
2023
devotional journal

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)



November

2023
devotional journal

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)

2023

memory verses

JANUARY

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

Daniel 1:8 (ESV)

FEBRUARY

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

Daniel 1:17 (ESV)

MARCH

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

Daniel 2:21 (ESV)

APRIL

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

Daniel 3:17-18 (ESV)

MAY

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

Daniel 4:3 (ESV)

JUNE

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

Daniel 6:27 (ESV)

JULY

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

Daniel 7:14 (ESV)

AUGUST

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

Daniel 7:27 (ESV)

SEPTEMBER

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

Daniel 9:19 (ESV)

OCTOBER

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

Daniel 10:12 (ESV)

NOVEMBER

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

Daniel 12:2 (ESV)

DECEMBER

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

Daniel 12:3 (ESV)

from daniel

preparing to meet king jesus: into your hands

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

Preparing to Meet King Jesus: Into Your Hands.

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

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

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

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

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

May you entrust yourself into His sovereign hand daily as you prepare to meet King Jesus!

Into His Hands: We Pray and Obey

As disciples of Christ, how do we submit our lives, our families and our mission into the sovereign hand of God? We follow His leading, as we simply pray and obey. Whatever circumstance we are going through – in our family or work – let's pray and obey the Lord's leading. Whatever sphere of influence that we can be salt and light, let's pray and obey the Lord's leading. Whoever God brings across our path to share the Gospel, let's pray and obey the Lord's leading.

Based upon our core values, may we fulfil our mission through the 3 Faith Exploits anchored on Jesus' Great Commandment (Matt 22:36-40) and Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20)!

Our Core Values:

- Truth centred upon the Word of God
- Community centred upon the worship of God
- Stewardship centred upon the will of God

- Balance centred upon the wisdom of God
- Brokenness centred upon the way of God

Our Mission:

Returning the Church to its 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

senior pastors,

foreword

guide to using this devotional journal

PREPARE YOUR HEART IN GOD'S PRESENCE

- Select a fixed time (preferably in the morning before you begin your day) and a quiet place where you can be alone and undisturbed.
- Observe a moment of silence as you acknowledge God's presence. Centre down.
- Begin with a song of worship. Meditate on the lyrics even if you are unfamiliar with the tune.
- Ask God to open your heart to hear Him.

SOMETHING TO PONDER

Examining your life is essential in your faith journey. Your redeemed life as a disciple of Christ deserves careful examining. May you take root and bear fruit in Him!



You can continue to type in the PDF copy of the Devotional Journal using your digital device as we have allotted fillable boxes for you to journal your thoughts and prayers without space constraints.

ALLOW GOD TO S.O.A.P. YOU WITH HIS WORD AND SPIRIT

- **Scripture** - Take your time to meditate on the Scripture passage for the day. Pause and mull over words and phrases that stand out to you.
- **Observation** - Jot down significant insights and reflections from the passage you have read. You may use the guiding questions provided. The "Deeper Reflection" section is to aid your contemplation of the Scripture. It is not to replace your own observation, for the Holy Spirit illuminates the Scripture to you as you seek Him earnestly.
- **Application** - Note down a specific and practical commitment to God's Word for you. Is there a command to obey, a sin to avoid, an example to follow, or a principle to live out? Where appropriate, share your devotional entry with someone.
- **Prayer** - Bring your heartfelt response to God in prayer.

✦ PRAYER POINTERS FOR 2023

We have provided prayer pointers for Pastors and Staff every Tuesday and for one of the 3 Faith Exploits (Disciple the Generations, Singapore and the Nations) every Wednesday. Every Thursday, a prayer pointer is included for Outreach/Missions/New Life Leaders. On each Friday, there is a prayer pointer for SGI Leaders (e.g. Zone Mentors, CG Leaders and Assistant CG Leaders). A prayer pointer for Church Board Members is included every Saturday. Please pray for each group as well as any specific individuals whom God may bring to your mind.

step one

step two

pray for indochina

“It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.”

ISAIAH 49:6 (NIV)

“Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you.”

JOSHUA 3:5 (NIV)

Our mission is to multiply Disciplemaking Church Plants (DCPs) in Indochina through partnership with national churches and missions organisations.

God’s heart is for the nations. As such, it is indeed “too small a thing” for us to become entangled with worldly affairs or to focus only on reaching the people of our own country.

Regardless of the trials and tribulations, God is on the move and has appointed us as His Ambassadors, ministers of reconciliation, so that His salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.

Ready yourself therefore for the amazing things He will do in and through you!

Pray for:

1. Our Missionaries
 - a. The Westwoods
 - Trust and unity in their relationships with national partners throughout the region.
 - Divine appointments for potential partnerships in Indochina.
 - Strong physical health and emotional well-being.
 - For a church community where their sons, Philip and Matthew, can grow and serve.
 - b. The S Family

The S family have been in Nepal for almost six years with a heart for discipling, mentoring and training church leaders among the Nepali and Himalayan people.

 - Their new business platform to flourish and to be used for God’s Kingdom to meet the physical and spiritual needs in the community.
 - Good health and protection against environmental issues.
 - Hearts to be won, lives transformed and worship established throughout the Himalayan region.
 - Protection, especially in their travels for ministry.
 - Closeness and obedience in their walk with God.
2. Our Missions Partners in Indochina

For security purposes, the names of partners and cities will not be disclosed, except for Thailand.

 - Healthy relationships with existing partners – 21 partners across 4 countries.
 - Physical, spiritual and emotional protection. Most of our partners serve in politically and spiritually diverse contexts where it is illegal to proselytise.
 - Open hearts to the Gospel. Many remain opposed, especially in rural areas.
 - Protection and favour in the community of the new church-plant in the far north of Vietnam.

pray for indochina (cont'd)

- Favour from the authorities to hold a combined church rally in Vietnam on 2 December targeting 10,000 believers, and for many receptive hearts. For unity amongst the various churches and denominations planning for this.
- Suitable facilities for ministry and the permission to use them for worship in Vietnam and Nepal, among others.
- The Lord's divine intervention, and permission to use a recently completed building for ministry be granted. Permission to use has been withheld.
- A growing movement and ownership of the Intentional Disciplemaking Church (IDMC) mandate and mission throughout Indochina.
- Various training and equipping scheduled for 2024 to bring about greater ownership and resonance for the emerging IDMC movement.
- For two short-term missions (STMs) trips headed to north Vietnam in November and December, and one STM in mid-December in Ayutthaya, Thailand – open doors and hearts for the Gospel, safety and protection upon each team member.
- Thailand's 1-1-1 National Plan's vision – 1 million believers, 10,000 churches and 10,000 pastors by 2028 (200th year of Protestantism in Thailand). Currently only 0.8% of the country's population are Christians – 540,000 believers, 6,000 churches and 6,000 pastors. For unity and collaboration across the country, especially for leaders, believers and churches of *A Certain Kind*.

NOTES

wednesday

01

Fulfilment Pattern of Biblical Prophecy

SCRIPTURE Luke 4:16-21; Isaiah 61:1-2

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about Jesus' reading of Isaiah 61:1-2 at the synagogue?

APPLICATION

How do I approach understanding of fulfilment of biblical prophecy?

