

COURAGEOUS PRAYER

Connect Resource

Dates: Sunday 7th July to Sunday 28th July 2024

Purpose of this campaign: To unpack key principles of prayer in Daniel and equip people in practical ways to pray in circumstances that require courage and resilience.

Key scriptures for this campaign: Daniel 1, Daniel 2:17-23, Daniel 6:10-13, Daniel 9.

Throughout the campaign, we will be drawing from chapters 1-9. We will **not** be covering the prophecies of Daniel found in the book, including chapters 10-12.

4 weeks of supporting points to the overarching point of this campaign.

Week 1: Welcome to Babylon

Week 2: The Prayer of Praise & Petition

Week 3: The Prayer of Courage & Consistency

Week 4: The Prayer of Repentance and Restoration

Key historical context, commentary, or references:

Summary:

We want people's understanding of prayer to EXPAND beyond what they have thought prayer is. For many people, their muted prayer life directly correlates to their muted knowledge of God's character and his intentions for **partnership with us in his redemptive plan**. Prayer is not just talking to God when we feel like it, praising Him when things are good, or asking for help when things are tough. Prayer is the foundation of any fruitful life with God.

Our foundation of prayer that we build in our life means that when things get tough (and they will), we know exactly how to respond (prayerful submission to a God who hears - Psalm 139:4, 1 John 5:14, 1 Peter 3:12).

Author:

The book itself claims to be written by Daniel (10:21). For simplicity and focus, we will approach this campaign with the assumption that Daniel is the author (which is the traditional view).

Date:

Attributing authorship to Daniel, he would have received the prophecies between 605 BC and 536 BC. The story of the Book of Daniel is set right after Nebuchadnezzar's first attack on Jerusalem, where they took a wave of exiles back to Babylon. See the timeline below to orient Daniel's story in the timeline of Israel's exiles.

930 BC	The Kingdom of Israel divided into North (Israel) and South (Judah)
740–681 BC	Isaiah warns of the coming judgment against Israel
722 BC	Fall of the Northern Kingdom to Assyria: 2 Kings 17 (Isaiah dies—681 BC)
626–585 BC	Jeremiah warns of coming judgment against Judah
606 BC	Daniel taken captive to Babylon
597 BC	Ezekiel taken captive to Babylon
586 BC	Fall of the Southern Kingdom: 2 Kings 25 (Jeremiah dies—585 BC)
539 BC	Fall of Babylon to Persians
536 BC	Cyrus (King of Babylon) decrees that the Jews can return to Jerusalem (70 years from the taking of the first captives in 606 BC)
530 BC	Daniel dies
516 BC	Temple rebuilt (70 years after its destruction in 586 BC)

Background:

Daniel was just a teenager when he was taken into captivity by Babylon (17 or 18 years old!) Scholars believe that Daniel's tenure of service to Babylon extended over 65-years until he died at approximately age 85. That's an incredible amount of time to be in such a notable position of influence and in a society that had proven to be antithetical to his faith (for more info on the Neo-Babylon Empire, see [Neo-Babylonian Empire.pdf](#))

The book tells of the struggles of four young men to persevere in opposition and maintain hope as they dwelt in the land of their conquerors. We can draw many parallels between the Babylon of Daniel's time and many empires/societies throughout history, hence why the book of Daniel remains a book of the great hope of the promise of God's kingdom, which will one day reign forever, despite the pattern of human behaviour to be prideful, arrogant, and full of idolatry.

Week 1: Welcome to Babylon

Date: Sunday 7th July 2024

Key Point of this week: For people to understand the culture of Babylon, which helps them to see how Daniel prayed amid opposition. Also launching 21 Days of prayer and fasting on this Sunday.

Key Scripture/s: Daniel 1:1-8 and 1:17-20

Daniel 1:1-8

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 delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia^[a] and put in the treasure house of his god.³ Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring into the king's service some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility—⁴ young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians.^[b]⁵ The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service.⁶ Among those who were chosen were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.⁷ The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.⁸ But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.

Daniel 1:17-20

¹⁷ To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.¹⁸ At the end of the time set by the king to bring them into his service, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar.¹⁹ The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service.²⁰ In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.

