets” (vv.6, 10). Divine patience has limits: “So the curse has been poured out on us” (v.11). The divine curse is redemptive in intent. But unbelievably, “yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD” (v.13). This is what persistent sinning against God can do to us.

thursday

07

“With All Your Righteous Acts”

SCRPTURE Daniel 9:7, 11-16

OBSERVATION

How does God demonstrate His righteousness toward His people (vv.7, 14, 16)?

APPPLICATION

How do I relate the righteousness of God to 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 Outreach/Missions/New Life leaders: To hunger and thirst for the righteousness of God
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

There are three post-exilic prayers of confession in the Old Testament. It is easy to remember where they are found. They are all in “Chapter 9”: Daniel 9, Ezra 9 and Nehemiah 9 (in chronological order). Each prayer has its own historical and theological context. Read all the three prayers together and observe their similarities and differences.

Daniel’s prayer is a prayer of the faithful remnant in exile. Daniel, representing the faithful remnant, witnessed the persistent rebellion of their fellow people of God that had reached a point when the ultimate covenant curse of exile had poured out on them (vv.11-12). And despite “all this calamity” that had come on them, “we have not sought the favour of the LORD our God by turning from our iniquity and giving attention to Your truth” (v.13). When God’s people have reached such a spiritual condition, what can we say to God?

Daniel appealed to God’s character of righteousness: “Lord, in keeping with all Your righteous acts, turn away Your anger and Your wrath from Jerusalem” (v.16, NIV). Earlier on, Daniel acknowledged that God was “righteous” in judging Israel with His covenant curses (vv.7, 14). But how is God being righteous in turning away His anger? God’s “righteous acts” “denotes more broadly God **being in the right** in the way He has dealt with Israel”⁷. God’s “righteous acts” include “acts of faithfulness, commitment, mercy and deliverance”⁸. In Scripture, God’s “righteousness” and “salvation” are often paired up together (Isa 51:5, 6, 8; Psa 98:2). The Psalmist groups God’s “righteousness” with His “steadfast love”, “faithfulness” and “judgments” (Psa 36:5-6).

⁷ John E. Goldingay, 243; emphasis mine

⁸ John E. Goldingay, 243

friday

08

Two Theological Anchors in Prayer

SCRIPTURE Daniel 9:15-19

OBSERVATION

What is the significance of the repeated expressions “for Your sake” (vv.17, 19) and “called by Your name” (vv.18, 19) in Daniel’s prayer?

APPPLICATION

What does it mean for me that God acts for me for His own sake?

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 to the praise of the glory of God's grace
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

In his prayer, Daniel moved from brokenness – in the way he confessed the sins of Israel (Dan 9:5-14) – to earnestness: “O Lord hear! O Lord forgive! O Lord, listen and take action! O my God, do not delay!” (v.19). It was an earnestness with brokenness. Daniel’s prayer was anchored in the **glory** of God and the **grace** of God – the basis for God to answer his prayer.

Glory of God: Daniel appealed to God to hear and answer his prayer “for Your own sake” (vv.17, 19) – for His own glory. He also appealed to God by the fact of “Your city and Your people are called by Your name” (vv.18, 19). The name of God is the glory of God. When Moses asked God to show him His glory, God proclaimed His name (Exo 33:18-19). God redeemed Israel from the Egyptian bondage to make “a name for Yourself” (v.15). But Israel’s unfaithfulness that resulted in God’s judgment had dishonoured God’s name. And Daniel asked God to vindicate His own name by forgiving and restoring His people.

Grace of God: Daniel recognised the utter spiritual bankruptcy of Israel: “we are not presenting our supplications before You on account of any merits of our own” (v.18). What Daniel was saying is, “Lord, we have nothing and we can do nothing to have You hear and answer our prayer.” Israel’s hope was found only in the “great compassion” (v.18) of the God of “compassion and forgiveness” (Dan 9:9). Biblical discipleship is marked by “to the praise of the **glory** of His **grace**” (Eph 1:6).

saturday

09

The Faithful Covenant-Keeping God

SCRIPTURE Daniel 9:1-20

OBSERVATION

What is the significance of the divine name, “The LORD” (Yahweh), being repeated eight times in Daniel 9 and found only in this chapter in the book (vv.2, 4, 8, 10, 13, 14 [twice], 20)?

APPPLICATION

How has God been to me the God who keeps covenant and steadfast love?

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 be steadfast in the steadfast love of the covenant-keeping God
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

The divine name, “The LORD” (Yahweh), occurs eight times in Daniel 9 (vv.2, 4, 8, 10, 13, 14 [twice], 20). It is found only in Daniel’s prayer here in the book of Daniel. This is not without theological significance.

“The LORD” is the covenant name of the God of Israel, which “appears to be used almost exclusively when the covenant relationship lies behind a situation or statement”. When God redeemed Israel from the Egyptian bondage to be His covenant people, He revealed Himself as “**The LORD, the God of your fathers**” who made His covenant with Abraham and his descendants (Israel) as “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Exo 3:15).

The context of Daniel’s prayer was “the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years” (v.2). It was in this context that Daniel used “The LORD” in his prayer. Daniel had in mind God’s covenant relationship with Israel as their covenant God. He emphatically made references to God’s covenant relationship with His people: “our God” (vv.9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 17) and “Your people” (vv.15, 16, 19). The covenant relationship is defined as “I will take you for My people, and I will be your God” (Exo 6:7). Daniel recalled before God God’s redemption of Israel from the Egyptian bondage to be “Your people” (v.15). He began his prayer with “O Lord, the great and awesome God, who **keeps covenant and steadfast love**” (v.4). At the heart of Daniel’s prayer is God’s faithfulness in keeping His covenant with His unworthy broken people.

