



C O R N E R S T O N E

## **Sermon Based Study Guide** **Daniel: Faithful to God, Far From Home**

### **Daniel 1 - Faithful to God, Far From Home**

June 5, 2016 – Christian Burkhardt

*Leader's Guide:* Do not feel like you need to use all these questions for your CG discussion. Pick and choose what you think would be best for your group. After listening to the sermon, you may have your own points for discussion.

Here is the link to the sermon podcasts and archives of these Study Guides:

<http://cornerstonesimi.com/#/resourcesmediaclasses>

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1. Our series in Daniel will last 3 months. Challenge each other in your group to read through Daniel at least three times, once per month over the summer.
  2. How do you feel the tension between this current world not being our ultimate home, and the need and desire to live well in this world? Discuss the different ways this tension manifests itself.
  3. Daniel and his friends faced the tension of whether they would find their identity in the Biblical Story or the Babylonian story in which they were being trained. Where do you face this “story tension” in your life? What other stories seek to shape your identity in your home, school, workplace, etc?
  4. If the Biblical story is meant to shape our identity and our role within society, we need to know it well. How well do you know it? How diligently do you seek to learn it? Discuss what you could do as a group to learn God’s story together (Grow classes, Silo Courses, RightNow Media, read books, etc. Email [grow@cornerstonesimi.com](mailto:grow@cornerstonesimi.com) for other ideas).
  5. In chapter 1, Daniel and his friends were able to negotiate through a tough situation, not because they were smart enough on their own, but because God gave them what they needed:
    - v. 9 – *God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs...*
    - v. 17 – *God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom...*

In your prayer time, ask God to give you skill, wisdom, and favor with others, so that you may walk faithfully. Be specific about any situations or relationships you know will challenge you this week.



C O R N E R S T O N E

## **Sermon Based Study Guide** **Daniel: Faithful to God, Far From Home**

### **Daniel 2 – The Kingdoms of Men and the Kingdom of God**

June 12, 2016 – Christian Burkhardt

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1. Our series in Daniel will last 3 months. Challenge each other in your group to read through Daniel at least three times, once per month over the summer.
  2. In Daniel 2:19-23, after God answered Daniel's prayer, Daniel responded by praising God for *who He is* and for *what He had done*. Have you had any recent answers to prayer in your life? Share with your group. Take time together to worship the Lord for who He is and for what he has done in your lives. (Don't rush this. If it takes up your whole time, that's great!)
  3. Read v. 36-45. Discuss some of the characteristics of the first four kingdoms. While this vision refers to 4 specific kingdoms from history, how do you see some of these same characteristics in contemporary human governments? How is the final kingdom different?
  4. As followers of Jesus, we live in two kingdoms at once: the eternal Kingdom of God, which has already begun in Jesus Christ, and the temporary kingdoms of men. How do you see this two-kingdom reality in your life? Which one occupies more of your thoughts and emotions? Which one seems more real to you? Why do you think that is?
  5. Iain Duguid makes an insightful remark about the end of Daniel 2:

*It is not coincidental that the chapter ends with Daniel and his friends promoted to responsible positions within the Babylonian system...These men didn't isolate themselves from the kingdom of this world as they waited for God to establish his kingdom; rather, they poured themselves into seeking the welfare of their temporary home in Babylon.<sup>1</sup>*

Discuss what you can do as a group, both to remind each other of your primary citizenship in God's Kingdom, and to "seek the welfare of our temporary home" in this society.

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<sup>1</sup> quoted in Davis, Dale R. *The Message of Daniel* (The Bible Speaks Today Series), Downers Grove, IVP Academic: 2013. pp. 46-47.



