



The Daniel Fast

21 Days In The Lord's Presence

Wayne and Sharon Gill

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Introduction

“And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, “Why could we not cast [the demon] out?” So He said to them, “This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.” Mark 9:28–29 NKJV

Some years ago we felt ourselves slipping into a spiritual rut. You wouldn't have guessed it from outward appearances. We were active in church and wearing multiple leadership hats. We were deeply committed to serving the Lord, but something felt missing. No matter what we did, we couldn't shake the feeling that God wanted *more* from us.

What do you do in a situation like that? What do you do when you've prayed, searched the Scriptures, and taken other spiritual steps, but still sense that you're in need of a breakthrough?

In our case, we decided to add fasting to our prayers. We hadn't fasted much before then and so we knew very little about it. What we did know was that we wanted to draw closer to God and to take our spiritual lives to another level. Perhaps through denying ourselves, we would obtain a more impactful encounter with God.

One of the Scriptures that made us believe this was possible is partially quoted in the beginning of this chapter. The story involves a young, demon-possessed boy who was brought to Jesus' disciples for healing. The disciples

attempted to cast out the demon but could not. After Jesus personally evicted the demon, the disciples asked why they had failed. Jesus replied that “this kind [of demon] can come out by nothing but prayer *and fasting*.”

Our interpretation was that certain spiritual obstacles are so difficult that they require a deeper measure of faith and spiritual power to overcome them. Jesus stated that fasting can add that extra spiritual force required to prevail on the invisible battlefield of faith.

This theme is repeated throughout the Bible. Going back more than 1000 years before Christ, God’s people often fasted in times of national emergency, or when there was a need to draw nearer to God. It was a time to set aside the distractions of everyday life and to focus upon the Lord. Often the people fasted when they needed God’s protection from enemies or God’s deliverance in a crisis.

So what does this have to do with the Book of Daniel?

Roughly 600 years before Christ, the southern kingdom of Israel (Judah) was captured by Babylon. Daniel was one of God’s people relocated to Babylon where he was groomed as an official of the royal court, charged with helping the transition of the other captives.

Upon arrival in Babylon, he was asked to eat at the royal table. But Daniel was a devout Jew who had covenanted with God to follow a strict dietary law.

Stepping outside of this law and eating the king's food would mean disobeying God. But refusing the king would mean his instant death.

Even at the risk of his life Daniel refused the king's delicacies, and chose by faith, to eat only vegetables and water. The result was that after ten days, Daniel was accounted as 10 times healthier than everyone who had eaten the king's treats.

And that is our hope for you during this 21-day experience. As you follow this study and follow along in fasting, we pray that you will emerge 10 times better than when you started. Ten times closer to God. Ten times spiritually rejuvenated. Ten times more purposeful and on-fire for God.

A few suggestions on what you may choose to fast during this journey. Daniel fasted from the king's lavish menu of all kinds of exotic meats, cakes, grains and delicacies. He ate only water and vegetables. Subject to your physician's input, we suggest that you follow the same practice: Eat only water and vegetables during this period.

True fasting always involves self-denial. During the fast, you are to set aside those foods and "delicacies" that are most pleasing to you. Some refer to this as the setting aside of all "meats, sweets and treats." During the time of self-denial, your focus should be placed on God, in prayer and meditation on His word. Listen for what God may be saying to you and keep notes in a journal if you would like.

Most people associate fasting with food, but you may also fast from certain favorite activities such as television or social media. Let the Lord lead your spirit. If the activity feels like a “treat” then you should contemplate abstaining during the fast.

Although you may fast from social media for entertainment purposes, be sure to follow our posts during the fast. There will be many others who are following the fast and they will be posting their feedback, struggles and testimonies. This will provide you with encouragement when the days are difficult, and you feel that double-cheeseburger calling out to you!

And remember, we will also be praying for you and with you. Years ago, as we emerged from our fast, God gave us a vision for a bold new ministry. We had no idea of how it would work or where we would get the resources. We had to place our full trust in God. He did not disappoint. The road had its challenges, but God was faithful.

He has carried us on eagle’s wings. He has done the miraculous. He has exceedingly and abundantly exceeded all we thought of or asked for. That is the God who we serve. It’s our prayer that you will encounter Him in powerful new ways as you embark upon this blessed journey.

Wayne and Sharon

How To Use This Book

Before you jump in Day One, we wanted to offer a few words about how the study is designed and some suggestions about how you can get the most out of it. You may follow your own intuition, but these guidelines will help you to maximize the lessons.

Structure Of The Study

The Study is designed with 21 Sections that should be completed daily over a 21-day period. You should try and complete one section per day, but let your spirit lead you. It may take you more time to get through the material, but it's better to slow it down and really experience the teaching, rather than plowing ahead without prayer and understanding just to keep up.