⁹ William Sanford LaSor, David Allan Hubbard & Frederic William Bush, *Old Testament Survey* (Eerdmans, 1982), 327, footnote 19

—
sunday

10

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

Being God's Child

Memory Verse

"Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
 – John 14:6 (NIV)

1 Bottom Line

Jesus has a greater purpose for your life.*

2 Bible Story

Luke 5:1-11 – Simon Peter, James and John Followed Jesus

3 Activity

Use What We Have

Props: An assortment of things and a bag

Place an assortment of objects (anything around your home) in a bag. Get everyone to pick something from it. Ask everyone to use the object that he or she picked to start a conversation about God.

Guiding questions:

- For adults: (a) How does this object remind you of God's purpose or goodness?
 (b) What can you do with it to fulfil God's purpose?
- For children: How can this object help you do God's work?

Say, "God gives us different skills and knowledge to fulfil His purpose. Our purpose as followers of Jesus is to share God's Word so that more will know and experience Jesus. We do not need to be afraid or shy (like Simon Peter). We can ask God to give us the courage and wisdom to speak to others."

4 Talk About It

- What does a "fisher of men" do?
- What skills and knowledge have God given you?
- Why do you think He gives you these skills and knowledge?
- What is stopping you from using these skills and knowledge for God's purpose?

Parents: Talk about how following Jesus has given you a greater purpose in life. How do you live out that greater purpose every day?

5 Prayer

Dear God, thank you for choosing us to be followers of Jesus. Show and teach us to be fishers of men. Take away our fear. Give us the wisdom and courage to share the Gospel with others so that more will know Your Name.

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



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 this week's Bible
 story video!

monday

11

How God Answers Our Prayers

SCRIPTURE Daniel 9:1-3, 20-23

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about prayer from these verses?

APPPLICATION

What do I discover about God from the ways that He answers my prayers?

PRAYER

In the morning, God, You hear my voice; in the morning, I lay my requests before You and wait expectantly. You are near to those who call on You, to those who call on You in truth. You hear my voice and give ear to my pleas for mercy, and answer me in Your faithfulness, in Your righteousness, as my Heavenly Father who gives me what is good.¹⁰

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

deeper reflection

There are important lessons on prayer that we can glean from Daniel's prayer in Daniel 9.

How Daniel prays: The starting point of Daniel's praying was the Word of God (v.2), for the Word of God was the basis for his prayer. Daniel prayed with **humility** – “with fasting, sackcloth and ashes” (v.3), and **intensity** – “I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him” (v.3), even to the point of “extreme weariness” (v.21). **What Daniel prays:** Having confessed much of Israel's covenant unfaithfulness, Daniel appealed to God's “great compassion” that He might turn His anger away from His people and forgive their sins, to shine His face on His desolate sanctuary and to “take action” according to His promise of restoration from exile (Dan 9:16-19; v.2 with Jer 29:10).

How God answers: Daniel received God's response to his prayer “**while I was still** speaking in prayer” with a visitation of the angel Gabriel (v.21). In fact, God began to answer Daniel's prayer when he began to pray: “**At the beginning** of your supplications the command was issued” (v.23). This shows how readily God is to answer our prayers. God is our Heavenly Father who knows our needs before we ask Him (Matt 6:8). But God's readiness to answer does not mean God answers immediately. It is God's sovereign prerogative as to when and how He answers our prayers. We can be hoping in God's Word and waiting for God to answer our prayer until we are like the Psalmist: “I feel exhausted, waiting for Your salvation”¹¹ (Psa 119:81).

¹⁰ Psalms 3:3; 145:18; 143:1; Matthew 7:11

¹¹ Translation by Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, Word Biblical Commentary, 21 (Word Press, 1983), 130

tuesday

12

God's Agenda Behind His Answer

SCRIPTURE Daniel 9:1-4a, 19-27

OBSERVATION

What is the significance of how God answered Daniel's prayer in verses 22 to 24?

APPPLICATION

What situations in my life do I need to understand with insight and understanding from God?

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 able to discern the divine agenda in their discipleship journey
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

God both answered and did not answer Daniel’s prayer, in that He responded to his prayer – even before he finished praying (vv.20-21), but He did not grant Daniel’s request.

Daniel asked God to “take action” and “not delay” in bringing the suffering of His people to an end (v.19), since their exile had reached the “seventy years”, which marked “the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem” (v.2). But, instead of the divine action that Daniel asked God for, God gave him His divine agenda: A vision – which consists of a “bewildering combination”¹² of the number “seven” (vv.24, 25, 27). The vision was “Seventy sevens/weeks¹³ have been decreed for your people and your holy city” (v.24). In the context, the “**seventy** sevens” is related to the “**seventy** years” (v. 2). In Scripture, the number “seven” symbolises completeness and perfection. “Seventy sevens” “represent a full measure of time”¹⁴. The suffering of God’s people would not end in the “seventy years”, but “it will last for seventy sevens” – “the complete and perfect time that God determines”¹⁵.

It does happen that when we ask God to deliver us from troubles, the divine answer is harder and longer trials. It is like when we ask God for a loaf, He gives us a stone instead (Matt 7:9). It can be hard to accept that. But we must learn to believe and trust in God for **His agenda behind His answer**. But like Daniel, we need insight and understanding from God to discern His agenda (vv.22-23). This requires prayerful reflection with Scripture and patient waiting on God.