PRAYER

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

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for leaders
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for the Generations: To receive the Spirit's enlightenment in reading the Scriptures
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Before we explore in understanding the difficult text of Daniel 11:36-45, it will be helpful for us to look at the fulfilment pattern of biblical prophecy. Biblical prophecy was often presented as one event, but its fulfilment can be more complex than that. We observe this within the Scriptures itself. God revealed Himself in biblical history progressively. God's revelation in the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation was given progressively over a period of 1,600 years. Then correspondingly, biblical prophecy is fulfilled progressively as initial fulfilment, or partial fulfilment and toward the full and final fulfilment. We can observe this fulfilment pattern of biblical prophecy only in the light of the full revelation of God in Scripture.

At the inauguration of His ministry, Jesus read Isaiah 61:1-2 in the synagogue, after which He declared, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (v.21). Jesus ended His reading of the Isaiah text at "to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord" (v.19), but he left out "... the day of vengeance of our God" (Isa 61:2). Jesus was deliberate in doing this. Isaiah prophesied the coming of the Messiah as one event, but Jesus fulfils the prophecy as two events. At His first coming, Jesus proclaimed redemptively "the favorable year of the Lord" through the cross, but at His second coming, He will judge the world in "the day of vengeance of our God". We see "references to Antiochus Epiphanes taking on larger than life characteristics" in Daniel 11:36-45, which is anticipatory of the New Testament figure called "the antichrist" who "is coming" (1 Jn 2:18).¹

¹ Tremper Longman III, *Daniel*, The NIV Application Commentary (Zondervan, 1999), 282

thursday

02

The Human Self-Magnification and Self-Deification

SCRIPTURE Daniel 11:36-39

OBSERVATION

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

APPLICATION

How can I prepare myself to live under a ruler who claims to be greater than God?

PRAYER

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

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for Outreach/Missions/New Life leaders: To know and live in God's unsearchable greatness
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Daniel's prophetic-theological vision in Daniel 8 received in "the third year" of Belshazzar's reign in 551 BC (Dan 8:1) contains parallel ideas in his vision in Daniel 11 received in "the third year of Cyrus [536 BC]" (Dan 10:1). The ram (Persia) "**did as he pleased**" (Dan 8:4, 20). In Daniel 11, we see Alexander the Great (the male goat in Dan 8:8, 21) being described as "do as he pleases" (Dan 11:3), as well as one particular Seleucid king (Dan 11:16). And the climactic Antiochus-like anti-God king will likewise "do as he pleases" (v.36). Recognise that this is at the core of fallen humans with great power. And along with this is "**he magnified himself**" (Dan 8:4). Are these two attributes present in your heart?

The male goat that overpowered the ram "magnified himself exceedingly" (Dan 8:8). Out of the four post-Alexander kingdoms rose a "small horn" (Antiochus) that "will magnify himself in his heart" and "magnified itself to be equal with the Commander of the host", who is God Himself, "Yahweh of hosts"² (Dan 8:8-9, 11, 25). But the climactic Antiochus-like anti-God king in verses 36 to 45 will "magnify himself above" – not "equal with" – "every god and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods" (v.36). Paul saw this to be fulfilled in the end-time "son of lawlessness" (2 Thess 2:3-4).

It is terrifying enough to live under an evil king like Antiochus (Dan 11:29-35), but how much more under the dictatorship of one who claims to be and acts as greater than God! God's faithful people must be ready for this.

² Earnest C. Lucas, *Daniel*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary (Apollos, IVP, 2002), 216

friday
03

Human Beings Becoming Like God

SCRIPTURE Daniel 11:36-39

OBSERVATION

What is the significance of the word “god” being repeated eight times in verses 36 to 39?

APPLICATION

How do I know when I attempt to be like God?

PRAYER

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

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for SGI leaders: To be kept from idolatry of the self
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

The word “god” is repeated eight times in verses 36 to 39, of which only once it refers to the true God – “the God of gods” (v.36).

In the context, this repetition points to a theological reality: God is in human existence such that how humans conduct themselves, positively or negatively, inevitably reflect their attitudes toward God. These verses “summarise and evaluate Antiochus’ character” and “religious attitudes and policies”, with verse 36 as a “general statement” “filled out in verses 37 to 39.”³ But in these verses, Antiochus takes on “larger than life characteristics”, which anticipates the New Testament climactic antichrist (2 Thess 2:3-4; 1 Jn 2:18).⁴

While the climactic antichrist takes on “larger than life characteristics”, he is just a human being like all of us. We too have the same fallen human nature like his that makes him to be against God and above God (v.36). **The root of all human sin is “be like God”** (Gen 3:5). This “be like God” spirit is found not only in certain powerful rulers of this world, but in all human beings in various forms and degrees. To be like God is to be independent of God. It means I do not need God and God has no say in my life. And this effectively means “I am God”. This is idolatry at its highest. But Jesus points us to a theological irony. Human beings will always serve a master, no matter how we want to be like God: God or wealth (Matt 6:24). Wealth becomes a god when it is undergirded by greed, for “greed is idolatry” (Col 3:5).

³ Earnest C. Lucas, 289

⁴ Tremper Longman, 282

saturday

04

The End of Things in Life

SCRIPTURE Daniel 11:36-45

OBSERVATION

What is the significance of the conclusion (v.45) of the narrative in verses 36 to 45?

APPLICATION

How do I relate to the end of things in life?

PRAYER

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

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for Church Board: To rest in God who is the beginning and the end
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

The last six verses of Daniel 11 “have been a source of perplexity to commentators down the centuries”⁵. However, what is clear is, it is a picture of wars. The “king of the South” will provoke the “king of the North” to attack the Antiochus-like king (v.40). But he will become all victorious: “many will fall” before him (v.41), he will “stretch out his hand against other countries” (v.42), “gain control” (v.43) and “go forth with great wrath to destroy and annihilate many” (v.44). These wars happen “at the end time” (v.40). Verses 40 to 45 “look forward to a violent end to history”⁶. But Daniel 11 repeatedly shows the subtle subversiveness of the sovereign God who holds the end of things.

The empire of Alexander the Great was “broken up and parceled out” “as soon as he has arisen” (Dan 11:3-4). For the two Seleucid kings before Antiochus, one “will stumble and fall and be found no more”, and the other, “yet within a few days he will be shattered” (Dan 11:19, 20). The Antiochus-like anti-God king “will prosper” – but within a limited time period: “until the indignation is finished” (v.36). This king marks the epitome of man’s blasphemy against God (v.36). But mark how the prophetic narrative of this arrogant king concludes: “yet he will come his end” and “no one will help him” – how miserable! (v.45). Everything in Daniel 11 is “that which is **decreed**” by God, and they all “will be **done**” by God (v.36). This gives us security and confidence, come what may.

⁵ Earnest C. Lucas, 290

⁶ Tremper Longman, 282

sunday

05

Sunday Journal

SCRIPTURE

OBSERVATION

APPLICATION

PRAYER

the past week

review

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

What gave me life and what drained me?

How was the Spirit of God at work?

the past week

reflect

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

respond

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



Week 1 FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

GRATITUDE:

Letting others know how they have helped you.

Memory Verse

"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.
His love endures forever."
– Psalm 136:1 (NIV)

1 Bottom Line

You always have something to be grateful for.*

2 Bible Story

1 Thessalonians 5:18 – Give Thanks Every Time

3 Activity

Count Your Blessings

Props: Origami paper and a transparent jar

Get your family members to cut the paper into strips. Ask everyone to write what they are grateful for on it. Fold the paper strips into a star (see Internet videos on folding "origami lucky stars"). Fill the jar with the paper stars as a remembrance of what God had done or given to every family member. Count the number of stars (blessings) in the jar. After the activity, invite everyone to share what they are grateful for and say a thanksgiving prayer.