Historical Context, Commentary + supporting references:

King Nebuchadnezzar (Neb for short) was the king of the Neo-Babylonian empire, the greatest empire in the known world at the time, having defeated the Assyrians and pacified the Egyptians.

John Lennox sets the scene for Daniel's Babylonian encounter well,

“[Neb] made regular visits to his conquered territories in the west, in order to take tribute and personnel from them and to dispense justice. **It was one of those visits that permanently changed the trajectory of the lives of Daniel and his friends.** It happened like this. As part of his policy for dealing with conquered nations, Nebuchadnezzar took the best of their young men to Babylon in order to have them trained to serve in his administration. Daniel and his friends were judged to be suitable material for that training, and so they were taken from their families, society, and culture, and transported to a strange and unfamiliar land many miles away. They had to cope not only with the emotional trauma of forcible removal from their parents, but also with the sheer strangeness of their new surroundings – new language, new customs, new political system, new laws, new education system, new beliefs. It must have been overwhelming.” *Against the Flow*, pg. 19-20.

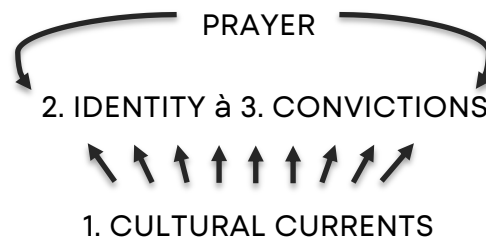
For Neb, the goal of Daniel's training was always assimilation into the Babylonian way of life. A kind of “way” that Daniel and his friends knew was not conducive to what Yahweh had instituted for Israel.

But, because Daniel's **identity** was firmly fixed in Yahweh, he was able to face the polarisation of Babylon and not just survive but be highly fruitful and favoured (although we'll see that this did not come without great tribulation!) all to the glory of Yahweh's name. The following points will unpack how prayer plays an under-appreciated role in the forming of Daniel's convictions. We can learn from the life of Daniel in this way so that we can continue in the identity that Christ has laid out for us with solid conviction.

Supporting points to key point:

This week is an introduction to the story of Daniel and the culture of Babylon. We will be setting the scene of the story of Daniel by unpacking Daniel 1 and how Daniel was able to stand on the conviction of his identity in God (Yahweh), an identity forged in prayer. How did they face the lion's den, how did they face the fire, they had a lifestyle of prayer!

Our aim is for people to begin to see that when we pray amid opposition, God grants us both favour and kingdom perspective, wisdom, conviction, and vision—focusing on the importance of prayer in a world pressuring us to compromise on our convictions.



1. Cultural Currents are *strong*.

The world that Daniel and his friends were immersed in was (on the surface) impossible to engage with while still holding to their identity as children of Yahweh. To believe in only one true God was completely counter cultural. At some points in Daniel's life, it meant he was not merely an outcast, but subject to great persecution.

2 Timothy 3:1-7

¹ But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. ² For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. ⁶ For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, ⁷ always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.

What cultural currents are we immersed in today?

- [Individualism](#) – “Do what is best for you.”
- [Consumerism](#) – “The way to live a full life is to consume more.”
- Post-Christian [Relativism](#) – “There is no real truth.”
- Secular [Humanism](#) – “You are your own god.”

2. Our identity in God must be *stronger*.

Daniel and his friends didn't respond to Babylon by throwing in the towel and assimilating, but neither did they try to take over the whole empire from the ground up. In fact, Yahweh spoke to the exiles through Jeremiah, saying, *“But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.” - Jeremiah 29:7.*

Their strength of identity in God enabled them to stand on their convictions and not allow themselves to assimilate into the Babylonian way. What does identity have to do with it? **Our identity informs our convictions.** Daniel's whole life story is marked out by how he stood tall when everyone else bowed to cultural pressures and compromised their convictions.

See this comment on Daniel's situation in Chapter 1:

“There have been extensive discussions and a variety of suggestions regarding the reasons why Daniel and his friends refused the king's food. Most work on the assumption that the

contrast is between meat and vegetables (see comments on 1:5 and 1:12 for the problems). It is true that sharing the king's food implied some level of allegiance to the king, but that would hold no matter what the young men ate. Jewish dietary laws (kosher) would likely have rendered meat unclean, but improper storage or preparation could render other food unclean as well. Furthermore, the Jewish dietary laws did not prohibit wine. The finest meats were undoubtedly supplied to the palace from the temples, where they had been offered before idols (and the wine poured out in libations before the gods), but any food could easily have come through the same route... **is not so much something in the food that defiles as much as it is the total program of assimilation. At this point the Babylonian government is exercising control over every aspect of their lives. They have little means to resist the forces of assimilation that are controlling them. They seize on one of the few areas where they can still exercise choice as an opportunity to preserve their distinct identity.**"

Walton, Chavalas, and Matthews, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, pg. 731.