¹² Gordon Wong, *Faithful to the End: The Message of Daniel for Life in the Real World* (Genesis, 2006), 134

¹³ “Seventy ‘sevens’” (NIV); “seventy weeks” (KJV, NASB, ESV); “A period of seventy sets of seven” (NLT)

¹⁴ Robert B. Chisholm Jr., *Handbook on the Prophets* (Baker Academic, 2002), 317

¹⁵ Gordon Wong, 134

wednesday

13

God's Purpose for All History

SCRIPTURE Daniel 9:1-3, 20-24

OBSERVATION

What does verse 24 tell us?

APPPLICATION

Which aspect of the “seventy weeks” decree is of relevance 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 fulfil His redemptive purposes for the nations
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

“**S**eventy weeks have been decreed” for six spiritual realities to happen to God’s people (v.24), which can be summed up as “the accomplishment of God’s purpose for all history”¹⁶. It was “decreed” by God – that is, “it is God’s unbreakable will and commitment.”¹⁷ Bible scholar Christopher Wright has rightly said, “It is difficult, in my view, to read verse 24 as a fitting description of any events that took place in the centuries after the fall of Babylon other than the events of the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ”¹⁸.

God promised that the total sin – “transgression”, “sin” and “iniquity” (cf. Psa 32:1-2; 51:1-2) – of His people will “finish” and come to “an end” (v.24). In Jeremiah, Israel’s unfaithfulness had reached a point where exile to Babylon became the will of God, and resistance against Nebuchadnezzar’s rule was considered rebellion against God (Jer 27:6-8). But central in Jeremiah is the hope of the “new covenant” promise of spiritual restoration, where “I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” (Jer 31:31-34). Thus, Daniel prayed for God’s forgiveness (Dan 9:19). However, only the “atonement” made through Jesus’ death – “the new covenant in My blood” (Lk 22:20) – can “make an end of sin” (v.24). This “atonement for iniquity” results in “everlasting righteousness” – God’s righteousness through faith in Christ (Phil 3:9).¹⁹ And the climax of “vision and prophecy” (v.24) of God’s purpose in history is found in Revelation²⁰: “the mystery of God is finished” (Rev 10:7), concluding with “I am coming quickly” (Rev 22:20).

¹⁶ Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (IVP, 1978), 169

¹⁷ Christopher J. H. Wright, *Hearing the Message of Daniel: Sustaining Faith in Today’s World* (Zondervan, 2017), 208

¹⁸ Christopher J. H. Wright, 208

¹⁹ Joyce G. Baldwin, 169

²⁰ Richard Bauckham’s studies on the Book of Revelation is entitled *The Climax of Prophecy*.

thursday

14

Understanding a Difficult Biblical Text

SCRIPTURE Daniel 9:24-27

OBSERVATION

What is your understanding of the content of verses 25 to 27?

APPPLICATION

How do I approach a biblical text that is not easy to understand?

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 grow in accurate understanding of the Scriptures
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

We are to “accurately handle the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15). But interpreting the Scriptures can be complex. The history of the interpretation of Scripture shows a mysterious reality: We do not attain perfectly correct interpretation of every biblical text even with the Holy Spirit teaching and guiding us (Jn 14:26; 16:13). That Biblical research and writing of Bible commentaries have not ceased testifies to this reality.

Verses 25 to 27 is a difficult text. The Hebrew word *masiah* (vv.25, 26) – literally, “anointed-one” (without the definite article) – “referred to anyone who was anointed to perform a particular task or service for God”²¹. Some English translations made a Christological interpretation of the word: “Messiah” (KJV, NKJV, NASB) or “Anointed One” (NIV, NLT, CSB). But others translated it simply as “an anointed one” (NRSV, ESV, REB). Perhaps, we need to be tentative, and not too dogmatic, in our interpretation. Interpretation of Scripture is a **community** endeavour. In this community are God-given teachers, like scholars and commentators, with whom we consult and interact with in our process of interpretation. **Humility** and **charity** are necessary, while we interpret Scripture with **integrity**.

“The Bible has a surface simplicity that children can understand and relish. It is also a book in which scholars find sophistication of technique and subtlety of content. Scholars have shown the immense complexity that lies below the surface, but there is no requirement that we read the Bible at this level in order to understand and enjoy it. The Bible is the most flexible of all books.”²² Nevertheless, we still need to learn and grow to delve deeper “below the surface”.

²¹ Christopher J. H. Wright, 209

²² Leland Ryken and Tremper Longman III, editors, *A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible* (Zondervan, 1993), 34-35

friday
15

A Historical Understanding of Daniel 9:24-27

SCRIPTURE Daniel 9:24-27

OBSERVATION

How do you understand the text historically?

APPPLICATION

What aspect of evil in the text is of relevance 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 stand firm in the Lord in the evil day
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

We can look at the prophetic-theological vision of Daniel (vv.25-27) as being **initially fulfilled historically** “in the period of time running up to the terrible blasphemy and persecution of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, and especially his desecration of the temple in 167 BC [v.27].”²³

The seventy “weeks”/“sevens” (v.24) are divided into three distinct periods of seven weeks, sixty-two weeks, and one week, as summarised by Bible scholar Robert Chisholm Jr.: “The first period of **seven weeks** begins with a decree to rebuild Jerusalem and ends with the arrival of an anointed ruler, whose task appears to be to carry out the decree [v.25a]. A period of **sixty-two weeks** then follows, during which the city is rebuilt [v.25b] and after which an anointed one (not referred to as a ruler) is cut off. Jerusalem is destroyed by the people (or army) of a ruler who is to come [v.26]. War persists to the end, when an unidentified individual (presumably the ruler who is to come) ratifies a covenant with many for **one week**, but then desecrates the temple before meeting his demise [v.27].”²⁴

Note that descriptions like “anointed one”, “times of distress”, “the prince to come”, “war”, “flood” and “one who make desolate” are not specific enough for specific identification.²⁵ They are symbols – **theological symbols**.²⁶ Daniel’s prophetic-theological vision is a **prophetic-theological paradigm** for “**reapplication**”²⁷. An initial fulfilment of the vision will be followed by further partial fulfilments in history – characteristically marked by opposition to worship to God and desecration of God’s temple (v.27; cf. 2 Thess 2:3-4) – until it reaches the climactic fulfilment.

