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2023  
devotional journal

*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)**



October



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2023  
devotional journal

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)**

1  
2023  
memory verses**JANUARY**

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

***Daniel 1:8 (ESV)***

**FEBRUARY**

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

***Daniel 1:17 (ESV)***

**MARCH**

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

***Daniel 2:21 (ESV)***

**APRIL**

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

***Daniel 3:17-18 (ESV)***

**MAY**

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

***Daniel 4:3 (ESV)***

**JUNE**

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

***Daniel 6:27 (ESV)***

## **JULY**

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

***Daniel 7:14 (ESV)***

## **AUGUST**

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

***Daniel 7:27 (ESV)***

## **SEPTEMBER**

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

***Daniel 9:19 (ESV)***

## **OCTOBER**

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

***Daniel 10:12 (ESV)***

## **NOVEMBER**

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

***Daniel 12:2 (ESV)***

## **DECEMBER**

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

***Daniel 12:3 (ESV)***

from daniel

# preparing to meet king jesus: into your hands

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

## **Preparing to Meet King Jesus: Into Your Hands.**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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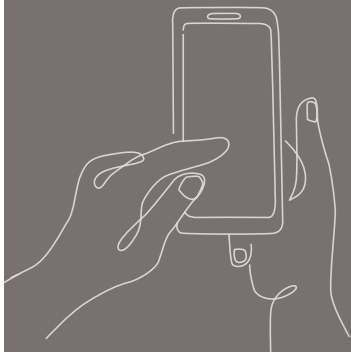
# guide to using this devotional journal

## 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.

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### ✦ 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

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# pray for covenant efc missions

*Thus says the LORD: "In a time of favour I have answered you; in a day of salvation I have helped you; I will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people, to establish the land, to apportion the desolate heritages, saying to the prisoners, 'Come out,' to those who are in darkness, 'Appear.' They shall feed along the ways; on all bare heights shall be their pasture; they shall not hunger or thirst, neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them, for he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will guide them. And I will make all my mountains a road, and my highways shall be raised up. Behold, these shall come from afar, and behold, these from the north and from the west, and these from the land of Syene.*

**ISAIAH 49:8-12 (ESV)**

**W**e can see the promises of God in verse 8 as He “answered”, “helped”, and “keep”! These promises lead to a covenant to establish a permanent presence in the land. We can also see the power of God by His Word alone in verse 9, as He says to those in darkness “Come out!”. We see His grace and mercy in the power of salvation!

We see the provision of God in verses 9 to 10, “They shall feed...they shall not hunger or thirst”. We see the protection of God in verses 10 to 11, “neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them, for he who has pity on them will lead them...guide them...make all my mountains a road and my highways shall be raised up.” All the promises, power, provision and protection apply to us as His children.

Pray for:

1. The first Business-As-Missions (BAM) conference to be held in the Philippines on 20–21 Oct. This will be a gathering of business owners in Asia.
  - That the participants will be challenged to do business God’s way.
  - That each business owner will be a follower of Jesus and help their staff and customers know and follow Jesus too.
  - That each business will become a witness for God and become a discipling community.
2. Missions Prayer Wave starting on 13 Oct, which seeks to raise the faith level and prayer gumption of Covenanters.
  - That each Covenanter will see as God sees and receive a deep burden and compassion for the lost.
  - That Covenanters will join hands with local and overseas partners to win the world for Christ.
3. Missions Sundays to move the hearts of Covenanters to disciple the nations.
  - That each Covenanter, in their simple ways, will use their talents, time and treasures to disciple the nations.
  - That each Covenanter will find their station and keep to it to disciple the nations and win the world for Christ.

—  
sunday

01

# Sunday Journal

**S**CRPTURE

**O**BSERVATION

**A**PPPLICATION

**P**RAYER

# 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

## INTEGRITY:

Choosing to be truthful in whatever you say and do.

### Memory Verse

"Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but whoever takes crooked paths will be found out."  
– Proverbs 10:9 (NIV)

### 1 Bottom Line

Be truthful with your whole life.\*

### 2 Bible Story

Luke 6:43-45 (John 15:1-17) – A Tree and Its Fruit

### 3 Activity

#### If I Were a Tree...

Props: Paper and drawing tools

Ask your family members to each draw a tree that best represents them. After the activity, invite everyone to share their drawings and discuss:

- What does a tree need to grow?
- Who takes care of the trees in the forest?
- What happens if a tree is infested with pests?

Say, "Jesus is the source of everything. When we believe and remain in Him, we will grow into a good tree, bearing good fruit. If Jesus is love, then the best fruit we can show others is love. This means treating others with respect, encouraging others and being honest in everything we do. If we're not careful and get infested by bad thoughts and actions, the fruit we produce gets ourselves and others into trouble. With Jesus' guidance, He can make it right."

### 4 Talk About It

- According to Luke 6:43-45, what kind of tree does God wish we become? Why?
- What is the meaning of John 15:5, where Jesus said, "He is the vine and we are the branches, and that to bear fruit, we have to remain in Him"?
- What changes or decisions will you make to be a good tree?

**Parents:** Share an incident in which you were a "bad" tree. What consequences did you face? What did you do to make things right? How did you feel after that? What happened when you changed for the better?

### 5 Prayer

Dear God, forgive us for the wrong things and bad decisions we have made. Guide us in making wise choices and being honest in everything we say and do. Protect us from a dangerous and crooked path.

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



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

monday

02

# Sent by the Lord

**SCRIPTURE** John 20:19-21; Luke 4:14-21

## OBSERVATION

What is the analogy that Jesus used in sending forth His disciples (v.21)?

## APPLICATION

How do the purposes for which Jesus sends forth His disciples impact the way I plan and live out the years of my life?

## PRAYER

Dear Father in heaven, what manner of love You have bestowed on me that I should be called Your child! Every opportunity given to me to carry out Your will is a privilege for me to participate in Your glorious purposes. Help me to clearly discern the things that You want me to accomplish and to faithfully work at them with a heart that loves and depends on You and always seeks Your glory. Amen.





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

## deeper reflection

**A**s we enter the month of October with our upcoming two Missions Sundays, let us focus our attention and prayers on Covenant EFC's third Faith Exploit, "Disciple the Nations". In today's Scripture, verse 21 is a very significant statement that Jesus said to His disciples after His resurrection. And it applies equally to all those who are Jesus' disciples today. There are three key observations we can make.

**First**, the analogy that Jesus used – His having been sent by the Father – points us to Jesus' foundational teachings that He came to accomplish the very will and works of the Father (Jn 4:34; 5:30, 36; cf. Lk 4:14-21). **Second**, the idea of Jesus' disciples being "sent" reminds us that world missions is not a result of human initiative, but is God-initiated and God-directed. It is God's mission in the world. **Third**, verse 21 reminds us that Jesus is not merely calling us to join God in His mission, but to relate to Him as our heavenly Father – in love, obedience and dependence.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, the more fundamental question is not "Are we being sent?" or "What must we do?". Rather, it is "**To what extent do we understand and treasure our sonship in relation to God our Father (Jn 20:17)?**" So that, as beloved children of God, we will respond rightly to our heavenly Father who created us in His image, redeemed us in Jesus Christ, and called us to join Him in His mission. **Out of gratitude and love towards God, we joyfully walk in the Lord's will for us, and fully rely on His resources as we faithfully serve Him.**

<sup>1</sup> This is consistent with John's emphasis in his writings on the Father-Son relationship that anchored and motivated Jesus in all that He did in submission and obedience to the Father's will.

tuesday

03

## The One with Supreme Authority

**SCRIPTURE** Matthew 28:16-20; John 3:34-36

### **O**BSERVATION

Why did Jesus say to His disciples, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me” (v.18)?

### **A**PPPLICATION

How does the fact that Jesus has “all authority in heaven and on earth” affect the way I receive His commands and the way I conduct my life?

### **P**RAYER

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 follow and obey Jesus Christ as their ultimate leader and the Head of the Church, so that their lives and works will bring glory to God alone
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**V**erse 18 could be said to be the central premise of Christian discipleship and discipling: “**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me** [i.e. Jesus].” Jesus’ authority is clearly in focus when we read the accounts of His teaching and miracles. For example, when Jesus taught the crowds about God’s Kingdom and its radical righteousness (Matt 5-7; 7:28-29), healed a man of paralysis and terrible pain (Matt 8:5-10, 13), stilled a great windstorm out at sea (Matt 8:23-27), cast out many demons from two men (Matt 8:28-32) and forgave a paralytic’s sins (Matt 9:1-8).

