



LifeGroups

Grow. Belong. Engage.

DANIEL
HERE I STAND





Our vision is to be a faithful, adventurous and
compassionate church with an expanding
influence on communities, cities and nations with
the hope and love of God

Our Mission is to build a community of grace
committed to making disciples of Jesus.

Welcome

Welcome to our ministry for 2017. More importantly, welcome to your LifeGroup.

It is my hope and prayer that as we journey through the book of Daniel, we will all be built up in such a way that not only will our roots go deeper, but we will extend our impact and reach into our local community

Why study Daniel?

The big idea of Daniel is the struggle between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of man. What we will see, which is affirmed by our own experience, is they are worlds apart.

Daniel is one of the few books of the Bible that takes place during a period of judgment and in a foreign nation. Whether it's in the contrast between the culture's idol worship and Daniel's faithfulness or in the account of the arrogant Nebuchadnezzar and his humbling encounter with God, the backdrop, where the worlds of man and God kept colliding in Daniel, makes its most appropriate for us.

We will see the Lord's power shining through in a magnificent and majestic way. The book of Daniel makes it clear that the true God is the supreme ruler over heaven and earth (Daniel 4:17), even when all seems lost and the consequences of sin seem overwhelming.

All this makes Daniel a great way to start a new year. May it be that as we **"Seek First the Kingdom"** we will not only learn how to do this, but we will be able to do this while standing against all odds.

It is 500 years since the Reformation. It seems appropriate that in 2017, we should be studying Daniel under the title "Here I Stand" to celebrate the amazing work of God. Back then what was needed was a church that would listen to the word of God and act on it. People were broken and helpless, in desperate need of Jesus. As not much has changed, maybe we need another reformation?

Blessings,
Ian Barnett
Senior Minister



Preparing To Take A Stand | Daniel 1:1-21

Pray: That we might understand how God would have us live in this world.

Read Daniel 1:1-21

The first chapter of Daniel begins and ends with chronologic markers that allow us to date Daniel's career. Daniel as we see has been relocated in exile to Babylon. While there will be many things that stand out about chapter one, one of the key themes it introduces us to is the fact that despite appearances, God is in control. Three times God drove this home (vs.2,9,17) by giving something to someone. For the time being, his control was understood only in private by Daniel and his three friends. Even though they were in exile, God gave His people the ability to prosper and be faithful. We need to keep in mind that we too live in a strange land, in a "toxic" culture which grows more and more at odds with our faith. Daniel was able to tolerate much of his culture, but also knew when to draw the line and be true to his faith.

1. What is the context of the Book of Daniel (vs. 1-2)? What are the exiles doing in Babylon? Is there some new understanding of God the exiles are learning?

2. How were Daniel and his friends chosen and trained for service (being re-educated) in the Babylonian court (vs. 3-7)? What did Nebuchadnezzar do to win over their mind, body and loyalty?

3. Think about their names. What do their Hebrew names mean? Is there any purpose in giving the new "recruits" new names?

4. In what ways did Daniel and his friends resist assimilation into Babylonian culture?

5. Chapter 1 is NOT just a testament to the faithfulness of these four men, but to the faithfulness of their God whom they were serving. Where does Solomon's prayer of dedication (1 Kings 8:50) come into this?

6. How do you account for verse 20?

7. What is the implication of God being able to keep these young men faithful to Him in their situation? What does that mean for us, in whatever situation we might be in?

8. The good news of the Gospel is that God is not just faithful to those who are faithful to Him, but that Jesus has come to faithless and undeserving saints like us. Share with others in your group what this means to you.

Pray that God might give us the wisdom and courage to stand up and be recognised as one of God's people in an alien land.

Standing, While Shaking | Daniel 2:1-49

Pray: That as we study the Book of Daniel we might be challenged to stand up for the God who has loved us and called us to know and follow Him.

Have you had any more thoughts or insights from our study last week?

Read: Daniel Chapter 2

In his prayer, Daniel highlights two aspects of God's character pivotal to this chapter and the book as a whole. Firstly, God is powerful. Nebuchadnezzar was King "because (God) sets up Kings" (v21). Secondly, God is wise. Daniel understood that his own wisdom came from God (v14). Daniel's wisdom is similar to that which we find in the book of Proverbs. Some may say he is "street smart". That is, knowing how to navigate life in the midst of its troubles and obstacles. Here Daniel displays the kind of divinely inspired wisdom we all need. As we think about Daniel's interpretation of the dream, keep in mind that the statue, an object made with human hands, is contrasted with its object of demise, the rock, God's Kingdom. Also let us remember, it is only Daniel's God who knows the future.