²³ Christopher J. H. Wright, 208

²⁴ Robert B. Chisholm Jr., 314; emphasis mine

²⁵ John E. Goldingay, 267

²⁶ John E. Goldingay, 267-68

²⁷ John E. Goldingay, 267

saturday

16

A Theological Understanding of Daniel 9:24-27

SCRIPTURE Daniel 9:24-27

OBSERVATION

What can you learn about God from the text?

APPPLICATION

What aspect of God in the text is 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 Church Board: To rest securely in the faithful sovereign God during tumultuous times
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Verses 24 to 27 are “a schematic sketch of history to come, not a detailed chronology within which we can dogmatically assign dates, persons and events,” and “even though the details may be hazy or open to differing plausible theories, there is enough overall shape to the scheme to help us see” “the main point of the text”²⁸.

“Seven weeks”: When we fail God, even as unfaithful as Israel, such that God had to pour out on them His ultimate covenant curse – exile (Dan 9:11-12), God remains faithful. He will restore and rebuild us as He has promised in His “decree” (v.25; cf. Jer 30:18). **“Sixty-two weeks”:** Like Israel, having being restored and rebuilt, we will fail again. We see this up-and-down and up-and-down pattern in post-exilic Israel: Restoration (Ezr 1-8) followed by transgression (Ezr 9-10); and restoration (Neh 1-12) followed by transgression (Neh 13). Biblical discipleship is a redemptive three steps forward, two step back reality. This redemptive discipleship period consists of “times of distress” (v.25). **“One week”:** As history progresses, repeated terrible times and even climactic challenges lay ahead in the distant future for God’s people.²⁹

However, **in all that happen** in the seven weeks, sixty-two weeks and one week periods, **God is at work in fulfilling His promises in verse 24**, within the divinely “decreed” **“seventy weeks”** – “the complete and perfect time that God determines”³⁰. Note that all that happen are “decreed” by God (vv.24, 26, 27) and will have an “end” (vv.24, 26). So, with this prophetic-theological vision, we walk with God faithfully, watching vigilantly and waiting patiently with certainty and confidence.

²⁸ Christopher J. H. Wright, 209-10

²⁹ Christopher J. H. Wright, 210

³⁰ Gordon Wong, 134



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

Being God's Child

Memory Verse

"Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
– John 14:6 (NIV)

1 Bottom Line

Jesus cares about your pain.*

2 Bible Story

Mark 1:40-42 – Jesus Heals a Man with Leprosy

3 Activity

God Cares!

Props: Bandages

Get your family members to watch any online instructional video on bandaging an injured hand. Pair up and practise it on each other. After the activity, invite everyone to talk about how God has shown compassion to you or others, just like how a bandage is used to protect and help an injury to heal.

Say, "Jesus cares about our pain. Jesus is like the bandage, protecting and healing our injured areas. He feels our pain. We can put our trust in Him and let Jesus heal our pain in His time. Jesus is always there for us."

4 Talk About It

- How did Jesus feel about this leper?
- Do you think Jesus feels this way about everybody? How do you know?
- What is the toughest thing you've ever experienced? What made it so painful?
- How did God help you during this painful period?

Parents: Share how you know that Jesus cares about your pain. How has the love of Jesus made a difference in your life?

5 Prayer

Dear God, thank you for being there for us all the time especially when we are in pain. Show us someone in our lives that needs to know that Jesus cares about his or her pain. Give us the wisdom and courage to approach him or her.

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



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monday

18

Daniel 10-12: The Future of God's People (1)

SCRIPTURE Daniel 10:1-14

OBSERVATION

What is Daniel's vision in verses 10 to 12 about (v.14)?

APPPLICATION

How will I live my life if I know "what will happen" to God's people "in the latter days"?

PRAYER

O God, Your Spirit explicitly says that in the last days, some will fall away from the faith, and pay attention to deceitful spirits, as many false teachers will arise among the people of God.³¹ Help me to be spiritually alert and discerning with the truth of Your Word. Strengthen and deepen my walk with You, and keep me from going astray from the truth.

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

deeper reflection

Daniel 10 to 12 is to be viewed as “one single, climactic visionary experience”³² of Daniel. Daniel’s visionary experience began with him standing “by the bank of the great river, that is, the Tigris” (v.4) and ended with him and two heavenly beings standing by “the bank of the river” (Dan 12:5). And a “man dressed in linen” was present at the beginning (v.5) and at the end (Dan 12:6-7). Daniel’s vision may be outlined in terms of six key ideas.

The future of God’s people: Daniel 10 to 12 is “the vision [that] pertains to the days yet future,” and it is about “what will happen to your people [Israel] in the latter days” (v.14). This vision expands on certain themes in Daniel’s vision of the “Seventy Weeks” decreed for God’s people (Dan 9:24-27). In the vision, a particular focus is given to the **conflicts of two Greek kingdoms**. Daniel 11:2-12:4 “portrays a history that would stretch into the future beyond Daniel”³³. Alexander the Great overthrew Persia, and after his death, his kingdom was “broken up and parceled out” into four kingdoms (Dan 11:2-4). Daniel 11:5-45 outlines “the cycle of plots and schemes and battles”³⁴ between two post-Alexander Greek kingdoms in the South – the Ptolemies in Egypt, and the North – the Seleucids in Syria. This had profound effects on the people of God, Israel, who had returned to their land (Ezr and Neh). The land of Palestine – “the Beautiful Land” (Dan 11:16, 41) – lay between these two rival kingdoms, and as a result, “the fate of the Jews” was “at the mercy of one or the other”³⁵.