“All authority in heaven and on earth” means that Jesus’ authority is **supreme and all-encompassing**. There is no realm of creation nor sphere of life that lies outside of His authority. Whoever has the highest authority has the final say. The words of the One who has the final say must count the most in any major decision that we make. For a Christian, **the Lord Jesus has the final say** in all of one’s major life questions about meaning, purpose and direction.

Based on His authority, Jesus gave the Great Commission to all His disciples in every nation and generation, commanding them to “**make disciples of all nations**” (vv.19-20). As such, we are to respond in reverent fear and obedience to Jesus. At the same time, we can walk in full confidence as we go about doing our part in fulfilling the divine mandate, strengthened and comforted by the fact that Jesus is always with us by His Spirit until His Second Coming when we will see Him face to face.

wednesday

04

## Earnestly Seek the Lord

**S**CRIPTURE Hosea 5:1-15

### **O**BSERVATION

What kept the people of Israel from earnestly seeking the Lord (vv.3-7, 11, 15)?

### **A**PPPLICATION

What is preventing or hindering me from truly seeking the Lord?

### **P**RAYER

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 the Church will return in faithfulness to the Lord and bear the light of Christ to the nations, and that the nations will turn and seek Him
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**T**he book of Hosea marks a time when Israel descended into moral decay following an era of peace and prosperity since the days of Solomon.<sup>2</sup> The prophet Hosea called Israel to forsake their idols, return to the Lord and be faithful to Him, and warned of the impending judgment to come if they persisted in sin.<sup>3</sup> The religious and political leaders were themselves leading the people astray and away from the Lord; therefore He will judge them all (vv.1-2, 10). Israel needed to decisively turn towards God and seek Him – the God who loves them like a faithful husband who loves His wife despite her unfaithfulness.<sup>4</sup>

**To truly seek the Lord, we must be willing to acknowledge our sins of idolatry and disobedience, and repent of our unfaithfulness, wickedness and moral failures.**<sup>5</sup>

The practice of such sins is contrary to the knowledge of God. God is not deceived; He knows when His people practise sin while simultaneously performing acts of worship like singing, praying and reciting His words. Externally, all may look well, but in reality, the decay and rot have already set in. Do we know our true spiritual condition? Do we reckon with who God is and what He requires of us? Do we sincerely cry out to God in repentance of our sins? Do we earnestly yearn to return wholeheartedly to Him?

If we truly seek the Lord, His light will shine in our hearts. With cleansed and purified hearts, we will deeply desire that God's Kingdom come and His will be done on earth as in heaven. **Only then can we disciple the nations.**

<sup>2</sup> The ESV Classic Reference Edition, 2007, Crossway Bibles, Hosea: Introduction, 895.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Hosea 2:14-23.

<sup>5</sup> Hosea 4:1-2.

thursday

05

## Wisely Fear the Lord

**SCRIPTURE** Matthew 10:24-33

### **O**BSERVATION

Why is it wise for us to fear the Lord?

### **A**PPPLICATION

How does my fear of the Lord influence the way I perceive the costs of engaging in Gospel work (whether locally or overseas) and make choices for my life and ministry?

### **P**RAYER

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 leading the church to fervently and boldly proclaim the Gospel through word and deed, that by all means we might save some<sup>6</sup>
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**A**fter Jesus called the twelve disciples, He sent them out to the surrounding towns and villages to proclaim the Kingdom of God (Matt 10:1-7). Verses 24 to 33 contain part of Jesus' instructions to His disciples as He warned them of persecution by opponents of the Gospel. The word "fear"<sup>7</sup> (four times; vv.26, 28, 31) is commonly used in the New Testament to cover a large range of contexts,<sup>8</sup> from fearing physical danger<sup>9</sup> and social ramifications,<sup>10</sup> to feeling awe, reverence and respect for God.<sup>11</sup> Just as Jesus was persecuted, so will His disciples be persecuted as they began to proclaim the Kingdom (vv.24-25). They therefore needed to **have the right kind of fear**.

Jesus did not sugarcoat the costs of discipleship, nor sidestep discussion on the implications of following Him. Instead, Jesus taught His disciples and heightened their vision of God and His Kingdom. **First**, we should fear the Lord because He has the power to completely destroy and punish all sinners (v.28). **Second**, we should fear the Lord because we are so precious to Him that nothing in our lives escapes His loving attention and care (vv.29-31). **Third**, we should fear the Lord because all people must acknowledge Jesus for entry into God's Kingdom; if we deny Jesus before men, He will deny us before the Father (vv.32-33).

In our life, God should be the One we ultimately fear because He is truly great and truly good. We are to **direct all our awe, reverence and respect towards God** who alone is worthy, and to **keep pointing unbelievers to Jesus, the only way to the Father** (Jn 14:6).

<sup>6</sup> 1 Corinthians 9:22.

<sup>7</sup> Greek *phobeo*.

<sup>8</sup> Mangum, Douglas, Derek R. Brown, Rachel Klippenstein, and Rebekah Hurst, eds. *Lexham Theological Wordbook*. Lexham Bible Reference Series. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014.

<sup>9</sup> E.g. Matthew 14:30.

<sup>10</sup> E.g. Matthew 1:20.

<sup>11</sup> E.g. Mark 4:41; Luke 18:2, 4.

friday

06

## Discover Anew God's Mission

**SCRIPTURE** Acts 15:35-16:10

### **O**BSERVATION

What were Paul and Timothy seeking to do before the Holy Spirit redirected them to Macedonia?

### **A**PPPLICATION

What does my participation in bringing the Gospel to the nations look like?

### **P**RAYER

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 in their understanding of God's heart and participation in God's mission to nations
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**T**he Apostle Paul embarks on his second missionary journey to visit the brothers in those cities where he had first proclaimed the Gospel (vv.36-41). Hardly missing a beat since the time he was first sent out by the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1-3), Paul continued to pursue God's mission. This time round, he sought to strengthen the churches and make new disciples of Christ among the cities of surrounding nations (vv.4-5).

In embarking on this missions endeavour, Paul was driven and directed by the mission that the Lord had already entrusted to him. The general direction was to bring the Gospel to places where Christ was not yet known among the peoples. Paul was not held back by a need to know all the details before deciding where to go and what to do. Rather than passively waiting to discover God's plan for each step of the way, Paul proceeded in active obedience to his calling and God's mission. Along the way, God gradually revealed His specific direction for Paul's ministry.

Brothers and sisters, what if missions is not about us discerning whether we are specifically "called" to missions, but rather about us **rediscovering God's heart for the nations and His mission to reach all nations with the Gospel**, and us **taking the initial steps to participate with Him**? What if bringing the Gospel to the nations was never meant to be only for specially "chosen" ones, but **for every ordinary person who calls Jesus "Lord"**? What if the key for us to overcome the sense of drudgery in life is to **joyfully live out God's mission**?

saturday

07

## Depend on God Through Prayer

**SCRIPTURE** Acts 4:13-31

### **O**BSERVATION

How did the disciples respond when they heard that the religious leaders had commanded Peter and John to henceforth stop speaking or teaching in the name of Jesus?

### **A**PPPLICATION

In what ways can I respond when faced with opposition to my continued witness for Christ, whether locally or overseas?

### **P**RAYER

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 continually depend on God through prayer for boldness and spiritual power to continue the work of intentional discipling among the nations
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**A**cts chapter 4 marks the beginning of the persecution that the early disciples would face as witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus Christ (see Acts 4:1-3). The tremendous joy of belonging to Christ and to one another (Acts 2:42-47) was now beginning to be mixed with the tremendous stress of threats and suffering for following and proclaiming Christ. Being “cancelled” was the new setting for people who believed in Jesus Christ as their risen Saviour and King.