Say, "In 1 Thessalonians 5:18, God asks us to give thanks for everything we receive. This means giving thanks in good and bad times. It is hard to give thanks in times of trouble, but God assures us that He will be there for us. Challenging experiences bring us closer to Jesus and make us better Christians. There is something to be thankful for all the time."

4 Talk About It

- How would you describe a grateful or ungrateful person?
- How does being grateful help us?
- How can you remember to be grateful every day?
- What are you grateful for? Are you grateful for the good things only?

Parents: Talk about an incident in which you were the most grateful to God. What happened? How did being grateful help you to overcome life challenges?

5 Prayer

Dear God, we are so thankful to You! You are the source of all good things in our lives. Help us to develop a grateful heart.

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Adapted by JoshuaWong/CEFC/November2023



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

monday

06

Joyful Service

SCRIPTURE Psalm 100:1-5

OBSERVATION

Why should we serve the Lord with joy and gladness?

APPLICATION

With what attitudes of heart have I served God this year and what changes do I need to make?

PRAYER

O Lord, please forgive me for the times this year when I grumbled and complained in serving You, and did not serve with joy in my heart. In carrying out tasks and activities, I lost sight of You and focused on what they cost me. Heal my heart and restore joy and gladness, even amid challenging circumstances. I praise You because You are good and faithful to me. Serving You is a great privilege! Amen.

prayer pointers

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

deeper reflection

As we serve God and the people He entrusts to us, we often face many challenges along the way. Hectic schedules, physical and emotional exhaustion, difficult and unappreciative beneficiaries, unfair criticism and treatment, inadequate support, etc. These can cause us much weariness and great discouragement, and rob us of joy in serving God. We may not see changes in the situation as we persevere in serving God. But we can and must regain our joy in serving the Lord. How? Redirect the focus of our eyes from the darkness of our situation to the brightness of God's beauty. He is our good and faithful God who is worthy of all our worship! The Psalmist finds many reasons to give thanks and praise to God. He is our creator, life-giver and shepherd (v.3)! "The LORD is good; His steadfast love endures forever, and His faithfulness to all generations" (v.5)!

"Serve the LORD with gladness!" (v.2) – the verb here is a command and not a suggestion. God doesn't delight in our murmuring or grumbling, because our service is our offering of worship to Him. Our motivation to serve God joyfully is our gratitude for His goodness, love and grace toward us. Doing our duty without love is a drudgery, but doing our duty with love for God is a delight. May we remain in close fellowship with Him and grow in our knowledge and experience of Him through our service. Our joy must not be determined by our circumstances, but instead be based on the goodness, power and purposes of God. Let us serve the Lord with joy and gladness!

tuesday

07

Compassionate Service

SCRIPTURE Mark 6:30-46**OBSERVATION**

What strikes you about the way Jesus responded to the people?

APPLICATION

Think about someone whom you know is currently in need of encouragement or help, and take a specific step towards meeting that need, even if it means going out of your way.

PRAYER

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

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for pastors and staff: That God will fill their hearts with compassion for people and enable them to serve others selflessly
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

When the disciples returned from a period of busy, intensive and emotionally draining ministry, Jesus wisely advised them to retreat to somewhere quiet so that they can rest for a while (v.31). But the multitudes of people in need were waiting for them even before they could alight from their boat (vv.33-34)! Ministry needs are never-ending. Even when we are tired and fatigued, there can be many people needing our attention, assistance and ministry. Sometimes we really wish that they would disappear for a while!

However, there is one thing that can push us into continued action and to pay attention to others' needs despite our own. **Compassion.** Compassion moves us to dig deep into our reserves of energy and resources. Compassion drives us to serve beyond our call of duty. When Jesus saw the crowd and their need for direction, protection and provision, He was filled with deep compassion within Him (v.34). Moved with compassion, Jesus met their needs.

Likewise, when we allow compassion to take hold of us, we will be able to focus on others rather than on ourselves. We will have the energy to go that extra mile for a friend in need, the time to pray with a colleague who is going through a rough patch, the joy and strength to nurture a young believer in her spiritual journey, or the perseverance to follow through a volunteer programme that will make a big difference to a young life. May the Lord give us greater compassion for the people around us, so that we can serve them selflessly and show them Jesus.

wednesday

08

Humble Service

SCRIPTURE Psalm 131:1-3

OBSERVATION

For the Psalmist, king David, what transformation has taken place and where?

APPLICATION

In what areas of my life do I need to learn humility and trust in order to grow as a humble servant of the Lord?

PRAYER

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

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for leaders
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for for the Generations: To serve one another across generations with a humble heart
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

David's words of humility and trust (v.1) speak directly to our pride and desire to control others and get things from them. As Charles Spurgeon wisely commented, "It is one of the shortest Psalms to read, but one of the longest to learn."⁷ David was not boasting before the Lord. Rather, it was an honest declaration of a totally humbled man. If anyone in Israel had reasons to be proud, it was David. Although he began as a humble shepherd, he later became Israel's great king. However, David learnt not to place his trust in his own achievements, but rather to put total reliance on God (vv.1b-2a).

Consider how you are serving our Lord today. Examine the condition of your own heart when you serve. Scripture reminds us to, above all else, guard our heart, for everything we do flows from it (Prov 4:23). Perhaps we are serving with strife or discontentment in our heart. Let us ask God to tutor our soul, so that we can be **like a weaned child, fully contented** in God's loving embrace. Contented with our assigned portion in life: "the boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance." (Psa 16:5-6 NIV). Not that we do not desire growth, but we learn to place our hopes and dreams fully in the Lord who makes our cup overflow with His blessings. As we cultivate a servant heart, we will find ourselves better able to serve people selflessly with a humility that pleases, reflects and glorifies the Lord.

⁷ Charles Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, Psalm 131.

thursday

09

Incandescent Service

SCRPTURE Matthew 5:14-16**O**BSERVATION

What is the relationship between being the light of the world and doing good works?

APPPLICATION

In seeking to shine your light before the people in our community, consider whether God is leading you to serve Him by volunteering in New Life's Steady Readers Programme.

PRAYER

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

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for Outreach/Missions/New Life leaders: To shine the light of Christ wherever God has placed them, so that many people will be drawn to the Lord
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

By God's calling and empowering, God's people are the light of the world. As God's light, we are to shine for all to see. There are two expressions of being this light. One is **who we are**. This is our identity and inner character that reflect who our Master is. The other is **what we do**. This is the practical outworking of our faith through the good works we do in obedience to our Master.

Our light is lit or switched on the moment we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour. A light source benefits others by showing the way in a dark environment, and by providing warmth and comfort. Just as the shining of light requires energy, doing good works involves the giving of oneself to bless others. We will need God's enabling and empowering. The purpose of this light is to bear witness to God's transforming power working in and through us. The intensity of our light is determined by both the careful cultivation of Christ-likeness in our character and the consistent practice of good works in our daily lives. Incandescent service is service that is extremely bright and good.

The result is that when others see our light, they would say to themselves or one another, "He really stands out in a positive way" or "There is something distinctive and attractive about her life". They will wonder what motivates us. Of course, when they talk to us, they will soon find out that we are motivated by a love for God and a desire for people to give glory to our heavenly Father.

friday
10

Faithful Service

SCRIPTURE Matthew 25:14-30

OBSERVATION

What does the master expect of his servants?

APPLICATION

In what areas of my life do I need to grow in faithful stewardship in order to serve God better?