1. Research the importance of dreams in ancient times, especially for leaders like King Nebuchadnezzar.

2. What has the King decided to ask of the specialist dream advisors (v.2)? Was that reasonable? What did the advisors think? Why was the King so adamant?

3. What was Daniel's reaction to the news of Nebuchadnezzar about sentencing all his wise men to death?

4. What might we learn from Daniel on how to deal with problems that arise in our own lives?

5. Describe the progression of vs. 11, 19, 25 and 28. Is there a principle here that we need to take notice of? (See Acts 12:21-23)

6. Daniel was a great man of prayer. What can we learn from him? See 2:18; 6:10; 9:3-23; 10:12. How might your prayer life reflect Daniel's?

7. Daniel wrote a Psalm of Praise in verses 20-23. What do we learn about the character of God? What gifts does Daniel praise God for?

8. Look again at the description of the King's dream (vs.31-35). What destroyed the statue (v.34)? What happened to that rock (v.35c)? How is that rock a description of the Kingdom of God? Who does the "rock" remind you of?

Pray that as we "seek first (God's) Kingdom" we might remember the transient nature of all we see around us and that we might be challenged about the "kingdom" we are building.

It's Time To Take A Stand | Daniel 3:1-30

Pray: For wisdom and insight as we study this well known Bible passage today.

Review: Have you had any further thoughts or insights on what we have studied?

Read: Daniel Chapter 3.

In chapter 2 God made known His great wisdom. Here we see firsthand His great power. This story that unfolds again highlights the main theme of the book; that God is in control despite appearances. When God had rescued His people from Egypt centuries earlier, Moses told the Israelites that God had "brought them out of the iron smelting furnace, out of Egypt, to be the people of His inheritance" (Deut 4:20). God's power even transcends death. What stands out is the courage that is on display, especially when we reflect on the question of how might they have thought about life and death (vs.16-18). These young men stood firm simply because they trusted God! Wow. Remember, we face the same temptations today. It is estimated that on average, there were 270 new Christian martyrs every 24 hours over the past decade. That translates into 1 million between 2000 - 2010.

1. In chapter 2, whether Daniel and his friends lived or died depended on God revealing Himself. How can Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego save themselves in this chapter?

2. What do you imagine was going through the minds of the three friends? Why didn't they compromise? Was not bowing to the statue worth dying for? Unchecked, where does idolatry end?

3. How did Nebuchadnezzar regard their disobedience? What did he consider they were attacking? How has he changed from the previous chapter (2)? What lesson should he have learned from the dream in chapter 2? What did Nebuchadnezzar have no control over?

4. The three men were convinced that God COULD save them, but not that God WOULD save them. How do we make sense of that in our situations?

5. In verse 15 Nebuchadnezzar issues the challenge, "...what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?" How is that challenge answered (v.25)? Can you describe the impact it must have had on the King?

6. This chapter is about decisions. If we are going to follow Jesus as LORD we will all have decisions to make that put our values to the test. In Luke 14:26-27 Jesus says we are to "hate" (i.e. give second place to/or let go) anything that comes before the Lord Jesus. How seriously do you take this? Would you act like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego?

Pray that we might have the courage to trust God enough to stand up for our faith.

Time To Stop Standing | Daniel 4:1-37

Pray: That God might open up His Word to us today.

Review: Have you had any further thoughts about, or had the opportunity to take a stand since last week?

Read: Daniel Chapter 4

Nebuchadnezzar has another dream, this time about a large tree. Daniel interprets the dream. Daniel demonstrated wisdom in how he engaged with Nebuchadnezzar while showing great respect. Yet he still did not back away from speaking the truth. Remember, this was no easy task for Daniel. Babylon contained two of the seven wonders of the ancient world and Nebuchadnezzar had much to

do with its greatness (v.30). The issue for the King was that he had forgotten where his power came from (vs.31-32) and had a wrong understanding of his place in the scheme of things. We remember and contrast Christ's humility (Phil 2:6-11) with the King's pride. This chapter has been described as a journey from pride to humility, by way of a great fall.

1. We could be forgiven for thinking the opening verses refer to the deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, but the key difference is in verse 2. According to Nebuchadnezzar, who were the signs and wonders performed for? How much of a challenge is "pride" in your life?

