



WEEKLY STUDY

WEEK 2

We continued this challenging series on the Old Testament Book of Daniel. We are learning from the story of Daniel's life that we will have to be devoted, different, and disciplined as we pursue the things of God. For followers of Jesus, we can see the end point of this Daniel story. The kingdom that is to come is coming through our savior and rescuer Jesus who rules with a crown of thorns and a robe meant to mock. He invites us to live in an everlasting kingdom!

Peace of Christ,
Dr. Mark Youngman
Pastor of Discipleship

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from daily readings as well as the additional questions at the bottom of this guide. If you would like to get connected visit prov.church/smallgroups.

Find a time each day to read the passage of scripture and follow the daily prayer prompt.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: DANIEL 1.17-20 (NLT)

God gave these four young men an unusual aptitude for understanding every aspect of literature and wisdom. And God gave Daniel the special ability to interpret the meanings of visions and dreams.

¹⁸ When the training period ordered by the king was completed, the chief of staff brought all the young men to King Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹ The king talked with them, and no one impressed him as much as Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. So they entered the royal service. ²⁰ Whenever the king consulted them in any matter requiring wisdom and balanced judgment, he found them ten times more capable than any of the magicians and enchanters in his entire kingdom.

- God was the source of the gifts that got Daniel and his friends noticed by the king. Daniel was a high capacity guy with an outstanding intellect, but he also had the gift of interpreting visions. You can see why the king would notice such rare gifts. But the reason these men were seen as ten times more capable than the other impressive consultants, is that they knew their gifts came from God. If they were to have become arrogant and self righteous, they would have fallen in line with the others. These verses set the stage for us to stay connected to the Source of anything good

within us. **When was the last time you allowed your giftedness to point someone to God's faithfulness?**

- *God, I see that you desire good things for me and through me. Help me to stay focused on serving where you have planted me, even when it feels like a culture of exile. Amen.*

TUESDAY: DANIEL 2.1-5

One night during the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had such disturbing dreams that he couldn't sleep.² He called in his magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and astrologers, and he demanded that they tell him what he had dreamed. As they stood before the king,³ he said, "I have had a dream that deeply troubles me, and I must know what it means."

⁴ Then the astrologers answered the king in Aramaic, "Long live the king! Tell us the dream, and we will tell you what it means."

⁵ But the king said to the astrologers, "I am serious about this. If you don't tell me what my dream was and what it means, you will be torn limb from limb, and your houses will be turned into heaps of rubble!"

- The king was only in the second year of his reign. It seems like things were going well but he was having these dreams that kept him up at night. He was troubled in his soul. Although he didn't know what the dreams meant, he was sure they were important. The folks he brought in to help him were known as those who had gifts of discernment and wisdom. It wasn't unusual to call upon them in times like this. It was, however, unusual to demand that they tell him what his dream was to begin with. They must have felt trapped. **Have you ever faced such an impossible task that you questioned the motive of the one who gave it to you? What was the king up to here?**
- *Jesus, you supply us with everything we need to be confident in the face of impossible circumstances. Thank you for giving us a path to integrity in our discernment. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY: DANIEL 2.16-23

Daniel went at once to see the king and requested more time to tell the king what the dream meant.

¹⁷ Then Daniel went home and told his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah what had happened. ¹⁸ He urged them to ask the God of heaven to show them his mercy by telling them the secret, so they would not be executed along with the other wise men of Babylon. ¹⁹ That night the secret was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven. ²⁰ He said,

*"Praise the name of God forever and ever,
for he has all wisdom and power.*

*²¹ He controls the course of world events;
he removes kings and sets up other kings.*

*He gives wisdom to the wise
and knowledge to the scholars.*

*²² He reveals deep and mysterious things
and knows what lies hidden in darkness,
though he is surrounded by light.*

*²³ I thank and praise you, God of my ancestors,
for you have given me wisdom and strength.
You have told me what we asked of you
and revealed to us what the king demanded."*

- The king's dream had been kept a secret, so Daniel's request to God was to reveal the content of the secret dream and the mystery surrounding its meaning. They could have done research, discovering what was at the root of the king's stress that would lead to a nightmare. They might have inquired what he had eaten the night before the dream. Instead they asked God to reveal hidden things in order that they might be saved. Notice how Daniel did not question that the vision he received was accurate. He was fully confident because he knew that it was from God. You can see the narrative developing—this was about more than saving Daniel and his friends, it was about the worship of God in a land that had turned away from God. So Daniel's response to the vision was to praise God. **Has God ever answered your prayer in a way that caused you to instantly worship?**
- *Jesus, teach me to seek the answers from the Father the way you did as you walked this earth. Amen.*

THURSDAY: DANIEL 2.28-30

there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and he has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in the future. Now I will tell you your dream and the visions you saw as you lay on your bed.