PRAYER

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

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for SGI leaders: To be faithful stewards of their God-given resources and receive their Master's commendation
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Here, “talent” does not mean some skill or ability. It is a large monetary unit worth about twenty years’ wages for a common labourer. The master did not instruct his three servants regarding what to do with the given talents nor did he tell them how long he would be away. He simply entrusted his property to them. Two of the servants invested the money and doubled the amount entrusted to them. When the master returned, he responded to each of the two faithful servants with identical words: “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.” (vv.21, 23)

The third servant buried the money and did nothing with it. The master called him a “wicked and slothful servant” and took away the one talent and gave it to the servant with the ten talents. The master’s reward for good and faithful stewardship is more responsibility! This does not mean that the master rewards faithfulness with increased hardship (more work!); rather, the master rewards faithfulness with **an increased capacity to do the master’s will and please Him**. A good and faithful Christian’s desire in life is to please and glorify God his Master. As we serve God with faithful stewardship of the resources (time, people, wealth and abilities) He has entrusted to us, we can be sure that our lives will please and glorify God in increasing measure as He Himself enables and empowers us. At the end of all our achievements, may we say sincerely with heartfelt devotion: “To God be the glory!”

saturday

11

Christ-like Service

SCRPTURE Mark 10:32-45

OBSERVATION

What does a Christ-like servant look like?

APPLICATION

This year end, what is something you can do to serve a family or an individual in need (e.g. a single mother and her family, or an elderly senior living alone)? You could also volunteer in the NLCS Blessed2BLESS event⁸ or our Community Blessings programmes⁹.

PRAYER

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

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for Church Board: To continue cultivating the heart of a Christ-like servant
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Credentials, positions and titles are highly sought after in society, whether in ancient times or in today's world. Performance is the key by which we gain those coveted trophies in whatever field or discipline. The need to perform drives us to work harder and do better than others, so as to emerge on top.

However, are our performance indicators the plumb line by which God will measure us? Jesus the Messiah was the Suffering Servant foretold in the Old Testament. He came as the Servant King to die for the sins of fallen humanity and to save the lost. Jesus set the example for His disciples to follow. We are to imitate Him by serving people who are in need, weak and unable to help themselves.

Jesus was rejected and despised on many occasions by those He came to save. Like Jesus, we are to serve people "with no strings attached", that is, our service is not conditional upon their gratitude, appreciation or positive response. Freely we have received grace, freely we give grace to others.¹⁰ Gifts that must be merited are not gifts of grace. We serve in order to give, not in order to get. Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."¹¹

Jesus taught us that to be great in the sight of God, one must be willing to serve all people. The way up is down. This is a descending into greatness. For it is an ascending towards Christ-likeness. May the Holy Spirit purge from our hearts every vain ambition and purify every tainted motive in our service.

⁸ Information: <https://newlife.org.sg/events/blessed2bless/> and Enquiries: b2b@newlife.org.sg

⁹ Enquiries: commbless@cefc.org.sg

¹⁰ Matthew 10:8.

¹¹ Acts 20:35.

sunday

12

Sunday Journal

SCRIPTURE

OBSERVATION

APPLICATION

PRAYER

the past week

review

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

What gave me life and what drained me?

How was the Spirit of God at work?

the past week

reflect

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

respond

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



Week 2 FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

GRATITUDE:

Letting others know how they have helped you.

Memory Verse

"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.
His love endures forever."
– Psalm 136:1 (NIV)

1 Bottom Line

Celebrate what God has done.*

2 Bible Story

2 Samuel 6:12b-22a – David Dances

3 Activity

Celebrate What God Has Done

Take a minute to think of one good thing that God has done for you in school, at work, at home or anywhere that you know of. Share it with everyone and talk about how you would like to celebrate God's goodness for what He has done for you.

Say, "When the Ark of God returned to Israel, David was elated. He celebrated wholeheartedly because God's presence was back with His people and land. David was not afraid to show what God had done for him and his people. It pleases God when we show appreciation and joy regarding His presence and the things He has done for us. We can celebrate through prayers, fellowship with the community or kind acts to those in need. By celebrating God's love for us, we are also showing and sharing God's glory to others."

4 Talk About It

- Why is it worth celebrating what God has done for you?
- How does showing gratitude help us grow to be more like Jesus?
- How does celebrating God's love enable us to bring more people to God's Kingdom?

Parents: Share an incident in which God did something for you. How did you feel? How did you celebrate what God had given?

5 Prayer

Dear God, thank you for the things You have done for us and our families. Help us to look for all the awesome gifts You have given and celebrate You in thankfulness this week.

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story video!

monday

13

The Unprecedented Time of Distress (1)

SCRIPTURE Daniel 11:40-45; 12:1

OBSERVATION

How does Daniel 12:1 flow from Daniel 11:45 in terms of ideas?

APPLICATION

What does being distressed by various trials mean to me in my discipleship journey?

PRAYER

Lord, I give my life to You and I trust in You. But I am alone and in deep distress. Turn to me and have mercy! The troubles and distresses of my heart are enlarged. My problems go from bad to worse. Feel my pain and see my trouble. If I have sinned against You, forgive all my sins. Deliver me, for I take refuge in You.¹²

prayer pointers

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

deeper reflection

Daniel 12 begins with “Now at that time” (Dan 12:1a). What is this “at that time”? Daniel 10 to 12 is a single prophetic-theological vision given to Daniel in King Cyrus’ third year (Dan 10:1). God sent a heavenly being to Daniel “to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days...the days yet future” (Dan 10:14). This future of God’s people “is inscribed in the Book of Truth” (Dan 10:21) – the contents of which are narrated in Daniel 11: the conflicts between the South Kingdom and the North Kingdom of post-Alexander Greece (Dan 11:2-20), which climax with Antiochus’ blasphemous opposition against God and brutal persecution of God’s people (Dan 11:21-35). Then there will arise the future final Antiochus-like anti-God king (Dan 11:36-45) – the New Testament antichrist (2 Thess 2:3-4; 1 Jn 2:18).

The “at that time” (Dan 12:1) is “the interval between the beginning and the end of the conflict” mentioned in verse 45.¹³ The beginning is the antichrist’s invasion of God’s people – “the beautiful Holy Mountain” and the end is the antichrist’s miserable demise – “his end”. The interval is “a time of distress such as never occurred” before (Dan 12:1). Jesus also speaks of this unprecedented “tribulation” that His disciples will suffer (Mk 13:19). We **must expect** and **be ready** for this unparalleled “time of distress”. It is a **divine necessity** for us to “be distressed by various trials” that we may grow in faith and perseverance by anchoring in and living by the Word of God (1 Pet 1:6-7; Jas 1:2-4). This prepares us spiritually for the unprecedented “time of distress”.

¹² Psalms 25:1, 16-20

¹³ Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (IVP, 1978), 203

tuesday

14

The Unprecedented Time of Distress (2)

SCRIPTURE Daniel 12:1; 10:20-21

OBSERVATION

What is the significance of Daniel 11 being sandwiched by the mention of Michael the archangel (cf. Jude 1:9) in Dan 10:21 and verse 1?

APPLICATION

How can I prepare myself for the future unprecedented “time of distress”?

PRAYER

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

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for pastors and staff: To be spiritually ready for the future unprecedented time of distress
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

How are we to face the unprecedented “time of distress”? (v.1). There must be **preparedness for suffering**. God has already spoken about this special “time of distress”, just as Jesus said, “Behold, I have told you in advance” (Matt 24:25). The divine purpose is that we be prepared spiritually. The thrice repeated “that time” calls us to pay close attention to God’s Word on this. The question is, do we take this seriously and take heed, and not be caught unprepared?