2. Nebuchadnezzar witnessed the power of God when Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego emerged from the fiery furnace, just as Saul saw the Lord's grace sustain Stephen through his violent death (Acts 8:1). Neither came to faith through those events. What was missing?

3. How is contentment and prosperity (v.4) an obstacle to the work of God in our lives? How does God teach us through the storms of life?

4. Do you think initially Nebuchadnezzar would be happy to be interpreted as the “tree” (relate it to the gold statue in chapter 3)?

5. How does Daniel break the bad news tactfully? What does he say to help Nebuchadnezzar actually listen? What lesson might there be here for us as we seek to communicate truth to those we know?

6. The Aramaic word for “what is right” (v.27) links our responsibility to both God and other people. How is that responsibility to work out in practice?

7. What does Daniel’s interpretation of the King’s dream say about pride, arrogance and humility? How are we to recognise these as problems in our own lives?

Pray that God might help us to really “see” the things that we are blind to in our own lives.

Are You Still Standing? | Daniel 5:1-31

Pray: That God will open our eyes to His message to us.

Review: Have you any further insights from last week's study?

Read: Daniel 5:1-31

The year is now 539BC, these holy objects was like spitting
Nebuchadnezzar had died in in God's eyes. Belshazzar combined
562BC, and his son (Nabonidus) blasphemy with idolatry. That he
became king of Babylon in was able to rule at all, was also only
556BC. The chapter moves as a result of the divine hand of God,
quickly and shifts from Belshazzar as the writing on the wall indicated
(Nebuchadnezzar's Grandson) to (vs.26-30). Once again let the story
the vessels that had been taken speak for itself. We need to feel the
from the Lord's temple and were impact of this and be able to see
now being used at the Kings wild that Jesus' death and resurrection
party. Let's face it, praising his gods moves us to a new era.
while at the same time drinking from

1. Compare the contributions made to Babylon life by Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar (See 1:2; Ch.3; 4:30; 5:1; 5:3,4). What lesson might we learn from this?

2. Can you think of other instances in Scripture where the finger of God has written? See Exodus 31:18; John 8:1-12; 2 Corinthians 3:3-6. What are the implications of this for us (particularly this last reference)?

“Mene, mene, tekel, parsin” are a sequence of weights (thus being nouns) decreasing from a mina. Read as verbs (with a different vocalization of the Aramaic letters) the sequence becomes: “numbered, numbered, weighed, divided”. The new Babel is about to end under the judgment of God.

3. What are the similarities with the first Tower of Babel in Genesis 11?

4. What modern counterparts to Belshazzar's feast impresses us? Are they the powerful, wealthy, celebrities, the physically attractive, the neighbour's house, car, good looks, good job, obedient children? If we continue along the path of adulation of these where will it end?

5. Where does this chapter leave Belshazzar's gods? Where does it leave this world's idols?

6. What have you learned from Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar about God's sovereign mercy? How do you respond to threatening scenarios regarding "smaller" things than Belshazzar? Do you need to attend to things you may be giving the status of "idol" in your own life?

7. Where are your eyes fixed? On Belshazzar's feast with all its gold and glitz OR on the true banquet Jesus invites us to? Draw out some more of the distinctions between the two.

Pray as you marvel at how high and how wide and how deep and how long is the love that the Lord has shown to each of us.

Here I Stand | Daniel 6:1-28

Pray: That in difficult and challenging circumstances we might have the courage to stand up for our faith.

Review: Share how these studies are having a transforming effect on your life.

Read: Daniel 6:1-28

This chapter concludes the accounts of Daniel's activities in Babylon. He hadn't changed location but the Medes and Persians had taken control of the Empire. This chapter parallels chapter 3. While the story of Daniel's three friends in the furnace pictured them refusing to participate in idolatrous practices, this chapter describes Daniel's refusal to refrain from the proper worship of God. Daniel obeyed God.

This is where Daniel took a stand. In verse 16 the words of the King stand out, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you." There are two worlds colliding here - the world of man, and the world of God. We experience this in our life. We need to learn how to respond when it happens. For Daniel, not only did he survive the ordeal, but he prospered (see Hebrews 11:33 as an example of faith).

1. Even after all those years in Babylon Daniel was still a pilgrim. What evidence do you see of that? In what sense are WE pilgrims and what does that mean for us? See Phil 3:20; 1 Peter 2:11; 1 Thess 3:4; 2 Tim 3:12.