An important thing to note is that Daniel's identity would have centered on his Jewish identity and God's promise to the Jews. Much like how our identity mustn't revolve around "me" but be anchored deeply in how Christ identifies us as the Body of Christ, a part of the family of God.

1 Peter 2:9-10

⁹ But you [plural] are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

3. Prayer re-aligns our identity and convictions to God's truth

It is Christ who has declared our identity. We do not create our own identity. In trying to develop our own identity or finding our identity in created things (Romans 1:25), people become the most off-track. When we pray humbly and use scripture, we allow the Truth of God to re-align our identity and, therefore, our convictions.

o Prayer is humility

Humble people are praying people. If we do not approach prayer humbly, we will try to control and manipulate God rather than allow God to re-align us.

1 Peter 5:6-7

⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷ casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

"God is the only person from whom you can hide nothing. Before him you will unavoidably come to see yourself in a new, unique light. Prayer therefore leads to a self-knowledge that is impossible to achieve any other way" – Tim Keller, *Prayer*, Pg. 12

- **Use scripture in prayer to re-align and affirm our identity**

As Proverbs says, the Word of God is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. We spend too much time wallowing in worry and confusion, ultimately leading to an identity crisis! *Enter, The Word of God*. Scripture is readily available to us ALWAYS to bring clarity, correction, and hope to our worried minds. We can harness this is by memorizing, declaring, and believing scripture about our identity.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. ¹⁷ God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.

Example Identity Scriptures:

[Galatians 2:20](#); [1 John 3:1-3](#); [Ephesians 4:22-24](#); [Psalm 100:3](#); [Colossians 3:1-4,12](#); [1 Corinthians 6:9-10](#).

See also: <https://www.lcbcchurch.com/articles/top-31-verses-about-identity-in-christ>

APPLICATION/CALL TO ACTION:

C3 SYD will be invited to participate in 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting.

Ps Alex will give instructions on the prayer and fasting elements of the campaign in his video message.

NOTE:

- We will have a 21-day devotional to follow in this campaign.
- Daniel's fast in chapter 1 is a consecration to eating only grains and vegetables. We can launch our 21-day fast from this, but note that Daniel's fast in Chapter 1 is not for "prayer and fasting" as the quote about from Walton suggests.

SUPPLEMENTARY SCRIPTURES: Psalm 119:33-40

Connect Questions

7th July 2024

Welcome to Babylon

GATHER:

- Have you ever experienced culture shock whether during travel or by living overseas? Were there things that were accepted behaviour but felt immoral to you?
- What cultural currents are we immersed in today? Discuss the ones you particularly notice and if you're comfortable, share which ones you find hardest to fight against.

GROW:

- How can you fight against cultural currents using the Word of God? Which verses speak most strongly to you about your identity in Christ?
- Taking part in a community time of prayer and fasting requires planning. What is your plan? Perhaps if you've never done this before, your connect group can help you with practical things, like the shopping list, reminders to pray and where to pray.

GO:

- What does the Word of God say about peoples' identity (all humanity, not just believers) that you can use in your prayers for salvation?
- Jesus criticized people who prayed loudly in public, drawing attention to themselves, but we should be ready with an answer if we are asked about fasting. What will you say if people ask what (and why) you are doing?

Connect Group Resources:

<https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-daniel/>

[7 Easy Tips for Personal Prayer](#)

[C3 SYD Prayer and Fasting Resources](#)

Week 2: The Prayer of Praise & Petition

Date: Sunday 14th July 2024

Key Point of this week: Helping our people know how to apply the principles of praise and petition into their own lives when they need God's wisdom, insight, and understanding.