Enveloping the future difficult times of God’s people (Dan 11) is “Michael” (Dan 10:21 and v.1). No one can stand firmly against the spiritual principalities and powers working behind powerful human kingdoms that oppose God’s people, except Michael (Dan 10:20-21), who “stands guard and watches over” God’s people (v.1, NASB, NET). But it is more than Michael enveloping God’s people. Michael represents God. So, it is actually the **presence of God** through Michael enveloping us in the unparalleled “time of distress”, watching over us and guarding us. With God’s presence, we stand with **perseverance in security** in God: Our names are “written in the book” – “the book of life” (Psa 69:28; Rev 3:5). The security is similar to Jesus keeping and guarding us, “and no one will snatch them out of My hand” (Jn 10:28-29; 17:12). And we rest in God’s **promise of deliverance**: We “will be rescued”. In suffering, “we do not know how to pray as we should”: To be delivered from suffering or through suffering – that is, perseverance? In suffering, we need to pray in the Spirit (Rom 8:23-27).

wednesday

15

Discipleship Suffering, Death and Resurrection

SCRIPTURE Daniel 12:1-2

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about God's faithful people in verses 1 to 2?

APPLICATION

How do I relate to suffering, death and resurrection in my discipleship journey?

PRAYER

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

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for leaders
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for the Generations: To experience the power of the resurrection of Christ
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

God has promised His people who suffer for their unwavering faithfulness to Him in the unprecedented “time of distress” that they “will be rescued” (v.1). Among these are the martyrs of God, who “sleep in the dust of the ground” and the divine rescue for them is, they “will awake to everlasting life” (v.2a). The wicked people who kill God's faithful people may live on with triumph and prosperity, but they will eventually die. When they “sleep”, they will also “awake”, except that it will be “to disgrace and everlasting contempt” (v.2b). Here is a double comfort for the martyrs of God: They will “awake to everlasting life” and their enemies to “everlasting contempt”. With this knowledge and assurance, they know that their suffering and death for their God is not in vain. They have the last laugh on their enemies. But this is **possible only** because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Christ's death and resurrection formed Paul's discipleship, and therefore were consciously central in his life. For Paul, knowing Christ surpasses everything (Phil 3:7-8). And knowing Christ includes knowing “the power of **His resurrection** and the fellowship of **His sufferings**, being conformed to **His death**” and “attain the resurrection from the dead” (Phil 3:10-11). This is Paul's discipleship package. Thus, “carrying the dying of Jesus...the life of Jesus manifested” in Paul's body was an “always” reality (2 Cor 4:10). Is what Paul says about Christ's sufferings, death and resurrection in his life just an abstract concept to you, or is it a spiritual reality in your daily life?

thursday

16

Shining Brightly with Heavenly Brightness

SCRIPTURE Daniel 12:1-3

OBSERVATION

What characterises God's people "who have insight"?

APPLICATION

How important it is for me to be a person who has insight?

PRAYER

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

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for Outreach/Missions/New Life leaders: To shine in the world as wise people of God
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

What is required for the prophetic-theological visions given to Daniel by God in Daniel 7 to 12 is "understanding of the visions" (Dan 8:15-17; 9:22-23; 10:1, 12, 14). This "understanding" comes only from God, "who gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding" (Dan 2:21). For us today, this "understanding" is already given in the book of Daniel. But we must "set your heart on understanding it" with humble and earnest seeking of God (Dan 10:1-3, 12).

God's people who have "understanding of the visions" are called "those who have insight", who live during the unprecedented "time of distress" (vv.1, 3). It means then that we must be people "who have insight" to live triumphantly in the unprecedented "time of distress". Such people of God "shine brightly" with heavenly brightness (v.3a) by "holding fast the Word of life" (Phil 2:15-16). Heaven shines in our earthly suffering! These people know God's purpose for their suffering: "to refine, purge and make them pure", in which they persevere "until the end time" (Dan 11:35). And as they are refined and purified by God, they shine even brighter in their suffering. This brightness is the glory of God. We "suffer with Christ, so that we may also be glorified with Him" (Rom 8:17).

"Those who have insight" are leaders and disciplinarians "who lead the many to righteousness" (v.3b). This righteous teaching and leading with godly wisdom is critical, because in such "time of distress", God's people can be easily and quickly tempted to compromise or depart from their faith (cf. Dan 11:30, 32-34; see 1 Tim 4:1).

friday
17

God's Word Concealed and Sealed

SCRIPTURE Daniel 12:4, 9

OBSERVATION

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

APPLICATION

What does the fact that God may conceal His Word mean to me?

PRAYER

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

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for SGI leaders: To wait on God persistently and patiently to speak His Word
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

God commanded Daniel to “conceal the words” of the prophetic-theological visions given to him and to “seal up the book” (v.4). We can make a theological application of “the book” by extension to the whole Bible – “All Scriptures” (2 Tim 3:16). This divine concealing is not God’s Word “kept secret in the sense that no one was permitted to read it”, but yet at the same time “it was not placarded for all to see”¹⁴. God who reveals His Word also conceals His Word.

God conceals His Word for the **right time**: “until the end of time” (v.4). In Daniel, “the end of time” began with the evil reign of the “small horn” – Antiochus (Dan 8:9, 17, 19). God conceals His Word “until the time when they will be needed”¹⁵. There is a divine timing of God giving us understanding of His Word and speaking to us. God does not speak to us on demand. And “I wait for Your Word” is a divine necessity in biblical discipleship (Psa 119:81-82; 130:5-6).

God conceals His Word for the **right heart**. The concealing of God’s Word (v.4) “alludes to the words of Amos 8:11-12 concerning a ‘famine... of hearing the words of the LORD’”¹⁶ – such that God’s people seek His Word but not find it, because their hearts are not right. The right heart is “the good and honest heart” that hears the Word and “hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance” (Lk 8:15). The “He who has ears, let him hear” (Matt 13:9) is always there in every reading and hearing of the Word of God.

¹⁴ Joyce G. Baldwin, 207

¹⁵ Joyce G. Baldwin, 206

¹⁶ Earnest C. Lucas, 296

saturday

18

“But as for You, Daniel”

SCRIPTURE Daniel 12:4; 1:17

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about God’s call and role for Daniel in these passages?

APPLICATION

What is God’s call and role for me in my life?

PRAYER

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

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for Church Board: To be able to discern God’s call and role for their lives
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

There is a principle behind these words that God spoke to Daniel: “But as for you, Daniel” (v.4a). God called Daniel to serve Him in the pagan courts in exile for a particular purpose: to receive and understand prophetic visions that reveal God’s plan for world history (Dan 1:17). This is clearly fleshed out in the whole book of Daniel. The career of Daniel’s call was coming to an end in Daniel 12 with “But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words...” Daniel would not live to see God fulfilling the visions given to him. God’s **“as for you, Daniel”** call and role was to just receive and understand the visions.

Each one of us does have from God a particular **“as for you” call and role** for our lives in our times. In God’s covenant promise of blessing, land and descendants to Abraham, God foretold that his descendants would be enslaved and oppressed 400 years in Egypt, but He would bring them back to Canaan (Gen 15:13-14, 16). But God said to Abraham, **“As for you”** he would die in peace at a good old age (Gen 15:15). Abraham had his “as for you” call and role in the Abrahamic covenant that has its ultimate fulfilment in Jesus Christ (Gal 3:8-9, 13-14). David had his “as for you” call and role from God: “after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, he fell asleep” (Acts 13:36). God wants us to know and fulfil in our lives our “as for you” call and role, but we must walk with Him with faithful commitment.

sunday

19

Sunday Journal

SCRIPTURE

OBSERVATION

APPLICATION

PRAYER

the past week

review

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

What gave me life and what drained me?