Each day begins with some background material on the assigned reading, the reading itself, followed by some questions to think about. At the end of the questions is a short prayer you may adopt, or you may create one of your own. We've also suggested some short "Extra Mile Reading" where we felt it complimented the material. These readings are optional but will deepen your experience if you include them.

Set Aside Time

We suggest you set aside time before or at the end of your day to complete each day's work. The lessons are designed to be completed in 20

minutes or less, so you may be able to cover the material during a lunch break or other downtime. Whatever period you choose, it's important that you honor the Lord and your decision by scheduling time to pray and complete the readings.

Maintain Perspective

The purpose of this study is to help you to draw closer to God in prayer and fellowship and to ultimately experience a breakthrough in your area of need. Do not become flustered or frustrated if you happen to miss a day or fall behind. We're all human. Make up the missed time when you can. God may want to slow it down with you. Stay the course.

Pray About Specific Requests

No one can tell you what to pray. However, we suggest you pray for specific things. Petitions such as "Bless me, Lord" are better than no prayers at all. But you will find greater impact on your inner life when your prayers are definite and you observe to see how God moves in those areas.

Remember that fasting is designed to promote self-denial and God-exaltation. It facilitates your drawing nearer to God and experiencing the special bounty that flows from that decision. Make your prayers and encounters with God as personal and meaningful as possible.

We are praying for and expecting God's richest blessings for you on your journey!

Day One

“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 1:8 NIV

Background

The setting of Today’s Reading takes place after the southern kingdom of Israel (Judah) fell to the Babylonians and many survivors of the war are taken captive. Daniel and a group of young, educated men from noble families were also captured and given appointments in the foreign king’s court to assist in indoctrinating those captured to blend into the Babylonian culture.

This society reveled in many things foreign to Daniel’s culture and religion, such as worshiping multiple gods and eating certain foods prohibited under the strict Judaic dietary system. A moment of truth arose when Daniel was commanded to eat from the king’s menu in violation of his sacred beliefs.

Read Today’s Scripture Reading below to discover Daniel’s dilemma and his life-changing decision. Then answer the questions that follow the reading.

Today’s Scripture Reading

Please read Daniel Chapter 1: Verses 1-14

Questions

1. Have you ever been in a situation where you were asked to compromise something you believe in or held sacred? Describe how you handled it.

2. The reading states that “Daniel *resolved* not to defile himself with the royal food and wine.” Have you made any personal resolutions for the next 21 days? What are they and how do you intend to keep them?

3. What do you think gave Daniel the strength to make the resolutions that he did? How can you develop the same strength?

Today's Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,
Thank you for being close to me
Even when I stray from you.
Help me to maintain a clean heart,
And to choose you when I'm tempted
To compromise and to take shortcuts.
Help me to develop a heart like Daniel
And the strength to live it out in faith.

Amen.

Extra Mile Reading

Please Read Psalm 51. Record your thoughts in your journal if you are keeping one.

Day Two

“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.” Daniel 1:17 NIV

Background

Daniel took a bold step for God. By refusing the king’s offerings, he ensured that he and his friends who also followed his lead, were headed for a showdown with the king. If their physical condition did not improve, they would be bound to eat from the king’s table or face death.

Daniel had demonstrated his faith. Would God show Himself faithful?

Today’s Scripture Reading

Please read Daniel Chapter 1: Verses 15–21

Questions

1. How has your faith been tested recently? What did you do about it?

2. God rewarded Daniel and his friends for their faith in Him. What “rewards” are you seeking from God during the next 21 days?

3. God made Daniel and his friends “10 times better” than the people who ate from the king’s table. What would you like God to make “10 times better” in your life?

Today’s Prayer

My Lord and my Shepherd
When I am challenged by the issues of life
Please strengthen me to stand in faith,
And remind me that you are
The all-powerful maker of heaven and earth.
But also, a friend that is nearer to me than a brother.
As I take this 21-Day journey of prayer and fasting
Please grant me the courage to ACT on my convictions.

Amen.

Extra Mile Reading

Please read James 2:14–22. Record your thoughts in your journal if you are keeping one.

Day Three

“The king replied to the astrologers, “This is what I have firmly decided: If you do not tell me what my dream was and interpret it, I will have you cut into pieces and your houses turned into piles of rubble.” Daniel 2:5 NIV

Background

The background of today’s lesson involves a dream by the king and what seems to be an impossible request. The king dreamed an incredibly detailed and significant dream. He then demanded that his wise men and prophets tell him the details of his dream with no input from the king and also the interpretation of it! If the wise men failed to read the king’s mind and tell him the details of the dream and then the interpretation of it, they would be put to death.

Once again Daniel’s faith would be tested. Considered among the wise men of Babylon, he and his friends were also subject to the same decree. If the king’s dream could not be recounted and explained, they would also be put to death.

