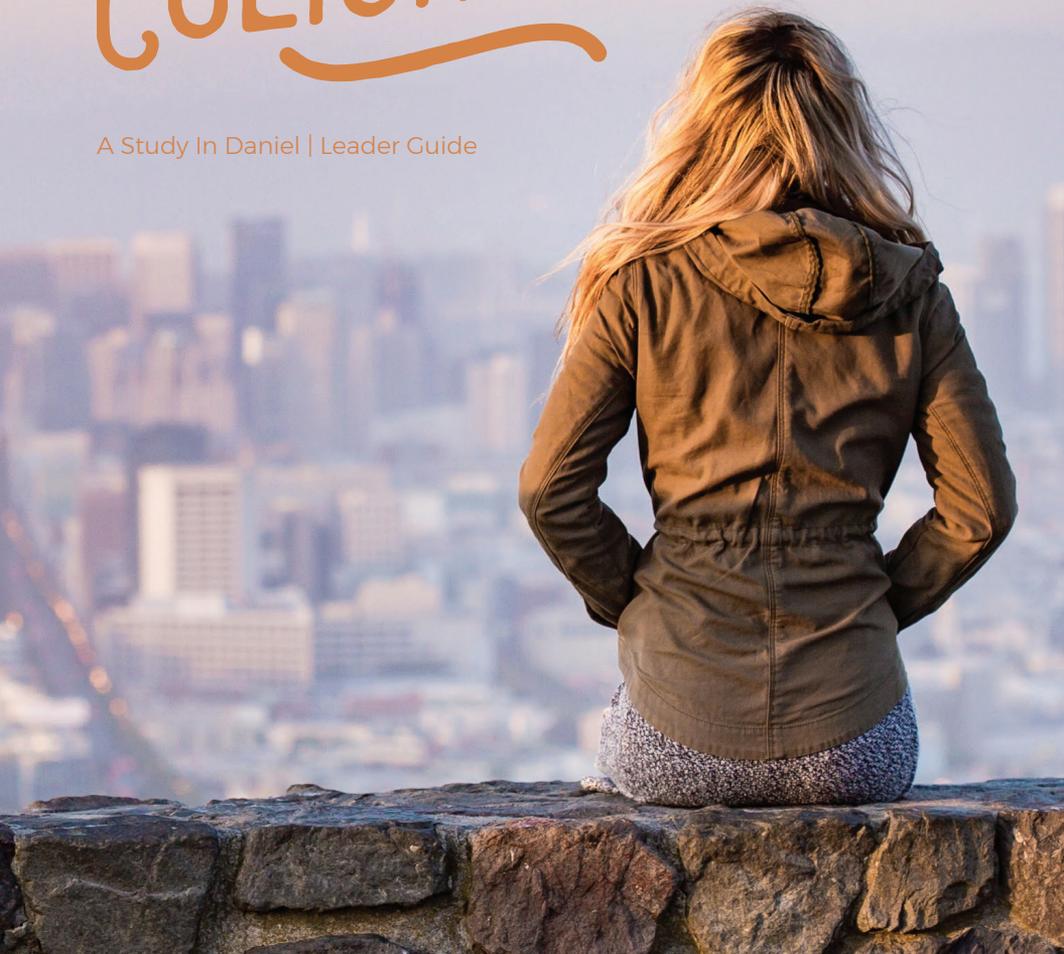


CALLED TO LIVE

COUNTER- CULTURALLY

A Study In Daniel | Leader Guide



DANIEL

CALLED TO LIVE COUNTER-CULTURALLY

The Christian Grads Fellowship is a network of Christian graduate community groups. We assemble on university campuses across the country to support one another and impact the academy as thoughtful and informed followers of Christ. The Christian Grads Fellowship is a ministry of Grad Resources, a nonprofit dedicated to supporting the emotional and spiritual needs of grad students. Learn more at www.GradResources.org

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CHRISTIAN
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CALLED TO COUNTER-CULTURAL LIVING

DANIEL 1 | WEEK ONE

OVERVIEW

The goal of the Fellowship is to create connections leading to authentic community, and provide biblical perspective on becoming a Christian scholar. Therefore, be sure to:

- take time to hear from each other (15 minutes),
- review the lesson (30 minutes) and
- to pray for personal concerns and campus outreach efforts (15 minutes).

Encourage participants to read the chapter in advance, using it for personal devotionals, reflecting on the Memory Verse and journaling insights from your Quiet Time. Try to connect with others outside of the Fellowship this week. In this way your spiritual and relational goals for the group can be met. Having leaders rotate discussion will allow each to share their perspective.

BACKGROUND

The Book of Daniel opens with some of the Israelites being taken into captivity along with objects from the temple (605 or 598 B.C.). It says the Lord gave the king and many of the nobility into the hands of the Chaldeans. He warned them this would happen (Deuteronomy 28:64–66, Isaiah 39), so like a loving parent who tells his children the rules ahead of time, God warned Israel to obey lest they suffer the consequences. It is merciful of God to continue the line of David through Israel, intending to fulfill his promise to raise up the Messiah to rule over us forever. This is ultimately the gospel. God is insuring His plan of redemption, graciously saving those who cannot save themselves

GET STARTED

Open up the session by asking someone to pray. This will help break the ice and get everyone in the practice of listening to each other.

DON'T FORGET

Before you start calling on people to read Scripture or pray, make sure the individual you are calling on is comfortable with the task. You never want to put someone on the spot!

All provided Scripture quotations are in the English Standard Version.

THE BIG IDEA

Choosing not to become defiled with the king's food can still produce excellence in the world's eyes.

MEMORY VERSE

Daniel 1:20

LOOKING AT THE TEXT

ASK SOMEONE TO READ DANIEL 1:1-7.

*In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. **2** And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the vessels of the house of God. And he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his god. **3** Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility, **4** youths without blemish, of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and competent to stand in the king's palace, and to teach them the*

*literature and language of the Chaldeans. **5** The king assigned them a daily portion of the food that the king ate, and of the wine that he drank. They were to be educated for three years, and at the end of that time they were to stand before the king. **6** Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah. **7** And the chief of the eunuchs gave them names: Daniel he called Belteshazzar, Hananiah he called Shadrach, Mishael he called Meshach, and Azariah he called Abednego.*

1. What do verses 3-4 say about the youths taken to stand in the king's palace? Would you say God had prepared them years ago for this assignment?

They were chosen because of their appearance, knowledge, wisdom, understanding and ability to "stand before the king." They were assigned royal food and drink, taught for 3 years and then called to defend. Similar to the application process for grad school? Grad school may feel like exile to some

THINK ABOUT IT

The Chaldeans began to redefine the Israelites by teaching them their language, customs, and literature, and by giving them new names. They were pressing these men to reconsider themselves, not as Yahweh's children, but as servants to their king. They were not to be working for the defeated god they left back in Israel. They were to be remade into Babylonians.

of us. Many of us were chosen because of similar factors such as a “good appearance” like grades, publications, and contribution to the academic community as we show that we are “skilled in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding, and learning.” Many of us had to leave our homeland to enter grad school. Many of us are ruled by people who have a drastically different worldview and faith than we do. If you’re lucky, you were given a “daily portion of food” through a stipend! Isaiah 39:7 shows that God knew the Chaldeans would do this many years ago, so he would have prepared Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah for these positions. Though grad school is difficult, God has prepared you ahead of time for it. He knew you would be selected and has prepared you for your studies. As you reflect on your grad school experience so far, what are some ways that God prepared you prior to entering? How have you seen his hand of guidance/ preparation in your life?

ASK SOMEONE TO READ VERSES 8-10.

*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. **9** And God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs, **10** and the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, “I fear my lord the king, who assigned your food and your drink; for why should he see that you were in worse condition than the youths who are of your own age? So you would endanger my head with the king.”*

2. What is Daniel doing by taking this stand and making his request?

Daniel (and his friends) are banking on the Lord. The “King’s Food” would be affiliated with pagan religions and would not follow the guidelines God set out for his people (clean/unclean). What are some things that may “defile” a

person in grad school? It could be a philosophical assumptions, an ethical commitment, or even a cultural practice (even within your cohort)?

Some grad schools require that students hold to a naturalistic view of the world, which by nature assumes that God cannot exist. Other times, there are cohorts that have a practice of getting drunk together on the weekends. And so, if you don't participate, you are considered an outsider in the cohort. They do not believe God has hung them out to dry in Babylon. They believe He has put them there "for such a time as this," like Mordecai tells Esther (Esther 4:14). So they trust that he wants them to follow his precepts, even in a foreign land.

3. What stands out to you more, Daniel's request or the eunuch's agreement to permit it? Has someone ever gone to bat for you?

"God gave Daniel favor..." As Daniel desired to remain holy, the Lord provided a way for him to be holy. The trainer recognized the

personal peril of letting the men choose their food and regimen, but allowed them freedom.

SUMMARIZE VERSES 11-16

*Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had assigned over Daniel, Haniah, Mishael, and Azariah, **12** "Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. **13** Then let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king's food be observed by you, and deal with your servants according to what you see." **14** So he listened to them in this matter, and tested them for ten days. **15** At the end of ten days it was seen that they were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king's food. **16** So the steward took away their food and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.*

4. How do you account for their better health and appearance?

There were probably some healthy benefits to Moses' dietary laws that the four men wanted to

ILLUSTRATE IT

Years ago as a young grad student, Rob Koons (Philosophy, UT Austin) had a life changing encounter with Dr. Alvin Plantinga. Dr. Plantinga asked him some critical questions about his reason for studying philosophy:

"How will it make a difference in your study that you are a believer?"

"Why do you think God called you into this discipline?"

This intentional perspective caused Dr. Plantinga to challenge the presuppositions of his field and radically change philosophy for generations of Christian scholars who followed his lead.



ILLUSTRATE IT

Apple had a corporate culture but Steve Jobs needed freedom to create something spectacular. To encourage innovation he selected a team, sequestered them in their own area and encouraged them to think outside the box. There was secrecy, camaraderie and the magic of novelty: the Mac. Do you think they would have attained the same result if they followed the traditional Research and Development methods?

respect. Also there are probably some practices that are assumed to be part of grad school (all-nighters, junk food, and 80 hour weeks) that could be challenged by a balanced life producing better results. But don't forget that the Lord gave them favor in all things because they loved him with all of their heart, soul, and mind.

5. God made them successful in Chaldean research and training.

Daniel and the other captives were under pressure to succeed as trainees in a new culture. They

saw the program as being unfaithful to God and conforming to a pagan culture. They felt compelled to ask for freedom to do it their way. They didn't ask to be exempt from the test but fully expected to comply and exceed the standards ("test us and see"). There was intense pressure, tangible dangers and the potential for failure, but the Lord walked them through it by giving them the grace to maintain their focus on Him.



Following Christ through grad school will make you a better scholar. By taking time for Sabbath rest, by daily connecting with the Author of all truth, and by having certain virtues that only Christ can produce in your heart, you may find that you flourish and excel. What are some counter-cultural practices you could begin that may cause you to excel?

(There are studies on the advantage of taking time to rest, connect in community, and eating healthy for thinking/producing work—this would be a good place to insert some of that).

TIPS FOR APPLICATION

Ask yourself what your discipline would look like if it were more “friendly to Christian views?” What topics would you research if your advisor supported you and gave you freedom to explore the intersection of faith and academics?

READ DANIEL 1:17–21.

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. 18 At the end of the time, when the king had commanded that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. 19 And the king spoke with them, and among all of them none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Therefore they stood before the king. 20 And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom. 21 And Daniel was there until the first year of King Cyrus.

6. What do you notice about the performance of the Israelites? If we viewed our academic discipline through God’s lens as Creator/Redeemer, should we expect Christian grads to be 10 times better as a result?

Understanding God’s role in creating the universe and the big plan of loving and redeeming man for Himself could cause unique insights into your research, whether

sciences or humanities. Seeing His order and beauty in nature is informative and motivating for believers. Understanding the brokenness of man and knowing His plan to redeem and restore gives value and meaning to our existence. Jesus wants to be the center of our studies and will enhance our academics and personal lives as we walk in His grace and power. Dallas Willard stated, “To excel as a believer in academics you should be asking questions that no one else is asking.”

7. How are we trusting God to walk with us through the challenges of our graduate study program? How are we guarding our minds and hearts so we won’t defile ourselves with the world’s food?

This is an open-ended question with many good answers. However we devote ourselves to our Lord and provoke ourselves to fully depend on him is good.

“Often the large ideas that frame and dominate our lives are so deeply ingrained that we do not realize they are there,” writes Richard Horner.

These ideas are presuppositions or assumptions that we take as reality. They color everything else we learn. The Chaldeans wanted to

reorder their captives' presuppositions, turning them to false gods. Our university, mentor, or peers may want to do the same thing. They may call it common ground, common sense, or facing the facts, but the result is a rejection of our Lord as King and Master of our lives.

Richard Horner writes, "I would suggest that late-modern ways of thinking often frame our lives and our religious beliefs and practices far more than we may realize. Specifically, an understanding of the spiritual realm that views it as either a realm of imagination or a realm that is malleable and open to individual taste and will generally frames religious and spiritual experience and belief."

WRAPPING IT UP

Consider reading this to your group:

God shows his faithfulness in the book of Daniel, but we can easily turn the story upside-down and think Daniel's faithfulness is what wins every battle. If we were to ask Daniel how he got through his captivity, he would say, "[It was the] Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments" (Daniel 9:4).

Dr. Bryan Chapell explains: "God preserves young men from impurity and an old man from lions; He answers prayer and interprets dreams; He exalts the humble

and humbles the proud; He vindicates the faithful and vanquishes the profane; and He rescues covenant-forsaking people by returning them to the land of the covenant. Daniel acts on the grace God repeatedly provides, but God is always the One who first provides the opportunity, resources, and rescue needed for Daniel's faithfulness. If we reverse the order and make God's grace dependent on Daniel's goodness, then we forsake the Gospel message Daniel is telling and produce the hero worship of adventure tales, rather than the divine worship of the Gospel according to Daniel."

CLOSING

When Scottish runner Eric Liddell competed in the 1924 Olympics in Paris, he refused to run on Sundays. But his races, the 100 meter and 100 meter relays, were scheduled on Sundays. Liddell trusted in the Lord's grace and changed to the 400 meter.

His wife, Florence, remembered, "Eric always said that the great thing for him was that when he stood by his principles and refused to run in the 100 meter, he found that the 400 meter was really his race. He said he would never have known that otherwise." He won a gold medal for the 400 meter and a bronze medal for the 200 meter at the Paris Olympics. You might discover a new and better expression for your gifts and skills when they are yielded to God's principles.

As your discussion comes to a close, end the session in prayer.

Lord,

Let us learn to see what is clearly from you and what is “defiled” and to be avoided in our academics. Let us live Godly and think wisely, loving our peers with your love and seeing our discipline through your eyes.

