



WEEKLY STUDY

WEEK 6

This week we wrapped up our current series on the Old Testament book of Daniel. We learned that Daniel had a contrite heart before God and it allowed for things to get better for him and for his people. As you study and pray this week, consider what your prayers demonstrate about your heart before God.

Peace of Christ,
Pastor Mark

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 9.1-3

It was the first year of the reign of Darius the Mede, the son of Ahasuerus, who became king of the Babylonians. ² During the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, learned from reading the word of the LORD, as revealed to Jeremiah the prophet, that Jerusalem must lie desolate for seventy years. ³ So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and fasting. I also wore rough burlap and sprinkled myself with ashes.

- Daniel read these words from Jeremiah 25.11-12: **Israel and her neighboring lands will serve the king of Babylon for seventy years.** It had been 70 years, so by Daniel's calculations, it must have seemed that the time of captivity was coming to an end. The promise from Jeremiah went on: **after the seventy years of captivity are over, I will punish the king of Babylon and his people for their sins," says the LORD. "I will make the country of the Babylonians a wasteland forever.** I wonder if after 70 years, Daniel had any sadness for what might become of his land of captivity. After all, he had done quite well there. Yet his heart consistently longed to return to the Promised Land. It might be helpful to think of the 70 years as an unjust jail sentence for Daniel. **Do you ever feel haunted by the memory of a better, more idyllic home? In what way are your prayers geared towards escaping captivity and returning home to God's ultimate plan for your life?**
- *God, draw me into a season of prayer and fasting as I plead with you to fulfill your promises to your people. Draw us out of our captivity and bring us to life. Amen.*

TUESDAY: DANIEL 9.4-11

“O Lord, you are a great and awesome God! You always fulfill your covenant and keep your promises of unfailing love to those who love you and obey your commands.⁵ But we have sinned and done wrong. We have rebelled against you and scorned your commands and regulations.⁶ We have refused to listen to your servants the prophets, who spoke on your authority to our kings and princes and ancestors and to all the people of the land.

⁷“Lord, you are in the right; but as you see, our faces are covered with shame. This is true of all of us, including the people of Judah and Jerusalem and all Israel, scattered near and far, wherever you have driven us because of our disloyalty to you.⁸ O LORD, we and our kings, princes, and ancestors are covered with shame because we have sinned against you.⁹ But the Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him.¹⁰ We have not obeyed the LORD our God, for we have not followed the instructions he gave us through his servants the prophets.¹¹ All Israel has disobeyed your instruction and turned away, refusing to listen to your voice.

- Daniel’s prayer is filled with a familiar pattern. He tells God how great, and faithful, and merciful God is, and at the same time how sinful and disobedient God’s people have been. It is certainly not ground-breaking news to God, but it is necessary for Daniel (on behalf of the nation) to confess that they had rebelled against God and not the little false gods of their captors. They had forgotten how to hear God’s voice. **The more honest the prayer, the better positioned we are to move towards God. Can you incorporate this pattern in your prayers today?**
- *O God, you are so good and faithful. I see this in this way_____ . But I have fallen short in my response to your faithfulness, forgive me for _____ . Amen.*

WEDNESDAY: DANIEL 9.11b-16

“So now the solemn curses and judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured down on us because of our sin.¹² You have kept your word and done to us and our rulers exactly as you warned. Never has there been such a disaster as happened in Jerusalem.¹³ Every curse written against us in the Law of Moses has come true. Yet we have refused to seek mercy from the LORD our God by turning from our sins and recognizing his truth.¹⁴ Therefore, the LORD has brought upon us the disaster he prepared. The LORD our God was right to do all of these things, for we did not obey him.

¹⁵“O Lord our God, you brought lasting honor to your name by rescuing your people from Egypt in a great display of power. But we have sinned and are full of wickedness.¹⁶ In view of all your faithful mercies, Lord, please turn your furious anger away from your city Jerusalem, your holy mountain. All the neighboring nations mock Jerusalem and your people because of our sins and the sins of our ancestors.