Today’s Scripture Reading

Please read Daniel Chapter 2: Verses 1-13

Questions

1. Have you ever encountered what seemed like an impossible situation? How did you handle it?

2. In verse 10, the wise men stated that no one on earth could do what the king requested. Is anything too difficult for God?

3. Is there something the world has labeled “impossible” that you are praying for during this 21-Day fast? If not, why not?

Today's Prayer

Dear Lord

There's nothing that ever takes you by surprise.

Forgive me when I try and handle things by myself

Or when I crumble in despair at my situation.

Strengthen my heart and help me to trust you

When my world seems to spiral out of control.

Give me wisdom and understanding for this day

And a remembrance that you give bright hope for tomorrow.

Amen.

Extra Mile Reading

Please read Luke 1:28-37. Record your thoughts in your journal if you are keeping one.

Day Four

“Daniel replied, ‘No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries.’” Daniel 2:27 NIV

Background

Sometimes life presents unexpected difficulties. Daniel and his people were already in a crisis, being captives in a foreign and hostile land. In ancient Babylon, the king ruled with absolute authority so his word was law and could not be challenged. On the king’s whim, Daniel and all the wise men of the land would either satisfy the king’s demands or die.

What do you do when significant challenges emerge in your life without warning? You can handle it on your own or you can follow Daniel’s example. Please read Today’s Scripture reading to see how Daniel handled the volatile and dangerous situation.

Today’s Scripture Reading

Please read Daniel Chapter 2: Verses 14-23

Questions

1. How did Daniel handle the news of the king’s edict? What can you learn from his response?

2. How did God answer Daniel's prayer? Can He do the same for you?

3. What can you do in your life when negative things happen that are out of your control?

Today's Prayer

Dear God
Nothing is impossible for you.
At times my faith is weak
And I feel like giving up.
But deep in my heart I know that you are able.
People and kingdoms may come and go.
But you are forever and ever.
Thank you for reminding me.

Amen.

Extra Mile Reading

Please read Psalm 25. Record your thoughts in your journal if you are keeping one.

Day Five

“Then the herald loudly proclaimed, ‘Nations and peoples of every language, this is what you are commanded to do: As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.’”

Daniel 3:4-6 NIV

Background

It wasn't long before Daniel and his people were met with another life challenge; one that perhaps you've also faced. In Today's Reading, Daniel is asked to compromise the very heart and soul of his faith: Belief and worship of the One True God.

Cast in a society that worshiped multiple gods and multiple values, Daniel was asked once again to choose between the popular culture and his most cherished beliefs.

Today's Scripture Reading

Please read Daniel Chapter 3: Verses 1-7

Questions

1. What kind of “images” does our world seem to worship today?

2. Jesus said, “Be in the world, but not of the world.” What does that mean to you?

3. Daniel maintained his values while under pressure from the king to do otherwise. He maintained his strict diet in the face of possible death, he spoke the truth to the authorities, and he was faithful to his friends. List some things you can do daily to reinforce your values.

Today's Prayer

Heavenly Father
The world is full of distractions
That demands our attention.
There are responsibilities
That battle us for center stage.
Help me to eliminate worthless idols
And to focus on what is eternal.
Keep me devoted to you in all my ways.

Amen.

Extra Mile Reading

Please read Romans 12: 1-2. Record your thoughts in your journal if you are keeping one.

Day Six

“But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up.” Daniel 3:12 NIV

Background

In all of God’s creation, only the souls of people are eternal. The Bible teaches that at some point in the future, the very world as we know it will melt away. The only thing that will survive are the souls of God’s people. Jesus died for people. We are the prize of all creation.

Yet we live in a fallen world. Absent the grace of God, we all fall short of His best. People can be cruel. People are often the cause of much of the pain that we experience. In Today’s Scripture Daniel and his friends must once again take a stand. But instead of encouraging them, their fellow wise men are only too willing to betray them. They seemed to have forgotten who had previously saved their lives.

Today’s Scripture Reading

Please read Daniel Chapter 3: Verses 8-16

Questions

1. Have you ever been betrayed by a friend or colleague?

2. What did Daniel do to the men who reported him?

3. During this time of fasting, is there someone you need to forgive? Is there a grudge that you should let go?

Today's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
As we have also forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one.

Amen.

Matthew 6:9-13 (NIV)

Extra Mile Reading

Please read Matthew 18: 21-35. Record your thoughts in your journal if you are keeping one.

Day Seven

“I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at home in my palace, contented and prosperous. I had a dream that made me afraid. As I was lying in bed, the images and visions that passed through my mind terrified me.” Daniel 4:4-5 NIV

Background

Fear is a destructive emotion. It is the opposite of faith. Whereas faith is believing God for a positive outcome, fear pushes God to the side and believes for a negative outcome. No one is exempt from fear. All people face times of fear and trepidation. For the people of God, He encourages us to cast our cares on Him.