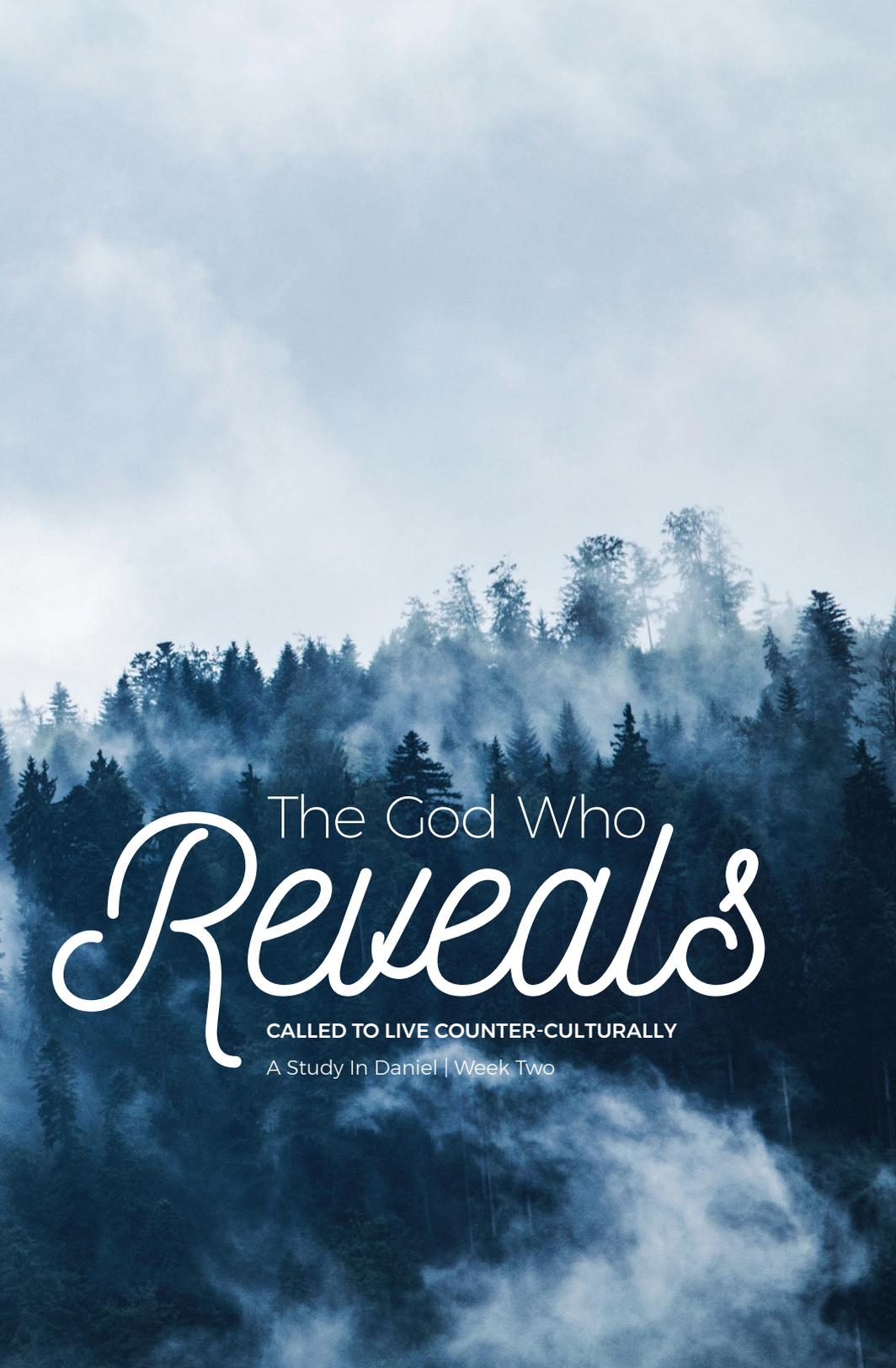
Amen

NOTES:

Richard Horner, “What Frames What?” Reconsiderations: Exploring Christian Thought in the University Community, October 2005.

Dr. Bryan Chapell and Richard Doster, “The Gospel According to Daniel: Our Conversation with Bryan Chapell,” by Faith, no. 44 (Q.2.14), 38–43.





The God Who
Reveals

CALLED TO LIVE COUNTER-CULTURALLY

A Study In Daniel | Week Two

THE GOD WHO REVEALS

DANIEL 2 | WEEK TWO

OVERVIEW

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GET STARTED

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DON'T FORGET

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All provided Scripture quotations are in the English Standard Version.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

Last week, we began our study of Daniel by seeing how the Lord prepared Daniel and his friends for an important work in Babylon. God gave them the opportunity, resources, and rescue needed for their faithful reliance on him.

THIS WEEK

Now we see one of the big things God wanted them to do in Nebuchadnezzar's court: reveal His mysteries.

MEMORY VERSE

Daniel 2:20-21, I Corinthians 4:1, 2
We are "stewards of the mysteries of God."

THE BIG IDEA

God has challenges for us where He will respond with power and wisdom when we surrender and pray.

LOOKING AT THE TEXT

ASK SOMEONE TO READ DANIEL 2:1-7.

In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his spirit was troubled, and his sleep left him. 2 Then the king commanded that the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans be summoned to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king. 3 And the king said to them, "I had a dream, and my spirit is troubled to know the dream." 4 Then the Chaldeans said to the king in Aramaic, "O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation." 5 The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, "The word from me is firm: if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you shall be torn limb from limb, and your houses shall be laid in ruins. 6 But if you show the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts and

rewards and great honor. Therefore show me the dream and its interpretation." 7 They answered a second time and said, "Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show its interpretation."

"Nebuchadnezzar exercised tight control over the affairs of his empire. Known as a master builder and military architect, Nebuchadnezzar was the pride of the Neo-Babylon Empire. He ruled for 43 years (605-562 BC) and gained fame by defeating the Egyptians at the battle of Carchemish just before ascending the throne. Historical sources emphasize his vast army and warring tendencies, portraying him as a king obsessed with conquest and power. He is portrayed similarly in Daniel but is used to make a theological point: the power of earthly rulers comes from God. Nebuchadnezzar is given power to exercise a temporary judgment on Judah. But his pride will be his downfall, and his vast kingdom will eventually belong to another foreign king." ¹

1. How would you describe Nebuchadnezzar in your own words?

READ ALOUD 2:8-11

*The king answered and said, "I know with certainty that you are trying to gain time, because you see that the word from me is firm—9 if you do not make the dream known to me, there is but one sentence for you. You have agreed to speak lying and corrupt words before me till the times change. Therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can show me its interpretation." 10 The Chaldeans answered the king and said, "There is not a man on earth who can meet the king's demand, for no great and powerful king has asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or Chaldean. 11 The thing that the king asks is difficult, and no one can show it to the king **except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.**"*

2. How does the Chaldeans' complaint summarize the fundamental problem of man?

The king, who has threatened to kill them for failing this test, is asking them to do something impossible. They confess no one

can do what he wants, except the gods and they don't live among us. Daniel saw it as an opportunity to display God's glory. Jesus hinted at this very thing in Lk 5:24, "But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the man who was paralyzed—"I say to you, rise, take up your bed and go home." No one could answer Nebuchadnezzar except God alone, but Jesus' miracle demonstrated authority over sickness and sin.

This is the way he has ordered the universe. The revelation of God is unknowable without the grace of God to interpret it. No one is wise except the Lord gives wisdom.

3. The king was asking for the impossible. Daniel could not do what the King wanted him to do unless God revealed the interpretation to him. What are some ways you need God to meet you in your academic pursuits? What is something that seems impossible that God could do in your field as a result of your work?

This would be a great place to hear about God's work in someone's life during what felt like an

THINK ABOUT IT

"Yet the exile is also a sign of hope. God's people are placed in the midst of the religion-assimilating, privilege-seeking, royal-food-serving, power-serving, name-changing kingdoms of the world to bear witness to those kingdoms that they are not the last word. They are placed there because God loves the world, including Babylon, and wants his ways to be known everywhere, not just within a religious enclave."

—Andy Crouch

ILLUSTRATE IT

Some say that we should avoid worldly studies. Keller says, Daniel studied to be an enchanter, magician, and a student of Babylonian Culture, and, as a result, became a member of the King's Council. It allowed him to be in a position to glorify God. Ask yourself, "What is your foundation and why are you doing what you do?" Have you ever been criticized for pursuing your field of study? In what ways do you think your studies bring glory to God? How might your studies position you to have a broader influence in the world?

Grant, I pray thee, that we may feel and demonstrate, by experience, that our life is in thy hand, and that under thy faithful guardianship thou wilt not suffer one hair of our heads to fall. Do thou also so defend us, that the impious themselves may acknowledge that we do not boast this day in vain in thy name, nor invoke thee without success."

—John Calvin³

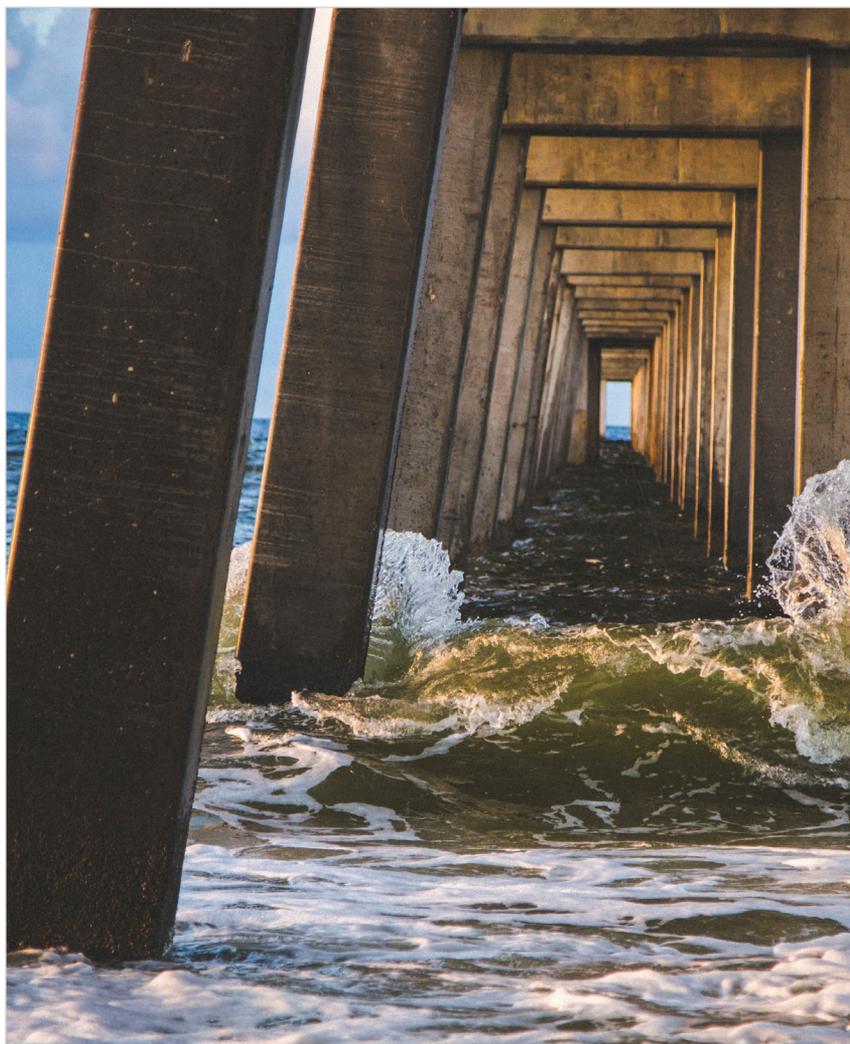
impossible challenge. See the sidebar for another testimony to God's mercy.

SUMMARIZE 2:12-16 AND READ 2:17-23

Then Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, **18** and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his companions might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. **19** Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. **20** Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. **21** 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; **22** he reveals deep and hidden things;

he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him. **23** To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of you, for you have made known to us the king's matter."

- 4. Notice that Daniel doesn't trust in his own abilities, but gives all credit to God. He does this by praising God, by acknowledging his abilities, and by deflecting all attention to God's work. What are some ways you can do the same in your own achievements? In what ways may you be tempted to take credit for yourself? How can meeting together with other Christian grad students help you to stay focused on God's glory?**



"We tend to lose sight of those who benefit from our labors. He reminds us to make that connection. We hesitate to let our work flow from who we are. He encourages us to find that freedom. Most significantly, we forget that work expresses the image of God in us and is an expression of our relationship with our Creator and our Redeemer."

—Richard Horner⁴

SUMMARIZE 2:24–26 AND HAVE SOMEONE READ 2:27–30

*Daniel answered the king and said, “No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery that the king has asked, **28 but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries**, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream and the visions of your head as you lay in bed are these: **29** To you, O king, as you lay in bed came thoughts of what would be after this, and he who reveals mysteries made known to you what is to be. **30** But as for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because of any wisdom that I have more than all the living, but in order that the interpretation may be made known to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your mind.*

5. In your studies and teaching assignments, how much do you rely on a God in heaven who reveals mysteries? What would it look like to trust God’s revelation in your study?

When you are pushing yourself to support your conclusions with documentation, experimentation, and verifiable research, it becomes easy to develop habits of unbelief. You may still pray that the Lord would do something specific for you, but even when your prayer is answered, you

suspect it would have happened naturally without your prayers. Let’s encourage each to rely on the Holy One who reveals mysteries, even through your painstaking research. Note the quote in the sidebar on the fact our graduate work expresses the image of God.

HAVE SOMEONE READ 2:31–45

*“You saw, O king, and behold, a great image. This image, mighty and of exceeding brightness, stood before you, and its appearance was frightening. **32** The head of this image was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze, **33** its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. **34** As you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. **35** Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. **36** “This was the dream. Now we will tell the king its interpretation. **37** You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory, **38** and into whose hand he has given, wherever they dwell, the children of man, the*

“He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

—Micah 6:8

*beasts of the field, and the birds of the heavens, making you rule over them all—you are the head of gold. **39** another kingdom inferior to you shall arise after you, and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. **40** And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, because iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things. And like iron that crushes, it shall break and crush all these. **41** And as you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom, but some of the firmness of iron shall be in it, just as you saw iron mixed with the soft clay. **42** And as the toes of the feet were partly iron and partly clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle. **43** As you saw the iron mixed with soft clay, so they will mix with one another in*

*marriage,³ but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay. **44** And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, **45** just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure.”*

6. In light of who Nebuchadnezzar is, why would God bless him (v37)?

This again is gospel mercy. Remember what we said at the beginning of this study? This is not a man after God's own heart. He doesn't respect God, though he is impressed by Daniel's revelation, and yet the Lord of Heaven has made him the ruler of the known world in order to fulfill his purposes. He is still a profane man, but the Lord is merciful. Even someone like this can be raised from his sins and live eternally with Jesus.