Key Scripture/s: Daniel 2:1-23 (ESV)

Ensure that you read out Daniel 2:1-17 for context

Daniel 2:17-23

¹⁷ 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."*

Historical Context, Commentary + supporting references:

Visions and Dreams in the Ancient Near East – "Dreams were believed to have importance for revealing the work of the gods as early as the third millennium B.C. They were considered to be communications brought from the gods by a spirit messenger. Dreams often caused concern, if not alarm. The very nature of the king's dream would have suggested that the news was not good news." Walton, IVP Bible Backgrounds, pg. 731.

Supporting points to key point:

Fast-forward through Daniel and his friend's first big encounter with Babylon, King Neb had decided that these four young men were "ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom." So, they entered the King's service. Read the whole of Chapter 2 for the context of the situation.

This week, we will be exploring the story of Daniel 2 and how Daniel petitioned and praised God together with his friends in prayer for God to give them wisdom, insight, and understanding of Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

When you need answers, when things are not going as you thought, when the culture of the world overtakes you, what is our response.. Prayer!

Petition is:

1. Firstly, praise

It's recorded in the story that Daniel and his friends praised God AFTER He revealed the dream to Daniel. However, it's important to note here that when pleading, they pleaded for **mercy**, not for **answers**. They weren't just asking God to give Daniel the interpretation of the dream; they prayed based on what they knew God's character to be (merciful – Ex. 33:19, Deut. 4:31, Ps. 69:16) and God provided an interpretation.

Without immersion in God's words, our prayer may not be merely limited and shallow but also untethered from reality. We may be responding not to the real God but to what we wish God and life to be like. (Tim Keller, Prayer, pg. 62)

Praise is the habit that reminds us of who God is (here, namely, His great mercy and faithfulness). So, we praise before the breakthrough *and* after!

Philippians 4:6-7

*⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication **with thanksgiving** let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Praise towards God in scripture typically follows this kind of criteria (in any order):

- a. Remembrance of who God is.
- b. Remembrance of what He has done.
- c. Thankfulness for what He is doing.

Countless Psalms that follow this pattern (Ps. 9; 33; 103; 145, to name just a few).

There is no actual petition without praise. We can see in Psalm 103 how the Psalmist is bursting with praise. It's quite easy to imagine David coming out of this place of praise in Psalm 103 to then call upon Yahweh's name in petition to bring him deliverance from His enemies.

2. “Seeking mercy” out of that knowledge of God

Daniel 2:18

“He urged them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that he and his friends might not be executed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.”

Other translations use the word “plead”, which usually carries connotations that the person to whom you are pleading is unwilling or hard to convince. The Hebrew word for “seek/plead” here means to “ask, desire, make petition, request, seek”. God is not unwilling, nor is he in need of convincing, nor is he able to be manipulated. So, when we petition, we are petitioning for God to provide us with all that we need (according to his mercy) to see his will be done.

“The assumption of biblical prayer is that God’s action always precedes my request. The aim is not to get God in on what I think he should be doing. Rather, the aim of prayer is to get us in on what God is doing, become aware of it, join it, and enjoy the fruit of participation.” – Tyler Staton, *Praying Like Monks, Living Like Fools*.

See Psalm 18 for example. This whole Psalm is dedicated to the testimony of God saving David from the hands of Saul. Amongst His retelling of God’s saving work, David writes this;

*This God—his way is perfect;
the word of the LORD proves true;
he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.*

David was concerned with God’s way, not his own.

3. Doing it in community.

Daniel 2:17

“Then Daniel returned to his house and explained the matter to his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. ¹⁸ He urged them to plead for mercy...”

The church prayed for Peter while he was in prison (Acts 12:5). Paul asked the Roman believers to “strive together in prayer” for him (Romans 15:30).

Contrary to much belief, prayer is primarily not an individualistic moment. Many of the most well-known prayer passages in scripture speak to whole communities, not just individuals. When we read “you” in these prayer passages, they are plural, not singular, including the below “armour of God” passage.

Ephesians 6:13, 18-19

*“Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that **you** may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm... praying at all times in the Spirit, with **all prayer and supplication**. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance,*

making supplication for all the saints,¹⁹ and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel..."

When we (like Daniel) see God's mercy regarding a situation, we should do what Daniel did. Bring our closest friends in on it with us. We need friends who understand the problem as Daniel's friends did (which will mean being honest!) and those who will stand in prayer with us for God's mercy to be revealed, whatever that may look like.