In Today's Reading the king had yet another dream. This time the dream terrified him. The dream seemed to foretell an ominous future.

Today's Scripture Reading

Please read Daniel Chapter 4: Verses 4-37

Questions

1. Even powerful kings have fears. How have you allowed fear to hold you back in life?

2. How did the king deal with his fear?

3. As you draw nearer to God in prayer and fasting, do you believe God is able to deliver you from your fears? How and why?

Today's Prayer

Dear Lord,
Your word says that perfect love casts out fear,
But I am still fearful at times.
Please calm my anxious mind
And fill me with your peace
That passes all understanding.
Though I may walk through many valleys,
I am comforted by your presence
I put my faith in you and I release all of my fears.

Amen.

Extra Mile Reading

Please read Psalm 56. Record your thoughts in your journal if you are keeping one.

Day Eight

“Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken from the temple of the house of God which had been in Jerusalem; and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone.” Daniel 5:3-4 NKJV

Background

In Today's Reading we fast-forward more than 20 years and King Nebuchadnezzar's grandson, Belshazzar is now the king. In Chapter 4 God had given Nebuchadnezzar a life-changing lesson in humility.

But life-lessons are useless if they aren't practiced. Belshazzar followed his grandfather in succession to a great throne. But with great power comes great responsibility.

Did King Belshazzar learn anything from his grandfather?

Today's Scripture Reading

Please read Daniel Chapter 5: Verses 1-9

Questions

1. In verses 1 - 4 what was at the heart of King Belshazzar's behavior?

2. The Bible states that man looks at outer things, but God looks at the inner life. What do you think that means?

3. During this time of prayer and fasting, are there any inner attitudes that you need to give to God?

Today's Prayer

Father, please search my heart,
And grant me wisdom.
Teach me not to think too lowly of myself
Because you made me with love and with purpose.
But help me not to think too highly of myself
That I fail to hear your voice
And acknowledge who you are.
Plant in me the heart of a servant.

Amen.

Extra Mile Reading

Please read Matthew 23: Verses 1-12. Record your thoughts in your journal if you are keeping one.

Day Nine

“Inasmuch as an excellent spirit, knowledge, understanding, interpreting dreams, solving riddles, and explaining enigmas were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar, now let Daniel be called, and he will give the interpretation.”

Daniel 5:12 NKJV

Background

One of the great themes in life and also presented in the Bible is timing. You may have heard it said that “timing is everything.” There’s a lot of truth to that statement. In Today’s Reading, the king follows an act of folly at the beginning of the chapter with one of wisdom: He listened to his queen and summoned Daniel to help interpret his dream. It is wise to reach for godly advice in times of crisis.

However, the king’s decision may have been too late. It is a stern warning to all that “today” is the day of salvation. Tomorrow may never come.

Today’s Scripture Reading

Please read Daniel Chapter 5: Verses 10–30

Questions

1. Is there any issue in your life where “the writing has been on the wall” for some time, but you haven’t dealt with it?

2. The Bible states that we shouldn't wait for a dramatic event like what occurred with King Belshazzar to stop and assess our spiritual lives. We are encouraged to examine ourselves to know if we're in the faith. Are you following this advice?

3. It's a sad thing to be weighed by God and to be found wanting. How could King Belshazzar have developed "an excellent spirit" like Daniel?

Today's Prayer

Lord, please grant me an excellent spirit.
A spirit that longs to worship and serve you.
A spirit filled with understanding and light.
A spirit of peace, courage and faith.
Help me not to be blinded by folly
And all the things that get in the way.
Let me be found faithful by you
When I am weighed in your balances.

Amen.

Extra Mile Reading

Please read Luke 12: Verses 13-21. Record your thoughts in your journal if you are keeping one.

Day Ten

“Then they said to the king, “Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, Your Majesty, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day.” Daniel 6:13 NIV

Background

At the end of the previous chapter, King Belshazzar was judged by God and found lacking. He lost his life and his kingdom. The Babylonians were overthrown by the Persians and the Medes and a new king, Darius, was now the supreme leader of the land.

But although the rulership of the nation had changed hands, human nature remained the same. Daniel maintained his spirit of excellence and received promotion and honor. The other administrators maintained a spirit of jealousy and envy. Rather than follow Daniel’s example of excellence, they chose to scheme and attack.

Today’s Scripture Reading

Please read Daniel Chapter 6: Verses 1-16

Questions

1. Have you ever been personally attacked professionally or when you were simply doing your job? What did you do?

2. On the other hand, have you ever “schemed” or tried to manipulate a situation to get your way? What was the outcome?

3. Where does scheming and manipulation come from? How can you avoid taking such actions in your relationships with others?