- The destruction of Jerusalem was a defining moment in the story of God’s people. It serves as a reminder and a marker of the gap between God’s faithfulness and ours. In this prayer of contrition, Daniel identifies that the only hope for God’s people is God’s mercy. **Have you ever been in such a place of desperation that you were able to admit that God was your only hope?**
- *God, You are my hope and my salvation. Forgive my sins and free me for joyful obedience. Amen.*

THURSDAY: DANIEL 9.17-19

¹⁷ “O our God, hear your servant’s prayer! Listen as I plead. For your own sake, Lord, smile again on your desolate sanctuary.

¹⁸ “O my God, lean down and listen to me. Open your eyes and see our despair. See how your city—the city that bears your name—lies in ruins. We make this plea, not because we deserve help, but because of your mercy.

¹⁹ “O Lord, hear. O Lord, forgive. O Lord, listen and act! For your own sake, do not delay, O my God, for your people and your city bear your name.”

- This desperate plea for the salvation of God’s holy city is relatable. We oftentimes want God to come and save our broken cities, states, and countries. It is clear that our current condition is a result of our own collective actions and so we don’t deserve God’s help. But we know God to be merciful. It is a bold prayer to ask God to adjust God’s timetable, but we also can ask God to not delay. **What does your prayer for your city sound like?**
- *O God, hear, forgive, listen and act! Restore the desolate sanctuary of my heart and make me whole again! Amen.*

FRIDAY: MATTHEW 13.13-16a

For they look, but they don’t really see.

They hear, but they don’t really listen or understand.

¹⁴ *This fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah that says,*

*‘When you hear what I say,
you will not understand.*

*When you see what I do,
you will not comprehend.*

¹⁵ *For the hearts of these people are hardened,
and their ears cannot hear,
and they have closed their eyes—
so their eyes cannot see,
and their ears cannot hear,
and their hearts cannot understand,
and they cannot turn to me
and let me heal them.’*

¹⁶ *“But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear.*

- Jesus is explaining his use of parables. His use of Isaiah’s words here demonstrate his awareness of the condition of his audience—specifically the condition of their hearts. Their hearts were hard, and therefore unable to accept a direct teaching. He used parables to allow the truth to fall on hearts that were ready to hear and respond. **How do you keep the condition of your heart from becoming hardened?**
- *Jesus, thank you for speaking in ways that the good news can come to me. Till the soil of my heart, give me ears to hear and eyes to see you at work today. Amen.*

SATURDAY: PSALM 51.16-19a

You do not desire a sacrifice, or I would offer one.

You do not want a burnt offering.

¹⁷ *The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit.*

You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God.

¹⁸ *Look with favor on Zion and help her;
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.*

¹⁹ *Then you will be pleased with sacrifices offered in the right spirit—*

- David knew that God desires for us to come to Him with a contrite heart. Daniel demonstrated that in his prayer in Daniel 9, and we are called to do the same. Instead of remaining bitter about the state of the world around us (or within our own hearts) we can look to God to rebuild the walls of that which has been torn down. When we put our hope in God to give favor and rebuild, we are more likely to give credit to God when it takes place. **Is there anything you have allowed to serve as a “burnt offering” before God instead of offering your repentant heart?**
- *God, receive my sacrifice of a broken spirit—a broken and repentant heart. Rebuild the walls of my life and restore me so that you can fully use me for your glory. Amen.*

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Many people have expressed being impacted by our study on Daniel. Discuss its impact in your personal life and the potential it holds for your community and beyond.

- What is one teaching from the book of Daniel that will impact the way you view your life as a disciple of Jesus?
- Are there any parallels between Daniel’s story and our world today?
- Daniel’s prayer from chapter 9 demonstrated a tender, grateful, and confident heart. Which of these conditions of prayer do you wrestle with the most?