2. How did Daniel's enemies know what charge would work against him? What modeling of prayer does Daniel present us with? Would other people recognise in us a commitment to prayer? How might we practically improve our commitment to prayer?

3. Why was Daniel praying three times a day, every day of the week, and what was he praying for? See 1 Kings 8:46-50 for background. Why didn't God close the enemies eyes now, as He closed the lions mouths later? How does 1 Peter 1:6-7 help you in your life?

4. Between Darius (with all the comforts of home) and Daniel (with none), who had the most comfortable night? Why? Where does true peace come from? How does Daniel explain what has happened (v.22)?

5. See verse 28. What did this mean for Daniel? How did he prosper? 2 Chronicles 36:22-23 and Isaiah 45:1-4. If we are going to "prosper", what will it look like in our lives?

6. At a superficial level, regarding chapter 6 we might teach people to "Dare to be a Daniel", but let's spend some time thinking a little more deeply about the similarities and differences between Daniel and the Lion's Den and the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Pray for each other – that we will be solid believers, standing firm in the face of opposition.

I Stand I See I am Troubled | Daniel 7:1-28

Pray: That God’s Holy Spirit might lead us into all truth as we study His Scriptures.

Review: In what ways are these studies helping you to be more like Christ?

Read: Daniel 7

In this chapter we see a shift. Chapters 1 to 6 make sense, with most people probably having heard the stories as a child. From chapters 7 to 12 everything changes and every scholar continues to argue about the meaning. We now move from simple stories to apocalyptic visions using larger than life symbols. The picture is of impending doom. Yet, just like Revelation, the book of Daniel radiates with victory over God’s enemies. Daniel’s dream in chapter 7 is generally interpreted as synonymous with the four kingdoms (v.17). There is an abrupt shift in v.9 as we move to a courtroom. The “Ancient of Days” is God in His role as Judge. There is to come “one like a son of man” (Jesus) who would be enthroned as King. In the New Testament the curtain of this conflict is ripped away (Eph 6:12). Jesus is the great warrior who wins.

1. Does your understanding of “Biblical apocalyptic literature” impact your life in any way?

2. Describe the four beasts. How do you feel about them?

It has been suggested that it is more helpful to think of the number of beasts as representing a symbol of completeness, rather than assigning them to particular world empires. As such, the message of Daniel 7 is that life in this present age will always be this way.

3. How does Paul describe our situation in Eph 6:12? In the context of the passage, what are we to rely on to get us through difficult times?

4. What encouragement is there for us in the angel's answer to Daniel's question in vs.16-18?

5. What picture does the "Ancient of Days" bring to mind? Compare other descriptions of God - Exodus 34:6,7; Isaiah 6. How does Daniel communicate the transcendent and earthly aspects of God (vs.9-14)?

6. In the New Testament, who is the Son of Man? What does Daniel teach about Him? What path to greatness did He choose, as opposed to the beasts with their horns?

7. What would you take as the overall message of chapter 7?

Pray that we might be thankful for the Lord Jesus for His salvation and His protection of us. He tells us not to be "afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt 10:28).

I Stand In Awe | Daniel 9:1-19

Pray: Lord, teach me to pray.

Review: In what ways has God been working in your life since you have commenced these studies?

Read: Daniel 9:1-19

For Daniel as he prayed, he had in mind the passages of Jeremiah 25:11-12 and 29:10. He has witnessed the fall of Babylon and has now heard from the King that some Jews could return home. What Daniel continued to realize was that Israel's situation was the result of breaking God's laws. He also realised that the road to recovery was through repentance. What a prayer! His prayer for forgiveness and restoration was motivated by his reading of Scripture. He sets a good example for all believers as we too seek to know God's will. Unlike Daniel we have the whole Bible. We know that repentance stands at the heart of Christian belief (Mark 1:15). We should be like Daniel at this point (v.20). He includes himself in the people's confession.

1. How are we to pray (as we should), if we believe that God has predetermined the future?

2. How could Daniel pray with such confidence? See vs.2-3, also Jeremiah 25:11-12 & Jeremiah 29:10. What lesson is there in this for us?

3. How is the "scope" of Daniel's prayer reflected in the Lord's Prayer?

4. Daniel's prayer includes "invocation", "confession" and "petition". Can you recognize them? Do your prayers include these three elements?