Daniel's words should also inform the king of his place. In the dream, his kingdom is the head of gold, but the God of heaven has given him everything he has, even this interpretation. We can apply this directly to ourselves. No matter who we are, no matter what we have accomplished, we have been given what we have by the God of heaven who calls us to praise him above all things.

God may do this with pagan department chairs!!! We must remember that God is the revealer of all knowledge and that he sometimes extends common (not necessarily saving) grace, even to people who seem like God's enemies.

7. Describe Daniel's attitude toward the king. Why does he speak to him this way?

Daniel is a model for us all. He knows the Lord will provide for him, even if it takes him to his death, and he does not believe he needs to defend God, as some do today. He does not step into God's place as the omniscient judge to condemn the king, because that's not his place. He speaks the truth in love, just as he loves to seek the truth.

WRAPPING IT UP

Graduate programs are often communities in and of themselves. But there is no better place to live out our faith than in a church community. We find truth in Christ (as the Spirit reveals Christ to us), through God's Word, through Community and peers. We need all three; if any one is lacking we are missing an essential element to our faith.

Timothy Keller says of this passage (about Daniel and friends): don't assimilate, don't separate, but be deeply involved, engaged in the life of the city (Babylon) as my people, holding onto your monotheistic worldview. Be spiritually bi-cultural. Pray for the city. Love the city of man, for the sake of the city of God. The Dream of the Kingdom

As your discussion comes to a close, end the session in prayer.

NOTES:

1. Faithlife Study Bible, ©2012
Logos Bible Software
2. Andy Crouch, "What I Wish I'd
Known My Freshman Year."
Reconsiderations: Exploring
Christian Thought in the Univer-
sity Community, April 2004
3. John Calvin, Commentary on
Daniel 2:19. (<http://biblehub.com>)
4. Richard Horner, "The Work Itself."
Reconsiderations:
Exploring Christian Thought
in the University Community,
March 2007..





WHOM WILL YOU WORSHIP?

CALLED TO LIVE COUNTER-CULTURALLY

A Study In Daniel | Week Three

WHOM WILL YOU WORSHIP?

DANIEL 3 | WEEK THREE

OVERVIEW

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GET STARTED

Open up the session by asking someone to pray. This will help break the ice and get everyone in the practice of listening to each other.

DON'T FORGET

Before you start calling on people to read Scripture or pray, make sure the individual you are calling on is comfortable with the task. You never want to put someone on the spot!

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WHERE WE ARE NOW

Last week, we saw one of the big things God wanted them to do in Nebuchadnezzar's court was to reveal His mysteries. God gave Daniel the king's dream and interpretation for the glory of his name, despite the king's sinful life.

THIS WEEK

In chapter 3, we see Nebuchadnezzar setting up an image for national worship and accusing Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of disloyalty.

MEMORY VERSE

Daniel 3:17-18

THE BIG IDEA

Every risk or opportunity should be considered in light of God's power and plan.

LOOKING AT THE TEXT

READ DANIEL 3:1-7.

King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its breadth six cubits. He set it up on the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

2 *Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent to gather the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. **3** Then the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. And they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. **4** And the herald proclaimed aloud, "You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, **5** that when you*

*hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. **6** And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace." **7** Therefore, as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.*

We don't know where Daniel was at this time. It's reasonable to suppose he was away on business, but in verse 8, we see that Chaldeans accused Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of disobedience, so perhaps Daniel refused to bow as well but was not accused for fear of his position.

1. Everyone is worshipping Nebuchadnezzar's idol. Many have reported having department chairs that are on the level of Nebuchadnezzar, demanding that students worship their work. Others find that simply the demands of grad school are challenging to their loyalties to Christ by eliminating time for personal Bible study and prayer, church attendance, or fellowship with other believers. Have you ever had your loyalties challenged like this? How did you handle it?

Nebuchadnezzar was the greatest ruler the Babylonian empire ever had, and he built many marvelous things for his kingdom. The Bible doesn't tell us when Nebuchadnezzar built this image or what the image was. He may have completely missed the point of his dream in chapter two and ordered the image built soon afterward, or he may have done it many years later after more conquest of the known world. Regardless of timing, his motive appears to be to unify his nation. He wants to bring everyone together to worship him or Marduk, the Chaldeans' chief god. He wants everyone to be on his team, but three men show that they are

loyal to the living God before the king.

2. In what ways do the religious life of ancient Babylon relate to the secular life of today?

Our world is comfortable with keeping ideas labeled "religious" in their place in churches or private lives, so stories of national religious persecution like this one sound foreign to us. We have been told by many different people that we can put aside our dogma and live with each other on our common ground. But does that common ground actually exist? Is worshiping the living God just an arbitrary extension of a healthy secular philosophy?

No. Biblical Christianity is a comprehensive philosophy that defines everything without reference to outside philosophies. Everything else is idolatry. Idolatry, to use Tim Keller's definition, can be allowing a good thing to become an ultimate thing in your heart. Here is a list of good things taken to idolatrous ends, written by Kevin De Young:

THINK ABOUT IT

"And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...'"

—Matt. 28:18-19

"For who in the skies can be compared to the Lord?"

- **Scientism:** truth is only found in what can be measured, tested, and published by peer review.
- **Protest-ism:** if I always speak out against evil out there, I can ignore the evil inside.
- **Biological determinism:** I am what my genes tell me to be.
- **Journey-ism:** life is in the search for truth, not the discovery of it.
- **Advocacy-ism:** I care, therefore I am.
- **Experience-ism:** the good life can only be found through travel, adventure, and novelty.
- **Health-ism:** younger is always better, and when I get old there is a pill and a video to help me feel young again.
- **Entertainment-ism:** if it doesn't make me feel something right now, then it can't be worth my time.
- **Voyeurism:** my life is disappointing and boring so I will do all I can to peer in on celebrities whose lives are more exciting and more dysfunctional.
- **Sports-ism:** I live and die every weekend based on how well twenty year-olds push each other over while chasing the guy with the ball.
- **Party-ism:** life pretty much stinks most days, but once or twice a week I have the time of my life; later I throw up.
- **Politics-ism:** everything bad is the other guy's fault and everything that needs to change in the world can be voted on by Congress.
- **Family-ism:** Christ and his church take a back seat to soccer and band.
- **Sexuality-ism:** my parts are my business and no God can tell me what they're for or when or how to use them.
- **Shopping-ism:** it's not idolatry if it's for my kids or on sale.²

Do you have a tendency toward a personal "ism" needing to be surrendered?

READ 3:8-15

Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews. 9 They declared to King Nebuchad-

"Grant, Almighty God, since we always wander miserably in our thoughts, and in our attempts to worship thee we only profane the true and pure reverence of thy Divinity, and are easily drawn aside to depraved superstition,—Grant that we may remain in pure obedience to thy word, and never bend aside from it in any way. Instruct us by the unconquered fortitude of thy Spirit. May we never yield to any terrors or threats of man, but persevere in reverencing thy name even to the end."

—John Calvin³

THINK ABOUT IT

"What people revere, they resemble, either for ruin or for restoration."

—Greg Beale

We Become What We Worship

nezzar, "O king, live forever! **10** You, O king, have made a decree, that every man who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image. **11** And whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace. **12** There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, pay no attention to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the king. **14** Nebuchadnezzar an-

swered and said to them, "Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? **15** Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?"

We often think that if God wants us to do something he will open the door for us, but what if he wants us to push the door open? The metaphor isn't perfect, but we can see with Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah that doing God's will isn't a recipe for easy living. God calls some of us to do hard things

ILLUSTRATE IT

The Statue of Liberty is a depiction of the Roman goddess Libertas. "Now we may not worship this goddess in the traditional manner. But it is not too much to say that our radical allegiance to self and independence is idolatrous worship, nor that such worship manifests itself in extravagant offerings of money spent and relationships sacrificed—even the sacrifice of the unborn. And if we worship freedom, we may become the personification of Libertas, unable to experience healthy dependence on God and others, even as others find they cannot depend on us. Freedom can ironically enslave us, crippling our service to God and others."

—Jason Hood¹

in reliance on him. Is that where you are today?

3. Some have failed comps more than once before success. How did you interpret God's will for your life when you were applying for or going on in your grad program?

READ 3:16-18

*Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. **17** 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. **18** 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."*

4. How is the God whom you serve able to deliver you from trouble? If he doesn't keep you from trouble, how do you interpret that?

We can accomplish nothing without God's favor, but how do

we know we have his favor in a specific area? It's right for us to praise the Lord when something goes smoothly. Do we ever think to praise him when it's rough?

Jesus encourages us to seek his kingdom without worry: "Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'" 32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Matt. 6:31-33).

But he also warns us to expect hard times. "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33).

We must learn to discern God's will and favor beyond the ease of our circumstances. This trial was done in community. As the three had each other to encourage, support, and be with the other in the midst of the hard time, it strengthened their trust in God. As you meet in grad fellowships, it

ILLUSTRATE IT

Dr. Berman was studying European history in Germany when Hitler invaded Poland. He fled with many others to France, fearing the end of the world. But God found him on the train and appeared to him like a scarred man who had suffered much. Dr. Berman understood that no matter what happened in the world, Jesus had suffered deeply so that he could live.

"And so this experience of 'amazing grace' not only made me a Christian believer—against my will and against my heritage—but also freed me from that pride and illusion of intellect which is the besetting sin of academic scholarship."

—Harold J. Berman⁴

"And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord, which I am commanding you today for your good?"

– Deuteronomy 10:12-13

can give you the encouragement, support and fellowship you need to get through what could be rough times in grad school.

READ 3:19-30

*Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated. **20** And he ordered some of the mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. **21** Then these men were bound in their cloaks, their tunics, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the burning fiery furnace. **22** Because the king's order was urgent and the furnace overheated, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. **23** And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace.*

24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?" They an-

*swered and said to the king, "True, O king." **25** He answered and said, "But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods." **26** Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace; he declared, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire.*

27 And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men. The hair of their heads was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them. **28** Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God.

29 Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language

Pride destroys your ability to weather bad times and sucks the joy out of good times. The only way to be healed of pride is if God does it. Nebuchadnezzar realized it and raised his eyes to heaven.

Pride is that which claims to be the author of that which was really a gift. It's a form of cosmic plagiarism. Humility receives life as a gift saying that I don't deserve it. It acknowledges it is free. The Author owns the work and glory goes to the giver.

—Tim Keller

*that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way.” **30** Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.*

5. What details are given to show how comprehensively God saves these men?

The soldiers who took the men to the furnace were killed by the heat. The bindings burned up, but not the men. An angel or Christ Jesus himself stood with the men in the fire. When they came out, they were not harmed in the least. No singed hair, no burned clothing, not even the smell of fire on them. The men knew this could happen, that God was powerful enough to do it, but they also knew he could end their physical lives in the furnace. Either way, they would worship him.

6. If we remain faithful to God, do we expect to see unbelievers around us gain respect for him? Why or why not?

We aren't responsible for how others respond to God. We can only be responsible for our own actions. Our study shows us how loving God with all of our heart, mind, and strength should inspire us love and respect others, including our enemies.

WRAPPING IT UP

“A furnace is when something important to you is taken away. You're going to go into some kind of furnace and who do you want to go in with? What idea of God do you want to have? Only if you know he was thrown into the furnace for you will you then feel him walking in the furnace with you.”

—Tim Keller

The point is that God controls everything and calls us to worship him in everything we do. What is a way that you can trust God as you navigate grad school? What is one way that you can demonstrate your worship of God rather than any other kings in your world? How can this group encourage you and support you in that endeavor?

NOTES:

1. Jason Hood, "Idolatry, the Gospel, and the Imitation of God," March 24, 2011 (<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2011/march-web-only/idolatrygospelimitation.html>)
2. Kevin De Young, "Blame It on Babylon," October 18, 2011 (<http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevindeyoung/2011/10/18/blame-it-on-babylon/>)
3. John Calvin, Commentary on Daniel 3:8. (<http://biblehub.com>)
4. Harold J. Berman, Finding God at Harvard: Spiritual Journeys of Thinking Christians (IVP Books, 2007). (<http://www.findinggodat.org/harvard/>)
5. James Vincent, Parting the Waters: How Vision and Faith Made Good Business (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1997)





THE
GREATEST
KING
humbled

CALLED TO LIVE COUNTER-CULTURALLY

A Study In Daniel | Week Four

THE GREATEST KING HUMBLLED

DANIEL 4 | WEEK FOUR

OVERVIEW

The goal of the Fellowship is to create connections leading to authentic community, and provide biblical perspective on becoming a Christian scholar. Therefore, be sure to:

- take time to hear from each other (15 minutes),
- review the lesson (30 minutes) and
- to pray for personal concerns and campus outreach efforts (15 minutes).

Encourage participants to read the chapter in advance, using it for personal devotionals, reflecting on the Memory Verse and journaling insights from your Quiet Time. Try to connect with others outside of the Fellowship this week. In this way your spiritual and relational goals for the group can be met. Having leaders rotate discussion will allow each to share their perspective.

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Open up the session by asking someone to pray. This will help break the ice and get everyone in the practice of listening to each other.

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WHERE WE ARE NOW

Last week, we saw God prove his sovereignty over the gods of Chaldea in the face of Nebuchadnezzar's call for national loyalty. Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah knew that even if the Lord did not save them, he was the only God worthy of worship.

THIS WEEK

In chapter 4, God will humble Nebuchadnezzar, the greatest king on earth, in order to demonstrate who gives him his authority.

MEMORY VERSE

Daniel 4:34b-35

THE BIG IDEA

We should define ourselves and our ambitions as children of the Most High God

LOOKING AT THE TEXT

READ DANIEL 4:1-18.

King Nebuchadnezzar to all peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you! 2 It has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for me. 3 How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endures from generation to generation. 4 I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and prospering in my palace. 5 I saw a dream that made me afraid. As I lay in bed the fancies and the visions of my head alarmed me. 6 So I made a decree that all the wise men of Babylon should be brought before me, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. 7 Then the magicians, the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers came in, and I told them the dream,

but they could not make known to me its interpretation. 8 At last Daniel came in before me—he who was named Belteshazzar after the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods—and I told him the dream, saying, 9 “O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you and that no mystery is too difficult for you, tell me the visions of my dream that I saw and their interpretation. 10 The visions of my head as I lay in bed were these: I saw, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and its height was great. 11 The tree grew and became strong, and its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth. 12 Its leaves were beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, and the birds of the heavens lived in its branches, and all flesh was fed from it.

13 *“I saw in the visions of my head as I lay in bed, and behold, a*

watcher, a holy one, came down from heaven. **14** He proclaimed aloud and said thus: 'Chop down the tree and lop off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts flee from under it and the birds from its branches. **15** But leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, amid the tender grass of the field. Let him be wet with the dew of heaven. Let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth. **16** Let his mind be changed from a man's, and let a beast's mind be given to him; and let seven periods of time pass over him. **17** The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men.' **18** This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw. And you, O Belteshazzar, tell me the interpretation, because all the wise men of my kingdom

are not able to make known to me the interpretation, but you are able, for the spirit of the holy gods is in you."

