

GROWTH + GROUPS

NAVIGATE LIFE TOGETHER

Maranatha Chapel Sermon Based Study Guide
SB 1.14.2024

PRAY LIKE YOUR LIFE DEPENDS ON IT– DANIEL 2:1-23

Receiving the Message and Relating to the Study

What insights, principles or observations stood out to you from this week's message? Discuss with your group.

Pastor Daniel tells us, "At this point, we are starting to get a sense of the kind of man Daniel was. The first chapter revealed him to be a principled man. Instead of bowing to peer pressure, Daniel 'purposed in his heart' that he wouldn't defile himself. In a day and age when everyone else was content to go with the flow, Daniel stood up for what was right and it caused him to stand out in all the best ways. In today's study, we're going to learn that in addition to being a principled man, Daniel was also a man of prayer. This won't be the only time we talk about Daniel's prayer life. Prayer weaves its way through the entirety of his story like a thread. My hope in studying Daniel's prayer life is that we will be inspired to begin to call out to the Lord more earnestly in prayer. I believe with all my heart that God is calling us to be a praying church." Let's get into our lesson...

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

1. What struck you most from the Pastor Daniel's sermon?
2. Studies have shown that the average person has 4-6 dreams a night. Yet 95% of our dreams are forgotten. Share a fun dream you recently had and what made it so special?

Many people worry about the future, but as Christians we can choose not to worry because we know the One who controls the future. We also know the kingdoms of this world will pass away. From the texts we will discuss today, we are reminded that God is God and we are not. God showed Himself to be God by revealing to Daniel both the content of Nebuchadnezzar's dream and the interpretation. Through these events, God revealed to Nebuchadnezzar that it was God who had given him the power he currently enjoyed, and it was God who would soon take it away.

Digging Deeper in God's Word: Life Lessons

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DANIEL 2:1-13

1. Why do you think that Nebuchadnezzar asked someone to tell him his dream instead of telling them the dream first? What was he afraid of by telling the wise men his dream?
2. In your opinion, why were the astrologers and magicians not able to interpret the dream?
3. Explain how God revealed the dream to Daniel. How would you feel if God revealed an important dream like Daniel's to you?
4. Think about a time when you faced an impossible situation or circumstance. What did you do to resolve it and how did you respond?
5. Why is it so important for us as Christians to seek the Lord in those times that seem impossible?

Throughout history people have felt that dreams are very important. Many people think that their dreams tell them about the future. This was very true in Babylon. We will see that the Lord used Daniel to interpret the dreams of several kings. This tells us about the first such dream. One night the king of Babylon had a dream. As he usually did, the king called for his astrologers and fortune tellers to come and interpret the dream for him. These men were able to interpret some dreams and tell things about the future through the power of Satan. This time the king chose not to tell them the dream but wanted them to tell him the dream. They complained that this was impossible and no one on earth could do what the king asked. God used this situation to show He is far more powerful than Satan or any other so called 'god' of Babylon.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DANIEL 2:14-23

1. What was the first thing that Daniel did when he found out the king planned to kill all the wise men?
2. What do you notice about the tone and character of the way Daniel responded to the news that the King was going to kill all the wise men? (Dan. 2:14-16)
3. In Daniel 2:18 we see that Daniel went immediately to his friends and "they pleaded for mercy from the God of heaven..." Who do you have in life that goes to God in prayer for you? (Explain why small groups are so important and we should not neglect fellowship and prayer cc Heb. 10:19-25).
4. Read Daniel's response to God (vs 20-23) after the Lord revealed the dream. What stands out to you about Daniel's prayer and how should this impact our response to when God is active in our lives?
5. Name as many character traits of God as you can from Daniel's prayer in vs. 20-23. What does this tell you about Daniel?

Applying God's Word

What did you learn from this study and how does this personally speak to you? Discuss with your group.