³¹ 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Peter 2:1

³² Christopher J. H. Wright, 212

³³ Christopher J. H. Wright, 221

³⁴ Christopher J. H. Wright, 222

³⁵ Christopher J. H. Wright, 222

tuesday

19

Daniel 10-12: The Future of God's People (2)

SCRIPTURE Daniel 12:1-4

OBSERVATION

What will the people of God experience at “the end of time”?

APPPLICATION

How will I face the expected unprecedented “time of distress” 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 pastors and staff: To persevere through any unexpected time of distress
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Out of the Seleucid Kingdom **“a despicable person will arise”** (Dan 11:21-35) and he would be Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BC). Antiochus would “set himself against the people of the holy covenant”, and “pollute the sanctuary, put a stop to the daily sacrifices, and set up the sacrilegious object that causes desecration” (Dan 11:28, 31, NLT). Then in progression, there will appear **one who opposes God blasphemously**: A “king” who “will exalt and magnify himself above every god” (Dan 11:36). The description of this king (Dan 11:36-45) is “typological and transcends the historical Antiochus” and “epitomises the pride and power of these previous kings”³⁶. This king will be the antichrist that is highlighted in the New Testament (2 Thess 2:3-4; 1 Jn 2:18). During this tumultuous historical and eschatological period of Daniel 11, the people of God will go through **an unprecedented “time of distress”** (v.1), where their faith will be severely tested. And those who triumph through these trials are **people “who know their God”** (Dan 11:32). The contrast of these persevering faithful people are “those who forsake the holy covenant” and “act wickedly toward the covenant” (Dan 11:30, 32).

Daniel 10 to 12 is relevant to us, because its vision is eschatological. It is a vision of “the latter days” and “the end time” (Dan 10:14; 12:4, 9). So, “what will happen to” Daniel’s people “in the latter days” (Dan 10:14) “will happen to” the Church of Jesus Christ. The Church is a continuity of Old Testament Israel as the New Covenant Israel, which comprises both Jews and Gentiles (Eph 2:11-22).

³⁶ Robert B. Chisholm Jr., 324-25

wednesday

20

“In the Third Year of Cyrus” (1)

SCRPTURE Daniel 10:1-3

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about Daniel?

APPPLICATION

How do I go about seeking God intensively in prayer?

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 turn the hearts of the nations to seek Him
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

The date, “the third year of Cyrus king of Persia” (v.1), in which Daniel received the Daniel 10 to 12 vision from God is significant. In “the first year of Cyrus” (538 BC), the Persian king made a decree for Israel in exile to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple (Ezr 1:1-4). Then “in the second year” of their return, Israel laid the foundation of the temple, “praising and giving thanks to the LORD, saying, ‘He is good and His unfailing love is upon Israel forever’” (Ezr 3:8-11). But shortly after, Israel faced strong opposition from their enemies and the rebuilding work “stopped” in 535 BC for 15 years (Ezr 4:1, 4-5, 24). The “third year of Cyrus” was a time when God’s people were filled with discouragement,³⁷ and probably wondering, “Where is the goodness and unfailing love of God?” It was at this time that Daniel turned to God in prayer.

Broadly speaking, prayer takes on three forms. **Regular devotion to God:** We see this in Daniel, who was “on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God” (Dan 6:10). **Continual communion with God:** This is as Paul teaches, “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess 5:17). A distinguishing mark in this is we are conscious of God at all times in all things. **Intensive seeking of God:** In solidarity with his discouraged fellow Israelites at a great distance,³⁸ Daniel was “mourning”, and fasted from choice food such as “meat” and “wine”, and “ointment” that “made life more comfortable in a dry, desert climate”³⁹ (vv.2-3). Daniel was “in a state of prayerful turmoil”⁴⁰.

³⁷ Iain M. Duguid, *Daniel*, Reformed Expository Commentary (P&R, 2008), 178

³⁸ Iain M. Duguid, 179

³⁹ Iain M. Duguid, 178

⁴⁰ Tremper Longman, 247

thursday

21

“In the Third Year of Cyrus” (2)

SCRIPTURE Daniel 10:1-3

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about the Word of God in verse 1?

APPPLICATION

What does it mean to me that the Word of God is true?

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 strongly grounded in the Word of truth
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

“In the third year of Cyrus” (v.1), Daniel learned that his people in Jerusalem were greatly discouraged by the hostile opposition that they met in their work of restoration. He then sought God in prayer with mourning and fasting (vv.2-3). In Daniel’s earnest seeking of God, there was also “the desire for further revelation to clarify” the “Seventy Weeks” vision (Dan 9:24-27).⁴¹ God responded to Daniel with “a **word**” “revealed” to him (v.1). *Dabar* for “word” is repeated three times in the verse. No content is given in this “word”, because verse 1 “summarises chapters 10 to 12 as a whole, introducing the motifs of the reliability of the revelation Daniel is given, the conflicts chapter 11 describes, and the understanding Daniel is given.”⁴²

The interlinked movements of the Word of God and prayer in Daniel 9 to 10 is noteworthy: From the Word (Dan 9:1-2) to prayer (Dan 9:3-19), from prayer (Dan 9:3-19) to the Word (Dan 9:20-27), from the Word (Dan 9:20-27) to prayer (vv.2-3), and from prayer (vv.2-3) to the Word (v.1, Dan 10:4-12). The chained movements begin and end with the Word of God.