1. Do you think of God as a worker of signs and wonders? Why or why not?

Nebuchadnezzar wrote this chapter as his personal testimony to what he has seen of God's authority. He wrote it "to all peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth," the same groups he called to worship his golden image in chapter 3. We know he saw some amazing things. Should we expect to see those kinds of things in our lives? Yes and no. History seems to say God does not perform incredible wonders like the miracles in Daniel all the time, but reserves them for specific times so we shouldn't expect to see a parting of the Red Sea with our own eyes, though possible. God does answer prayer and work in many ways we would not call signs and wonders today. We can miss seeing his work around us



THINK ABOUT IT:

"If you want to find an instance of true gratitude for the infinite grace of God, do not go to those who think of God's love as something that cost nothing, but go rather to those who in agony of soul have faced the awful fact of the guilt of sin and then have come to know with a trembling wonder that the miracle of all miracles has been accomplished, and that the eternal Son has died in their stead."

— J. Gresham Machen¹

due to unbelief. It's easy to pray for God to act and then chalk up his answer to natural causes. Also consider how the breaking of our natural pride in submission to the Almighty is a genuine miracle.

READ 4:19–27

*Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was dismayed for a while, and his thoughts alarmed him. The king answered and said, "Belteshazzar, let not the dream or the interpretation alarm you." Belteshazzar answered and said, "My lord, may the dream be for those who hate you and its interpretation for your enemies! **20** The tree you saw, which grew and became strong, so that its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth, **21** whose leaves were beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in which was food for all, under which beasts of the field found shade, and in whose branches the birds of the heavens lived—**22** it is you, O king, who have grown and become strong. Your greatness has grown and reaches to heaven, and your dominion to the ends of the earth. **23** And because the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, 'Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, in the tender grass of the field, and let him be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven periods of*

*time pass over him,' **24** this is the interpretation, O king: It is a decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king, **25** that you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. You shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and you shall be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will. **26** And as it was commanded to leave the stump of the roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be confirmed for you from the time that you know that Heaven rules. **27** Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you: break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity."*

2. Why do you think Daniel shows so much respect to a wicked king?

Daniel knew the king for most of his 43-year reign and had probably developed a good relationship with him. We have no evidence that Nebuchadnezzar ever repented wholeheartedly for his paganism to follow the Lord God alone. Though this letter is a remarkable testimony to God's work, the king still appears to revere the Lord as the greatest of many gods. Consider the possibility that Daniel loved Nebuchadnezzar just as God loves the world, even



THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN POWER AND AUTHORITY

The main theme of Daniel is that Yahweh is the Most High God whose kingdom will never end. This speaks to his authority and may differ a bit from how we understand him and his work in the world.

*Power is the **ability or strength** to act. Authority is the **right** to act.*

Our God is omnipotent, which means he can do anything he wants to do, but more importantly he is the supreme king of the universe, which means he has the right to do as he wishes. Yahweh is not a great power among many powers. He is the rightful king who rules as part of the natural order.

those who do not repent (John 3:16). Could we love the people in authority over us such as grad advisors or department chairs (or even dissertation committees!)?

“God uses 40 years of testimony from Daniel before this pagan king finally claims the true God as his own. Accordingly, we should not give up on God’s grace regardless of the degree of time of spiritual failure in others—or in ourselves.”

– Bryan Chapell³

3. Why does Daniel advise the king like he does in verse 27?

When we read a verse like this (Matt. 19:21 is another example), we should not interpret it as saying good behavior alone will make us right with God, but that good behavior is evidence of a heart set on God. Showing mercy and practicing righteousness are good ways of worshiping the living God. Doing ethical, comprehensive work in your graduate program and showing compassion on undergrads are two good ways of worshiping the Lord as well.

READ 4:28–37

*All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. **29** At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, **30** and the king answered and said, “Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?” **31** While the words were still in the king’s mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, “O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you, **32** and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. And you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.” **33** Immediately the word was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from among men and ate grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair grew as long as eagles’ feathers, and his nails were like*

ILLUSTRATE IT

When Carmen Acevedo Butcher of Shorter University was a sophomore, she worked as a professor’s assistant. She decided one day while her prof. was away to inspect a coffee can that sat atop a filing cabinet with the sign, “Do not lift.” She did, and marbles gushed out, making a loud racket. Her world religions prof., a demanding teacher, had the office next door and poked his head in to say, “The last student worker to do that graduated summa cum laude, and she went on to great things.”

Was that a compliment? Butcher was still embarrassed, but now she felt new respect for a difficult teacher.²

THINK ABOUT IT

"What we believe to be precious [the world] regards as of no account. What we believe to be fundamental truth it passes by as of little importance. Much which we feel to be wrong it regards as good. Our jewels are its tinsel, and its jewels are our tinsel."

-Alexander MacLaren
"Expositions of Holy Scriptures"

birds' claws. **34** *At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; **35** all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?"*

36 *At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and splendor returned to me. My counselors and my lords sought me, and I was established in my kingdom, and still more greatness was added to me. **37** Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble.*

4. How do the Most High God and his everlasting kingdom influence your daily life?

One way to view the Christian life is to see ourselves as stewards or managers of a small part of God's vast estate. Our field of study is a work in his kingdom. "The university began as an attempt to understand God's world, with theology as the queen of sciences. From that origin it has become something very different, but there is something about its original purpose that still makes sense to the people of God. The university, with all its doubts about truth, still seeks truth. Well, we follow someone who claimed to be the Truth, so we too care about seeking truth. The university, with all its arrogance and self-centeredness, still is regularly humbled by how much there is to know and how little we really understand. Well, we are in the business of laying aside our pretensions to understand, admitting that we don't know, and asking our maker to show himself to us." - Andy Crouch⁴ In what ways does the pursuit of truth humble you? Read 1 Corinthians 8:1 In what ways does knowledge puff up? In what

ways does love with knowledge build up?

5. How might this terrible experience be the best thing to ever happen to the king?

God breaks people in different ways to rid them of their pride and make them ready for his service. Though King Nebuchadnezzar doesn't appear to have repented and surrendered to God, he probably lived the rest of his life more humbly than he had before then. Do you remember what an angry man he was in chapter 2? Humility would have been a great mercy to the people in his kingdom. In what ways has God humbled you or someone you know as a way of encouraging humility?

WRAPPING IT UP

Jared C. Wilson describes the term gospel wakefulness as "treasuring Christ more greatly and savoring his power more sweetly." He says another pastor asked him about it, primarily wondering how to get it. "He didn't believe he had it yet." Wilson asked him "if he'd ever had his legs knocked out from under him, and despite having had his share of disappointments and having made his share of mistakes, he said he had not yet experienced getting utterly bowled over. This, I suggested, was the problem. The prescription is the same either way, however: dwell in the gospel daily. Brokenness will find you, and you

will want to be ready."⁵ The more you understand how you cannot worship the Lord wholeheartedly or fulfill his call on your life, the more you will cry out to him for the grace to worship and work for him properly. What does it look like to dwell in the gospel daily as a grad student? What about in your future career? What examples have you seen of those who live the gospel daily?

As your discussion comes to a close, end the session in prayer.

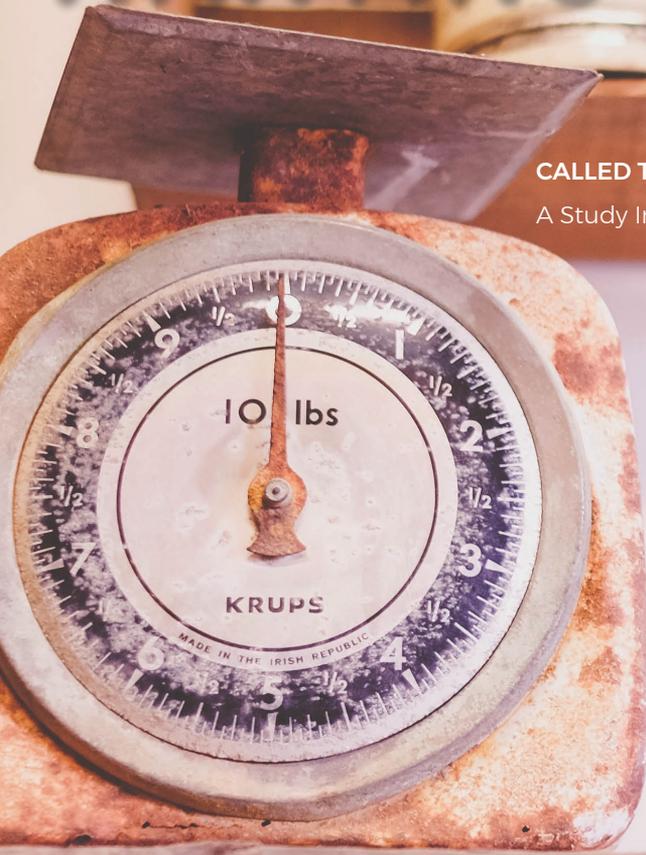
NOTES:

1. J. Gresham Machen, "What the Bible Teaches about Jesus," quoted in *Gospel Wakefulness*, Jared C. Wilson (Wheaton, IL:Crossway, 2011), 52.
2. Carmen Acevedo Butcher, "Coffee Cans and Christ" (<http://thewell.intervarsity.org/blog/coffee-cansand-christ>)
3. Dr. Bryan Chapell and Richard Doster, "The Gospel According to Daniel: Our Conversation with Bryan Chapell," *by Faith*, no. 44 (Q.2.14), 38-43.
4. Andy Crouch, "What I Wish I'd Known My Freshman Year." *Reconsiderations: Exploring Christian Thought in the University Community*, April 2004.
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NOTES



FOUND WANTING



CALLED TO LIVE COUNTER-CULTURALLY

A Study In Daniel | Week Five

FOUND WANTING

DANIEL 5 | WEEK FIVE

OVERVIEW

The goal of the Fellowship is to create connections leading to authentic community, and provide biblical perspective on becoming a Christian scholar. Therefore, be sure to:

- take time to hear from each other (15 minutes),
- review the lesson (30 minutes) and
- to pray for personal concerns and campus outreach efforts (15 minutes).

Encourage participants to read the chapter in advance, using it for personal devotionals, reflecting on the Memory Verse and journaling insights from your Quiet Time. Try to connect with others outside of the Fellowship this week. In this way your spiritual and relational goals for the group can be met. Having leaders rotate discussion will allow each to share their perspective.

GET STARTED

Open up the session by asking someone to pray. This will help break the ice and get everyone in the practice of listening to each other.

DON'T FORGET

Before you start calling on people to read Scripture or pray, make sure the individual you are calling on is comfortable with the task. You never want to put someone on the spot!

All provided Scripture quotations are in the English Standard Version

WHERE WE ARE NOW

So far we have seen the Most High God demonstrate his authority over all gods and kings. In both dreams and trials, the Lord has said he would reign forever. Last week, he showed a merciful discipline to the most powerful king on earth by reducing him to a beast in order to teach him humility.

THIS WEEK

In chapter 5, we see the end of the Chaldean empire with a king who should have learned from Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation.

MEMORY VERSE

Daniel 5:22

THE BIG IDEA

The Almighty God determines the steps of all mankind. His Word is our highest authority, guarding us against pride and idolatry.

LOOKING AT THE TEXT

READ DANIEL 5:1-9.

King Belshazzar made a great feast for a thousand of his lords and drank wine in front of the thousand. 2 Belshazzar, when he tasted the wine, commanded that the vessels of gold and of silver that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem be brought, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. 3 Then they brought in the golden vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. 4 They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. 5 Immediately the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, opposite the lampstand. And the king saw the hand as it wrote. 6 Then the

king's color changed, and his thoughts alarmed him; his limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together. 7 The king called loudly to bring in the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers. The king declared to the wise men of Babylon, "Whoever reads this writing, and shows me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around his neck and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom." 8 Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or make known to the king the interpretation. 9 Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, and his color changed, and his lords were perplexed.

1. Knowing King Belshazzar's party takes place on the eve of their defeat, what is your initial response? We may be quick to mock these people for indulging in sin and inviting God's judgment...There may be people in our lives that we are tempted to condemn. When might you be tempted to con-

demn rather than show grace?

It's unclear all the reasons Belshazzar, the viceroy of Babylon, throws this lavish and lusty party, while his father, King Nabonidus, was living in another city for many years. Cyrus the Persian had defeated the Chaldean army in a nearby city days before, so Belshazzar and his nobles should know they are threatened. They may feel safe, because Babylon is a powerful fortress and the city has not been overrun in 1,000 years. They may be in denial, simply pushing away their fears with pleasure. Clearly, Belshazzar is drawing attention to his position-only relationship with Babylon's greatest king, Nebuchadnezzar, in order to make himself look strong, and everyone loves the idea of toasting their gods with the implements of defeated gods.

There are plenty of reasons to mock them for being blind to God's judgment, but that's not the

example Christ Jesus sets for us. "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God" (John 3:17-18).

2. How should a Christian respond to a blasphemous scene like this?

Some Christians will see their role as the killjoys of the world's party. When Daniel comes in (v17), he bluntly tells Belshazzar to keep his own gifts, but we would be reading into the text to say this is how we should act when confronted with flagrant licentiousness. The heart of the gospel is a love of the lost.

Pastor Matt Chandler says, "Because a God who is ultimately most focused on his own glory

THINK ABOUT IT

"But it is not enough to resolve to be truthful, and to dedicate oneself to sincere and authentic communication with others. Unless we master the meaning, the structure, the grammar and syntax of our language, we are easy prey for the manipulations of others, vulnerable to bad arguments, apt to get mired in muddled thinking, and thus not as capable of 'reflection and choice' in our lives as we should be. As another German thinker, the linguist Uwe Poerksen, has put it, certain expressions, familiar turns of phrase, and the blurry concepts they convey become 'the everyday prison of perception' for us, reordering our very reality because we do not possess the tools to break free.

"With attention to how you express yourself and how others express themselves, the house of your mind can be kept uncluttered, your thoughts unencumbered by falsehood and error of every kind, and your soul better equipped to meet life's accidents with the responses that befit a free person."

— Matthew J. Franck¹



THINK ABOUT IT

C.S. Lewis says one of our natural desires will be to belong to the inner ring of our profession or organization. We want to be with the important people, the trend-setters. Lewis says such circles are not evil per se, but "of all the passions, the passion for the Inner Ring is most skillful in making a man who is not yet a very bad man do very bad things." Our desire to be accepted by these insiders can dominate, even ruin, our lives, and it can move us to ruin other's lives, because once we are inside the ring, we will try to keep the specialness going by keeping others outside. If anyone can get inside, then being an insider isn't special at all. The solution to this desire is to recognize it as sin and pursue excellence in our profession for God's glory. In doing so, we will find ourselves among friends on the inside of the only rings that matter.²

will be about the business of restoring us, who are all broken images of him. His glory demands it. So we should be thankful for a self-sufficient God whose self-regard is glorious.”³

So the blasphemous peers, the worldly advisors, and the ungrateful undergrads are all broken images of our wonderful creator, whether they like it or not. We must encourage each other to love the lost around us as Christ did, even as we encourage each other to hold closely to the Word of God which makes us holy. Who is one person you know you should be more loving and gracious toward?