Today's Prayer

Sometimes the most difficult thing to see is myself.
Lord, I pray you will help me to be live by faith
And not take matters into my own hands.
When others may come against me
I choose to turn to you.
When I am uncertain of the future
I choose to put my trust in you.
Thank you that I don't need to control anyone
Because you keep all things firmly in your grasp.

Amen.

Extra Mile Reading

Please read Proverbs 6: Verses 16-19. Record your thoughts in your journal if you are keeping one.

Day Eleven

“The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.” Daniel 6:23 NIV

Background

The jealous administrators got their way, or so it seemed. They had successfully tricked the king into punishing Daniel. But in doing so, they overlooked a towering truth: That God is sovereign over all nations and people. He sees men's hearts. And although He does not choose to intervene in every situation, He is all-powerful and He can at any time, at His will.

That's why Jesus taught that His people should always pray and not grow weary. While there is breath there is hope in God. He can deliver in even the most desperate and perilous situations. Darius was king of the Persians. But God is the King of the universe.

Today's Scripture Reading

Please read Daniel Chapter 6: Verses 17-28

Questions

1. Even while being manipulated by the wicked administrators, King Darius favored Daniel and displayed faith in God seemingly greater than some believers. How would you explain this?

2. How can you obtain the favor of God flowing through your life?

3. When all seems lost, God is the Master at turning things to your favor.
Where do you need some turnabout in your life?

Today's Prayer

Lord, help me never to give in to despair.
To give up when things seem hopeless.
Remind me that you are the God of all hope.
You turn things around when all seems lost.
You call things that are not as though they are.
You are the miraculous, wonder-working God.
Seasons change and people change
But you are the same yesterday, today and forever.
I know that you are with me, even on this day!

Amen.

Extra Mile Reading

Please read Proverbs 1: Verses 8-19. Record your thoughts in your journal if you are keeping one.

Day Twelve

“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven” Daniel 7: 13 NIV

Background

Today’s reading is a flashback to King Belshazzar. The scene takes place in the first year of Belshazzar’s rule. This was 14 years before the “handwriting on the wall” incident in which Belshazzar lost his throne to King Darius of the Persians and Medes.

In these verses Daniel dreamed of 4 fantastical beasts. Each beast represented a kingdom that would rise, dominate the world for a season and then fall. The first beast (a winged lion) represented Babylon. The second beast (a bear) represented Medo-Persia, The third beast (a leopard) represented Greece. The fourth (a 10-headed beast) represented the kingdom of Antichrist that would rise, but would also fall at the judgment of God.

Today’s Scripture Reading

Please read Daniel Chapter 7: Verses 1-13

Questions

1. Daniel was given the gift of receiving fantastic dreams and also gifted with the interpretation of them. How does God speak in this day and time?

2. The Bible states that all God's people have been gifted with at least one spiritual gift. Have you ever considered yours? What do you think it is?

3. God is a revealer of secrets. He showed Daniel many things that would happen in the future. During this fast, what would you like the Spirit of God to reveal to you?

Today's Prayer

Why do I worry and fret
When I know that you are the revealer of all things?
Why am I anxious and afraid
When I know that you provide light for my path?
You are the God who knows the end from the beginning
And the beginning from the end.
Today I will bask in the fact that
You hold my future in your hands
And nothing can ever change that.

Amen.

Extra Mile Reading

Please read Romans 12: Verses 3 - 8. Record your thoughts in your journal if you are keeping one.

Day Thirteen

“Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the holy people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.” Daniel 7:27 NIV

Background

In Today's Reading God gave Daniel the interpretation of the fantastic visions he received earlier in the chapter. Although the images were strange and even terrifying, the central message was that God Had a plan for His people. Although they were currently in captivity and subject to another nation, a time will come when they will receive restoration and enter fully into God's promises.

There would be a time of growth and refinement ahead, but Daniel would be able to comfort his people for generations with the sure promises revealed in his visions. God has a marvelous plan for all believers; one that He will reveal when we are yielded to Him.

Today's Scripture Reading

Please read Daniel Chapter 7: Verses 14 - 28

Questions

1. Do you have a plan for your life?

2. Does God have a plan for your life?

3. During this time of prayer and fasting how can God reassure you of His plans for your life?

Today's Prayer

The God who holds my life and times in His hands
Also holds the key to my future.
I know that He has excellent plans for me.
Plans not to harm me,
But to give me hope and a future.
Plans to bless me and to make me a blessing,
Because I trust in His plans
I will walk in peace and assurance on this day.

Amen.

Extra Mile Reading

Please read Jeremiah 29: Verses 11-14. Record your thoughts in your journal if you are keeping one.

Day Fourteen

“Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to him, “How long will it take for the vision to be fulfilled—the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, the rebellion that causes desolation, the surrender of the sanctuary and the trampling underfoot of the Lord’s people?” He said to me, “It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated.”