How was the Spirit of God at work?

the past week

reflect

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

respond

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



Week 3 FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

GRATITUDE:

Letting others know how they have helped you.

Memory Verse

"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.
His love endures forever."
– Psalm 136:1 (NIV)

1 Bottom Line

Take time to say thank you.*

2 Bible Story

Luke 17:11-19 – Jesus Heals Ten Men

3 Activity

Saying Thank You in Different Ways

Props: Paper and writing tools

Get your family members to learn to say thank you in different languages, for example using sign language or a foreign language. Design a thank you card and write an appreciation note to Jesus.

Say, "On his way to Jerusalem, Jesus met 10 men who had leprosy. Jesus asked them to show themselves to the priests. A miracle happened as they went – they were healed. But only one of them returned to thank Jesus. By giving thanks to God, we are showing that we appreciate what God has done for us. We are showing that we accept God's full control over our lives and acknowledge that everything belongs to Him."

4 Talk About It

- Have you ever not been thanked for something you did? How did you feel?
- Have you thanked anyone this week? If so, what happened?
- Have you been thanking God more often than before? Why or why not?

Parents: Talk about an experience in which you were extremely thankful for God's help. How did this experience change you?

5 Prayer

Dear God, thank You for giving us everything we have. Thank You for the people in our lives who take care of us. Please help us to say thank you this week.

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monday

20

How Long Will It Be? (1)

SCRIPTURE Daniel 12:5-6

OBSERVATION

What are “these wonders” referring to in the heavenly being’s question in verse 6?

APPLICATION

What is the question, “How long will it be?”, like in my discipleship journey?

PRAYER

O Lord, how long will You forget me? Forever? How long will You look the other way? How long must I struggle with anguish in my soul, with sorrow in my heart every day? Hear my prayer and give heed to my pleas for mercy. Strengthen my heart to wait for You and hope in Your Word and trust in Your goodness and unfailing love.

prayer pointers

- 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 a prophetic narrative of a single visionary experience of Daniel, which begins and ends with the same scene: at “the bank of the great river...the Tigris” (Dan 10:3-4; v.5). At the ending scene, two unnamed heavenly beings were conversing with each other while Daniel was listening.

A climactic question was asked: “How long will it be until the end of these wonders?” (v.6). In Hebrew, the “wonders” (*pele*) is “closely related” to the “monstrous” (*pala*)¹⁷ things that the climactic Antiochus-like anti-God king speaks against God (Dan 11:36). So, “these wonders” – “unheard-of-things,”¹⁸ or “awesome events...are those that came to a climax in Dan 11:29- 12:3, involving Antiochus’ laying his hand on the realm of God”¹⁹ and the unprecedented “time of distress” (Dan 12:1). “When will ‘these wonders’ end?” is “a legitimate question and not at all a matter of idle curiosity”²⁰.

“We live in an age in which we expect everything to be fixable. There is a pervasive air of pragmatic optimism in our society” that in every way and every day we can get better and better.²¹ This kind of mentality is also found among God’s people. Popular are teachings and books on “X number of simple effective ways” to this and that for successful Christian living. “We have reduced sanctification and spiritual victory to a technique to be learned and mastered, almost like a golf swing.”²² The discipleship question “How long?” is a question for God to answer. “How long?” underscores the reality that things cannot be easily or quickly fixed as and when and how we want it to be.

¹⁷ Tremper Longman, 286

¹⁸ Tremper Longman, 286

¹⁹ John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, Word Biblical Commentary (Word Books, 1989), 309

²⁰ Dale Ralph Davis, *The Message of Daniel*, The Bible Speaks Today (IVP, 2013), 165

²¹ Iain M. Duguid, *Daniel*, Reformed Expository Commentary (P&R, 2008), 209

²² Iain M. Duguid, 210

tuesday

21

How Long Will It Be? (2)

SCRIPTURE Daniel 12:5-7**OBSERVATION**

What significant observations can you make about the answer given in verse 7 to the question in verse 6?

APPLICATION

What is my experience of divine timing and purpose in my discipleship journey like?

PRAYER

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

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for pastors and staff: To consciously live by divine appointment
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

A twofold answer is given to the climactic question, “How long will it be until the end of these wonders?” (v.6). First, “these wonders” (Dan 11:29-12:3) will be “for a time, times, and half a time” (v.7) – half of seven times. In Daniel, seven times refer to “a complete period of judgment”, as seen in the “seven periods of time” of God’s judgment on Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 4:25).²³ So, in contrast to the complete period of judgment, the period of God’s people suffering in the unprecedented “time of distress” (Dan 12:1) is “limited, cut short in its length”²⁴. Behind this half of seven times is God in total sovereign control, who as “a cross-centred God”²⁵ knows and understands the pains and endurance limits of His suffering people.

Second, it will be “as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people” (v.7). It is either a “shattering” of the faith of God’s people or their existence by slaughtering them (Dan 11:32-34). Bible scholar, Dale Ralph Davis, makes this sobering note: “This is the hardest misery. This is, eventually, the future of the church.”²⁶ “We will come to the point in history where it appears that darkness has already won the day. It will seem as if the Antichrist is going to continue for ever. It will seem as if the church has been entirely obliterated. For there will no longer be any sign of it.”²⁷ But what is invisible in such times must be most visible in our faith: God’s sovereignty and purpose are behind this – “seeing Him who is unseen” (Heb 11:27).

²³ Iain M. Duguid, 215

²⁴ Iain M. Duguid, 215

²⁵ Dale Ralph Davis, 165

²⁶ Dale Ralph Davis, 165

²⁷ Dale Ralph Davis, 165 – citing Stuart Olyott

wednesday

22

God's Ways and God's Word

SCRIPTURE Daniel 12:5-9

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about God and Daniel?

APPLICATION

What does knowing God as the everlasting God mean to me in my discipleship journey?

PRAYER

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

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for leaders
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for the Generations: To know God as the faithful and everlasting God
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

“Understanding of the visions” (Dan 8:16; 9:23; 10:1), which reveal the will and ways of God in world history is a key motif in Daniel. The Hebrew words for “understanding” – *bin* and *binah* – occur 26 times. Daniel understood much of the visions that God gave him. But at the end of his prophetic career, we hear Daniel saying, “I heard but could not understand” God’s ways in “these wonders” (v.8a). Daniel pursued the matter: “What will be the outcome of these events?” (v.8b). But Daniel’s question was not answered. Instead, the divine answer was, “Go your way, Daniel”, for the ways of God revealed is also concealed “until the end time” (v.9). Daniel had to be contented with his “could not understand” and rest in God’s wisdom. Daniel and we can only understand the “a time, times, and half a time” (v.7) symbolically and theologically, but not with mathematical precision. **We cannot understand God’s ways** is part of biblical discipleship. “How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!” (Rom 11:33) must be our theological anchor.