SUPPLEMENTARY SCRIPTURES:

Psalm 40

Week 3: The Prayer of Courage & Consistency

Date: Sunday 21st July 2024

Key Point of this week: Unpacking how to create a foundation of consistent prayer into our lives so that we can pray with courage when we face opposition.

Key Scripture/s: Daniel 6:1-9 and Daniel 6:10-13 (ESV)

Ensure that you read out Daniel 6:1-9 for context

Daniel 6:10-13

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. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously. ¹¹ Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and plea before his God. ¹² Then they came near and said before the king, concerning the injunction, "O king! Did you not sign an injunction, that anyone who makes petition to any god or man within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?" The king answered and said, "The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked." ¹³ Then they answered and said before the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or the injunction you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day."

Historical Context, Commentary + supporting references:

We have to remember that Daniel wasn't just taken into exile, but also prayed his way through been overrun by different kingdoms. In the book of Daniel, he is under Babylon, then Mede and then Persia. (Notice the different Kings in the text).

[Persian Empire](#) – The largest, most expansive Empire to have ever existed until that point.

Satrap – "The primary administrative geographical division in the Persian empire was the satrapy. The number of these varied between twenty and thirty-one, so the text must be referring to lower-level administrative governors." - Walton, IVP Bible Background, pg. 739.

The Edict – "Persian kings were not at all inclined toward self-deification. Furthermore, the gods were considered too important to be ignored. Alternatively, it is likely that Darius was persuaded to issue the decree to address some religious/political problem without ever intending to prohibit what Daniel (and most of the population of the empire) was doing." - Walton, IVP Bible Background, pg. 739.

Supporting points to key point:

With the institution of a new king and empire (Darius the Mede, King of Persia – whose historicity is highly debated, please don't die on this hill), Daniel faces *another* situation of opposition as the expression of his faith and his life is threatened. Make sure you read through Chapter 6:1-9 to understand the background of Daniel's predicament. Daniel is SO favoured by God and excels in what he does so much that his peers (the satraps) try to get him killed!

Yet, Daniel courageously continues to pray **as he always had**, consistently and unashamedly. Daniel's foundation of consistent prayer is what built his great trust in God's character.

Daniel's foundations of consistent prayer enabled him to take courage in these times of opposition. If our prayer life ebbs and flows based on our situations (e.g., "Things are tough, so I will pray more"), we will struggle each time we face challenges. We will be rebuilding courage *through* a tough situation rather than being able to tap into a well of courage. This well is only created by a foundation of *consistent prayer* that establishes convictions and courage within us, ready for whatever opposition we face. Paul makes this clear in his letter to the Ephesians:

Ephesians 6:13,18

"13Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm... 18 praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints..."

We must draw courage from a well of consistency in prayer.

Daniel's life was not easy, steady or consistent, he had disruption, serving different kings. But what did remain consistent was his rhythm of prayer, that rhythm allowed him to face the lion's den, established his confidence and identity in Yahweh that remained firm no matter what happened around him.

After listing the prayer practices he had put in place, Keller said,

"The changes took some time to bear fruit, but after sustaining these practices for about two years, I began to have some breakthroughs. Despite ups and downs since then, I have found new sweetness in Christ and new bitterness too, because I could now see my heart more clearly in the new light of vital prayer. In other words, there were more restful experiences of love as well as more wrestling to see God triumph over evil, both in my own heart and in the world. These two experiences of prayer we discussed in the introduction grew together like twin trees. I now believe that is how it should be. One stimulates the other." - Prayer, pg. 17.

1. Find a rhythm

Prayer should have a more than a monthly or even weekly rhythm; it should be a daily rhythm that you establish with consistency. There is a reason why the Lord's Prayer says, "Give us today our daily bread". Prayer is a daily practice.

- Daniel had a rhythm by which he prayed. Chapter six tells us that it was three times each day.
- Jesus Himself often woke up early to pray (Mark 1:35)

Daniel and his friend's rhythm of prayer gave them confidence, courage, and strength in the face of the lion and the flames. Their rhythm allowed them to be confident and established in God who answers them according to his will. Their consistent prayer allowed them to build such a strong relationship with Yahweh that they were able to cry out in the face of persecution, the God we serve is able to save us but even if he doesn't, we will not serve your gods (Daniel 3:16-20).