Daniel 8: 13–14 NIV

Background

In today’s Reading Daniel returns to the time of King Belshazzar and recounts another powerful vision: The image of the ram (representing Medo–Persia) and the goat (representing Greece). These visions depicted powerful kingdoms that each would reign supreme for a season.

True wisdom involves being able to discern what season you’re in. This is true of people and of nations. It is pointedly true of God’s people. Throughout Scripture God rebuked his people for failing to perceive His timing. He also praised others who had “understanding of their times” to know what ought to be done. In our focus verses, the enemies of God’s people acted with great arrogance because they failed to understand or appreciate God’s timing. God’s people should work hard not to repeat that mistake.

Today’s Scripture Reading

Please read Daniel Chapter 8.

Questions

1. How do you assess God’s timing for making your decisions in life?

2. Throughout the Bible God's people have had to wait on His timing. Daniel waited. Moses waited. Even Jesus waited until "the appointed time" to commence and to fulfill His ministry. How do you "keep the faith" while waiting on God?

3. Is there something you've been waiting on that you would like to release to the Lord during this time of fasting and prayer?

Today's Prayer

Sometimes I'm impatient
And I doubt that my prayers will be answered.
I look at the lives of others
And they seem to realize their hopes and dreams.
Lord, help me to take my eyes off strangers
And to place them on you.
I know that you are the one who answers.
You are the one with all wisdom.
I know that your answer will come at the right time.
Forgive me when I lose sight of your faithfulness.

Amen.

Extra Mile Reading

Please read Ecclesiastes 3: Verses 1-8. Record your thoughts in your journal if you are keeping one.

Day Fifteen

“Lord, listen! Lord, forgive! Lord, hear and act! For your sake, my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name.” Daniel 9:19 NIV

Background

Today’s Reading gets down to the heart of this study. Daniel fast-forwards to the beginning of the reign of King Darius who overthrew the Babylonian empire. Daniel searched the Scriptures and found the prophecy by his contemporary, the Prophet Jeremiah, that the captivity in Babylon would last 70 years, and then his people would be returned to Jerusalem.

Rather than simply accepting Jeremiah’s words as an assured outcome, Daniel set himself to fasting and prayer. Daniel’s prayer is a textbook example of how we should approach the Lord in prayer.

Today’s Scripture Reading

Please read Daniel Chapter 9: Verses 1–19

Questions

1. What were the elements in Daniel’s prayer?

2. Why do you think Daniel also fasted during his time of prayer?

3. Daniel prayed in a manner similar to what is called the ACTS method of prayer. This means that his prayer was broken down into 4 general categories: “A” for Adoration (He praises God); “C” for Confession (He confesses the sin of he and his people); “T” for Thanksgiving (He acknowledges God’s goodness) and “S” for Supplication (He makes his prayer request). How can you work this method into your prayer life?

Today’s Prayer

Lord you are an awesome God
Of love, mercy, and forgiveness.
I confess that I don’t always follow your commands
And I fall short of your standards.
I thank you for your mercy and grace.
I thank you that you do not hold our faults against us
But you are quick to listen to our prayers and answer.
Father, I ask for your hand of blessing on all my ways this day.

Amen.

Extra Mile Reading

Please read Matthew 7: Verses 7-8. Record your thoughts in your journal if you are keeping one.

Day Sixteen

“As soon as you began to pray, a word went out, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed. Therefore, consider the word and understand the vision.”

Daniel 9:23 NIV

Background

Today's Reading demonstrates the awesome power of prayer. The Book of Daniel demonstrates that God always answers. Sometimes the response is dramatic, such as Daniel's angelic visitations. But most often, God responds in quiet ways as we go about our daily lives. There are times when the answer is plainly “no” or “not yet.” But no prayer ever goes unheard or unanswered by God.

That is why the Scriptures encourage us to pray without ceasing, and to never give up on God's willingness and ability to answer His people. Daniel's brutally honest and passionate cries for the restoration of his people would eventually be answered in his lifetime. That is the power found in seeking the Lord.

Today's Scripture Reading

Please read Daniel Chapter 9: Verses 20-27

Questions

1. Take a moment to recall when God answered a prayer for you. How did that affect your prayer life?

2. Notice that Daniel prayed about God's character in his prayer (His love, mercy, forgiveness, etc.) How can you incorporate God's qualities in your prayer life?

3. What are some unanswered prayers that you would like to renew in this time of fasting and praying?

Today's Prayer

Lord, you are my healer and deliverer.
You answer me when I call.
Many obstacles are in my way, but I call upon your name for rescue.
Sometimes I am overwhelmed, and it seems that you are far from me.
But in those times, I remember your love.
Your never-ending faithfulness to me.

Amen.

Extra Mile Reading

Please read Psalm 20. Record your thoughts in your journal if you are keeping one.