C O R N E R S T O N E

## **Sermon Based Study Guide** **Daniel: Faithful to God, Far From Home**

**Daniel 3 – Submissive Disobedience**  
June 19, 2016 – Christian Burkhardt

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1. If commanded by those in authority over us to disobey or violate our allegiance to God (whether government, work, school, church or family), Christian said that we must practice “Submissive Disobedience” – maintaining an *attitude* of submission, even if we cannot perform the *action* of obedience:
    - Take a Stand, but Don’t Make a Scene
    - Refuse to Obey, and Refuse to Rebel
    - If you cannot Follow the Command, be ready to Face the Consequences.
    - Trust in God’s ability to Deliver You and Display His Glory.
    - Have you ever been in a situation where an authority was commanding you to disobey God? How did you respond?
    - Are you currently facing a situation like this? Share with the group, pray and ask for wisdom on how to submissively disobey.
  2. As exiles, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego served within the system, but didn’t expect the system to serve them. This actually freed them to serve more effectively, since they didn’t depend upon having ideal conditions to do it. They were able to demonstrate that they were *for* Nebuchadnezzar, even when they had to stand *against* his command.
    - Think about the different “systems” in which you live: (work, home, school, family, church, government, etc.). Has your conduct been shaped more by the desire to be served or to serve? Explain your answer.
    - What about your group? Are you more focused on what you get out of these relationships, or how these relationships can be used to serve others (neighbors, city, church body, etc.)? Discuss what you could do to serve and bless others as a group.

For Further Discussion: Mark 10:35-45; 1 Peter 2:11-24



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## **Sermon Based Study Guide**

### **Daniel: Faithful to God, Far From Home**

#### **Daniel 4 – Who Really Rules?**

June 26, 2016 – Todd Nighswonger

*Leader's Guide:* Do not feel like you need to use all these questions for your CG discussion. Pick and choose what you think would be best for your group. After listening to the sermon, you may have your own points for discussion.

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1. It was fascinating to see the powerful change in the life of Nebuchadnezzar. But this change took *time*. He saw God's wisdom in revealing the dream and interpretation to Daniel (ch. 2). He saw God's power when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego emerge unscathed from the fiery furnace (ch. 3), yet he wasn't immediately converted by either of these experiences. Why do you think that it took God stripping away of everything in which Nebuchadnezzar gloried to bring about the change in his life? Why was this a gift from God? If difficulty is one of the means that God uses to change us, why do we tend to see trials as less than a gift?
  2. In ch. 4, Nebuchadnezzar's dream was a "shot across the bow" of his life from God: a gracious warning. But instead of heeding it, Nebuchadnezzar seemed to ignore it. Why do we tend to ignore God's gracious warnings to us? What are some of the methods we employ to ignore these warnings? What do we not understand about God?
  3. God saw a heart of pride within Nebuchadnezzar: a love affair with himself and his accomplishments. Nebuchadnezzar was convinced that he was the center of the universe. What is so heinous about this? Why is it gracious of God to demolish our pride and place himself as the center? Make sure you discuss this in regards to the beginning and end of Nebuchadnezzar's trial. Where were his eyes focused?
  4. Looking away from oneself is the essence of true humility, and also the way that we can tell true humility from its counterfeit. With counterfeit humility, we may say despondently, "Oh how worthless I am," yet our eyes are still fixed on ourselves. We are caught up in our weaknesses rather than our strengths, but we are still just as focused on ourselves as we were in our pride! So what does true humility look like? Press each other on this one. Don't settle for simple answers.
  5. This chapter of Daniel demonstrates how God relentlessly pursues His people. He will not allow us to stay in the muck of pride. He will do what it takes to get our eyes off of ourselves and onto Him. How did Christ relentlessly pursue prideful people during His ministry? How have you seen him relentlessly pursue you?



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## **Sermon Based Study Guide** **Daniel: Faithful to God, Far From Home**

### **Daniel 5 – *The Writing on the Wall***

July 3, 2016 – Todd Nighswonger

*Leader's Guide:* Do not feel like you need to use all these questions for your CG discussion. Pick and choose what you think would be best for your group. After listening to the sermon, you may have your own points for discussion.