2. Find a place

The place where you pray will significantly impact on how you pray, and how intimately you can focus on God. Daniel and Jesus both had a place where they would pray and both were very different places. Daniel prayed in the upper chamber of his house, while Jesus often withdrew to "lonely places" and "wilderness" to pray (Luke 5:16, Matt. 14:23). Both are starkly different environments. Yet, both are with **minimal distraction**, and **alone**.

Jesus taught His disciples to go away by themselves when they pray (Matt. 6:6). Imagine trying to have intimate prayer time on the train or during soccer training. Focus and isolation are two essential criteria for finding your best place of prayer.

3. Find a time

Scripture speaks about praying at all times of the day. Most notably, scripture talks about devotional prayer being in the morning and evening, which builds a foundation for other prayer throughout the day. This helps us to begin and end our day with God in reflection, thankfulness, and repentance.

Psalm 5:3

In the morning, Lord, you hear my voice; In the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly.

Psalm 63:6

when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night.

The most important thing is that we can carve out a time that we can commit to. No matter what time of day, communion with God deserves to be top priority in our lives.

This rhythm outlined in Daniel doesn't mean that these were the ONLY times Daniel prayed. It means that he had built a FOUNDATION of prayer off which his relationship with God was built.

“At a deep level of our human relationships, the real connection between people takes place below the surface of our conversations. We begin to know each other through simple presence. Prayer is the same. If we pray faithfully every day, year in and year out, we can expect little excitement, lots of boredom, and regular temptations to look at the clock. But a bond and an intimacy will be growing under the surface—a deep, growing bond with our God.” - Fr. Ronald Rolheiser, 7 Easy Tips for Personal Prayer.

RESOURCES:

[7 Easy Tips for Personal Prayer](#)

Connect Questions

21st July 2024 The Prayer of Courage & Consistency

GATHER:

- Share any experiences you might have had about overcoming boredom or reluctance in your prayer life.
- Have you had any experiences where you've "drawn from the well" of knowing God intimately in tough situations?

GROW:

- Reflect on your prayer life. Do you only pray when you're in trouble, or is your prayer life consistent and routine? Discuss with one another in the group.
- We are called to live in relationship with God, but sometimes we need to check our motivation and attitude towards prayer - are we seeking His hand, not His face? Are there distractions getting in the way? Discuss ways to develop a life of relationship with God through prayer.
- As we get to know God more through prayer, discuss the fruit of such a relationship.
- What will be your next step for your prayer life? Do you need to find a rhythm, a place, a time or all three?

GO:

- What would you say to someone who was a "fair-weather friend" of God about what they miss out on?
- How can we build evangelism into our prayer life, rather than just praying that God would save our list of friends & family? Are there strategies, verses or prayers you can share with the group?

Connect Group Resources:

<https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-daniel/>

[7 Easy Tips for Personal Prayer](#)

[C3 SYD Prayer and Fasting Resources](#)

Week 4: The Prayer of Repentance and Restoration

Date: Sunday 28th July 2024

Key Point of this week: We'll unpack the importance of repentance on our journey with Christ and the power of scripture to restore God's will into any situation.

Key Scripture/s:

Daniel 9:1-19 (ESV)

In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, by descent 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...

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...

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."

Historical Context, Commentary + supporting references:

Amongst the retelling of Daniel's wild visions, Daniel recalls how he learned of Jeremiah's prophecy that Jerusalem "*must lie desolate for 70 years*" (Daniel 9:2). There is much to say about Daniel's response here, including the way he repents and intercedes on behalf of his nation (something we too are called to do). For the purpose of this campaign, however, we will focus on Daniel's act of **remembrance and repentance** to bring about **restoration**.

“Daniel offered this prayer at a specific moment in redemptive history, under the covenant that God made with Moses, during the time when Jerusalem was the centre of the spiritual universe. Today we are in a different redemptive era, under the new covenant, when the heavenly Jerusalem is the centre of the universe.

Nonetheless, there are truths that span the covenants. Despite our differences in time, redemptive era, location, and circumstances, Daniel’s prayer was still *“written for our instruction, that . . . we might have hope”* (Romans 5:14). So how does Daniel’s prayer give us hope?” – Joe Rigney, *Desiring God*.