**SUMMARIZE DANIEL 5:10-16.
READ DANIEL 5:17-23.**

The Queen Mother remembers Daniel and highly recommends him to Belshazzar, who summons him, showing marginal respect and offering to reward him.

17 Then Daniel answered and said before the king, “Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another. Nevertheless, I will read the writing to the king and make known to him the interpretation. **18** O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father kingship and greatness and glory and majesty. **19** And because of the greatness that he gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whom he would, he killed, and whom he would, he kept alive; whom he

would, he raised up, and whom he would, he humbled. **20** But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was brought down from his kingly throne, and his glory was taken from him. **21** He was driven from among the children of mankind, and his mind was made like that of a beast, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. He was fed grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, until he knew that the Most High God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will. **22** And you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this, **23** but you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven. And the vessels of his house have been brought in before you, and you and your lords, your wives, and your concubines have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know, but the God in whose hand is your breath, and whose are all your ways, you have not honored.

3. Daniel explains that Belshazzar should have learned humility from Nebuchadnezzar’s remarkable testimony, recorded in chapter four. He says he was praising worthless gods instead of honoring “the God in whose hand is your breath and whose are all your ways.” What does God’s Word tell us about

guarding our hearts and minds so that we remember him?

Philippians 4:4-8

There are many good answers to this question. Our focus should be on God's grace and mercy, because the grace that made us alive in Christ continues to work in us to make us holy.

4. When is a time you have failed to learn a lesson from the past and what consequences did that have/could have?

READ DANIEL 5:24-31

24 *"Then from his presence the hand was sent, and this writing was inscribed. 25 And this is the writing that was inscribed: Mene, Mene, Tekel, and Parsin. 26 This is the interpretation of the matter: Mene, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end; 27 Tekel, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting; 28 Peres, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians." 29 Then Belshazzar gave the command, and Daniel was clothed with purple, a chain of gold was put around his neck, and a proclamation was made about him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. 30 That very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed. 31 And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.*

5. Just as the Word of God held the rulers of Babylon accountable, it holds all humans accountable. What about you in your research? How might the Word of God hold you accountable in your own work?

Tim Keller says, "Daniel is telling us unless you take the Bible seriously and completely, even those parts that you don't like, you can't have a God that is not an idol of your own making."⁵ This may be hard to apply in your field of study, but that is one of the reasons God has you where you are. What would the Almighty God say about the subjects of your work? If he only says personally comforting things and nothing that challenges you, you may not understand him fully. If you believe the whole Bible, Keller teaches, you know you have a God who can contradict you. "Pride is simply not seeing that absolutely everything you have and everything you are is a gift of grace." —Tim Keller⁶

6. How does the Word of God keep your pride in check?

Daniel clearly tells his masters that his information doesn't come from his own gifts. In v17, he tells Belshazzar not to reward him because he isn't the one deserving honor (plus the kingdom will fall that night, so all gifts are worthless). The honor should go to the one who sent the hand that wrote on the wall. God's Word should be our highest authority in order to guard us against intellectual pride. We may begin to

think that because we live today, we know more than anyone has ever known. As a growing expert in your field, you certainly know many things. The magicians around Daniel were children compared to us, but God would disagree. “Modern worldly wisdom is not a bit more helpful than ancient worldly wisdom,” Keller says, because fearing the Lord is where a full understanding of anything begins. All knowledge must be framed by the Word of the God who owns all of our ways.

7. How does the Word of God give you hope for the future? How might this hope shape the way you approach your field of study?

Remember what Nebuchadnezzar said in chapter four:

At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures

from generation to generation; 35 all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, “What have you done?”

One message Daniel keeps repeating is the everlasting reign of our Holy God. The “immeasurable greatness of his power” will overcome every kingdom on earth by finding it wanting, like Belshazzar’s Babylon.

Read Ephesians 1: list more reasons to work in hope in our God.

WRAPPING IT UP

KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RELIGION AND FAITH.

Tim Keller tells a story about a man he knew in college who claimed to be converted to Christ. He had been a very licentious man, known everywhere as a heartbreaker. He would seduce

THINK ABOUT IT

“It is easy to see that you and I have been created to worship. We’re flat-out desperate for it. From sports fanaticism to celebrity tabloids to all the other strange sorts of voyeurisms now normative in our culture, we evidence that we were created to look at something beyond ourselves and marvel at it, desire it, like it with zeal, and love it with affection. Our thoughts, our desires, and our behaviors are always oriented around something, which means we are always worshipping—ascribing worth to—something. If it’s not God, we are engaging in idolatry. But either way, there is no way to turn the worship switch in our hearts off.”

– Matt Chandler⁴

woman and, as soon as he had them, drop them. So when he professed faith in Christ, Keller and others believed him. They were happy about it, because he had been a cruel guy. “But we notice that in every Bible study, he had to be right. We noticed he had to be elected an officer in the fellowship. We noticed when he was in any conversation with a non-Christian, trying to tell them why the Bible was right and Jesus was right, he was really pretty abusive. We began to realize the way he was originally trying to gain significance was through power of other people, and now he was doing the same thing.

“You must know the difference between religion and faith. Religion is ‘I give God a good record, then he owes me a good life.’ The gospel is ‘God gives me a good record which I receive by faith and now I live in grateful knowledge that he has accepted me forever.’”
What does it look like for you to live the gospel as a grad student? What attitudes or practices might you have to show you are living out the gospel during your academic pursuits?

As your discussion comes to a close, end the session in prayer.

I pray for each of us that we trust our Lord and take him at his word. Let's not settle for a few religious comforts or make the church merely our inner ring. Let's rest entirely in the one who deserves our praise and owns all of our ways. Amen!

NOTES:

1. Matthew J. Franck is Director of the William E. and Carol G. Simon Center on Religion and the Constitution at the Witherspoon Institute. Quotation from a commencement address at Glendale Preparatory Academy, 2014 (<http://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2014/06/uncluttering-thehouse-of-the-mind>)
2. C.S. Lewis, “The Inner Ring,” Oration at University of London, 1944.
3. Matt Chandler, *The Explicit Gospel* (Wheaton, IL:Crossway, 2012), 32.
4. *Ibid.*, 103.
5. Tim Keller, “Daniel: Living by Faith in a Secular World,” Redeemer Presbyterian, Apr–May, 2000.
6. *Ibid.* All quotations and paraphrases attributed to Keller in this lesson come from this sermon series.

NOTES





FIRST
principles

CALLED TO LIVE COUNTER-CULTURALLY

A Study In Daniel | Week Six

FIRST PRINCIPLES

DANIEL 6 | WEEK SIX

OVERVIEW

The goal of the Fellowship is to create connections leading to authentic community, and provide biblical perspective on becoming a Christian scholar. Therefore, be sure to:

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WHERE WE ARE NOW

Last week, we saw God judge and divide the Babylonian kingdom. He was not standing by while men did their own thing. He gave Babylon to the Medea and Persians.

THIS WEEK

In chapter 6, we see Daniel suffer for the high respect he has earned from Darius the king in a story similar to the trial by fire in chapter three.

MEMORY VERSE

Daniel 6:10. When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem; and he got down upon his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.

THE BIG IDEA

The Almighty has prepared the way for us to walk in faith, no matter what we suffer.

LOOKING AT THE TEXT

READ DANIEL 6:1–4.

It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps, to be throughout the whole kingdom; 2 and over them three high officials, of whom Daniel was one, to whom these satraps should give account, so that the king might suffer no loss. 3 Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.

1. Daniel's excellent work gets rewards and respect from his ungodly masters because he served with the intent that the king might suffer no loss. What would it look like to serve an advisor this way?

Daniel appears to be a skilled diplomat, administrator, and leader. He is a model for grads in his excellence, passion for seeking

God and trusting Him with any outcome.

Pastor Tim Keller notes, "Daniel had all the gifts to be a full-time prophet, but he had a secular job." He served God as a prophet-in-residence in the administrations of pagan empires. How would we advise someone with such gifts?

"If you're a Christian and the kind of person who can get into the very top graduate schools, which means you can get the very top kinds of jobs, and you know you could have a top status and kind of life, and you know that missions and ministry is not that kind of life, you must be very careful that you are not really giving it a consideration. In other words, Christians should be thinking more about ministry and the church should be thinking about it less."⁷²

What would it look like if a grad student were to lend his/her expertise to the ministry of the church? In what ways would it be well received? What challenges might there be? What is one sim-

THINK ABOUT IT

“Daniel acts faithfully, but God provides the protection and provision necessary for such righteousness. God is working prior to, through, and beyond Daniel’s own resolve to act righteously. Such care reminds us to act righteously and let God take care of the rest that is needed for his purposes to be fulfilled.”

—Bryan Chapell¹

ple gift you can offer the ministry of your church?

READ 6:4–5.

4 *Then the high officials and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him. 5 Then these men said, “We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God.”*

2. They found no error in him because he was faithful. Could this be said of us? What compromises are we prone to make? What doubts do we allow to keep us from faithful service?

It may be important to note that Daniel is still a Hebrew in a pagan empire, serving in captivity. The Lord has placed him in positions of influence to serve him for an unspecified period of time. Daniel and his friends likely remembered

how Joseph was accused and imprisoned wrongfully, understanding it could happen to them too. Plus they had the experience with the furnace and probably many other small threats over the years. They were not immune to injustice. There may be times that you feel like the only believer in a “pagan empire” in your grad program. How does Daniel’s example of trusting God give you a vision for trusting God in your program?

3. Even though we have worked hard to get where we are, do we fully believe that every skill and every opportunity we have has been given to us from the Lord?

This is one of the perpetual questions Christian ask themselves. It’s what walking by faith means. In our world, we are pressed to believe that spirituality is an elective, a hobby some of us enjoy. But God claims dominion over everything, so when Daniel is rewarded, he thanks God for giving it to him (note v10). When you are not sure you are going to pass

your oral exams, when you feel as if you cannot hit your research or publication deadlines, when there is tension in the department, are you seeking the face of God to lead and direct you? The applications are obvious. When our paper is accepted, when we get the grant we wanted, or when we discover something different, do we thank the Lord for giving it to us? When an experiment fails or when we are asked to do something unethical, do we remember the Most High God has our back no matter what?

SUMMARIZE 6:6–15.

Daniel's peers could not accuse him for being corrupt (playing favorites, taking bribes or kickbacks, ignoring laws), so they set up an idolatrous situation similar to Nebuchadnezzar's image in chapter three. They lie by implying that Daniel agrees with them that everyone should show their loyalty to the king by praying only to him for 30 days. Darius, being a polytheist, thinks nothing of this

law, but when the officials return to say Daniel continues to worship the Lord in defiance of the law, he knows he has been tricked.

READ 6:16–28.

16 Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The king declared to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!" **17** And a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel. **18** Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no diversions were brought to him, and sleep fled from him.

19 Then, at break of day, the king arose and went in haste to the den of lions. **20** As he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish. The king declared to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your

THINK ABOUT IT

Speaking to a group of ministry leaders, Dallas Willard said a few words about success: "In another age it might have been enough for your people to know that you are devoted and that you are called of God. But we live in a world where this issue is enough to drive anyone nuts. You have people constantly surveying, 'Is this a success?' I often imagine people handing out little questionnaires at the end of the Sermon on the Mount about whether or not it was a success.

[Should faithfulness replace success?] I don't think so. I'm not big on the saying that 'All God requires is that we be faithful.' Faithfulness means more than just doing the same things over and over. I would say that, in our faithfulness, one of the things we do is change—and sometimes we need to change before God will respond to our efforts."³

God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?" **21** Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! **22** My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm." **23** Then the king was exceedingly glad, and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. **24**

And the king commanded, and those men who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and cast into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives. And before they reached the bottom of the den, the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces.

25 Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth:

"Peace be multiplied to you. **26** 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. **27** 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." **28** So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

4. Daniel goes into the lion's den with the same confidence his friends had decades ago. He knows God is able to save him, "but if not," he will not serve another god. Do we have this kind of faith or have we allowed disappointment to steal this confidence away? Would he have had the confidence to face the Lion's Den if it were not for the faithfulness and testimony of his friends in the fiery furnace?

ILLUSTRATE IT

Eric Johnson, a founder of Gorilla Pictures, applies his Christian perspective to his collaborative creative work. He and his team want to respect the people involved in the film, not allowing it to be a burden to them. "I believe that to make films that are inspiring, my first responsibility is to respect and inspire the community of people directly involved. When we started, an angel investor helped us purchase a large amount of film equipment we could not afford. This act inspired us to build a company on the same ethos.

"What's amazing is not just that it's fulfilling; it's also economically viable. It's a holistic value that can't be quantified on a spreadsheet, but is now integral to our mission: 'When you give things away, you don't lose them.'" Like Daniel, Eric doesn't follow the patterns of his industry, but asks the Lord to direct and provide for the work he has been given.⁴

ILLUSTRATE IT

"The Shawshank Redemption is about a prisoner convicted of a murder he didn't commit. That prisoner escapes by crawling through a sewer line until he's outside the prison walls. The narrator describes the transaction this way: 'He crawled through a river of [dung] and came out clean on the other side.' God the Son did that, and He did it for the likes of me—so that I too, and many more like me, might come out clean on the other side. That truth doesn't just change my life after I die. It changes my life here, now."

—William J. Stuntz⁵

Thankfully, we don't have to answer that question. And, as you have believing friends who give testimony in your life of living through the trials of grad school, you may have confidence as well.

5. What are some ways we can have confidence in God, even in the midst of seemingly unrealistic circumstances??

6. Daniel does not fear being killed or injured by the lions, but he knows he could be. What similar faith challenges do we face in our lives?

Since we already know the stories of Daniel in the lion's den and his friends in the furnace, we aren't surprised they survive. We may even tell ourselves that if we "dare to be a Daniel," we may be threatened, but we will not suffer. God will make everything work out in the end. When that is NOT the case, how should we respond

WRAPPING IT UP

Kenneth Pike, former president of the Linguistic Society of America, asks if we have ever wondered why Jesus tells Nicodemus, the

theistic intellectual, that he must be born again, but we don't have a record that he said it to anyone else. The publican and the harlot know they are sinners and need help. They don't ask how it's possible to get help or whether the help makes sense to them.

But "the intellectual already has his mental outlook logically formed, a coherent system with all of the pieces fitting together in a neat mosaic such that the removal of one piece of the mosaic destroys the pattern...[He] needs to be told that his system as a whole must be replaced—that he must be born again. Christianity is not an accretion; it is not something added. It is a new total outlook which is satisfied with nothing less than penetration to the farthest corners of the mind and the understanding." In what ways does the story of Daniel show that Christianity is a different outlook altogether? What are some specific ways in your program you may have a completely different outlook due to your faith in Christ?