Day Seventeen

“And he said to me, ‘O Daniel, man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you.’”

Daniel 10:11 NKJV

Background

In Today’s Reading Daniel touches upon the central theme of all Scripture: God’s everlasting and unfailing love for His people. As Daniel received an awesome vision of an angelic being, he became overwhelmed and could hardly stand his ground. As God often does in our times of overwhelm and distress, the angel touched Daniel, and assured him of God’s love.

“I have loved you with an everlasting love” the Lord declares through the Old Testament prophet, Jeremiah. The New Testament teaches that “God is love.” He so loved the world that “He gave His only begotten son,” Jesus as a sacrifice for our sins. In Daniel’s captivity and in the midst of the tribulation of his people, the Lord reminded him that he was greatly beloved.

Today’s Scripture Reading

Please read Daniel Chapter 10: Verses 1 - 11

Questions

1. Have you ever doubted God’s love for you? If so, how did you resolve the question?

2. Jesus said that the greatest commandment is “to love the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind,” and the second greatest is to “love your neighbor as yourself.” Do you feel challenged by either of these two commands?

3. What is one thing that you can do to show your love for God and for your neighbor during this time of fasting and praying?

Today's Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,
Thank you for loving me
When I didn't always return
Your love or even love myself.
Thank you that your love is everlasting
And it's not dependent on my performance
Or what others may think of me.
I feel your love in everything around me.
You are never far from me, and I am grateful.

Amen.

Extra Mile Reading

Please read Romans 8:31 -39. Record your thoughts in your journal if you are keeping one.

Day Eighteen

“Then he said to me, “Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words.”

Daniel 10:12 NKJV

Background

Today’s Reading reminds us to never lose hope in God. As Daniel continues his conversation with the angel, he hears a stunning revelation. His devoted prayers had been instantly heard by God. The angel was sent to reveal the answer to Daniel but was withheld from delivering the message by evil forces. The angel had to fight a spiritual battle in order to get the message through to Daniel.

This may sound fantastic or like something out of a movie, but spiritual warfare is real. Anyone who seeks to honor God will face spiritual opposition. The Apostle Paul wrote that “our struggle is not against flesh and blood, ... but against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” So many times our prayers are delayed, but not denied. That is why it’s imperative to pray and to fast for your spiritual breakthrough!

Today’s Scripture Reading

Please read Daniel Chapter 10: Verses 12-20

Questions

1. Have you ever felt like you were being spiritually opposed? How did you get through that time?

2. When Daniel felt overwhelmed, the angel strengthened him. How do you receive strength during times of spiritual opposition? What can you add to this?

3. How will you deal with spiritual opposition differently, going forward?

Today's Prayer

Dear Lord, sometimes it feels as if
So much is against me.
It's like a war raging around me
Or a storm at sea.
I thank you that although
I may not have yet received your answers
You've heard my prayer.
You are mindful of my struggles.
Help me to remember that the battle
Belongs to you.

Amen.

Extra Mile Reading

Please read Ephesians Chapter 6: Verses 10-20. Record your thoughts in your journal if you are keeping one.

Day Nineteen

“Also in the first year of Darius the Mede, I, even I, stood up to confirm and strengthen him.” Daniel 11:1 NKJV

Background

In Today’s Reading the angel that was sent to Daniel gives him a long prophecy of what is to come with the rising and falling of nations. He also assures Daniel that he (the angel) was sent to confirm and strengthen King Darius because God would use Darius to return the captive Jews to their homeland. There would be long seasons of worldwide upheaval, but none of those things could stop God from fulfilling His promise to reestablish Israel.

Daniel learned there is no difficulty God can’t overcome. There is no situation that can’t be turned around. There is no human, spirit being or political system that can thwart the purposes of God. He is all-seeing, all-knowing, and all-powerful. He never fails when you call on Him. Like Daniel, God’s people are to always press into Him.

Today’s Scripture Reading

Please read Daniel Chapter 11: Verses 1-4

Questions

1. Do you live with anxiety about world events or about what will happen in the future?

2. The angel was sent to strengthen and confirm King Darius, a pagan king, in God's purpose to return the Jews to their homeland. What does that tell you about the future?

3. What can you trust God to handle for you?

Today's Prayer

The world may seem to be out of control
But I know, O lord, that you hold the scales.
There's so much that I don't understand
But I put my trust in you.
Let me come to you in quiet
When others are boasting.
Let me find the truth in your word
When others seem to know it all.
I place my confidence in you, my God
For only you are Almighty.

Amen.

Extra Mile Reading

Please read Psalms 46. Record your thoughts in your journal if you are keeping one.

Day Twenty

“And in his place shall arise a vile person, to whom they will not give the honor of royalty; but he shall come in peaceably and seize the kingdom by intrigue.”