What does Daniel do in response to this prophecy? He prays a beautiful prayer of repentance. He clearly confesses the sins of Israel, remembers specifically God’s covenant with them, and pleads confidently with God to restore them, knowing that God is faithful to His promise.

Supporting points to key point:

At this point in Daniel’s life, he had seen it all. He saw his home destroyed, he was immersed in a completely new counterculture, his identity constantly threatened, his friends thrown into a furnace, himself thrown into a den of lions, and yet persevered as a man of prayer and a devout follower of Yahweh. Now, in his 80’s, he rediscovers Jeremiah’s prophecy about the restoration of Jerusalem.

This prayer is not about praying for himself, but he takes on the burden to pray for Jerusalem. Prayer is not just about you; we are called to pray for other people and other nations (2 Chronicles 7:14).

Let’s look at the key elements of Daniels prayer: Confess and Repent and Remember and Restore

1. Repentance

Here, Daniel engages in a practice of repentance. “The Hebrew word that most closely approximates “repent” or “repentance” is translated into English as “return,” which basically means “to turn around and go in the opposite direction.” In theological contexts, the implication is to turn from a road characterized by rebellion toward God and to a road characterized by obedience. The emphasis is upon actions that necessarily proceed from turning one’s orientation toward God” (Lexham Bible Dictionary).

Daniel does not waste time trying to make excuses for the sin of his people. He recognises that Israel as a whole *“have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from [Yahweh’s] commandments and rules.”* (Daniel 9:5).

Sometimes we can tend to make excuses for our own sin or try to rationalise our way out of taking responsibility, but this only causes us more pain! Being ignorant of our own brokenness and rebellion towards God means that we give God no room to restore us. We will continue in our own pride and in the consequences of continuing in sin.

See this quote below from Tyler Staton on the importance of clear confession:

“One of the names thrown around for Jesus is the great physician. But a doctor can’t heal you without an accurate diagnosis. If you show up to a great doctor and describe yourself as “generally sick,” they’re not gonna be able to do a lot for you. To confess is to say, “I want to name my symptoms, completely and comprehensively, because I want healing, completely and comprehensively.” – Tyler Staton, *Praying Like Monks, Living Like Fools*.

2. Remember Specifically

“Daniel remembers God’s word and God’s works. In confessing, Daniel directly quotes Deuteronomy 7:9, and frames his prayer by Israel’s failure to obey the law of Moses (Daniel 9:11). In exiling Israel, God is simply confirming the oaths and curses he laid down in Deuteronomy 28. Even more than that, Daniel remembers the great works of God, especially the exodus, when God brought his people out of Egypt with a mighty hand (Daniel 9:5). – Joe Rigney, *Desiring God*.

When we use scripture to frame our prayer life and guide our confession of sin, we can pray in confidence, knowing that we are humbling ourselves in submission to the word of God, ready to be convicted and rebuked of whatever sin is entangling us.

We can remember both God’s warnings (Hebrews 10:26-31) and discipline (Hebrews 12:7-11), as well as his promises.

3. Restoration: Seek/Plead Confidently

Again, Daniel pleads for God’s mercy as he did in Chapter 2 (which we spoke about in week 2). See notes on week 2 about seeking God’s mercy in prayer.

The way Daniel asks for God to restore Israel isn’t because He really wants it to happen and thinks it’d be a good idea, but because he recognises that he would be seeking God’s mercy based on a declaration God had made to Jeremiah to restore Jerusalem. “In doing so, Daniel demonstrates his deep faith in Yahweh’s fundamental character toward his people: he is a God compassionate and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love (Exodus 34:6-7).” (Joe Rigney, *Desiring God*).

What does this mean for us? The author of Hebrews makes it clear that we can “*come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.*” Hebrews 4:16. God is a God of good

judgement and is also loving, forgiving and merciful to those who humble themselves before Him (2 Chron. 7:14; Ps. 103:8-18). The prayer of restoration of God's promises and will are powerful. Our daily prayer is "let your Kingdom come and let your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Matthew 6:10.

SUPPLEMENTARY SCRIPTURES:

- See also Isaiah 63:7-64:11 for another example of penitential prayer.

Commentary/Blogs:

This is the blog that much of this week's content is built off:

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/kneeling-among-lions>