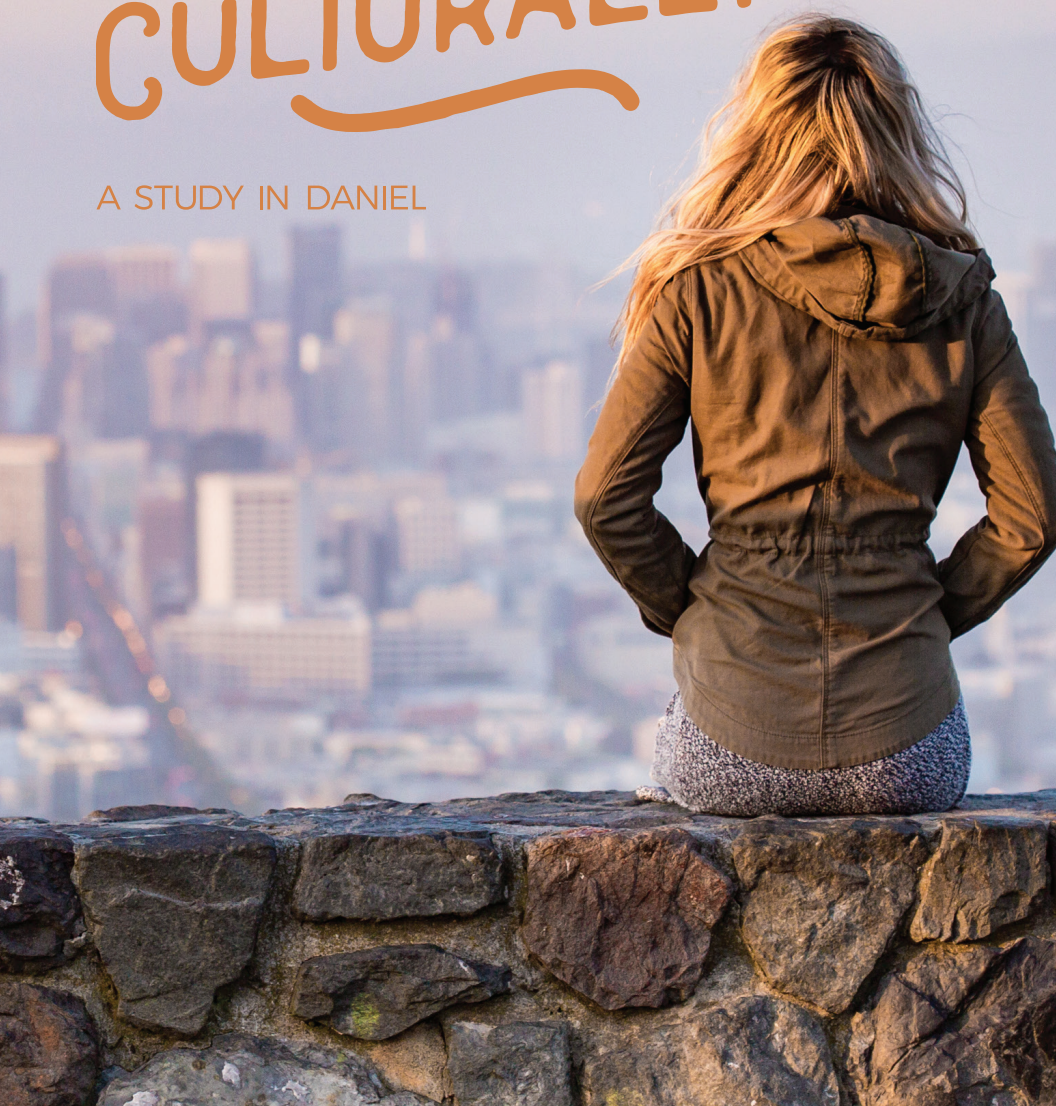


CALLED TO LIVE

COUNTER- CULTURALLY

A STUDY IN DANIEL



DANIEL

CALLED TO LIVE COUNTER-CULTURALLY

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CALLED TO LIVE COUNTER-CULTURALLY

A Study in Daniel

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CALLED TO COUNTER-CULTURAL LIVING

DANIEL 1 | WEEK ONE

PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Read Daniel 1

MEMORIZE

"And in every matter of wisdom and understanding concerning which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom."