As your discussion comes to a close, end the session in prayer.

NOTES:

1. Dr. Bryan Chapell and Richard Doster, "The Gospel According to Daniel: Our Conversation with Bryan Chapell," *by Faith*, no. 44 (Q.2.14), 38-43.
2. Tim Keller, "Daniel: Living by Faith in a Secular World," *Redeemer Presbyterian*, Apr-May, 2000.
3. Dallas Willard, "Becoming The Kinds of Leaders Who Can Do The Job," Summer 1999 (<http://www.dwillard.org/articles/art-view.asp?artID=165>).
4. Eric Johnson and Bethany Jenkins, "Filmmaking in Unexpected Places," July 10, 2014 (<http://thegospelcoalition.org/article/filmmaking-in-unexpected-places>).
5. William J. Stuntz, "Three Lessons on Suffering," March 2009 (<http://www.findinggodat.org/suffering/>).
6. Kenneth L. Pike, *With Heart & Mind* (Huntington Beach, Calif.: Wycliffe Bible Translators, 1962), 19-24.

NOTES

NOTES





everlasting
KINGDOM

CALLED TO LIVE COUNTER-CULTURALLY

A Study In Daniel | Week Seven

EVERLASTING KINGDOM

DANIEL 7 | WEEK SEVEN

OVERVIEW

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- take time to hear from each other (15 minutes),
- review the lesson (30 minutes) and
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Encourage participants to read the chapter in advance, using it for personal devotionals, reflecting on the Memory Verse and journaling insights from your Quiet Time. Try to connect with others outside of the Fellowship this week. In this way your spiritual and relational goals for the group can be met. Having leaders rotate discussion will allow each to share their perspective.

GET STARTED

Open up the session by asking someone to pray. This will help break the ice and get everyone in the practice of listening to each other.

DON'T FORGET

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All provided Scripture quotations are in the English Standard Version

WHERE WE ARE NOW

Last week, we saw another pagan king declare that the kingdom of the Most High God would endure forever “and his dominion shall be to the end.” This dominion did not keep Daniel from walking through a terrible trial, but it did protect him.

THIS WEEK

In chapter 7, Daniel has an incredible vision of God’s everlasting dominion and the world’s rage against it.

MEMORY VERSE

Daniel 7:17-18

THE BIG IDEA

Our God, the Ancient of Days, reigns now and forever, though his people must still suffer at the hands of sinners and the devil.

LOOKING AT THE TEXT

READ DANIEL 7:1-8.

*In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream and visions of his head as he lay in his bed. Then he wrote down the dream and told the sum of the matter. **2** Daniel declared, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. **3** And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another. **4** The first was like a lion and had eagles' wings. Then as I looked its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man, and the mind of a man was given to it. **5** And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. It was raised up on one side. It had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth;*

*and it was told, 'Arise, devour much flesh.' **6** After this I looked, and behold, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back. And the beast had four heads, and dominion was given to it. **7** After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. **8** I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.*

THINK ABOUT IT

“God is love. That is why he suffers. To love our suffering, sinful world is to suffer. God so suffered for the world that he gave up his only Son to suffering. The one who does not see God’s suffering does not see his love. God is suffering love.”

— Nicholas Wolterstorff,
“Lament for a Son”

1. Daniel’s vision parallels Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in chapter two, and the interpretations are similar: one world empire succeeds another. What do you think God wants us to understand from the prophecies in Daniel? After the group talks generally about these prophecies, read verses 17-18. *17 ‘These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth. 18 But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever.’*

This is the emphasis God has given to this prophesy. Though he gives us many details, he doesn’t appear very concerned that we understand every one of them, because he continually drives us back to the theme of the whole book, that the Most High God is an earthly kingmaker, giving dominion to one empire and taking it from another, his own kingdom eternally established.

If your group is unfamiliar with these prophecies, here’s a brief explanation. The four beasts represent in the empires of Babylon, the Medes and Persians, Greece,

and Rome. In the first beast, we can see hints of Nebuchadnezzar’s power and humiliation (seen in chapter four). In the second beast, we see a depiction of the Medo-Persian empire. The Persian side was stronger, so the beast is raised up on one side. The ribs could represent the kings Cyrus of Persia had conquered before this time or the nations he would conquer later. The third beast represents Greece under Alexander the Great, who conquered the known world at break-neck speed (hence the four wings on a leopard). The fourth beast represents the Roman empire, a kingdom like no other before it.

2. How are these kingdoms ruined in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream from chapter two?

2:44-45a—*“And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, **45** just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that*



THINK ABOUT IT

"The world has succeeded in opposing intelligence to goodness...And today any attempt to combine spirituality or moral purity with great intelligence causes widespread pangs of 'cognitive dissonance.' Mother Teresa, no more than Jesus, is [not] thought of as smart—nice, of course, but not really smart. 'Smart' means good at managing how life 'really' is."

—Dallas Willard¹

THINK ABOUT IT

"If we were required to seek God without a Mediator, his distance would be far too great, but when a Mediator meets us, and offers himself to us in our human nature, such is the nearness between God and us, that our faith easily passes beyond the world and penetrates the very heavens."

–John Calvin³

it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold."

READ 7:9–12.

9 *"As I looked, thrones were placed and the Ancient of Days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire. **10** A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.*

11 *"I looked then because of the sound of the great words that the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was killed, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. **12** As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.*

3. How does the majestic description of the Ancient of Days frame the description of the four beasts?

The beasts look terrifying, but it appears that at a mere word from the Ancient of Days their dominion is taken away and the fourth beast with his boastful horns is killed. The throne of the Most High God looks like a fiery chariot. A river of fire gushes out before and behind him while millions of people stand in his court. This is a judgment scene as well as a platform for battle.

4. Do these four kings reign by their own might or has God given them their dominion? How do we apply this directly to ourselves and authorities in our lives?

No one is where they are except that God put them there. Presidents, professors, students, and interns all serve their roles by permission of the Most High God.

This idea applies in other ways too. Do we see God's dominion over knowledge and scholarship, or do we view those areas as somehow separate as if reality is a thing unto itself? Jared Wilson writes: "We Christians are great at compartmentalizing our lives. We believe that Jesus' knowledge is for our 'spiritual lives,' but that our everyday lives require a more modern knowledge...Most of us

today have to get into the habit of thinking of Jesus as competent in certain areas of life, but it isn't enough that we settle for Jesus' mere competence. We must embrace his all-surpassing brilliance. He's not just a storehouse of facts or data; he is the wellspring of all truth. Jesus the Man didn't just teach and live the truth; he was, as he said himself, the truth itself."²

In what ways are you tempted to compartmentalize your faith from your scholarship?

In what ways have you successfully integrated the two?

READ 7:13–18.

13 *"I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. 14 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. 15 "As for me, Daniel, my spirit within me was anxious, and the visions of my head alarmed me. 16 I approached one of those who stood there and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of the things. 17 'These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth. 18 But the saints of the*

Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever.'

5. Who is the "one like a son of man?"

A being who is not a man, but looks like one, approaches the throne and is given everlasting dominion. Who is he? He is Christ Jesus, the incarnate God. Jesus refers to himself as "the Son of Man" 30 times in Matthew's gospel alone. It seems clear his intent is to identify with Daniel's vision. Here are some examples: Matt. 8:20 And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." Matt. 26:64 Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." John 3:13–15 No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. John 1:51 And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

6. Take a moment to observe what the Son of Man receives from the Ancient of Days.

He is given dominion, glory, a kingdom that all people would serve,

everlasting dominion, and an indestructible kingdom. In v14, notice that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. That's the same group Nebuchadnezzar and Darius address in their idolatry and praise of the Most High God.

**SUMMARIZE
THE REMAINING VERSES,
EMPHASIZING V21–22.**

21 *As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them, 22 until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom.*

7. Putting aside further discussion of specific end-times events (i.e. exactly who the little horn is and what his war against the saints entails), would it be fair to say this “wearing out of the saints” (v25) describes the Christian life

today? When Jesus said the world would hate us without cause (John 15:18–25), should we understand that suffering as this war against the saints?

Sin has corrupted the natural order of things from human relationships to the lifespan of plants. You may be studying diseases or destructive habits in select people groups. You may be frustrated at your inability to communicate with someone. All of this is the result of sin. What Jesus describes is a step down from that. Despite our best efforts, we may suffer injustice, misunderstanding, or hatred. We can take comfort in the fact that God has scheduled the end of it already. Even if we are ridiculed and hated like Jesus was, even if we are forced into lions' dens or furnaces, the fourth kingdom will be destroyed and the saints will reign forever with the Almighty.

ILLUSTRATE IT

As of 2014, Pastor Randy Nabors has been married 43 years to a woman who is not of his race. It's odd to say that, because race is something many want to ignore today, but the tension between people of different races still exists.

Nabors says married couples may get treated as individuals often at hotels or ticket counters, but interracial couples get it all the time. People still don't think they belong together initially.

“The stares we used to get on entering a place of business, a rude remark here or there when you could almost feel the animosity in the air,” he says. “There are lots of prejudices people used to have about such couples (as us) while actually knowing nothing about us.”

But when someone assumes they aren't a couple, he or his wife or both at once will say, “We're together.” That's the same response they give to people who assume they aren't married to Christ Jesus. “He's with me,” they'll say.⁴

WRAPPING IT UP

In 2012, Dr. Drew Randle of Bryan College in Dayton, Tenn. briefly described personal betrayal. “I was rejected and abandoned by someone very close to me, someone I trusted closely with secrets, struggles, and victories in life. The pain of the betrayal was intense, and I longed to be understood by colleagues and others close to me. But the expectation in the Christian community to have it all together made the betrayal even more unbearable, especially as my life seemed so fragmented.”

He asked himself how Jesus felt when Judas betrayed him. The Bible doesn’t give us that answer directly, but it does show us his actions. He didn’t respond in anger. He even treated him with respect. What does that mean for us? “Our first response should be to cry out to Jesus who loves us, pursues us, and intimately understands the reality of that betrayal.”⁵

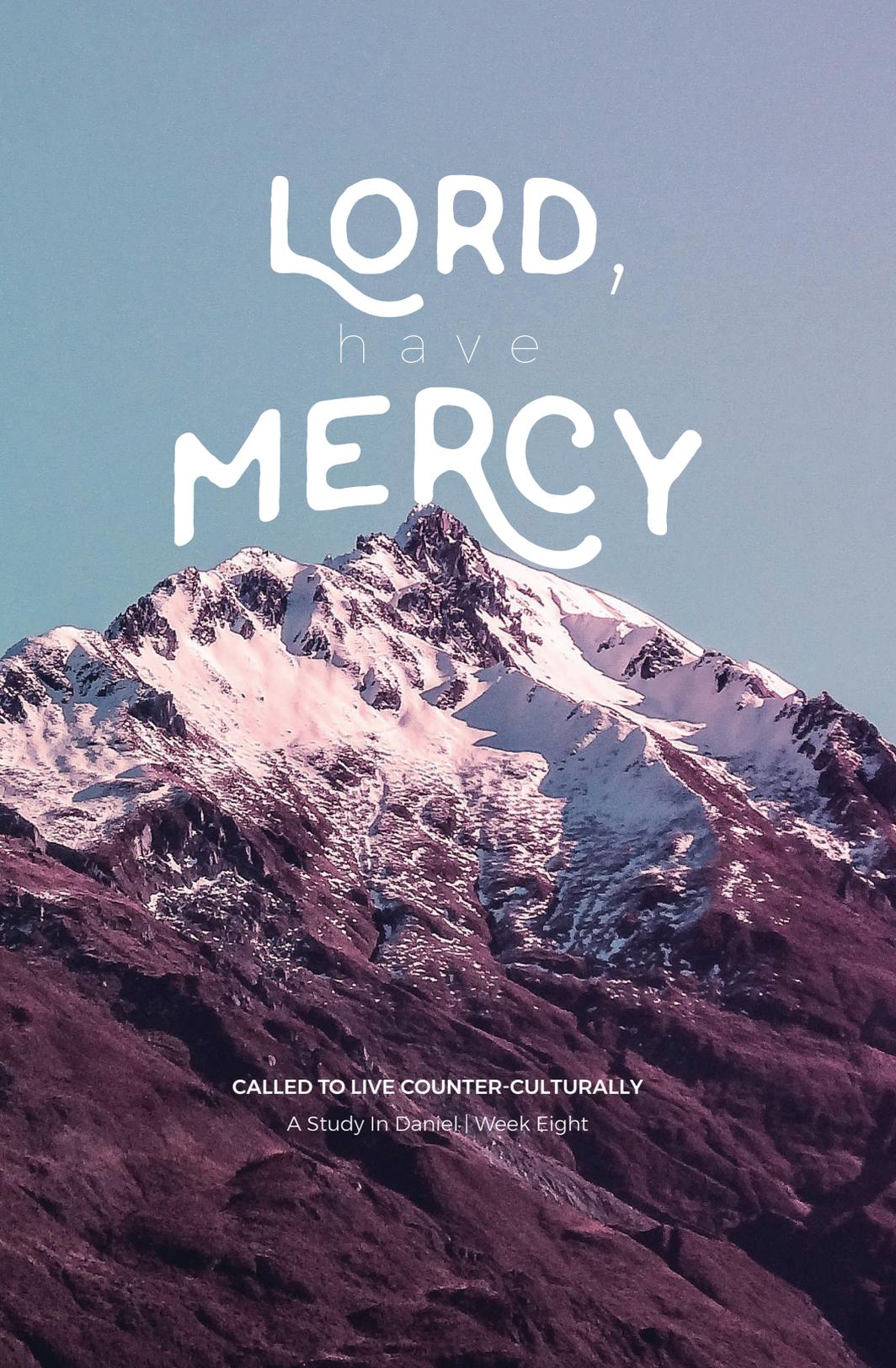
As your discussion comes to a close, end the session in prayer.

NOTES:

1. Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1998), 135.
2. Jared Wilson, *Your Jesus Is Too Safe: Outgrowing a Drive-Thru, Feel-Good Savior* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009) 93–94.
3. John Calvin, *Commentary on Daniel* (<http://biblehub.com/commentaries/calvin/daniel/7.htm>)
4. Randy Nabors, “We’re Together” (<http://randysrag.blogspot.com/2014/06/were-together.html>)
5. Drew Randle, “Suffering Through a Betrayal” (<http://www.thehighcalling.org/faith/suffering-throughbetrayal#>. U8RAS-fldXCu)

NOTES





LORD,
have
MERCY

CALLED TO LIVE COUNTER-CULTURALLY

A Study In Daniel | Week Eight

LORD, HAVE MERCY

DANIEL 8-9 | WEEK EIGHT

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WHERE WE ARE NOW

So far we have seen powerful kings limited by the all-powerful God and God's people taken through difficult trials, possibly for stronger faith on the other side. Last week, we read a prophesy of five kingdoms, the final of which being ruled forever by Jesus.