²⁹ *“While Your Majesty was sleeping, you dreamed about coming events. He who reveals secrets has shown you what is going to happen.”* ³⁰ *And it is not because I am wiser than anyone else that I know the secret of your dream, but because God wants you to understand what was in your heart.*

- This was Daniel's moment to separate himself from the pack. He could have taken what God revealed to him and made an even bigger name for himself during his time in exile. Instead, he claimed no greater wisdom than anyone else and gave credit to God. In difficult situations, we can experience a struggle between survival and faithfulness. We can choose to climb the ranks, but if that's not where God is leading us, we will fall. **Have you ever felt this struggle between survival and faithfulness? What or who gives you strength in those moments?**
- *God, today I repeat the prayer of Daniel and his friends: reveal to me what I need to see so that I might reveal You to a broken world. Amen.*

FRIDAY: DANIEL 2.44-45

During the reigns of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed or conquered. It will crush all these kingdoms into nothingness, and it will stand forever. ⁴⁵ *That is the meaning of the rock cut from the mountain, though not by human hands, that crushed to pieces the statue of iron, bronze, clay, silver, and gold. The great God was showing the king what will happen in the future. The dream is true, and its meaning is certain.”*

- Read also Daniel 2.31-43 for the dream and its interpretation. Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream speaks to the impending destruction of his own kingdom, but projects way beyond the current kingdom. There will be many earthly kingdoms that come and go, but there is a kingdom coming that will last forever. As followers of Jesus, we know that he is the King of that Kingdom and we look to him beyond whatever king seems to reign today. **Do you believe that this dream is true?**
- *God, I offer myself to you as a living sacrifice. Bring transformation to my sometimes-distracted mind and restore me for your good purposes. Amen.*

SATURDAY: DANIEL 2.46-49

Then King Nebuchadnezzar threw himself down before Daniel and worshiped him, and he commanded his people to offer sacrifices and burn sweet incense before him.⁴⁷ The king said to Daniel, “Truly, your God is the greatest of gods, the Lord over kings, a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this secret.”

⁴⁸ Then the king appointed Daniel to a high position and gave him many valuable gifts. He made Daniel ruler over the whole province of Babylon, as well as chief over all his wise men.⁴⁹ At Daniel’s request, the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to be in charge of all the affairs of the province of Babylon, while Daniel remained in the king’s court.

- Just as Daniel worshiped God after receiving vision, the one who received the vision wanted to worship Daniel. Daniel instantly deflects the praise to God. The increase in status and wealth that Daniel could have claimed when he first interpreted the dream was awarded to him anyway. In humility and faithfulness, he requested that his friends join him in increased roles of leadership. It seems like Daniel was able to remain focused on the bigger picture, not considering his new status as something to behold. **Is God guiding you to something bigger than your current situation? Are you likely to get distracted by the immediate need, or like Daniel, are you able to look beyond it?**
- *God, guard my heart from pride and let me simply reflect your love and grace into this world I’m living in. Amen.*

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Read and reflect on these verses describing Jesus and the new Kingdom his life, death, and resurrection announced.

Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. Colossians 1.15

He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. Colossians 2.14

In this way, he disarmed the rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross. Colossians 2.15

The following points were made in this week’s message. In what ways are you being called to a life of courage, faithfulness, and resistance?

- *Devotion is courage.* What is our role? We point to God with our lives.
- *Different is faithful.* How must we be different? We live under the example of the true king. Extravagantly loving to all people, humble in all circumstances, kind and strong, and pointing people to the truth. Not compromising. Jesus showed the way.
- *Discipline is resistance.* Daniel says that during the reign of other kings, Jesus is building his kingdom, through us. We must live lives that feel the tension and are resistant to the ways of culture that are against God.
- *The resistance is being an image-bearer of God not an image-builder of self.*