5. How might remembering the greatness of God and the grace of God help in our praying?

6. If we are going to pray on the basis of what God Himself has promised us in His Word, what things should we be praying for, for our husband, wife, children, parents, friends, enemies, ministers?

7. Daniel's prayer is answered (vs. 20-27). What is the essence of the answer he received to his prayer?

Pray that God's Holy Spirit might be working in our lives, to make us as fervent, bold and relying on prayer as Daniel was.

Struggling while Standing | Daniel 10:1-11:1

Pray: That we might know and love God more deeply as a result of our meeting together today.

Review: Have you had any additional insights regarding your prayer life after our study and discussion last week?

Read: Daniel 10:1 - 11:1

During the era 537-536BC, Daniel's troubled state of mind lead him to intense prayer (vs.2-3). In response to this God sent a messenger with some striking revelations (v.12). Most consider this angelic messenger was Gabriel who had been battling the "prince of the Persian Kingdom". The evil spirit was finally overcome with the help of Michael. After the battle, the heavenly messenger then explained what will happen (v.14). The substance of this message will be developed in chapters 11-12. The vision at the end of Daniel refers to a great coming war. There is a spiritual battle being waged. This battle commenced in Genesis 3:15, but we need to remember that Jesus has won this cosmic conflict. In Colossians 2:15 we see how Jesus has "dismissed the powers and authorities". The cross secures our future, but we still wait for its completion.

1. What are your expectations on how life should treat you? Does chapter 10 add to your understanding?

2. The third year of Cyrus's reign (v.1) would have been a time of discouragement for the Jews living in Babylon and Jerusalem (Ezra 4:1-5). Can you think of a time when your Christian walk seemed easier and more exciting? What encouragement is there for us to maintain our faithfulness over the long haul?

3. What was Daniel's response to the challenges of his day (vs. 2-3)? How does 1 Corinthians 12:26 fit here? What might be an appropriate response from us to persecuted people throughout the world?

4. What does this vision of the heavenly being (v.5) tell us about God? Habakkuk 1:13 and Isaiah 55:8-9 will help. How does this view of God differ from what we see in the culture around us?

5. How many times do God's messengers "touch" Daniel (vs.10-18)? What is the significance of the touching? Can you recognize being "touched" by God? What difference did it make?

6. What advice are we given to "keep on keeping on"? See v.19 and Ephesians 6:10-13.

Praise God that our future is secured by Jesus going to the cross in our place - that we do not have to worry because our sin has been dealt with, we can now move forward with confidence.

Bent Knees But Still Standing | Daniel 12:1-13

Pray: Thank God that the faith and hope we have, has the solid base of revelation – God revealing Himself to us through His Word.

Review: Have you thought any more about putting on the “whole armour of God”?

Read: Daniel 12:1-13

This final chapter begins with the clearest reference to the resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked in the Old Testament. We may not like to hear it, but what is clear here is that the wicked will ultimately get what they deserve; destruction and shame. The Godly will receive honour and life. There will be an end, and Daniel hears the conversation about it between certain celestial beings. The reality is that only God knows. Daniel was twice told to go away (v. 9,13). God

has determined an end but Daniel was not supposed to know it. Note that both Daniel and Revelation end by leaving God’s people with a future, and end-times hope. For us a week out from Easter, we see the impact of and the hope that comes from the death and resurrection of Jesus. We live in troubled times but we know that something better is coming. Isn’t it great to know that GOD IS IN CONTROL.

1. What encouragements do you find in chapter 12?

2. According to chapter 12, there are two kinds of people in the world (v.10). What are they? What are the “wise” to do? See also 11:33. How can you show signs of “wisdom”?

3. What is the answer to the question posed in v. 6? (See vs. 7 & 11).
What is the purpose of the additional 45 days of verse 12? What does all this mean for us as we struggle through this world?

“Taken together, then, these numbers characterize history as a whole as a time of judgment and trial. At the same time, they remind us that this time of trial is limited by the Lord’s mercy, that its precise end is known to the Lord though utterly impenetrable by human logic, and that we need to persevere in faith until the very end.” (Iain M Duguid, Daniel Commentary)

4. The question, “How Long?” is asked in verse 6. What has to happen before the end (see the end of v.7)? Does that surprise you? What is going to continue to happen (v.10)?

5. What do we learn about resurrection from vs.1-3? Is it consistent with John 5:24-30?

Praise God for the opportunity to study His Word and that in that Word is the saving good news – that Christ came to us in human form, died and rose again so that we might have new life.



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