THIS WEEK

In chapter 9, Daniel responds to Scripture by repenting of Israel's sins in anticipation of being released from captivity.

MEMORY VERSE

Daniel 9:18

THE BIG IDEA

Daniel's prayer is a great example to follow for relying on God's word, confessing sin, and making our appeals based on God's character.

LOOKING AT THE TEXT

SUMMARIZE DANIEL 8.

READ 8:23.

And at the latter end of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their limit, a king of bold face, one who understands riddles, shall arise.

1. God reigns in full awareness of everyone's sins. How do you take sin into consideration in your graduate research?

When your research involves human interaction, how do you calculate for pride, peer pressure, and lying from your subjects?

In Daniel, the Lord reveals that he knows everything, even the minor details, so when godless kings take over the world, he stops them when they reach the limit he has set for them. So he is fully aware of the sinful kingdoms they are establishing, and yet

he works with them anyway. In graduate work, the effects of sin are all around us, so it's important to apply a biblical worldview to our research, one that assumes corruption and sin are tainting the Lord's marvelous creation.

READ JEREMIAH 25:10 -12, THEN DANIEL 9:1 -5.

Jeremiah: *Moreover, I will banish from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the grinding of the millstones and the light of the lamp. 11 This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. 12 Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, declares the Lord, making the land an everlasting waste.*

Daniel: *In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, by descent*



ILLUSTRATE IT

"I once saw some children who were having a good time playing croquet. Then someone moved the ball a little with his foot, pretending that it was fun, letting others know he was doing it. Then someone else, because it was 'fun' and obviously 'clever,' did the same thing. This gave those two an unfair advantage—they were kicking the ball, while according to the rules it had to be hit with a mallet—so others started kicking too. Soon they were throwing it and batting it out of turn. Then there was no more game—there could not be without rules. So the children who really wanted to play moved on because that game had been replaced by chaos."

—Kenneth Pike¹

Sin has and continues to create chaos in our world, so we must think of how we can control for it in our research as well as our lives.

a Mede, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans—**2** in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.

3 Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. **4** I prayed to the Lord my God and made confession, saying, “O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, **5** we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules.

2. What do you observe about how Daniel prays here?

He starts with God’s word, which he applies directly to his life. He doesn’t take it as a book of fables or moral principles. He believes Jeremiah’s words have come to pass (noting both the timeframe and Babylon’s being overthrown), and prays that the Lord will honor his word. He repents deeply for his own sins and all of Israel’s. He appeals to God’s covenant and faithfulness, not taking them for granted.

This is the daily life of the believer who walks in light of the gospel. We rely on God’s word and lean

into his grace, never taking it for granted despite how much God has promised us. We treat prayer like the faith exercise it is, so when we believe God will act, we will pray accordingly.

“We don’t believe something by merely saying we believe it, or even when we believe that we believe it. We believe something when we act as if it were true.”

—Dallas Willard,
“Renovation of the Heart”

READ DANIEL 9:6 –15.

6 “We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. **7** To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame, as at this day, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, those who are near and those who are far away, in all the lands to which you have driven them, because of the treachery that they have committed against you. **8** To us, O Lord, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you. **9** To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him **10** and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God by walking in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. **11** All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. And the curse and oath that are written in the

THINK ABOUT IT

“Whatever pleases kings and their counselors is esteemed lawful, sacred, and beyond all controversy; and thus God is excluded from his supreme dominion...Daniel here expresses how inexcusable all men are who do not obey the Prophets, even if a thousand kings should obstruct them, and the splendor of the whole world should dazzle them. By such clouds as these God’s majesty can never be obscured; nay more, this cannot offer the slightest impediment to God’s dominion or hinder the course of his doctrine.”

—John Calvin²

*Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against him. **12** He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us and against our rulers who ruled us, by bringing upon us a great calamity. For under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what has been done against Jerusalem. **13** As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this calamity has come upon us; yet we have not entreated the favor of the Lord our God, turning from our iniquities and gaining insight by your truth. **14** Therefore the Lord has kept ready the calamity and has brought it upon us, for the Lord our God is righteous in all the works that he has done, and we have not obeyed his voice. **15** And now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and have made a name for yourself, as at this day, we have sinned, we have done wickedly.”*

3. From what we’ve read, Daniel lived an exemplary life. What do you think about this confession, saying he and all Israel have rebelled and deserve open shame?

What are some of the cultural sins you see in your context? How can you actively pray and repent for the sins of that culture?

The horrific curse to which Daniel refers is found in Deuteronomy 28:15–68. If you look that up, be sure to also note the first verses of Deut. 30.

4. Has the awareness of your sins ever prevented you from doing something good, knowing you may not do it with pure motives or purely for the Lord’s glory?

Christians live in grace while recognizing their sins. As John teaches, “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole

world...⁴ Whoever says 'I know him' but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him..." (1 John 2:1-2,4). We aren't going to get free of sin in this life. All we can do is confess the sins we see and trust the Lord to forgive us of the sins we can't see as well. We must lean on him to walk with us through every trial and triumph we face. The Lord does not forgive us for only those sins we confess, but it is still important for us to acknowledge our sins and deliberately give them to him.

READ DANIEL 9:16 -19.

16 "O Lord, according to all your righteous acts, let your anger and your wrath turn away from your city Jerusalem, your holy hill, because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and your people have become a byword among all who are around us. **17** Now therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas for mercy, and for your own sake, O Lord, make your face to shine upon your sanctuary, which is desolate. **18** O my God, incline

your ear and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolations, and the city that is called by your name. For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy. 19 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."

5. What do you observe from these verses about how Daniel prays that you would add to your earlier observations?

Daniel makes his appeal for the Lord's favor based on "all your righteous acts," "for your own sake," "your great mercy," and "by your name." Appealing to the Lord's name and character are ways of submitting to his will. Some refer to these as "You said" prayers. There is nothing more powerful than saying to God, "You said..." to trust that he will bring what He says to pass. As Daniel says specifically, it isn't because we deserve God's favor, but because he is faithful and merciful to his people,

Bryan Chapell explains, "Grace certainly frees individual believers from the guilt of national, familial, and personal sin. The sins of our history and context do not keep us from individually enjoying the benefits of grace. And yet the benefits of grace should not keep individuals from confessing corporate responsibility for the sins of our families and culture. If I am so swept into a culture of materialism that I do not see or fight against the impoverishment of the disadvantaged, then I need to confess my personal sin. In addition, if I see and object to the sin but still live in, and benefit from, the society driven by such aims, then my confession of our corporate sin is appropriate."⁷³

that we ask to be forgiven.

Remember how Moses prayed for Israel after they sinned by making a golden calf (Exodus 32:12)? He prayed, "Why should the Egyptians say, 'With evil intent did he bring them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people." He went on to appeal to the covenant God had made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

This manner of prayer mirrors the pattern of the gospel. We appeal to God's mercy to save us and make us holy, not because we deserve it or have earned it, but because he is awesome, faithful, merciful, and worthy of worship. He says he will make for himself a people out of many nations, so for his own sake we pray he will save us, our peers, our families, and our cities. Because his kingdom will expand over all the earth, overwhelming every other kingdom, let's pray that he redeems everyone on our campuses for his glory.

6. What will you consider changing about your prayer habits because of this?

WRAPPING IT UP

"When I began my teaching career over 40 years ago, there were few evangelicals among my faculty colleagues," Dr. Charles Mackenzie said in 2003 to a congregation of grad students and professors from Florida State and the University of Florida. "I can recall a small cabal of 'bomb throwers' who called themselves evangelicals. They seemed to disrupt every discussion by lobbing a few questionable interpretations of Bible texts and then walking out. Their unwillingness to come to grips with a rapidly changing world often caused students to walk out of their classes in disgust and caused other faculty to ridicule them as obscurantists.

"Today, however, a wave of young energetic, Christian scholars is attaining faculty rank in many of our best universities. But they must be on guard lest deadly arrogance and its twin, obscurantism, return."

THINK ABOUT IT

During difficult times, we may have a hard time praying, because we don't know what to say. We shouldn't criticize ourselves for lacking words before our Lord, because he knows what we want to pray and the depths of our hearts already. His Holy Spirit within us prays according to his will constantly, so we can think of our lack of words (while still trusting the Lord) as listening to the Spirit pray for us. Another good way to pray when we don't know what to say is to use written prayers or the Scriptures. Open your Bible to one of the psalms and repeat each verse as your personal prayer or respond to the words as you pray them.

THINK ABOUT IT

'We have to persevere until Christ returns to put things to right. As Einstein's admitted, 'It's not that I'm so smart, it's just that I stay with problems longer.'

'...Perseverance in the life of the believer has its basis and source in the Lord God. It is not a matter of human integrity or honor. Christian endurance rests on the veracity of God's eternal covenant promises.'

—Kenneth Matthews⁴

The example we see in Daniel is not arrogant nor does he hide knowledge (or hide from it), but he recognizes that his people have done shameful things. They are a “byword” by their neighbors, taunted and derided for what they’ve done, but in Daniel we see humility, respect, perseverance, and intense devotion to the Almighty God. Knowing that God works in marvelous and mysterious ways, we should never allow pride to get the better of us, whether we work with blasphemers or God-fearers. In this way, we will honor the Lord and as Dr. Mackenzie said, “avoid falling into the trap described by the Spaniard Miguel de Unamuno who accused some intellectuals of being more concerned with winning an intellectual victory than with pursuing truth.”⁵

As your discussion comes to a close, end the session in prayer.

NOTES:

1. Kenneth L. Pike, *With Heart & Mind* (Huntington Beach, Calif.: Wycliffe Bible Translators, 1962), 54 -55.
2. John Calvin, *Commentary on Daniel* (<http://biblehub.com/commentaries/calvin/daniel/9.htm>).
3. Dr. Bryan Chapell and Richard Doster, “The Gospel According to Daniel: Our Conversation with Bryan Chapell,” *by Faith*, no. 44 (Q.2.14), 38 -43.
4. Kenneth Mathews, *The Theology of Work Project*, 2010 (<http://www.theologyofwork.org/old-testament/daniel>).
5. Charles Mackenzie, “The Practices of a Christian Scholar,” *Reconsiderations: Exploring Christian Thought in the University Community*, June 2003.
6. John Piper, “How to Pray for a Desolate Church,” January 5, 1992 (<http://www.desiringgod.org/sermons/how-to-pray-for-a-desolate-church>).

THINK ABOUT IT

“Without the Bible in our prayers, they will be just as worldly as the church we are trying to free from worldliness...What I have seen is that those whose prayers are most saturated with Scripture are generally most fervent and most effective in prayer. And where the mind isn’t brimming with the Bible, the heart is not generally brimming with prayer.”

-John Piper⁶

NOTES





preparing for a

GREAT CONFLICT

CALLED TO LIVE COUNTER-CULTURALLY

A Study In Daniel | Week Ten

PREPARING FOR A GREAT CONFLICT

DANIEL 10 | WEEK TEN

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WHERE WE ARE NOW

In last week's lesson we witnessed Daniel's sincere prayer for mercy for Jerusalem, as well as Gabriel's sharing of the seventy weeks. Daniel 9 also offered hope, as Gabriel offers to give Daniel "insight and understanding" (9:22).

THIS WEEK

Daniel 9 addressed the important issue of repentance and the anticipation of release from captivity. Beginning in Daniel 10 and continuing through Daniel 12, a vision is set forth that involves a great conflict, including preparation for it, the outbreak of wars, and the culmination of all things. This week the focus is on preparations for the great conflict.

MEMORY VERSE

Daniel 10:12

THE BIG IDEA

Daniel sincerely sought God's guidance via prayer, humility, and a desire to understand (Daniel 10:12). Despite conflict and challenges in the world, our hope is in God.

LOOKING AT THE TEXT

ASK SOMEONE TO READ DANIEL 10:1-9

1 In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a word was revealed to Daniel, who was named Belteshazzar. And the word was true, and it was a great conflict. And he understood the word and had understanding of the vision. **2** In those days I, Daniel, was mourning for three weeks. **3** I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine entered my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, for the full three weeks. **4** On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river (that is, the Tigris) **5** I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, a man clothed in linen, with a belt of

*fine gold from Uphaz around his waist. **6** His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a multitude. **7** And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision, but a great trembling fell upon them, and they fled to hide themselves. **8** So I was left alone and saw this great vision, and no strength was left in me. My radiant appearance was fearfully changed, and I retained no strength. **9** Then I heard the sound of his words, and as I heard the sound of his words, I fell on my face in deep sleep with my face to the ground.*

THINK ABOUT IT

“Daniel 10 is written to help us understand that life is hard and why life is hard, but also to remind us that we are not alone in our struggles...”

—Iain M. Duguid¹

1. Despite many challenges, Daniel responded by entering into a time of fasting and mourning. Do you think times of fasting and mourning are helpful to believers today? How might such times help you as you encounter difficulties in your studies?

Yes, times of fasting and mourning are helpful today. Jesus, for instance, sanctioned both fasting and mourning (see, for example, Matthew 4:2; 6:16; and John 11). Times of fasting and mourning can help us focus on God and the hope and strength he offers. We can know that, even though we may have difficulties in our studies, God cares about us and can offer us encouragement, strength, and hope.

2. Daniel experienced a powerful encounter with a messenger of God. Today, God speaks to us primarily through his Word. What can you do to make your Bible study times a more holy experience where you seek insights from God?

Bible study times should take place regularly, so God’s Spirit can move us to understanding and peace. We should seek to study the Bible in a way that truly seeks

understanding from the position of humility. Prayer should be part of our Bible study times, too, and, if we are called to do so, fasting. In addition to corporate times of Bible study, we should also have personal times of Bible study. Another thing we can do is create an environment that allows us to be open to contemplation and reflection (silence, minimal distractions, and environment where we will not be interrupted).

ASK SOMEONE TO READ DANIEL 10:10-21.

*And behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. **11** And he said to me, “O Daniel, man greatly loved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for now I have been sent to you.” And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling. **12** 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. **13** The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with*



THINK ABOUT IT

Your goal in studying Daniel 10 and following is not to conclusively determine the details of Daniel's vision or how they fit into a particular view of the end times. Instead, seek to guide the discussion around the bigger picture regarding Daniel's response to coming conflict and ongoing challenges. Focus on how Daniel responded as a follower of God and how we can learn from Daniel's example.

the kings of Persia, **14** and came to make you understand what is to happen to your people in the latter days. For the vision is for days yet to come.” **15** When he had spoken to me according to these words, I turned my face toward the ground and was mute. **16** And behold, one in the likeness of the children of man touched my lips. Then I opened my mouth and spoke. I said to him who stood before me, “O my lord, by reason of the vision pains have come upon me, and I retain no strength. **17** How can my lord’s servant talk with my lord? For now no strength remains in me, and no breath is left in me.” **18** Again one having the appearance of a man touched me and strengthened me. **19** And he said, “O man greatly loved, fear not, peace be with you; be strong and of good courage.” And as he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, “Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me.” **20** Then he said, “Do you know why I have come to you? But now I will return to fight against the prince of Persia; and when I go out, behold, the prince of Greece

will come. **21** But I will tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth: there is none who contends by my side against these except Michael, your prince.