—Daniel 1:20

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?

"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."

—Richard Horner

"What Frames What?"

DANIEL 1:1-7

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?

DANIEL 1:8-10

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

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?

DANIEL 1:11-16

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

DANIEL 1:17-21

5. 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?

6. 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?

THE GOD WHO REVEALS

DANIEL 2 | WEEK TWO

PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Read Daniel 2

MEMORIZE

“Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding;”

—Daniel 2:20-21

CONSIDER

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

Do your peers or advisor encourage you to view the world apart from God? Use Daniel’s prayer as your own for this week as a way to seek God’s kingdom before everything else.

“I wish I had known that today, just as in Daniel’s time, the vessels of the house of God have been mixed into the treasury of the world’s gods. Our problem is not that faith in God is not welcome—it is all too welcome as one more sign that the grand project of assimilation is working.”

—Andy Crouch

“What I Wish I Had Known My Freshman Year of College”

DANIEL 2:1-7

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

DANIEL 2:27-30

5. In your studies and teaching assignments, how much do you rely on a God in heaven who reveals mysteries?

DANIEL 2:8-11

2. How might the Chaldeans' final complaint summarize the fundamental problem of mankind?

DANIEL 2:31-45

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

3. Have you ever felt you were being asked to do something no one could do? How did you handle it?

7. Describe Daniel's attitude toward the king. Why do you think he speaks to him this way?

DANIEL 2:17-23

4. Reflect on each statement Daniel makes about God in these verses. You could list them all on the back of this page. Does any one of them challenge you more than the rest? Does one of them comfort you more than the rest?

WHOM WILL YOU WORSHIP?

DANIEL 3 | WEEK THREE

PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Read Daniel 3

MEMORIZE

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

—Daniel 3:17-18

"The kingdom of darkness is anything you substitute as your god instead of Jesus, the light of the world."

—Matt Chandler

Speaking on Colossians 1:13-14, which says, "He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

DANIEL 3:1-7

1. Everyone is worshiping Nebuchadnezzar's idol. Have you ever had your loyalties challenged like this? How did you handle it?

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

DANIEL 3:19-30

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

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

DANIEL 3:8-15

3. How did you interpret God's will for your life when you were applying for your graduate program?

DANIEL 3:16-18

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?

THE GREATEST KING HUMBLLED

DANIEL 4 | WEEK FOUR

PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Read Daniel 4

MEMORIZE

"... 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;"

—Daniel 4:34

"The good news is that the peace that was broken at the fall will be restored in everything, from God's reconciliation with sinners to his establishing of the new heavens and the new earth. A cosmic gospel means the restoration of all things."

—Jared C. Wilson

"Gospel Wakefulness"

DANIEL 4:1-18

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

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

DANIEL 4:19-27

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

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

DANIEL 4:28-37

4. How does the Most High and his everlasting kingdom Influence your daily life?

FOUND WANTING

DANIEL 5 | WEEK FIVE

PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Read Daniel 5

MEMORIZE

"I know, O Lord, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps. Correct me, O Lord, but in justice; not in your anger, lest you bring me to nothing."

—Jeremiah 10:23-24

CONSIDER

In your devotional time this week dwell on Ephesians 1.

"Because a God who is ultimately most focused on his own glory 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."

– Matt Chandler

"Ninety-five percent of the time the best way to defend absolute truth, if it's Jesus, is to live it."

—Tim Keller

DANIEL 5:1-9

1. Knowing King Belshazzar's party takes place on the eve of their defeat, what is your initial response? Do you condemn them for being caught in their sin? Do you have pity on them?