However, instead of lamenting or wavering in the face of opposition, the disciples drew closer to God with a deepening faith and a greater dependence. Their first response – not last resort – to persecution was to pray to God, anchoring upon His Word and trusting in His sovereignty, power and faithfulness to strengthen them (vv.24-28). Notice that they did not pray for immediate deliverance from trouble (vv.29-30)! Their faith in God far superseded their fear of man! God answered their prayers by filling them with His Spirit and giving them supernatural boldness to persevere in evangelism (v.31). What a mighty and faithful God!

As we enter Missions Week this Sunday, let us begin with humble hearts to pray and ask God to fill us with His Spirit. That God will look upon the adversaries, fears and pressures that we face in being Christ’s witnesses in our world today, and grant to us His servants what we need to continue to speak God’s Word with all boldness. And to accompany our Gospel proclamation with His miraculous works through the name of Jesus, that many more people will come to believe in Jesus and be saved!

—  
sunday  
**08**

# Sunday Journal

**S**CRPTURE

**O**BSERVATION

**A**PPPLICATION

**P**RAYER

# 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

## INTEGRITY:

Choosing to be truthful in whatever you say and do.

### Memory Verse

"Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but whoever takes crooked paths will be found out."

– Proverbs 10:9 (NIV)

### 1 Bottom Line

When you're not truthful, you lose trust.\*

### 2 Bible Story

2 Kings 5 – Naaman and Elisha's Servant

### 3 Activity

#### God Knows Everything!

Props: An assortment of 10 objects

Place the objects on the table. Give your family members 50 seconds to remember everything and then keep it away. Get everyone to look away, then remove one object from the items. Present the remaining items on the table again and have everyone guess which object is missing. Play a few rounds of this game.

Say, "Elisha's servant asked for money from Naaman without Elisha's knowledge. Elisha had clearly said he did not want anything in return after Naaman was cured. The servant lied and hid the money. Eventually, he faced serious consequences. Nothing can be hidden from God's eyes. God knows everything and we will have to face the consequences of being dishonest. When we lie to the people we care about, we lose their trust. It takes a long to gain it back."

### 4 Talk About It

- Even if you think no one is watching or will ever find out, why is it still important to be honest?
- If we don't get caught in a lie, it might feel like a victory. Why might not getting caught be worse than being found out?
- How can dishonesty affect a friendship?
- How does dishonesty affect our relationship with Jesus?

**Parents:** Talk about an incident in which you faced the consequences of being dishonest. What changes did you make to prevent it from happening again?

### 5 Prayer

Dear God, we know that Your path is the best. Guide us to make the wisest choices we can. We get off track sometimes and mess up. Help us to choose to be honest in everything we say and do.

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



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

monday

09

## An Unfinished Task

**SCRIPTURE** Revelation 7:9-10

### **O**BSERVATION

What is one significant observation about the “great multitude” that is standing before the throne and before the Lamb?

### **A**PPPLICATION

Ask God to place upon your heart a nation or a people group, and keep them in prayer throughout this week.

### **P**RAYER

God of all nations, salvation belongs to You! We are Your redeemed people! Please give us a passion to tell of Your salvation from day to day, and to declare Your glory among the nations, Your marvelous works among all the peoples!<sup>12</sup> We wait with eager anticipation for the day when we will worship before Your throne and before the Lamb with a great multitude of all ethnicities, crying out “Salvation belongs to our God”!



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

## deeper reflection

“**A** great multitude...from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages” (v.9) gives us a picture of what Swete calls a “polyglot cosmopolitan crowd”<sup>13</sup>. And that crowd “standing before the throne and before the Lamb” (v.9) “signifies their position of acceptance and honour as God’s true servants”<sup>14</sup>. This great multitude declaring “Salvation belongs to our God” (v.10) express their praise to God for His salvation in Christ. What a beautiful picture to behold – nations, tribes and people groups worshipping our God! Christ-followers today await that coming day when we will be part of that countless multitude of worshippers from all nations and generations.

That beautiful picture will certainly come to pass. But in the meantime, **we are still facing the unfinished missional task** of reaching all the nations, i.e. people groups, with the Gospel of salvation. Among the 17,445 people groups, 7,391 are unreached people groups.<sup>15</sup> Currently, Bible translation is happening in 2,846 languages in 157 countries and impacting 1.11 billion people, or about 15 percent of all language users.<sup>16</sup>

Missions is not yet over. “Missions exists because worship doesn’t.”<sup>17</sup> Let us **press on in proclaiming the Gospel in every nation**, so that all the elect will come before God’s throne to worship Him. Every generation of disciples must do their part in going and sending in missions. Let us place our faith in the Lord and put our hands to the plough – and work while it is still day! And “when this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more”<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Psalm 96:2b-3.

<sup>13</sup> *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Volume 13: Hebrews-Revelation, 666.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> An unreached or least-reached people is a people group among which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelise this people group without outside assistance.

(Source: Joshua Project, <https://joshuaproject.net/help/definitions>)

<sup>16</sup> 2022 Global Scripture Access, Wycliffe Global Alliance, <https://www.wycliffe.net/resources/statistics/>

<sup>17</sup> John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, 3rd Edition (IVP, 2010), 15.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

tuesday

10

## A Sense of Urgency

**SCRIPTURE** Romans 10:12-15; 1:16-17

### **O**BSERVATION

What is one significant observation you can make about the people referred to by the pronoun “they” (occurring five times) in verse 14?

### **A**PPPLICATION

Specifically, who are the “they” for whom God has placed a burden in my heart? How can I respond with a sense of urgency to tell them about the Lord Jesus Christ?

### **P**RAYER

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 a PDA<sup>19</sup> lifestyle whereby they are fervent to share Jesus with non-Christians
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**T**he Lord Jesus Christ is the one Saviour given to every member of the fallen human race: “... the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him” (v.12b). This “all-embracing blessing is salvation”<sup>20</sup> and the “door of salvation”<sup>21</sup> is open to anyone who “calls on the name of the Lord” (v.13), that is, puts their trust in Jesus Christ for their salvation from sin and death.<sup>22</sup>

In verses 14 and 15, the Apostle Paul used a series of logically connected questions to emphasise the point that unless the Gospel is being preached, there is no way for the Good News to reach all peoples of all ethnicities so that they can call on the name of the Lord and be saved. In verse 14, Paul used the pronoun “they” five times to refer to all those people who have yet to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ and believe in Him and call on Him.

Paul saw clearly and felt strongly the **urgency** for the Gospel to be spread beyond the Jews to the Gentiles, in other words, to the ends of the earth. He wrote in the first chapter of Romans: “...**the Gospel...is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes**, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ...as it is written, **‘The righteous shall live by faith.’**” (Rom 1:16-17). This explains Paul’s fervency to preach the Gospel everywhere to all who have not heard.<sup>23</sup> As Christian theologian Carl F.H. Henry once said, “The Gospel is only Good News if it gets there in time.”

<sup>19</sup> The acronym “PDA” refers to Personal revival, Divine appointments and Active obedience (per Reverend Edmund Chan).

<sup>20</sup> *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Volume 11: Romans-Galatians, Revised Edition, 163.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> See Romans 6.

<sup>23</sup> Paul did so with great purpose and passion even while he was under house arrest in Rome (Acts 28:30-31).

wednesday

11

## Those Who Bring Good News

**SCRIPTURE** Romans 10:12-15

### **O**BSERVATION

How is the pronoun “they” in verse 15 different from the “they” in verse 14?

### **A**PPPLICATION

How ready am I to be someone with “beautiful feet” (v.15) and who are the people whom God is leading me to share the Good News with during this season of my life?