When we go through discouraging times of difficulty and uncertainty, our only anchor and compass is the Word of God. The Word is “**true**” (v.1), because it is **God’s** Word, and God is true and cannot lie (Heb 6:17-18). When our faith is tested, the test is **if we really believe** that God and His Word are true. Oftentimes, adversities tell us that God and His Word are not reliable. Who or what do we believe in then?

⁴¹ Earnest C. Lucas, *Daniel*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary (Apollos, IVP, 2002), 274

⁴² John E. Goldingay, 290

friday

22

An Overwhelming Encounter with God (1)

SCRPTURE Daniel 10:1-9

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about Daniel's encounter with the "man dressed in linen" (vv.4-9)?

APPPLICATION

What does it mean to me that an encounter with God is a gift of God?

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 have a fresh encounter with God
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Daniel had an encounter with God through a vision of “a certain man dressed in linen” (vv.4-5a). This man was “beyond description”⁴³ (v.6 – note “like” in Daniel’s description). This man was certainly a heavenly being, but “more radiant than Gabriel [Dan 8:16; 9:21] and greater than Michael [Dan 10:13, 21; 12:1].”⁴⁴ What Daniel’s eyes saw was a blazing appearance of “lightning”, “flaming torches” and “gleam of polished bronze”; what his ears heard was “the sound of words like the sound of a tumult” (v.6). In Scripture, “angelic messengers themselves reflect the image of the glorious God whom they serve, so to look on the angel is tantamount to viewing God Himself”⁴⁵. This man’s awesome appearance conveyed God’s holiness and glory,⁴⁶ and that greatly overwhelmed Daniel: “My strength left me, my face grew deathly pale, and I felt very weak” (v.8, NLT).

One morning in 1997, as I was preparing a one-hour lesson on the “Doctrine of God”, I was suddenly overwhelmed by a strong sense of God’s infinite greatness and majesty, “How could I put the infinitely great God into a one-hour lesson of theology!” I described that theological encounter in these words: “Even when we have exhaustively studied all about God that He has revealed in His Word, and have prayerfully meditated on Him in the greatest possible depths, and are utterly overwhelmed by the revelations of His Spirit in speechless awe and worship, we have only arrived at but our inadequate best in knowing the Infinite God, and our worship of the Glorious One is but still in poverty!”

⁴³ Joyce G. Baldwin, 180

⁴⁴ Joyce G. Baldwin, 178

⁴⁵ Iain M. Duguid, 181

⁴⁶ Iain M. Duguid, 181

saturday

23

An Overwhelming Encounter with God (2)

SCRIPTURE Revelation 1:9-20

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about John's encounter with Christ?

APPPLICATION

What were my encounters with God like?

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 have an enlarged vision of God
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

At Patmos, John had an encounter with God that was similar to Daniel's (Dan 10:4-9). The awesome appearance of the persons revealed were similarly beyond description. Like Daniel, John also described the appearance of the "one like a son of man" (v.13) by way of comparison – "like" (vv.14-16). However, there is a major difference between the two visionary experiences. Daniel met a heavenly being representing God, but John met the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. And Christ is Himself God. Christ is "I am the first and the last" (v.17) as God is "I am the Alpha and the Omega" (Rev 1:8). Both Daniel and John were greatly overwhelmed in their encounter with God (v.17; Dan 10:8-9).

John knew Jesus as the God-man of Galilee, and was following and walking with Him so closely, that he could intimately **"lean back on Jesus' bosom"** and known as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (Jn 21:20). Even then, John "saw" Jesus' "glory" (Jn 1:14). But when John met this same Jesus at Patmos, he **"fell at His feet like a dead man"** (v.17). We are to know and walk with the Lord Jesus at two levels. We walk with **Jesus of the Gospels** with **personal closeness** and with **Jesus of Revelation** in His **transcendent glory**. The overwhelming visible encounters with God like Daniel and John's are not a norm. But God does give us overwhelming encounters with Him in meeting us in His Word. When Jesus was opening the Scriptures to two disciples and revealed Himself from Scripture, "our hearts were burning within us" (Lk 24:25-27, 31-32).



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

Being God's Child

Memory Verse

"Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
– John 14:6 (NIV)

1 Bottom Line

Jesus can do anything.*

2 Bible Story

Mark 2:10-12 – Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralysed Man

3 Activity

Amazing Things

Props: Amazing things table (see template on the right) and colour pencils

Print out the table on the right for your family members. It comprises some amazing things that God has done for the individuals in the family (you may change the contents of the table to make it more applicable).

Get everyone to colour the spaces which apply to them. Invite everyone to share the amazing things God has done for them and the family.

Say, "Jesus can do anything! In Ephesians 3:20, God says that he "...is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us..." There is nothing God cannot do!"

4 Talk About It

- What do you think this Scripture tells us about Jesus?
- What do you think Jesus meant by having "authority" in the Scripture in Mark 2:10-12?
- What are some things you wish to ask from Jesus? (Note: It does not mean it will be given immediately. Sometimes God wants us to wait. Sometimes it is not given because our motives are not right.)

Parents: Talk about some of the amazing things Jesus has already done in your life. Share about some of the things that you're still waiting for Him to accomplish and believe He will.

5 Prayer

Dear God, thank you for giving us all these amazing things. You can heal and forgive. You provide and take care of everything in our lives. Teach us to use the great experiences we received from you to help others in need.