After praising God for who He is and what He does, Daniel worships Him for being the revealer of hidden things. The gods of Babylon couldn't help the king, and the wise men proved to be worthless, "but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries." Are you distressed today? Do you need wisdom? Do you need answers? Do you need a breakthrough? Then learn from Daniel's example and begin to pray, but don't just pray. There is great power in prayer. There is even greater power in unified prayer. And there is great, great, great, power in unified, fervent prayer! So, start praying, and when you receive the answer, don't forget to give Him thanks.

1. How does our God use our difficult situations and circumstances that seem impossible for both His glory and our good?
2. What thoughts or concerns keep you from sleeping at night? How do you resolve the restlessness and anxiety?
3. Take time in your group to praise God for who He is and what He has done. How can you make "praise" a part of your daily life?

PRAYER: Close in prayer, asking God to help your group trust Him more this week. Pray that we would not worry about the future, but that we would have faith in the one true God who is ultimately in control.

"You have searched me, LORD, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways." {Psalm 139:1-3}

WHAT IS THE KEY TO ANSWERED PRAYER:

We all want our prayers to be “effective,” so much so that when we focus on the “results” of our prayers, we lose sight of the incredible privilege we have in prayer. That people like us can speak to the Creator of the universe is itself an amazing thing. Even more astounding is the fact that He hears us and acts on our behalf! The first thing we need to understand about effective prayer is that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ had to suffer and die on the cross to even make it possible for us to approach the throne of grace to worship and pray (Hebrews 10:19-25).

Although the Bible offers a great deal of guidance on how we can deepen our communication with the Creator, effective prayer has more to do with the one doing the praying than it does with “how” we are to pray. Indeed, Scripture says, “The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective” (James 5:16), and that the “eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer” (1 Peter 3:12; Psalm 34:15), and, again, “the prayer of the upright pleases Him” (Proverbs 15:8). Prayer saved the righteous Daniel from the lion’s den (Daniel 6:11), and in the wilderness, God’s chosen people benefitted from Moses’ right standing with God (Exodus 16–17). The barren Hannah’s steadfast and humble prayers resulted in the prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 1:20), and the apostle Paul’s prayers even caused the earth to shake (Acts 16:25-26). Clearly, the passionate prayers of God’s righteous children can accomplish much (Numbers 11:2).

We need to make sure that our prayers are in line with God’s will. “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, he hears us” (1 John 5:14-15). Praying in accordance with God’s will is essentially praying in accord with what He would want, and we can see God’s revealed will throughout Scripture. And if we do not know what to pray for, Paul reminds us that as God’s children we can rely on the Holy Spirit to intercede for us, as “the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will” (Romans 8:27). And since the Spirit of God knows the mind of God, the Spirit’s prayer is always in keeping with the will of the Father.

Additionally, prayer is something believers should do “continually” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). In Luke 18:1, for example, we are told to pray with persistence and “not give up.” Also, when we present our requests to God, we are to pray with faith (James 1:5; Mark 11:22-24), with thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6), with a spirit of forgiveness toward others (Mark 11:25), in Christ’s name (John 14:13-14), and as stated above, with a heart that is right with God (James 5:16). It’s the strength of our faith, not the length of our prayers that pleases Him to whom we pray, so we don’t need to impress God with our eloquence or intelligence. After all, God knows what our needs are even before we ask (Matthew 6:8).

Also, we should make sure we have no unconfessed sin in our hearts when we pray, as this would certainly be an impediment to effective prayer. “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear” (Isaiah 59:2; cf. Psalm 66:18). Fortunately, “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Another barrier to effective communication with God is praying with selfish desires and wrong motives. “When you ask you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures” (James 4:3). Rejecting God’s call or ignoring His advice (Proverbs 1:24-28), worshiping idols (Jeremiah 11:11-14), or turning a deaf ear to the cry of the poor (Proverbs 21:13) serve as additional obstacles to an effective prayer life.

Effective prayer is a way to strengthen our relationship with our Father in heaven. When we study and obey His Word and seek to please Him, the same God who made the sun stand still upon the prayer of Joshua (Joshua 10:12-13) invites us to come boldly before the throne of grace and pray with confidence that He will extend His mercy and grace to help us in our time of need (Hebrews 4:16).