### **P**RAYER

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: For open doors for God's sent ones to enter, so that nations will hear the Good News and believe and call on the name of the Lord and be saved
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

In verses 14 and 15, the Apostle Paul set out a compelling argument by asking four questions beginning with “How...?” and using the key words “call”, “believe”, “hear”, “preach” and “sent” to emphasise the critical importance of those who proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. Those five verbs depict “an account of God’s way of bringing ‘salvation’ to man... **calling** on the Lord depends on **believing**, believing depends on **hearing**, hearing depends on **proclaiming**, proclaiming depends on **being sent** (by God).”<sup>24</sup> When these verbs are put in reverse order, we see a logical progression of how a person can call on Jesus and be saved: “God sends heralds; heralds preach; people hear; hearers believe; believers call; and those who call are saved.”<sup>25</sup>

**“How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the Good News!”** (v.15b) was a statement that Paul quoted (and adapted) from Isaiah 52:7. This is instructive for us. “Paul sees Isaiah’s prophecy fulfilled in God’s sending forth of evangelists (like himself), who proclaim the ‘words of Christ’ that liberates captives from prison. ...God must send preachers so that people can call on the Lord.”<sup>26</sup>

Are cross-cultural, overseas missionaries the only heralds whom God sends into the world to bring the Good News to people who have yet to hear? Certainly not! As one commentator rightly pointed out, “Christians are saved to serve and a paramount element in that service is to bear witness to the power of Christ.”<sup>27</sup> **All of us who are God’s people are God’s sent ones; we are to preach the Good News to those people to whom God sends us.**<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Paul Barnett, *Romans: The Revelation of God’s Righteousness* (Christian Focus, 2003), 236.

<sup>25</sup> John Stott, *The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of Romans*, Revised Edition (IVP Academic, 2020).

<sup>26</sup> Paul Barnett, *Romans: The Revelation of God’s Righteousness* (Christian Focus, 2003), 237.

<sup>27</sup> *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Volume 11: Romans-Galatians, Revised Edition, 164.

<sup>28</sup> A helpful article on this topic can be found at <https://research.lifeway.com/2013/09/26/a-god-who-sends/>

thursday

12

## The Nations Next Door

**SCRIPTURE** Acts 1:1-8

### **O**BSERVATION

Where did Jesus command His disciples to go as His Spirit-empowered witnesses?

### **A**PPPLICATION

How willing am I to let God send me to where He wants me to be His witness? Take some time now to talk to God about any factor that keeps your heart from being fully willing.

### **P**RAYER

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 faithful witnesses for Jesus in their equivalents of “Jerusalem”, “all Judea and Samaria” and “to the end of the earth”
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**V**erse 8 “sets out clearly what the church is to be doing until Jesus returns.”<sup>29</sup> The disciples are to be empowered by the Holy Spirit and serve as witnesses for the Lord Jesus, beginning with “Jerusalem”<sup>30</sup>, then to “all Judea and Samaria”<sup>31</sup> and finally to “the end of the earth”. For Jesus’ followers, “the mission begins locally. It is to be launched in Jerusalem, where they are.”<sup>32</sup> So let us bear witness for Jesus in our “Jerusalem”, which can represent our homes, neighbourhoods, workplaces, schools and army camps.

The Lord has also called us to be His witnesses in “all Judea and Samaria” and to “the end of the earth”. We recognise that **God has brought into our country around one million people from other nations both near and far**, such as migrant construction workers, foreign domestic workers, foreign professionals and international students. **Let us share the Gospel with these sojourners whom God has called us to love and serve.**<sup>33</sup>

As one Christian missiologist observed: “Most of us can’t avoid the nations even where we presently live. God is moving people into our cities... God is moving people and groups into our cities and our neighbourhoods... The nations are waiting, sometimes next door.”<sup>34</sup> On weekends, the nations are waiting in our shopping malls and recreation parks. On workdays, in our offices, our HDB estates and the construction sites next to our blocks. Oftentimes, in our very own homes. **How will we be witnesses to them for Jesus, who has called us to tell them who He is and what He has done for them?**

<sup>29</sup> William J. Larkin Jr, *Acts: The IVP New Testament Commentary Series*, Vol.5 (IVP Academic, 2011), 41.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Acts 2:42-8:3.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Acts 8:4-12:25.

<sup>32</sup> Bruce Milne, *Acts: Witnesses to Him* (Christian Focus, 2010), 39.

<sup>33</sup> Leviticus 19:34.

<sup>34</sup> Ed Stetzer, “To Our Neighbours and the Nations” in *Finish the Mission: Bringing the Gospel to the Unreached and Unengaged*, Editors John Piper and David Mathis (Crossway, 2012), 84.

friday  
**13**

## Blessed to Be a Blessing

**SCRIPTURE** Genesis 12:1-3

### **O**BSERVATION

What is one word that is repeated in verses 1 to 3 and what do you think is the significance?

### **A**PPPLICATION

How can I be a channel of God's blessing to someone from another nation today?

### **P**RAYER

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 be a channel of God's blessing to foreign nationals in their spheres of influence
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**T**he divine call to Abram has a twofold command, represented by two imperatives – “Go from your country” (v.1) and “so that you will be a blessing” (v.2). Each imperative is followed by three promises from God: “I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great” (v.2); and “I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonours you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (v.3).

The idea of blessing is central to the promises God gave to Abram, with the key word “bless” occurring five times in verses 2 to 3. Abram will ultimately be the channel of God’s blessings to “all peoples on earth” (v.3b, NIV). “And it appears that at this point a more spiritual significance of ‘blessing’ is in mind.”<sup>35</sup> God promised Abram great personal blessings in order that he might ultimately be a blessing to all peoples / the families of the earth. And God’s promise that “in your offspring all the nations / families of the earth shall be blessed” was subsequently reaffirmed to Isaac and Jacob (Gen 22:18; 26:4; 28:14).

From the New Testament perspective, **God’s blessing comes through faith in Jesus Christ**, the offspring of Abraham: “And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the Gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘In you shall all the nations be blessed.’ So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.” (Gal 3:8-9) **To bless the nations, the Church must keep on preaching Christ!**

<sup>35</sup> Allen P. Ross, *Creation & Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Baker Academic, 1997), 263.

saturday

14

## God's Faithfulness and Our Obedience

**SCRIPTURE** Genesis 12:1-9

### **O**BSERVATION

What significant observations can you make from Abram's response to God's call?

### **A**PPPLICATION

What key lessons can I apply in my life as I reflect on Abram's journey of obeying God's call in his life?

### **P**RAYER

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 remain steadfast and faithful to God's calling for their lives
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**A**bram was a man who believed God at His Word and obeyed God to the best of his ability. This passage “provides a paradigm of the obedience of faith. It shows a faith that left everything and obeyed the Word of the Lord, but it also portrays a believer who proclaimed his faith”<sup>36</sup>. The verb “went” (v.4) corresponds with the verb “go” (v.1), which occurs twice more in the passage.<sup>37</sup> This repetition emphasises Abram’s obedience to God’s call. We know that Abram’s obedience brought great blessings to all the families of the earth through Jesus Christ. “...If he had not believed he would not have obeyed, and the promises of God would not have been fulfilled.”<sup>38</sup>

However, the journey was not all triumphant for Abram. For example, he almost led a “righteous Gentile”, Abimelech, into sin when he (Abram) lied about his relationship with Sarah (Gen 20:2-7). Yet, despite Abram’s shortcomings, God still used him to bless the nations. Abimelech’s acknowledgement that God was with Abram in all that he did (Gen 21:22), “proved that God’s determination to bless Abraham was being fulfilled in the presence of others”<sup>39</sup>.

**God will still use His people despite their weaknesses and failures.** God’s call for Abram was clearly missional in purpose. For “missionary” Abram, God fulfilled His promise to bless him so that in him all the families of the earth will be blessed (vv.2-3). Likewise for us, **when we answer and live out God’s call in our life, it involves both an act of our obedience and faith, and a demonstration of God’s grace and faithfulness to fulfil His promises to us.**

<sup>36</sup> Allen P. Ross, *Creation & Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Baker Academic, 1997), 262.

<sup>37</sup> “...**go** to the land of Canaan.” (v.5); “...still **going** toward the Negeb.” (v.9).

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 263.

<sup>39</sup> Allen P. Ross, *Creation & Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Baker Academic, 1997), 387.

—  
sunday

15

## Sunday Journal

**S**CRPTURE

**O**BSERVATION

**A**PPPLICATION

**P**RAYER

# 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

## INTEGRITY:

Choosing to be truthful in whatever you say and do.

### Memory Verse

"Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but whoever takes crooked paths will be found out."

– Proverbs 10:9 (NIV)

### 1 Bottom Line

Do what's right wherever you are.\*

### 2 Bible Story

Daniel 1 – Daniel's Integrity with Food

### 3 Activity

#### Dilemma

Props: Dilemma cards (see template on the right)

Ask your family members to pick a dilemma card. Discuss what Christians should do when faced with these dilemmas. Talk about the challenges of being a Christian and how we can overcome them.