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

Cured from an illness	Passed a difficult exam	Solved a difficult problem
A new baby/member joined the family	Saved us from a disaster	Lost and found an important thing
Successful and smooth completion of a project	An unlikely loved one/friend received Christ	Courage to stand up from failures/pain
Courage to do the right thing	Found a new job	Provided for us when we have "nothing"

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

monday

25

Journey of Understanding God's Word

SCRIPTURE Daniel 10:1-12

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about Daniel in verses 11 to 12?

APPPLICATION

What does it mean for me to set my heart to understand the Word of God?

PRAYER

Teach me, Lord, the way of Your decrees, that I may follow it to the end. Give me understanding, so that I may keep Your law and obey it with all my heart. Be gracious to me and strengthen me according to Your Word. Keep me from deceitful ways. I have chosen the way of faithfulness and set my heart on Your laws, and hold fast to Your statutes.⁴⁷

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

deeper reflection

Right from the beginning, we are told that “Daniel understood all kinds of visions and dreams” (Dan 1:17). It was a special gift from God to serve God’s purposes. In Daniel 1-6, we see Daniel interpreting for the Babylonian kings their dreams and visions (Dan 2:1-45; 4:1-27; 5:1-28). But in Daniel 7-12, Daniel himself received dreams and visions from God (Dan 7:1; 8:1-2; 9:20-21; 10:1). By way of broad summary, “the visions of Daniel 2, 7, 8 and 10-12 are to be understood as complementary presentation of the same realities”⁴⁸, and “the four-kingdom sequence in Daniel 2, 7, 8 and 10-12 will establish the framework within which the seventy weeks of Daniel 9 must be understood”⁴⁹.

These visions are the Word of God, as “word” and “vision” are synonymous (v.1). For Daniel, understanding the Word of God through these visions was a journey – a journey of Daniel 7-12. In this journey, there were times when “there was none to explain” the visions to him (Dan 8:27) or when he was called to “gain understanding of the vision” (Dan 9:23). Having the gift of understanding “all kinds of visions and dreams” (Dan 1:17) does not mean Daniel understands them naturally and automatically. Understanding the Word of God is **heart work** and **hard work**. Daniel “set” his “heart on understanding” the Word from God (v.12). And he sought to understand God’s Word prayerfully and intensely with mourning and fasting for three weeks (vv.2-3, 12). God “gives wisdom, knowledge and understanding from His mouth”, resulting in knowing Him; but the prerequisite is diligent seeking and searching (Prov 2:4-6).

⁴⁷ Psalm 119:29-34

⁴⁸ James M. Hamilton Jr., *With the Clouds of Heaven: The Book of Daniel in Biblical Theology*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (IVP, 2014), 104

⁴⁹ James M. Hamilton Jr., 87

tuesday

26

A Man of High Esteem

SCRIPTURE Daniel 10:11-12, 14-19

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about Daniel being called “man of high esteem” (vv.11, 19)?

APPPLICATION

What does being highly esteemed 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 be able to see oneself as God sees
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

One of the heavenly beings called Daniel “man of high esteem” (v.11). This honour was bestowed on Daniel emphatically, in that it was repeated twice (v.19). This “high esteem” did not come from man, but from God Himself. God gave this honour to Daniel toward the end of his life when God called him to “enter into rest” (Dan 12:13). As a youth, Daniel “made up his mind not to defile himself with the king’s choice food” (Dan 1:8), and as an old man, he was faithful to God in spending time with Him in his “three times a day” devotion, even if it means to be thrown into the lions’ den (Dan 6:10). Daniel was finishing well in his life with “humbling yourself before your God” (v.12). When we think of finishing well in terms of successful accomplishments, we must be careful that we are not exalting ourselves.

It is not for us to see ourselves in any way as a person of high esteem before God. It is for God to say that to us (2 Cor 10:17-18). Daniel never saw himself as a “man of high esteem”. A key emphasis in Daniel 10 is Daniel being greatly overwhelmed by the holiness and glory of God represented by the heavenly being with an awesome appearance (Dan 10:5-10, 15-18). And it was in this encounter with God when he was called “man of high esteem” that Daniel said, “How can such a servant of my Lord talk with such as my Lord?”⁵⁰ (v.17). The man highly esteemed by God saw his unworthiness before God.

⁵⁰ I have theologially translated “my lord” to “my Lord”, since the heavenly being is a representation of God.

wednesday

27

There Is War in Heaven

SCRIPTURE Daniel 10:1-3, 10-21

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make from what was happening in verses 1 to 3, 10 to 14 and 20 to 21?

APPPLICATION

How do I relate to the cosmic conflict in my discipleship journey on earth?

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 save the nations from Satan's stranglehold
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Daniel was seeking God with mourning and fasting for three weeks, setting his “heart on understanding” more fully the visions that God had given him in Daniel 7 to 9 (vv.2-3, 12). But there was war in heaven (cf. Rev 12:7). On “the first day” of Daniel’s humble seeking of God, God responded by dispatching His messenger to communicate to Daniel “what is written in the Book of Truth [Dan 11-12]” (vv.12, 21). But “the prince of the kingdom of Persia” was “withstanding” the heavenly messenger “for twenty-one days”, resulting in a delay (v.13a). Michael the archangel (Dan 12:1) “came to help” the heavenly messenger to fight “the prince of Persia” (v.13b). The heavenly messenger was then freed to deliver the Word of God to Daniel. Meanwhile, Michael was still fighting “the prince of Persia”, because when the heavenly messenger had fulfilled his mission, he “shall return to fight against the prince of Persia” (v.20a). And this ongoing war in heaven (v.21b) has to do with “behold, the prince of Greece is about to come” (v.20b).