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

DANIEL 5:10-23

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 tell us about guarding our hearts and minds so that we remember him?

4. Have you ever failed to learn from the past? Have you ever worried that a particular unlearned lesson will come back to bite you?

DANIEL 5:24-30

5. The Word of God calls Babylon to account. How does God's Word figure into your research?

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

7. How does the Word of God give you hope for the future?

FIRST PRINCIPLES

DANIEL 6 | WEEK SIX

PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Read Daniel 6

MEMORIZE

“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. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.”

—Daniel 6:10

“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 Chapell

DANIEL 6:1–5

1. Daniel's excellent work continues to reap rewards and respect from his ungodly masters. If we could ask him directly, how do you think he would describe his career?

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?

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?

DANIEL 6:16–28

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?

5. Have we allowed ourselves to become so much like the world that confidence like Daniel's looks unrealistic, even naïve?

6. Daniel does not fear being killed or injured by the lions, but he knows he could be. What place do we give suffering in our lives?

EVERLASTING KINGDOM

DANIEL 7 | WEEK SEVEN

PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Read Daniel 7

MEMORIZE

*"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."*

—Daniel 7:17-18

CONSIDER

"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"

"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."

—Jared Wilson,
"Your Jesus Is Too Safe"

DANIEL 7:1-8

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?

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

DANIEL 7:13-18

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

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

DANIEL 7:9-12

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

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?

DANIEL 7:19-28

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?

LORD, HAVE MERCY

DANIEL 8-9 | WEEK EIGHT

PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Read Daniel 8-9

MEMORIZE

"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."

—Daniel 9:18

CONSIDER

"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 Piper

"The world finds Christianity and Christians very weird. But may they always find us weird for what was most weird about Jesus—being radical about the incredible, scandalous gift of the grace of God."

—Jared Wilson,

"Your Jesus Is Too Safe"

DANIEL 8:23

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

DANIEL 9:16-19

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

DANIEL 9:1-5

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

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

DANIEL 9:6-15

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?

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?

PREPARING FOR CONFLICT

DANIEL 10 | WEEK TEN

PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Read Daniel 10

MEMORIZE

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

—Daniel 10:12

CONSIDER

"The revelation in the vision given to Daniel on this occasion shattered any hope the prophet might have had that Israel would enjoy her new freedom and peace for long. For God revealed that the nation would be involved in many conflicts (a great war). Understanding the significance of the vision, Daniel fasted..."

—Bible Knowledge Commentary

"Daniel shows us that the conflicts that we experience here on earth are the counterpart of a great spiritual conflict that is presently ongoing in the heavenly realm. An awareness of this great spiritual conflict will help us to be prepared for the challenges of life..."

—Iain M. Duguid

"Daniel"

DANIEL 10:1-9

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?

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?

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

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 10:10-21

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?

FAITHFUL ENDURANCE

DANIEL 11-12 | WEEK ELEVEN

PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Read Daniel 11-12

MEMORIZE

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

—Daniel 12:3

“Yet at the end of the story, and for all their vaunted power, the kingdoms of this world can neither destroy God’s work nor establish it. They are merely tools in the hand of a sovereign God who is able to declare the end from the beginning because he alone ultimately controls the affairs of men and nations... In such times of personal uncertainty, we need to cling firmly onto the knowledge that all of world events, from the greatest to the least, are not only known ahead of time to God but are under his sovereign power to control.”

—Iain M. Duguid
“Daniel”

DANIEL 11:1-4

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?

DANIEL 12

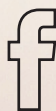
4. Being wise and encouraging righteousness are important (Daniel 12:3). What can you do to cultivate wisdom and righteousness in your own life and in your chosen career?

DANIEL 11:20-23

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?

DANIEL 11:29-45

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 can we do to alleviate suffering caused by bad rulers?



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