But we must stand in God’s Word. Having spoken of God’s ways in “these wonders”, a heavenly being “raised” both his hands “toward heaven and **swore by Him who lives forever**” – the faithful and everlasting God – that all that God has planned and purposed for the future of His people (cf. Dan 10:14) “will be completed” (v.7). Behind the divinely designed transient half of seven times is the everlasting God. Daniel 1 to 11 is about **God’s sovereign control** and the book ends with **God’s faithful commitment** as the apex.

thursday

23

Living Life Eschatologically with Wisdom

SCRIPTURE Daniel 12:5-10

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about the people of God in verse 10?

APPLICATION

What does it mean for me to live my life eschatologically with wisdom?

PRAYER

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

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for Outreach/Missions/New Life leaders: To live life eschatologically with wisdom
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Daniel is highly eschatological in its theological orientation: “in the latter days” (2:28; 10:14), “the appointed time of the end” (8:17, 19), “to the end” (9:26) and “until the end time” (11:35; 12:4, 9). Daniel gives us the prophetic-theological vision of world history (Dan 2, 7-12), and calls us to look at the world and live our lives eschatologically. Thus, biblical eschatology, not as abstract concepts, but as a theological and discipleship **reality**, must be in our dominant consciousness.

A key element in Daniel’s eschatology is the expected suffering of God’s people. We are to live through our eschatological suffering with wisdom, as “those who have insight” (v.10). The Hebrew verb for “have insight” or “discern” (Dan 9:25) – *sakal* – occurs nine times in Daniel.²⁸ Daniel and his three friends are examples of people of *sakal* (Dan 1:4, 17). It is noteworthy that the antithesis of “the wicked” in Daniel is not the righteous, but the wise (v.10). But it is assumed that the wise are righteous, because however they are persecuted, they remain faithful to God until death (Dan 11:33-35). The “insight” that they have comes from God (Dan 9:22). Indeed, in the evil days, we are to “walk as wise” people by “understanding what the will of the Lord is” from His Word (Eph 5:15-17). These wise people of God “know their God” (Dan 11:32), and know – and thus, live by – God’s purpose for their suffering: To “be purged, purified and refined” (v.10). But being assured of and aligned to God’s purpose for our suffering does not exclude us asking, “How long?” (Dan 8:13; 12:6).

²⁸ Daniel 1:4, 17; 9:13, 22, 25; 11:33, 35; 12:3, 10

friday
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“1,290 Days” and “1,335 Days”

SCRIPTURE Daniel 12:5-12

OBSERVATION

What is the meaning and significance of the “1,290 days” (v.11) and “1,335 days” (v.12)?

APPLICATION

How does God want me to cultivate the “keep waiting and attain” posture?

PRAYER

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

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for SGI leaders: To grow in eschatological vigilance and patience
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

The fuller answer to the climactic question at the close of Daniel, “How long will it be until the end of these wonders [Dan 11:29-12:3]?” (v.7), contains three chronological references: “a time, times, and half a time” (v.7), “1,290 days” (v.11), and “1,335 days” (v.12). They are all symbolic for theological significance. The “1,290 days” is about 3.5 years and it is similar to “a time, times, and half a time” (3.5 times). The latter is vague, but the former focuses on the time period measured with precision as “predetermined by God down to the very day” – “days” (cf. Matt 24:36 – “that day and hour”), when the unprecedented “time of distress” (Dan 12:1) will end.²⁹ In our discipleship suffering, “the timing of the exact end of our trials is known precisely to the Lord” as He has predetermined it, “though it is impenetrable to human logic”³⁰. We must trust in God that He will not keep us in our trials any longer than is necessary for our good.

To the “1,290 days” of God limiting the time period of our discipleship suffering is added 45 days to make the “1,335 days” (v.12). The additional 45 days means “the saints will need to persevere all the way to the end of this longer period”³¹: “keeps waiting and attains to the 1,335 days” (v.12) – until Christ returns. There are both the divine and human sides of the waiting: **We wait** – “those who eagerly **await** Him” (Heb 9:28), and **the Lord waits** – “He... **waiting** from that time onward until...” (Heb 10:12-13).

²⁹ Iain M. Duguid, 215

³⁰ Iain M. Duguid, 216

³¹ Iain M. Duguid, 215

saturday

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God's Last Words to Daniel

SCRIPTURE Daniel 12:13

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about God's last words to Daniel in verse 13?

APPLICATION

What do I desire the end of my life to be?

PRAYER

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

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for Church Board: To finish well in life in God's way
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Daniel begins with “Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself” while living as an exile in the world of Babylon (Dan 1:8). And it ends with God's last words to the aged Daniel toward his completion of answering God's call for his life (v.13). God's last words to Daniel signal God's affirmation of Daniel that he had lived well and finished well in his life. These divine last words to Daniel point to what occupy our lives and what should preoccupy our minds.

God said to Daniel, “Go your way to the end.” “The end” is Daniel's death, and “Go your way” refers to Daniel's **routines** before his life ends: “Get back to your desk and filing cabinet, Daniel, and finish your day's work; plod along in living quietly and working with your own hands and being faithful to King Cyrus, your Persian employer.”³² Our routines are earthly but necessary, and we go through them in an unpleasant world of beasts (Dan 7:1-8). But our orientation in life ought to be on ultimate realities: the future, not the present; and the eternal, not the temporal. In our inescapable physical tiredness, we set our minds on the eternal “**rest**” that we “will enter into” (cf. Rev 14:13). Our body is inevitably decaying toward death, but we hope in the **resurrection** to a glorious body: “you will rise again” (cf. Phil 3:20-21). As we are faithful to God until death, we will receive our **reward** from God: “your allotted portion” (cf. 2 Tim 4:6-7).

What do you desire to be God's last words for you?

³² Dale Ralph Davis, 168

—
sunday
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Sunday Journal

SCRPTURE

OBSERVATION

APPPLICATION

PRAYER

the past week
—
review

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

What gave me life and what drained me?

How was the Spirit of God at work?

the past week

reflect

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

respond

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



Week 4 FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

GRATITUDE:

Letting others know how they have helped you.

Memory Verse

"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.
His love endures forever."
– Psalm 136:1 (NIV)

1 Bottom Line

Make a habit of being grateful.*

2 Bible Story

1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Exodus 12 – The Lord's Supper

3 Activity

Being Grateful

Props: Note cards and a bowl

Ask everyone to write down the names of their family members on each card. Fold the cards and place them in a bowl. Then ask each family member to pick a card and say one thing he or she is thankful for about for this person. Continue the activity until all the cards have been picked.

Say, "We'll always have something to be grateful for because God's love will never run out, so we should get used to being thankful. When we build a habit of being grateful to the people we meet, we focus our attention on the person's good points. This pleases God. If we do this every day, we make others happy and also invite happiness into our lives."

4 Talk About It

- What is a habit?
- Why does God encourage us to be grateful for everything we have even during bad times?
- What will you do to develop a habit of being grateful?
- How does being grateful for what we have help us to grow as Christians?

Parents: Talk about how developing a habit of being grateful helps you. You may use a story to help others understand the importance of being grateful.

5 Prayer

Dear God, You are so good to us. You deserve all praise. We want to thank You for giving us so much. Help us to develop a habit of being grateful.

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

monday

27

The Throne

SCRIPTURE Daniel 1:1-2; 2:31-35, 44-45**OBSERVATION**

What significant observations can you make about God in these passages?

APPLICATION

How can I see the sovereignty of God in today's unpredictable and unstable world?