“The prince of Persia” and “the prince of Greece” in the heavenly realm have to do with the earthly “kings in Persia” and the “kingdom of Greece” (Dan 11:2). “There is a cosmic conflict that lies behind all that goes below on the earth” that involves spiritual forces called “princes”, or “the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places” in New Testament terms (Eph 3:10; 6:12).⁵¹ These “seem to be associated with particular nations and...involved in the political and military fortunes of those nations”⁵².

⁵¹ Christopher J. H. Wright, 215-16

⁵² Christopher J. H. Wright, 216

thursday

28

God's Delay in Answering Prayer

SCRIPTURE Daniel 10:1-3, 10-14

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about prayer in verses 2 to 3 and 10 to 14?

APPPLICATION

How do I respond to God's delay in answering my prayers?

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 wait patiently in God's delay in action
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Daniel 10 presents a picture of what happened on earth and in heaven when Daniel prayed to God. In heaven, God answered Daniel's prayer immediately: "from the first day...your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words" (v.12). But God's answer reached Daniel on earth only "twenty-one days" later (vv.13-14). There was a delay. We are told that it was caused by "the prince of Persia" "withstanding" the heavenly messenger (v.13). Paul teaches that we are to "put on the full armour of God" and "pray at all times in the Spirit" "with all perseverance", in order to "stand firm against the schemes of the devil" "in the evil day" (Eph 6:10-13, 18). However, Daniel 10 does not tell us that because Daniel persevered in his prayer for 21 days, God sent Michael to help the heavenly messenger to fight "the prince of Persia", so that the messenger was freed to deliver His answer to Daniel. The cosmic conflict continued even when Daniel received God's answer to his prayer after 21 days (Dan 10:20-21) and Daniel stopped praying after that.

Living with God's delay in answering our prayers is hard, especially when we do not know God's reason for it. Waiting patiently with faith is a vital discipline that God wants to develop in us (cf. Heb 6:12, 15). We "ought to pray at all times and not lose heart" (Lk 18:1), trusting in God that He "answers us in His faithfulness, in His righteousness" (Psa 143:1), and in His goodness (Matt 7:11), no matter how long we must wait.

friday
29

God's Word and Spiritual Warfare

SCRIPTURE Daniel 10:1, 10-21

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about the heavenly being's communication of the Word of God to Daniel and the mention of "the prince of the kingdom of Persia" (vv.11-14, 20-21)?

APPPLICATION

What is my experience of the Word of God and spiritual warfare like 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 stand firm in God's Word in spiritual warfare
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Daniel 10 to 12 is about “a word” that was “revealed to Daniel” in a “vision” (v.1), which was about “what will happen to your people in the latter days” (v.14). The narrative of verses 10 to 21 begins and ends with two themes: **Communication of the Word of God** and **conflict in the spiritual realm** (vv.10-14, 20-21). Daniel “set” his “heart to understand” more fully the visions that he had received in Daniel 7 to 9 (v.12). God responded to Daniel by sending to him a heavenly messenger with one purpose: “I have come to give you an understanding...” (v.14) and “I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth” (v.21). But as the heavenly messenger was carrying out his mission, he and another heavenly being were caught in “fighting”, “withstanding” and “standing firmly” against some “prince of Persia” and “prince of Greece”, who were no mere human powers (vv.13, 20, 21). There is spiritual warfare in God communicating His Word – in this context, “God’s purpose for history”⁵³ that affects His people (v.14).

Evil spiritual forces seek to obstruct the **revelation** and **realisation** of God’s Word. The spiritual conflict is “over whether God’s purpose for history should be revealed and...over whether it should be thereby put into effect”⁵⁴. God’s Word and His will can be opposed and delayed, but never frustrated (Psa 33:9-11; Isa 14:27). Even when the entire universe collapses, what remains standing is “My words will not pass away” (Matt 24:35). Do you have such confidence and assurance in God’s Word that you stake your life on it?

⁵³ John E. Goldingay, 312

⁵⁴ John E. Goldingay, 312

saturday

30

Strengthened by the Divine Touch

SCRIPTURE Daniel 10:4-19

OBSERVATION

What is the significance of the repetition of the terms “strength” and “strengthen” in Daniel’s encounter with God (vv.8, 16, 17, 18, 19)?

APPPLICATION

What area in my life do I need the divine touch of divine strengthening?

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 know God's power that is perfected in weaknesses
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

When God sent His Word to Daniel in a vision, it was he “alone saw” the “great vision” (vv.7-8). It was a special privilege of divine sovereign grace. The vision was also a vision of God's holiness and glory manifested in the awesome appearance of a heavenly being (vv.5-6). Daniel was so utterly overwhelmed by the divine vision, that “no strength was left in me” (v.8). The description, “no strength”, is emphatically repeated four times in Daniel's encounter with God (vv.8, 16, 17). We may not experience such an utterly overwhelming encounter with God like Daniel's, but we do experience “no strength was left in me” in utterly overwhelming adversities like being “afflicted in every way” (2 Cor 1:8; 4:8-9).

When we have “no strength”, we need the divine touch. God responded to Daniel's fourfold “no strength” with a threefold divine touch (vv.10, 16, 18): He “touched me again and strengthened me”. When we are so greatly afflicted, that we feel no strength is left in us, and yet we persevere in faithfulness, it is because we are being “strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of great endurance and patience” (Col 1:11). Note the intensity and immensity of this divine power at work in us! This is the divine touch of “the surpassing greatness of power” from God (2 Cor 4:7-9). But we feel the physical and emotional pains more than the Spiritual power. The greater is our suffering, the greater will be the strength from God in us, and the greater will be our steadfastness in God.

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