Daniel 11:21 NKJV

Background

In Today's Reading an excerpt is given of a ruler who obtains a throne, not through raw power or conquest, but by pretending to be a man of peace. Once he's able to pull the wool over his adversary's eyes, he's able to continue his rule by deception and intrigue. It further states that he “shall come up and become strong with a small number of people.”

It seems that the power of a small deception can conquer even a vast army. As a result of his prayer and fasting, Daniel was able to discern this truth by revelation from God's angelic messenger. God may not always send an angel to help you discern the truth of a particular situation, but Jesus promised God's Holy Spirit would be available to lead all believers into the truth. Jesus is the Way the Truth and the Life. In your times of darkness, He will always lead you into truth and light.

Today's Scripture Reading

Please read Daniel Chapter 11: Verses 20-24

Questions

1. In your daily life, how do you discern the truth from lies or what is legitimate from what is false?

2. In the Book of Matthew Jesus said a time will come when false Christs will be so prevalent and convincing that even “the Elect” (God’s people) would be deceived, but for God’s grace. What does that mean to you?

3. Have you been able to identify any false beliefs you may have during this time of fasting and prayer? What are they and how will you exchange them for God’s truth?

Today’s Prayer

Lord Jesus, I thank you that you
Have not just pointed out a way and some truth,
But you are The Way, The Truth and The Life.
I thank you that I can always turn to you,
And as I look into your face, I know that I am
Led by your Holy Spirit of Truth and Grace,
Who overcomes all falsehood, fear and deception.
Thank you for shining Your light into the darkness,
And illuminating my path back home.

Amen.

Extra Mile Reading

Please read John 14: Verses 15–21. Record your thoughts in your journal if you are keeping one.

Day Twenty-One

“But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.” Daniel 12:13 NKJV

Background

Today’s Reading marks the end of our journey through this 21-day study. But we pray that it’s just the beginning of a closer walk with Jesus through the practices of fasting and prayer. With Daniel’s final chapter and final recorded words, we’re left with a reminder of our ultimate hope in this life and the next—our seat at the Lord’s Table, in eternity. There we will experience firsthand all of the blessings that God has stored up for us. We will experience the perfection of God’s presence—our true inheritance.

Until then, the Lord has given each of us work to do. We all have a mission field right in front of our eyes. God bless His saints who travel the world with God’s message. But we needn’t go all over the globe to share God’s love. We can share Him right across the street, right down the hall, or any place our feet may take us. That was the core message of Daniel’s life—we are all called to bear God’s light wherever He has placed us!

Today’s Scripture Reading

Please read Daniel Chapter 12: Verses 1-3

Questions

1. Do you have a mission in life? How would you describe it?

2. Daniel always had the end of his days in mind, and so he wanted to live his life in a way pleasing to God. Therefore, he constantly bore God's witness in a very hostile culture. How has this study prepared you to reflect on your life and how to shine God's light where you are?

3. What are some specific ways you can bear witness to God in your environment now that this study is complete?

Today's Prayer

Heavenly Father, you were there
At the beginning of all things.
You are there in the middle
Where the road can be difficult
And you'll be at the end of all time.
In your presence is fullness of joy.
I long to rejoice with you and all your saints.
While I am in this world I pray
That you will help me to shine your light.
To live up to my inheritance in you.
To hear, "Well done!" from your lips.

Amen.

Extra Mile Reading

Please read Matthew 5: Verses 13-16. Record your thoughts in your journal if you are keeping one.

Conclusion

Congratulations on completing this 21-day journey. We know that any time spent in God's word and following His instructions bears a reward of its own. God has promised multiple blessings to those who read His word and live out the teachings found there.

But irrespective of how much of this content you covered, we are glad you came along for the journey. Perhaps there are some parts that you missed, skipped or marked for a later date. Perhaps you'd like to read some of the Extra Mile Scriptures or even the entire Book of Daniel on your own.

Well, the time is now!

You can go back and review the material, go deeper and explore some of the themes that you missed the first time around. The key is to never stop growing, never stop asking questions and never stop leaning on the Lord. This study was never meant to be a destination. It's only a beginning. God has called all of His children to an evergreen, ever-deepening and ever-widening experience of His presence.

We wish you nothing less!

With all of God's richest blessings.

Wayne & Sharon

Medical Disclaimer

The material presented in this Bible Study involves the optional fasting of certain foods over a 21-day period, or less. The authors of this study aren't medical doctors and do not pretend to be. Therefore, the idea of abstaining from any and all types of foods is suggestive only.

You are hereby advised to seek medical advice before abstaining from anything in your normal diet.

If you are in doubt as to the health effects of fasting on your mind or body, you should immediately consult a physician. The authors cannot and shall not be liable for any steps you take with or without consultation with your physician. Nothing contained in this Bible Study shall be construed as medical advice.