PRAYER

I bow in humble worship before Your transcendent majesty and glory. O Lord God Almighty, who sits on the throne as the One who is and who was and who is to come, You frustrate and nullify the plans and counsel of kings and nations, but Your plans and purposes stand forever. Living in today's unpredictable and unstable world, I am secure in Your hand.

prayer pointers

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

deeper reflection

We can read Daniel with a framework of six discipleship key themes that are theologically interlinked in the book: the **throne**, the **tyrants**, the **tribulations**, the **trust**, the **tenacity** and the **triumph**. We cannot miss the “kings” and “kingdoms” in Daniel. Two key words *malkut* (Hebrew) and *malku* (Aramaic) for “reign” (v.1), “kingdom” (Dan 2:37), “sovereignty” (Dan 4:31) and “dominion” (Dan 4:34), occur a total of 69 times. Human superpowers will continue to dominate the world, affecting peoples’ lives profoundly in many ways, until the close of history. But Daniel tells us that we can live securely in such an unpredictable and unstable world by having a vision of and faith in “Heaven that rules” (Dan 4:26).

God is the supreme sovereign God. This is prominently underscored by nine divine titles that together occur 24 times in Daniel: “the God of heaven”³³, “the Most High God”³⁴, “the great God” (2:45), “God of gods and Lord of kings” (2:47), “Heaven that rules” (4:26), “the King of heaven” (4:37), “the Lord of heaven” (5:23), “the Highest One”³⁵ and “God of gods” (11:36). God **establishes** and **eliminates** human kings and kingdoms: “He removes kings and establishes kings” (Dan 2:21; see Dan 4 – Nebuchadnezzar, Dan 5 – Belshazzar). And God’s Kingdom alone **endures** as an **everlasting** Kingdom (Dan 2:31-35, 44-45; 7:13-14).

God is a subversive sovereign God. “The Lord gave” “the vessels of the house of God” into Nebuchadnezzar’s “hand” to bring them to “the house of his god” (vv.1-2; see Dan 8:11-13 – Antiochus’ sacrilegious acts). God appears to be being controlled. But in reality, He is in control over Himself “being controlled”.

³³ Daniel 2:18, 19, 28, 37, 44

³⁴ Daniel 3:26; 4:2, 17, 24, 25, 34; 5:18, 21; 7:25

³⁵ Daniel 7:18, 22, 25, 27

tuesday

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The Tyrants

SCRIPTURE Daniel 5:24-31; 7:3-7; 11:36**OBSERVATION**

What significant observations can you make about human powers in these texts?

APPLICATION

How do I see the sovereign hand of God in people in authority abusing their power?

PRAYER

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

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for pastors and staff: To be careful not to lord over the flock under their watch
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

One of the hopes of God's people living in exile in Babylon was God's promise of restoring the Davidic Kingdom: "they shall serve the LORD their God and **David their king**" (Jer 30:8-9). But how greatly disappointed they were when they and generations after lived under the reigns of the Persians, the Greeks and the Romans. The question, "When will God restore the kingdom to Israel?", was asked for a long time up till before Jesus' ascension (Acts 1:6).

Jesus, the Son of David, is "David their king" (Matt 1:1; Lk 1:31-33). But meanwhile, God has revealed to His people that from Daniel's days and beyond they would not only be ruled over by Gentile superpowers, but they will also suffer under them as tyrants. This is the significance of Daniel's vision of beasts in Daniel 7, which are further elaborated variously in Daniel 8 to 12. Tyrants are **inhuman**. They are like wild beasts, but more violent and brutal, "dreadful and terrifying" (Dan 7:3-7). Tyrants want **control**. "He will do as he pleases" is a distinct mark of tyrants (Dan 8:4; 11:3, 16, 36), and people are at their mercy. Tyrants want **worship**: Nebuchadnezzar built a golden statue that represented him, and demanded everyone to worship him (Dan 3). To worship him means to give sole allegiance to him. Tyrants are **anti-God**: They arrogantly "speak monstrous things against the God of gods" (Dan 11:36).

However, tyrants are **weak**. Daniel and history have shown that every tyrant will eventually be toppled by another tyrant. This is the theological pattern designed by the One who is on the throne (vv.24-31).

wednesday

29

The Tribulations

SCRIPTURE Daniel 3:8-15; 11:31-35

OBSERVATION

What do these passages say about tribulation in discipleship?

APPLICATION

What is my perspective and posture toward tribulation in discipleship?

PRAYER

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

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for leaders
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for the Generations: To be not surprised by tribulation
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

The fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar and the exile of Judah to Babylon at God's command as the ultimate covenant curse in 586 BC (2 Kin 24:1-3; 25:1-21), in a way, marked the beginning of significant tribulations for God's people. For instance, the severe famine caused by the Babylonian invasion resulted in compassionate mothers boiling their own children for food (Lam 4:9-10). While the pre-exilic prophets prophesied of a prosperous and glorious post-exilic future for God's people (e.g., Am 9:11-15), Daniel prophesied that tribulations for God's people are here to stay for a long time – for “seventy weeks” (Dan 9:24-27). In Daniel, the source of tribulations is the tyrants, typified by Antiochus (Dan 11:21-36).

In Daniel, at the heart of tribulation is the issue of **worship**. Worship is essentially giving allegiance. Refusing to bow to Nebuchadnezzar's golden statue would end up in the blazing furnace (vv.8-15). Tribulations occur when “the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up” in God's temple (Dan 7:21-25; 8:9-14; 9:27; 11:31-35). Tribulation is a test of our faithfulness to God. We will be severely tempted to “forsake the holy covenant” (Dan 11:30). For us to grow in faithfulness to God, tribulation is a divine necessity. So, we must **expect** tribulations. Tribulations will only be more and more, and get harder and harder. The “times of distress” (Dan 9:25) will progress to the climactic “time of distress such as never occurred...until that time” (Dan 12:1).

When we suffer tribulations under tyrants, however tyrannical they are, we are to see and stand in the One who is on the throne.

thursday

30

The Trust

SCRIPTURE Daniel 3:13-18, 28-29; 6:16-23

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about Daniel and his three friends?

APPLICATION

What does it mean for me to trust in God?

PRAYER

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

prayer pointers

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for Outreach/Missions/New Life leaders: To trust in God in all things at all times
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

deeper reflection

Tribulation – particularly, tribulations under tyrants – is a key discipleship motif in Daniel. When we go through tribulations, our need is divine deliverance. The Aramaic word for “deliver” – *shezab* – occurs nine times in Daniel. They are found only in Daniel 3 – Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the blazing furnace (vv.15, 17, 28, 29), and Daniel 6 – Daniel in the lions’ den (Dan 6:14, 16, 20, 27). In these two faith stories, deliverance is paired with trust in God: “put their **trust** in God” (v.28) and “**trusted** in his God” (Dan 6:23).

The testimony of the faith of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego shows three dimensions of trusting in God for deliverance from tribulation (vv.17-18). Trust in God that **He can** deliver: God is “able to deliver us”. In this, we trust in the **power** of God. Trust in God that **He will** deliver: “He will deliver us.” In this, we trust in the **compassion** of God. God delivered Daniel from troubles twice out of His “compassion” (Dan 1:9; 2:18). Trust in God when **He doesn’t** deliver: “If He does not [deliver].” In this, we trust in the **wisdom** of God (Dan 7-12). Trusting in God in this way enables us to become people “who have insight” from God (Dan 11:35; 12:10).

The God whom Daniel’s three friends “trusted in” was “**the God of** Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego” (v.28). The God whom Daniel “trusted in” was “**the God of** Daniel” (Dan 6:23, 26). The expression “the God of” points to the **relationship** that these men had **with God**. Trust in God is established in a relationship with God.

NOTES

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