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

A friend invites you to his house for dinner. The family has a routine of praying to their gods. They invite you to join them in this ritual.

**Dilemma:** I may seem rude if I reject them.

You visit a stationery shop with a group of friends. But they ask you to steal something. Otherwise, you will be called a "coward" and no longer belong to their group.

**Dilemma:** It is hard to get into this group. I will lose these friends if I do not do what they say:

Your favourite artiste is performing in town and you do not want to miss it. Your friends are going. But you know that a concert ticket is costly and you can't afford to spend that much.

**Dilemma:** I feel I may miss out on something big that everyone else is experiencing. You do not want to be seen as "un-glam" by your friends.

Say, "In Daniel 1, Daniel knew his identity as a Christian and he would not compromise in any situation. He had faith that God would guide and help in times like this. Daniel taught us the way to reject the things that are not of God. Daniel knew he might lose the friendship and favour from the king, but he continued to keep his eyes on God. As Christians, we must be prepared and ready to face opposition from others."

### 4 Talk About It

- What kept Daniel strong while facing temptations and opposition?
- Why is it important to be truthful despite the dilemmas we face?
- Name two things you need to remember when you're tempted to make an unwise choice.

**Parents:** Talk about a time when you were tempted to "follow" the crowd. What decision did you make? How did your decision affect you and others? What did you do to keep yourself away from temptations?

### 5 Prayer

Dear God, it's hard for us to go against the crowd. Give us the help we need to be strong in times when we're tempted to make a bad choice. Help us make a wise choice this week and do what is right in the things we say and do – wherever we are.

monday

16

## Written in the Book of Truth

**SCRIPTURE** Daniel 10:1, 21; 11:2

### **O**BSERVATION

What is the significance of “truth” being mentioned in relation to the Daniel 10 to 12 vision?

### **A**PPPLICATION

What does it mean for me to live by “what is written in the Book of Truth”?

### **P**RAYER

O Lord, heaven and earth will pass away, but Your Word remains forever; and the sum of Your Word is truth. Grant me to know and experience in my daily life the living and active Word of God as a lamp to my feet, and its power to reveal to me the thoughts and intentions of my heart, that I may walk rightly with You.<sup>40</sup>



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

## deeper reflection

**T**he Daniel 10 to 12 vision is “what is written in the Book of Truth” (v.21), “containing the course of history as shaped by God”<sup>41</sup> and “what will happen to your people [Israel] in the latter days” (Dan 10:14). Three interrelated key themes are found in “the Book of Truth”: sovereignty of God, history of the world and destiny of God’s people. These three themes are also found in the visions in Daniel 2, 7, 8, and 9:24-27, with different focuses and perspectives.

A key emphasis in the Daniel 10 to 12 vision is **truth**: “the word was **true**” (v.1), “the Book of **Truth**” (v.21) – “a trustworthy book”<sup>42</sup>, “I will tell you the **truth**” (Dan 11:2). The source of “truth” is none other than God Himself, and the truth is given in God’s spoken and written Word. The ultimate “Book of Truth” is the Scriptures. What is truly true is not false and never fails. “Truth” gives us certainty and confidence to live our lives. “Truth” means **what is going to happen** in world history and what **will happen** to God’s people. The destiny of God’s people is a two-sided destiny: tribulations and triumph. And because tribulations will happen according to “the truth”, we must expect tribulations. A difficult part in living by God’s truth is when God’s truth says is going to happen but it **has yet to happen**, or **does not appear to happen**. When tribulations get harder, the absence of God’s sovereignty and His promised deliverance is profoundly felt. Do we then still hang in there and cling to the “trustworthy book” given by the trustworthy God?

<sup>40</sup> Matthew 24:35; Psalm 119:105, 160; Hebrews 4:12

<sup>41</sup> Tremper Longman, *Daniel*, The NIV Application Commentary (Zondervan, 1999), 252

<sup>42</sup> Earnest C. Lucas, *Daniel*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary (Apollos, IVP, 2002), 278

tuesday

17

## A Tale of Two Great Empires

**SCRIPTURE** Daniel 11:2-4

### **O**BSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about the Persian Empire and the Greek Empire?

### **A**PPPLICATION

How do I live humbly under the sovereign hand of God?

### **P**RAYER

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 walk humbly with the sovereign God who does whatever He pleases
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

“**T**he truth” about the history of the world as shaped by God begins with a tale of two empires (vv.2-4) that the world considers as great. **But “the truth” is**, their greatness was empty and vain. True greatness is “great in the sight of the Lord” – like John the Baptist, who had nothing “great” externally (Lk 1:15).

The “three more kings...then a fourth” (v.2) is a poetic expression “to indicate a totality of examples” (like “for three transgressions...and for four” in Am 1-2), “summarising the nature of the Persian Empire as rulers who amass wealth, grow strong and provoke conflict with the Greeks”<sup>43</sup>. The literary communicates the theological. The “200 years of an empire [Persia] that ruled from the Aegean Sea to the borders of India” is quickly summarised and summarily dismissed by God in one single verse (v.2)!<sup>44</sup>

Alexander the Great took over the Persian Empire in 330 BC (vv.2-3). Before his death in 323 BC, he “ruled a realm from Macedonia to northern India, and from central Asia to Egypt”<sup>45</sup>. “But as soon as he has risen”, he died and “his kingdom” was “broken up” into four parts (v.4). Theologically, the **“as soon as”** was determined by God. “Mighty” Alexander was marked by **“do as he pleases”** (v.3). But when his empire was divided after his death, it was divided “not to his own descendants, nor according to his authority” (v.4) – that is, not “as he pleases”. What an irony! Behind this comic irony is God’s sovereignty. “Mighty” Alexander’s “do as he pleases” lasted only seven years.

<sup>43</sup> Earnest C. Lucas, 279

<sup>44</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *Hearing the Message of Daniel: Sustaining Faith in Today’s World* (Zondervan, 2017), 222

<sup>45</sup> Earnest C. Lucas, 279

wednesday

18

## A Tale of Power and Peace

**SCRIPTURE** Daniel 11:5-8

### **O**BSERVATION

What significant observations can you made about people in the narrative in verses 5 to 8?

### **A**PPPLICATION

How do I maintain peace in relationships with difficult people?

### **P**RAYER

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 the Gospel of peace in Jesus Christ will be expansively preached among the nations
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**D**aniel’s prophetic-theological vision in Daniel 11:2-45 gives a historical sketch of events during the reign of the superpowers Persia and Greece from 6<sup>th</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC<sup>46</sup>: The Persian Empire from 6<sup>th</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> century BC (Dan 11:2); the Greek Empire under Alexander the Great in 333-323 BC (Dan 11:3); the kingdoms of Greece after Alexander’s death from 4<sup>th</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC – with particular focus on the Ptolemies in Egypt – “the kings of the South”, and the Seleucids in Syria – “the kings of the North” (Dan 11:4-20); and the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC (Dan 11:21-45). What we need to take note here is not specific persons and events, but the **nature** and **characteristics** of persons and events as given in the text.

The post-Alexander story begins with the rise in power and fight for power in the South Kingdom (v.5). Then the South Kingdom formed a marriage alliance with the North Kingdom – presumably, to pursue a relationship of peace (v.6a). There was a breakdown in the alliance, and that displeased the South Kingdom, who then attacked the North Kingdom (vv.6b-7). It is hard for fallen human nature to keep peace, but easy to use power. Sadly, this is also true for redeemed people of God in the church and at home. The strength of power is seen externally, but the strength for peace is internal. To keep peace there must be self-control. Peace in relationship is made possible only “by the blood of Christ” (Eph 2:13-15), and by humility, gentleness and patience developed through the power of the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:2-3).

<sup>46</sup> Gordon Wong, *Faithful to the End: The Message of Daniel for Life in the Real World* (Genesis, 2006), 165

thursday

19

## The Two Contrasting Kingdom Mindsets

**SCRIPTURE** Daniel 11:5-13

### **O**BSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about the conflicts between the South Kingdom and the North Kingdom?

### **A**PPPLICATION

How do I respond in a relationship conflict?