3. In reading Daniel 10:12, what personal characteristics contributed to God sending a messenger to Daniel? What do you think makes these characteristics important? How might you incorporate them into your studies and your future profession?

Daniel set his heart to understand and humbled himself. We can also infer that he did all this with sincerity. A desire to understand more about God and his ways is a positive trait. God wants us to learn more about Him. Humility helps keep us from pride and helps us be more open to understanding instruction. If we know we don’t know it all, we can be more receptive to learning from others. A true desire to learn, driven by a humble attitude, can help us as we strive to study any subject we pursue.

ILLUSTRATE IT

Daniel continues to live a holy life before God even though he is likely discouraged about his situation. He knows a great conflict is coming, but spiritual disciplines and his knowledge about God and his nature help Daniel to see hope. In 2 Peter 3:1-14, we can draw some applicable lessons relevant to Daniel’s situation, as well as our own lives. Although “scoffers will come” (v. 3), God’s will cannot be stopped and, ultimately, great and enduring good will come about. In the meantime, we are to be found living holy lives before the Lord (2 Peter 3:14).

THINK ABOUT IT

By seeking to strengthen our spiritual life through spiritual disciplines such as prayer, Bible study, fellowship, and, if called, times of fasting, we can better prepare ourselves for facing the challenges of life. In addition, by knowing great truths about God and his nature, we can not only be encouraged, but also have true hope, knowing “that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

4. What encouragement does God’s messenger offer Daniel in 10:19? How can these words encourage you, personally?

The messenger tells Daniel that Daniel is “greatly loved,” tells him not to be afraid, and offers peace, strength, and courage. Knowing that God loves us and wants us to have peace, strength, and courage, can help us keep moving forward despite challenges.

WRAPPING IT UP

5. Daniel knows that a great conflict is coming and has also experienced incredible challenges. His response is to humbly seek understanding. When you face severe challenges or setbacks in your studies, how can Daniel’s response be a model for you to follow?

Daniel responded with humility, a sincere desire to understand, and with actions that demonstrated his intentions (mourning and fasting). Daniel also trusted God and, because of what he knew about God, could have hope despite the suffering Daniel endured. Likewise, when we face challenges, we can follow Daniel’s example.

While we will always face one kind of challenge or another, preparing ourselves for conflict is something that will require the development of our spiritual life. Daniel 10 shows us how we can respond to troubles in a way that honors God. Daniel knows there is hope because the sovereign God of the universe is in control. Even though Daniel experiences suffering, he chooses to continue to live a holy life—fasting, mourning, and humbly seeking God. Daniel knew that God’s cosmic plan for the universe, including God’s plans for Daniel, could not be thwarted.

In a similar sense, you work hard to do well in your studies—studying for exams, working toward your degree—knowing that present challenges and obstacles will ultimately lead to greater fulfillment of your purpose and calling. Your hope and knowledge of what is to come can strengthen you during present difficulties. Similarly, if we step back and look at the broader scope of history, including our own time and what is to come, we should know that God remains in control. Because of this, we can have hope not only in our studies and future career, but also

THINK ABOUT IT

“Daniel was frightened by this vision, but the messenger reassured him. Daniel lost his speech, but the messenger’s touch restored it. Daniel felt weak and helpless, but the messenger’s words strengthened him. God can bring us healing when we are hurt, peace when we are troubled, and strength when we are weak. Trust God to minister to you as he did to Daniel.”

—Life Application Study Bible
commentary on Daniel 10:10-18

in knowing that the culmination of history is under God’s divine direction.

In an address titled, “The Two Tasks,”² Christian diplomat Charles Malik called believers to develop their spiritual lives and intellectual lives. Both are important, especially when it comes to preparing ourselves for dealing rightly with the challenges we will face in life. To this end, Daniel serves as an excellent example of a servant of God who sincerely desires God and seeks to live his life accordingly.”

As your discussion comes to a close, end the session in prayer.

NOTES:

1. Iain M. Duguid, *Daniel* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2008), 177.
2. Charles Malik, “The Two Tasks,” available at http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/23/23-4/23-4-pp289-296_JETS.pdf. Also see William Lane Craig and Paul M. Gould, eds., *The Two Tasks of the Christian Scholar: Redeeming the Soul, Redeeming the Mind* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2007).

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faithful

ENDURANCE

CALLED TO LIVE COUNTER-CULTURALLY

A Study In Daniel | Week Eleven

FAITHFUL ENDURANCE

DANIEL 11-12 | WEEK ELEVEN

OVERVIEW

The goal of the Fellowship is to create connections leading to authentic community, and provide biblical perspective on becoming a Christian scholar. Therefore, be sure to:

- take time to hear from each other (15 minutes),
- review the lesson (30 minutes) and
- to pray for personal concerns and campus outreach efforts (15 minutes).

Encourage participants to read the chapter in advance, using it for personal devotionals, reflecting on the Memory Verse and journaling insights from your Quiet Time. Try to connect with others outside of the Fellowship this week. In this way your spiritual and relational goals for the group can be met. Having leaders rotate discussion will allow each to share their perspective.

GET STARTED

Open up the session by asking someone to pray. This will help break the ice and get everyone in the practice of listening to each other.

DON'T FORGET

Before you start calling on people to read Scripture or pray, make sure the individual you are calling on is comfortable with the task. You never want to put someone on the spot!

All provided Scripture quotations are in the English Standard Version

WHERE WE ARE NOW

Daniel 10 introduced the coming of a great conflict, while Daniel served as an example we can follow of how to respond to challenges—with a sincere desire to understand God combined with a good dose of prayer and humility.

THIS WEEK

Daniel 11 begins with a sweeping vision of history, showing Daniel the many kings who will rise and fall, as well as their empires, and the numerous wars that will arise. This is followed by Daniel 12, which speaks of the culmination of the world, as it is guided by God's providential oversight. Many challenges will continue for believers, but ultimately there is great hope in knowing that God will overcome all evil.

MEMORY VERSE

Daniel 12:3

THE BIG IDEA

The difficulties of life and the conflicts of history are relentless and ongoing, but through it all we are to exhibit faithful endurance, trusting in God. When trials come we are to believe that God remains in control.

LOOKING AT THE TEXT

READ THE FOLLOWING EXCERPTS FROM DANIEL 11

1 *“And as for me, in the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood up to confirm and strengthen him.*

2 *“And now I will show you the truth. Behold, three more kings shall arise in Persia, and a fourth shall be far richer than all of them. And when he has become strong through his riches, he shall stir up all against the kingdom of Greece. **3** Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion and do as he wills. **4** And as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not to his posterity, nor according to the authority with which he ruled, for*

his kingdom shall be plucked up and go to others besides these...

1. Christ spoke of “wars and rumors of wars” (Matt. 24:6). What do you think we can learn from the reality of warfare the world over throughout history?

We can learn that human beings are inherently prone to strife, both on a personal level, and on national levels. We can also learn that wars will continue, along with the suffering they bring, until God’s kingdom is firmly established.

20 *“Then shall arise in his place one who shall send an exactor of tribute for the glory of the kingdom. But within a few days he shall be broken, neither in anger nor in battle. **21** In his place shall arise a contemptible person to whom royal majesty has not been given. He shall come in without warning and obtain the*

THINK ABOUT IT

“Through story and vision ... [Daniel] communicates the most mysterious message of the Old Testament: the kingdoms of this world are not beyond God’s control; in fact they one day will be replaced by God’s own kingdom.”

—Old Testament Survey¹

kingdom by flatteries. **22** Armies shall be utterly swept away before him and broken, even the prince of the covenant. **23** And from the time that an alliance is made with him he shall act deceitfully, and he shall become strong with a small people ...

2. Political leaders and empires rise and fall throughout history, often bringing with them great suffering. Given what you’ve learned about Daniel, how should we respond to the many challenges we must endure?

God wants us to respond faithfully, trusting in Him on the basis of what we know about His nature and attributes, as well as his many promises in the Bible. Like Daniel, we should genuinely want to understand God’s ways as best we can, taking time to pray, mourn, and seek truth. We should also expect suffering. This doesn’t mean that we should seek it out, but when it comes, we shouldn’t be surprised. Instead, we should strive to remain faithful and try to discern what we can learn from our sufferings and how they can better shape our character in ways God desires.

29 “At the time appointed he shall return and come into the south, but it shall not be this time as it was before. **30** For ships of Kittim shall come against him, and he shall be afraid and withdraw, and shall turn back and be enraged and take action against the holy covenant. He shall turn back and pay attention to those who forsake the holy covenant. **31** Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the regular burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate. **32** He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant, but the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action. **33** And the wise among the people shall make many understand, though for some days they shall stumble by sword and flame, by captivity and plunder. **34** When they stumble, they shall receive a little help. And many shall join themselves to them with flattery, **35** and some of the wise shall stumble, so that they may be refined, purified, and made white, until the time of the end, for it still awaits the appointed time.



THINK ABOUT IT

It's easy to get bogged down by focusing your study time on the details of the history presented in Daniel 11. Much material is available seeking to sort out the prophetic aspects of Daniel 10, such as specific kings and empires. Iain Duguid, for instance, notes, "Calvin devotes some forty pages to a full analysis."⁷² Our focus in this study, however, is the broader view of what we can learn from Daniel today and how we can apply it to our own lives in meaningful ways. To this end, Daniel 11 and 12 teach us about faithful endurance.

36 “And the king shall do as he wills. He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods. He shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished; for what is decreed shall be done.

37 He shall pay no attention to the gods of his fathers, or to the one beloved by women. He shall not pay attention to any other god, for he shall magnify himself above all. **38** He shall honor the god of fortresses instead of these. A god whom his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts. **39** He shall deal with the strongest fortresses with the help of a foreign god. Those who acknowledge him he shall load with honor. He shall make them rulers over many and shall divide the land for a price.

40 “At the time of the end, the king of the south shall attack him, but the king of the north shall rush upon him like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen, and with many ships. And he shall come into countries and shall overflow and pass through. **41**

He shall come into the glorious land. And tens of thousands shall fall, but these shall be delivered out of his hand: Edom and Moab and the main part of the Ammonites. **42** He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. **43** He shall become ruler of the treasures of gold and of silver, and all the precious things of Egypt, and the Libyans and the Cushites shall follow in his train.

44 But news from the east and the north shall alarm him, and he shall go out with great fury to destroy and devote many to destruction. **45** And he shall pitch his palatial tents between the sea and the glorious holy mountain. Yet he shall come to his end, with none to help him.

3. Despite the many Machiavelian machinations of sinful rulers, note what verse 45 says. How can this passage give us hope today in reference to rulers who abuse power and oppress their people? What

ILLUSTRATE IT

“Attempts either to establish historical details or to determine the times and seasons may, indeed, miss the book’s [Daniel’s] capacity to deliver in the midst of time an eternal message. Yet if that message is sought first, the details need not be lost, for they will become clearer as the time of the end approaches. A healthy concern for biblical apocalyptic that seeks first to hear what Word the Spirit speaks, is greatly to be desired—particularly in times of trouble.”

—Old Testament Survey³

can we do to alleviate suffering caused by bad rulers?

Bad leaders will always be with us to one extent or another, but in the end, God will ultimately stop them from continuing to perpetuate suffering. God is in control, not the troubled ruler who thinks he is in charge. There are many things we can do to alleviate suffering, such as seeking to financially support worthy causes, praying for those enduring persecution, finding ways to create a greater awareness of the struggles some are facing, and, if God calls us to, getting involved directly via various missions and relief organizations.

ASK SOMEONE TO READ DANIEL 12

1 *“At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. 2 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. 3 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. 4 But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge*

shall increase.” 5 Then I, Daniel, looked, and behold, two others stood, one on this bank of the stream and one on that bank of the stream. 6 And someone said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream, “How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?” 7 And I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream; he raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven and swore by him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time, and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be finished. 8 I heard, but I did not understand. Then I said, “O my lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?” 9 He said, “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end. 10 Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but the wicked shall act wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand. 11 And from the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be 1,290 days. 12 Blessed is he who waits and arrives at the 1,335 days. 13 But go your way till the end. And you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days.”

THINK ABOUT IT

"Why did Daniel need to hear about this history in his situation? The goal was to put the difficulties that the Jews were facing in 536 B.C. in perspective. There was nothing unique about the trials and tribulations that faced them. The court intrigues that delayed the building work on the temple in Jerusalem and the opposition from powerful enemies that they encountered were not merely a temporary hiccup but would be an ongoing feature of life in this world...Patient endurance would continue to be the order of the day until God intervened to set up his kingdom."

—Iain Duguid⁴

4. Being wise and encouraging righteousness are important (Daniel 12:3). What can you do to cultivate wisdom and righteousness in your own life and chosen career?

Being wise means, in part, to have good judgment, right knowledge, and the ability to apply these traits intelligently to whatever situation we have encountered. To cultivate wisdom and righteousness in our lives we must first seek to love God with heart, soul, mind, and strength. By reading the Bible we can gain much wisdom, but we can also grow in wisdom and righteousness through our interactions with fellow Christians, as well as with non-Christians. If we seek to learn from every significant situation in our lives, as well as circumstances that don't necessarily seem as important at the time, then we can make efforts to gain wisdom from our experiences.

WRAPPING IT UP

Daniel 11-12 may cause us to lose focus on what we can learn from it, especially since it seems to do little more than present us with

power-hungry kings, wars, and political intrigue. But behind its historical ups and downs we can discern some common threads.

First, God is firmly in control of history. He remains sovereign, providentially guiding history to a specific culmination. Second, despite the big conflicts that occur in the world, as well as the personal challenges we face in our own lives, we are to remain faithful to God, demonstrating mature spiritual growth and patient endurance even during trials. Third, although great suffering will continue in this world, we can have strong hope in knowing that ultimately God will overcome and dwell with us: "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away" (Rev. 21:4).

What about the application of Daniel 11-12 to the life of a graduate student? Studies always present their share of challenges, which, to us, at times seem insurmountable. Grades, tests, papers,

reading, professors and the many associated tasks of staying on path to complete a degree are no strangers to challenge, conflict, and difficulties. Like Daniel, we must seek to remain faithful, exhibiting humility, patience, and a sincere desire to serve God despite our circumstances.

As your discussion comes to a close, end your session in prayer.

NOTES:

1. William Sanford Lasor, David Allan Hubbard, and Frederic William Bush, *Old Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1996), 566.
2. Iain M. Duguid, *Daniel* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2008), 199.
3. Lasor, Hubbard, Bush, 582.
4. Duguid., 200.

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