### **P**RAYER

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 pursue the things that make peace with people
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**T**he narrative in verses 5 to 13 in Daniel’s prophetic-theological vision is literally power-packed. The kings of the Ptolemaic Kingdom and the Seleucid Kingdom are particularly described in terms of power – political and military power: “grow strong” (v.5), “display great strength” (v.7), “assemble a multitude of great forces” (vv.10, 11), “raise a greater army...with much equipment” (v.13). The breakdown in the marriage alliance between the South Kingdom and the North Kingdom has to do with the king of the South Kingdom “not remaining with his power” and his daughter “not retaining her position of power” (v.6). This breakdown sparked off the cycles of wars between the two kingdoms: The South Kingdom fought the North Kingdom (vv.7-8), the North fought the South (v.9), the South fought the North (vv.10-12) and the North fought the South (v.13). And these conflicts stopped only when the Romans came to power (cf. Dan 11:18, 30<sup>47</sup>).

In a war between two earthly kingdoms, one wins and the other loses. No kingdom wants to remain a loser if it has the power to fight back to win. This mindset lies behind the cycles of wars between the South Kingdom and the North Kingdom. But the kingdom of God is radically different. This kingdom wins by losing. This mindset is demonstrated by the crucified Christ. This mindset is “to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness” (1 Cor 1:23). But the cross is “the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:24). We are to know Christ, even Him crucified (1 Cor 2:2).

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<sup>47</sup> Earnest C. Lucas, 282, 286

friday  
20

## It Is Just Striving After Wind

**SCRIPTURE** Daniel 11:5-13

### **O**BSERVATION

What do the cycles of wars between the South Kingdom and the North Kingdom tell us about humanity?

### **A**PPPLICATION

How do I deal with conditions or situations in my life that seem to be going in endless cycles?

### **P**RAYER

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 their lives by living for Christ and dying for Christ
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**T**he elements that are highlighted in the cycles of conflicts between the two kingdoms “are a seemingly endless sequence of grand conflicts, wars and politics, which never come to a conclusion.

The balance of power ebbs back and forth between the two superpowers, but for all their best efforts and the vast expenditure of lives and wealth, neither one of these superpowers is able to conquer the other. Nor are they able to live in peace with one another: their best efforts to forge unity through politically motivated marriage unions and other strategies are equally unsuccessful”<sup>48</sup>. This story of “wars and rumours of wars” (Matt 24:6) continues into our 21<sup>st</sup> century, “as one ruler and empire after another seeks to gain power by cunning or force. Yet though the tide in the affairs of men comes in and goes out, in the end it accomplishes precisely nothing. The balance of power in earthly politics may shift but it never comes to a permanent rest”<sup>49</sup>.

The picture of power and politics in Daniel 11 points to a bigger picture: “The fallen world pursuing the wind and finding it elusive”<sup>50</sup> – as wise Qoheleth says, “All is futility!” (Ecc 1:2, 14). Even when we are not involved in power and politics, this can also be true of us in other arenas of life. Anything that we pursue in life can be striving after wind or not necessarily so. The determining factor is: Everything we do, we do **in the Lord**, so that we live and die **for the Lord**, and whether we live or die, we are **the Lord’s** (Rom 14:7-9).

<sup>48</sup> Iain M. Duguid, *Daniel*, Reformed Expository Commentary (P&R, 2008), 199-200

<sup>49</sup> Iain M. Duguid, 200

<sup>50</sup> Iain M. Duguid, 200

saturday

21

## Where Is God in This Mess?

**S**CRIPTURE Daniel 11:5-20

### **O**BSERVATION

What happened to God's people who were caught in the conflicts between the king of the North and the king of the South (vv.14-16)?

### **A**PPPLICATION

How do I respond to situations I am caught in that are beyond my control?

### **P**RAYER

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 God's sovereignty in situations that are beyond their control
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**T**he narrative of the cycles of conflicts between the two Greek kingdoms are filled with human decisions, actions and reactions (vv.5-20). What we see is a huge mess of chaotic people and events that are beyond human control. People in power are in charge, but ironically, not in control. Just look at Russia, Ukraine, America and NATO, who are stuck in the seemingly unending Ukraine War.

God is virtually absent and silent in the whole of Daniel 11. God is mentioned only twice, but not about Him in action (Dan 11:32, 36). Where is God in this huge mess? God is behind it, because the narrative of Daniel 11 is a prophetic-theological vision that comes from God Himself. An important feature in Daniel 11 is “the balance in tension between the sovereignty of God’s control of events and the freedom and responsibility that humans have for their own choices and actions”<sup>51</sup>.

In the cycles of conflicts, some of God’s people in Egypt, for religious reasons, sought “to take one side or another, but without success”<sup>52</sup> (v.14). These people tried to use the world’s power to do God’s work, seeking to establish God’s kingdom by political means.<sup>53</sup> Jesus said to Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world” (Jn 18:36). And God’s people in “the Beautiful Land”<sup>54</sup> faced “destruction” from the Seleucid king who was unstoppable in his conquest campaign (v.16). Our existence is affected by decisions and actions taken by higher authorities and powers – political, economic or social. In such challenging times, we need to see, trust, wait and rest in the sovereign God of Daniel 11.

<sup>51</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, 223

<sup>52</sup> Iain M. Duguid, 200

<sup>53</sup> Iain M. Duguid, 200-201

<sup>54</sup> Palestine

—  
sunday

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## Sunday Journal

**S**CRPTURE

**O**BSERVATION

**A**PPPLICATION

**P**RAYER

# 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

## INTEGRITY:

Choosing to be truthful in whatever you say and do.

### Memory Verse

"Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but whoever takes crooked paths will be found out."  
– Proverbs 10:9 (NIV)

### 1 Bottom Line

When you do what's right, others can see God.\*

### 2 Bible Story

Daniel 3 – Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego

### 3 Activity

#### Against All Odds

Props: Table tennis paddles and balls

Compete among your family members to see who can bounce a table tennis ball with a paddle the most times in one minute without dropping the ball.

Discuss after the activity:

- How did it feel to outdo one another?
- What motivated you to do better?
- How did you feel when you dropped the ball? Did it mean that you are less worthy?

Say, "A simple game like this reveals a lot about us. When we miss the ball, do we give up easily? Or do we go against the odds and try to do better? Others are watching our actions. We can bring glory to God's name through our good actions. Daniel and his friends said no to the king when they were asked to bow to other Gods. Their courage made others want to know more about their God. Do our actions make others want to know more about God?"

### 4 Talk About It

- Where do you think Daniel and his friends got the courage to say no to the king?
- What were some wise choices you made in the past week? How did it affect you and others?
- What will you do when you face a situation like Daniel and his friends?

**Parents:** Talk about an incident in which you went against all odds and made a wise decision. What happened? How did it affect you and others in a positive way?

### 5 Prayer

Dear God, thank you for the people in our lives who help us to see You. Help us to remember to ask You for help when we struggle with being honest.

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



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

monday

23

## Rise of Antiochus in Power

**S**CRIPTURE Daniel 11:21-27

### **O**BSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about the king of the North as described in the passage?

### **A**PPPLICATION

How do I look at the political situation through God's eyes?

### **P**RAYER

O Lord God Almighty, the Alpha and the Omega, who is and who was and who is come, the everlasting God, in Your hand are every king and kingdom – good ones and evil ones – in all of history. It is You alone who decides and determines their rise and their fall. In worship to You I rest confidently in Your supreme sovereignty of majesty, mystery and magnificence.



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

## deeper reflection

In Daniel 11, fifteen verses (vv.5-20) cover “the reigns of seven Seleucid kings [the kings of the North] over a period of around 150 years”<sup>55</sup>, after which the next fifteen verses (vv.21-35) focus on the reign of a single Seleucid king, Antiochus IV Epiphanes – “the climax of the story”<sup>56</sup> in Daniel 11.

Having seized the throne “by intrigue”, Antiochus “started with limited support but gradually grew in power, making strategic alliances”<sup>57</sup> through “deception” (vv.21, 23). He kept those who were loyal to him, but swept away whoever tried to resist him, including “a prince of the covenant” (v.22) – a Jewish high priest who “vainly attempted to resist the growing pressure from the Seleucid authorities towards the Hellenisation of their empire, which involved the adoption of Greek customs and practices that were antithetical to God’s laws”<sup>58</sup>. Historically, this “prince of the covenant” was Onias III, who was “deposed in 175 BC and assassinated as a result of intrigues [cf. v.21] against him in 171 BC”<sup>59</sup> and “replaced by a more compliant high priest”<sup>60</sup>. This event “marks the interference of the secular state in things spiritual. A precedent had been set which Roman emperors would not be slow to follow and which has become a commonplace in twentieth century politics”<sup>61</sup>. But Christians tend to naively presume that if the head of state is a Christian, it will be good for both nation and church. Just look at recent times, how a nation was unprecedentedly divided by a “supposedly” Christian head of state who was strongly supported by Christians, including renowned and powerful Christian leaders.

<sup>55</sup> Iain M. Duguid, 201

<sup>56</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, 223

<sup>57</sup> Iain M. Duguid, 202

<sup>58</sup> Iain M. Duguid, 202

<sup>59</sup> Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (IVP, 1978), 192

<sup>60</sup> Iain M. Duguid, 202

<sup>61</sup> Joyce G. Baldwin, 192

tuesday

24

## The Desecration of God's Temple

**S**CRIPTURE Daniel 11:21-31

### **O**BSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about Antiochus IV Epiphanes in verses 28 to 31?

### **A**PPPLICATION

How do I know when the worship of God is adulterated?

### **P**RAYER

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 God's people in unadulterated worship of God
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**D**uring Antiochus' reign, there were fresh outbreaks of wars with the South Kingdom (vv.24-27). During his campaign in Egypt in 168 BC, there was "an attempted uprising by the Jews", which made him so "enraged at the holy covenant" (v.30), that he "stormed Jerusalem and slaughtered many" on his return.<sup>62</sup>

Antiochus and his anti-God reign was featured in the previous prophetic-theological visions of Daniel<sup>63</sup>: "the fourth beast" that "will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One" (Dan 7:23-25); "a king will arise, insolent and skilled in intrigue" who "will destroy...the holy people" (Dan 8:23-25); "the prince who is to come" who "will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering" (Dan 9:26-27). Clearly, the anti-God theme is a prominent one in Daniel, especially in Daniel 7 to 12. The climax of this theme is Antiochus' reign (Dan 11:21-45). The prophetic narrative of Antiochus' reign carries two discipleship messages.

**Be prepared for strong opposition against God.** Blasphemous attacks on the worship of God will be a thing. Antiochus desecrated God's temple by offering pig's flesh<sup>64</sup> on its altar and dedicated the temple to the worship of Zeus (v.31).<sup>65</sup> Attack on the worship of God inevitably means attack on the worshippers of God. **Be prepared for the "silent inactivity" of God.** It will appear that God is nowhere to be found when His temple is so blasphemously desecrated. God is mentioned only twice – and passively – in Daniel 11 (vv.32, 36). It is difficult to believe in God in such times. But Scripture prepares us for this.

<sup>62</sup> Iain M. Duguid, 202

<sup>63</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, 223

<sup>64</sup> Pigs were considered as unclean animals (Lev 11:7-8).

<sup>65</sup> Iain M. Duguid, 202

wednesday

25

## The Defection of God's People

**S**CRIPTURE Daniel 11:28-32

### **O**BSERVATION

What is the significance of the term “covenant” occurring four times, thrice as “the holy covenant”, in the narrative of Antiochus’ religious rampage in verses 28 to 32?

### **A**PPPLICATION

How can I guard myself from being spiritually corrupted by the seductive flattery of the world?

### **P**RAYER

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 cause the nations to defect from their gods to Him the true God
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**T**he term “covenant” occurs four times in the prophetic narrative of Antiochus’ religious rampage (vv.28-32), with thrice as “the holy covenant” (vv.28, 30, 32). The “holy covenant” is a key object in the narrative here. It refers to the covenant that God had made with Israel, in which God was the initiator. In Daniel 11 where God is virtually absent, “the holy covenant” alludes to and represents the God of the covenant. Any action taken on “the holy covenant” is on God Himself.<sup>66</sup> There are two sets of negative actions toward “the holy covenant” from two groups of people.

Antiochus’ heart was “set against the holy covenant” (v.28) and he became “enraged at the holy covenant” (v.30). He “was set on emasculating the vitals of biblical faith and was determined to see every Jew apostatise. He stripped them of sacrament (the death penalty for circumcising male infants), sacrifice (unless they would offer pagan offerings to Zeus), Sabbath (observing it brought a death sentence) and Scripture (one’s life was forfeit if caught with a torah scroll)”<sup>67</sup>. So, God’s people were left with only one choice: Be a live pagan or a dead Israelite.<sup>68</sup> What will we do when we are put in a similar situation?

Among God’s people then were “those who forsake the holy covenant” (v.30) and “those who acted wickedly toward the covenant” (v.32). Antiochus showed favour to these (v.30), and corrupted them “by smooth words” – “seductive flattery and deception”<sup>69</sup> (v.32). Fear of suffering succumbs to the seduction to compromise, which leads to defection from the faithful covenant God.

<sup>66</sup> Joyce G. Baldwin, 193

<sup>67</sup> Dale Ralph Davis, *The Message of Daniel*, The Bible Speaks Today (IVP, 2013), 154

<sup>68</sup> Dale Ralph Davis, 154

<sup>69</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, 224

thursday

26

## People Who Know Their God (1)

**S**CRIPTURE Daniel 11:31-33

### **O**BSERVATION

What is the antithesis of “those who acted wickedly toward the covenant”?

### **A**PPPLICATION

What does it mean for me to be a person who knows my God?

### **P**RAYER

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 knowing God deeply
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**T**he emphasis of the repeated expression, “the holy covenant”, in Daniel 11:28-32 is purely on the opposition against and the defection from “the holy covenant” – even God Himself. But in the context, the expression bears a twofold positive connotation: the faithful God and His faithful people who are faithful to “the holy covenant”. The antithesis of “those who acted wickedly toward the covenant” are “the people who know their God” (v.32). “Their God” points to God’s covenant relationship with them. And “their God” is “the great and awesome God who **keeps His covenant** and steadfast love for those who love Him and keep His commandments” (Dan 9:4). This is the God whom they “know” that enables them to “display strength and take action” (v.32) – to “firmly resist him” (NIV) – in suffering Antiochus’ ferocious persecution.

“The people who know their God” are “those who still sought to express their commitment to the God of Israel by adherence to the teaching of the Torah”<sup>70</sup> – “the law of God” (Dan 6:5), and they are “those who are wise” (v.33, NIV). Their wisdom comes from knowing their God and living by the Word of God. Scripture teaches that “the Lord gives wisdom” through His Word: “from His mouth comes knowledge and understanding” (Prov 2:6). Armed with wisdom from God through knowing God and living by His Word, these people of God are not easily persuaded and deceived by the “smooth words” of Antiochus, but “firmly resist him” in their faith (v.32; cf. 1 Pet 5:8-9), even if it means to suffer painfully and die horribly.

<sup>70</sup> Earnest C. Lucas, 287

friday

27

## People Who Know Their God (2)

**SCRIPTURE** Daniel 11:31-35

### **O**BSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about “those who are wise”?

### **A**PPPLICATION

How do I know that I am growing as a wise disciple of Jesus?

### **P**RAYER

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 wise and discerning people
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**T**he “people who know their God” are “the wise” (vv.32-33), who were “well versed in the Jewish Scriptures and who, on this basis, have an ‘understanding’ of God’s ways in history and so of how to respond in the current situation of crisis”<sup>71</sup>. And in times of tribulations and trials, these people “**give understanding to many**” (v.33a), that they may know God and His ways. The “Word of Christ” ought to “**dwelling richly**” in each one of us, that we may be “teaching and admonishing **one another with wisdom**” (Col 3:16). This is an important mark of a maturing discipling fellowship.

“Those who are wise” in Daniel 1 to 6 are like Daniel, who successfully provided solutions in times of crisis (Dan 2, 4, 5). But the success of “the wise” in giving understanding to others in Daniel 11 is “at the price of suffering”<sup>72</sup>: “yet they will fall by sword and by flame, by captivity and by plunder” (v.33b). These wise people expect suffering for the Lord. And they “give understanding to many” not in words only, but by their lives as examples of discipleship suffering. They can “give understanding to many” because they know the divine purpose for their suffering, and align their lives to that purpose: “they will fall, **in order to** refine, purge and make them pure” (v.35). This divine purpose is the wisdom of the only wise God (Rom 16:25). It is wisdom because tribulation has no power to inflict real hurt to God’s people: it is instead the means by which God refines and purifies us toward Christlike character.

<sup>71</sup> Earnest C. Lucas, 287

<sup>72</sup> Joyce G. Baldwin, 196

saturday

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## The Theological Centre of Daniel 11

**SCRIPTURE** Daniel 11:21-35

### **O**BSERVATION

What is the significance of the thrice repeated “at the appointed time” in the narrative (vv.27, 29, 35)?

### **A**PPPLICATION

Where is the place of “at the appointed time” in my discipleship journey?

### **P**RAYER

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 discern God's appointed time in leading the church
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**D**aniel 11:2-35 is filled with human actions, decisions and reactions of superpowers as though history is directed by them. But Daniel 11 calls us to **look** at this anthropocentric picture of the world **theologically**. We must look with the theological centre of Daniel 11: God's sovereignty "**at the appointed time**" (vv.27, 29, 35).

The North and South superpowers had conference talks for peace – peace that can serve their self-interests. So, they “speak lies” to each other with “evil intent in their hearts” and they “will not succeed” (v.27a). The cause of the failure is not political, but theological: “for the end is still to come **at the appointed time**” (v.27b). In Antiochus’ war campaign, he would invade the South Kingdom again only “**at the appointed time**” (v.29) – not at Antiochus’ time. This theologically presupposes that every invasion happens “at the appointed time”. The suffering of God’s people for their purification and character development is “until the time of the end” “**at the appointed time**” (v.35).

Much of world history is what Jesus says: “In the world you” – faithful disciples – will “have tribulation” (Jn 16:33). Hence, looking at world history theologically is a critical necessity in biblical discipleship. “Our view of history is foundational to the way we live. If history is an assortment of random circumstances, coming from nowhere and going nowhere, then faithful suffering has no possible meaning. It is a wasted life that could have been better spent on pursuing pleasure instead. But if history is actually following God’s predetermined course to a final end, then our actions are filled with meaning.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, 206

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sunday

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## Sunday Journal

**S**CRPTURE

**O**BSERVATION

**A**PPPLICATION

**P**RAYER

# the past week



## **review**

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

What gave me life and what drained me?

How was the Spirit of God at work?

# the past week



## **reflect**

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



## **respond**

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



## Week 5

# FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

## INTEGRITY:

Choosing to be truthful in whatever you say and do.

### Memory Verse

"Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but whoever takes crooked paths will be found out."

– Proverbs 10:9 (NIV)

### 1 Bottom Line

Focus on what's true.\*

### 2 Bible Story

Philippians 4:8 – Think About These Things



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

### 3 Activity

#### Fake News

Props: Sentence cards (see template on the right)

Ask your family members to each pick a sentence card. Discuss what is true and false about the statement on it. For example, if the card states that "God does not care about you because you didn't do well in your exams", then the truth is "God cares." God loves everyone regardless of their status and grades. What He cares about is our heart and relationship with Him.

God cares for people who are wealthy and beautiful.	There is no hope.	God does not see the challenges and pain I am going through.
I am useless.	Everyone does not like me.	I can only do this much. I have no resources and abilities to do more.
I obey God's commands but why does God not give me what I want?	I will never be as good as _____	I don't deserve to be loved.

Invite everyone to share their thoughts after the activity.

Say, "Satan will often instill lies into our heads. He will tell us that we are not good enough or God does not love us. But these are not true! When we face temptations and opposition, we should ask God to clear our minds and focus on what is true. The truth is in God and His Word."

### 4 Talk About It

- Why do you think it's easier to focus on the negative instead of the positive?
- How can we train ourselves to focus on what is true?
- How does it help you to remember that God knows your thoughts?
- What is one thought you've been struggling with that you'd like to get rid of this week?

**Parents:** Talk about a time when you had doubts about yourself or God. What did you do to focus on the truth?

### 5 Prayer

Dear God, help our minds to focus on what is true. Help us remember that the choices we make matter – even the things we choose to think about.

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

monday

30

## Obscurities and Ambiguities in Scripture

**S**CRPTURE Daniel 11:36-45

### **O**BSERVATION

What is your understanding of this passage?

### **A**PPPLICATION

How do I approach understanding difficult texts in the Bible?

### **P**RAYER

God, I thank You for the precious gifts of the Scriptures, in which You have revealed Yourself and Your mind, and teachers to help us through the Holy Spirit to understand Your Word. I know that I have to do my part to diligently seek to understand Your Word correctly with these gracious provisions of Yours. Grant me the hunger to know You through Your Word.



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

## deeper reflection

Verses 36 to 45 is a difficult text to interpret. “The difficulty is that there is no clear transitional statement between verses 35 and 36 or later between verses 39 and 40.”<sup>74</sup> Clearly, Daniel 11:21-35 is about Antiochus, but the description of “the king” (v.36) in verses 36 to 45 does not fit Antiochus historically. The issue is, who is this “king”?<sup>75</sup> It is wise to heed this helpful word of caution: “Anyone who does not acknowledge a difficulty here is a polemicist in the worst possible sense. That is, he or she knows better that this is a difficult passage one way or the other, and to not acknowledge the difficulty and not to allow for tolerance for the other view is simply bad faith.”<sup>76</sup> We should not be too dogmatic in our interpretation of difficult biblical texts.

Obscurities and ambiguities exist in Scripture. They are meant to keep us humble in our interpretation of the Bible, as Saint Augustine of Hippo puts it: “But hasty and careless readers are led astray by many and manifold obscurities and ambiguities, substituting one meaning for another; and in some places they cannot hit upon even a fair interpretation. Some of the expressions are so obscure as to shroud the meaning in the thickest darkness. And I do not doubt that **all this was divinely arranged for the purpose of subduing pride**<sup>77</sup> by toil, and of preventing a feeling of satiety in the intellect, which generally holds in small esteem what is discovered without difficulty.” It is necessary to hold a theological position for clarity, but with the theological posture of humility.

<sup>74</sup> Tremper Longman III, 281

<sup>75</sup> Tremper Longman III, 280

<sup>76</sup> Tremper Longman III, 280

<sup>77</sup> Emphasis mine

tuesday

31

## Authorial Intentions in God-Breathed Scripture

**S**CRPTURE 1 Peter 1:10-12

### **O**BSERVATION

What can you learn about the Old Testament prophets and their prophecies of Christ?

### **A**PPPLICATION

How do I approach understanding the Old Testament prophets?

### **P**RAYER

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 handle the Word of truth accurately
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**D**ifficulty in interpreting Scripture existed in New Testament times. Peter found “some things” in Paul’s letters – which were considered as part of “the Scriptures” written “according to the wisdom given to him” by God – **“hard to understand”** (2 Pet 3:15-16). In view of understanding a difficult passage like Daniel 11:36-45, we will consider some matters for Bible interpretation.

“The Bible is the Word of God given in the words of man in history.”<sup>78</sup> This definition of the Bible shows the dual nature and dual authorship of Scripture: **divine** – “the Word of God” and **human** – “the words of man”. The “prophecy of Scripture” was not “made by an act of human will” (2 Pet 1:21a). Production of Scripture was an act of divine will. God was the source and initiator. But God used humans as instruments in this divine revelation. Humans wrote Scripture with “words of man” as “men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (2 Pet 1:21b).

The nature of Scripture is such that the human author did not understand certain implications of what he was writing about – implications made by the divine author. Old Testament prophets prophesied about Christ in what they wrote, but they did not understand the prophecies (vv.10-12), which only become clear when God “in these last days has spoken to us in His Son” (Heb 1:1-2). So then, “it is conceivable that Daniel thought he was still describing the climactic king of the north [Antiochus], whom he has been speaking about in verse 21” in Daniel 11:36-45, “but the divine intention may have been much broader”<sup>79</sup>.

<sup>78</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *The New Testament and Criticism* (Eerdmans, 1967), 12

<sup>79</sup> Tremper Longman, 281

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# NOTES

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