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1. The name 'Daniel' means: "God is my judge." Daniel had constantly lived with God as the center and Lord of his life, even through decades of serving under Babylonian kings. Whether it was the food he ate or the discussions he had with the various kings, he always seemed to see God as his ultimate Judge. How do you see God as your ultimate Judge? How does this mentality frame your life correctly? Why is it difficult to keep this mentality? What other 'judges' can seek to take over the place of God as Judge?
  2. The focus of chapter 5 was the elaborate feast that Belshazzar put on, and this was the sole event worth mentioning his life. He lived an empty life, and never accomplished anything other than being a spoiled "trust fund kid". So he sought to validate himself by showing off how much wine he could drink. Why do you think he needed to do this? I mean after all, he was the king of the known world! Where do you see yourself seeking to validate yourself in wrong ways? Why do you think you need to do this?
  3. How crazy is it that Belshazzar threw this feast while the Medes and Persians were outside the city gates seeking to overthrow the city! Todd told us that the walls were 87 feet thick and 350 feet high, and that there was enough food within the walls to last years. Belshazzar obviously thought that they were invincible. What are some areas of your life where you think that you are invincible, or at least feel very secure? How does having an external confidence or security blind us to the dangers that lurk within us? Meditate on 1 Corinthians 10:12. If you dare, ask those that know you best where they see this in you.
  4. We live in a country that is one of the most powerful in the history of mankind. Thinking through the above question, where do you see this feeling of security or invincibility happening at the nationwide level? Todd mentioned that many of the ways in which the Babylonians defied God, our nation does as well. There could come a time in which God is done with the United States. What does this mean for God's people in this country? What are we supposed to do? How are we supposed to live if the USA were to fall? Think through Daniel's life to help you answer this.
  5. One of the most difficult aspects of this chapter is trying to reconcile the different ways God dealt with Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. God humbled Nebuchadnezzar and he eventually came to understand the truth about God and bow his knee before him. In contrast, Belshazzar's life was cut short and died an untimely death--he was humbled and crushed rather than being humbled and restored. In your group, read Romans 9:1-24. What do we learn from Paul about God that is important for us to understand about this concept? Don't hurry past this. What does this mean for us? What kinds of reactions do you have as you process this?



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### **Sermon Based Study Guide** **Daniel: Faithful to God, Far From Home**

#### **Daniel 6 – *The Consequences of Faithfulness***

July 10, 2016 – Todd Nighswonger

*Leader's Guide:* Do not feel like you need to use all these questions for your CG discussion. Pick and choose what you think would be best for your group. After listening to the sermon, you may have your own points for discussion.

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1. If your life were put under the same scrutiny as Daniel's, would your "worst fault" be your absolute commitment and faithfulness to God? If yes, why? If no, why not? Do people know that you are a follower of the one, true God like King Darius did with Daniel?
  2. It seems that most Christians think that our lives will run smoothly if we are obedient to God. Maybe we would never say that, but when trouble hits, we often wonder: "Why me?" Discuss with your group some of the reasons that we think this way. If the opposite is actually true, how should that cause us to live differently?
  3. Even though Daniel served the Babylonian and Persian kingdoms well, he was not shaped by their values. He was in essence 'with them', but not 'of them'. He was identified as a man free from the corruption and vice that often marked men in his position of power. How did his view of himself as an exile shape his character while in Babylon? It is interesting that in the New Testament, the writer of Hebrews (11:13) and Peter (1 Pet 1:1, 17, 2:11) called Christians "exiles." What can we learn from Daniel's life as an exile that will help shape our time on this earth as exiles? Why do you think that Daniel prayed so much, and that prayer was such an integral part of this shaping?
  4. Life in exile would never be easy, nor would it ever be home. However, through God's faithfulness, it was possible for his people to survive the exile as strangers and aliens, serving the earthly empire in which they found themselves, even while they looked for another city that was yet to come (Heb. 13:14). The final verse of chapter 6 informs us that "Daniel prospered" during his exile. For the New Covenant believer and exile, what does it look like to prosper? Discuss the kinds of prospering we can expect, and not expect.
  5. Take some time as a group to think through how Daniel's experience in the lion's den modeled for us Jesus' work on the cross and the tomb. What things are similar in the events? What things are different?



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## **Sermon Based Study Guide** **Daniel: Faithful to God, Far From Home**

**Daniel 7 – *With the Clouds of Heaven***

July 17, 2016 – Chris Hay

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1. One of the main themes of Daniel 7 is that earthly kingdoms and nations are evil and beastly. Do you agree or disagree? Is America an exception? Is any other kingdom or nation an exception? How does this impact your expectations of our government's ability to fix things or make them better?
  2. Have some fun with this one!! If America (or your home country) showed up in Daniel's dream, what kind of beast or wild animal would it be? What sort of mutant distortions would it have (such as 4 heads, wings on a lion, etc)? Discuss why you chose that animal and those distortions.
  3. Do you agree with Chris's general interpretation of how Daniel's vision reflects the end times? Disagree? Have a civil discussion about the different ways of understanding these things. Listen to different views. Appreciate the differences. It is so easy to get angry and defensive about different ways to understand parts of the Bible like Daniel and Revelation. But we need to learn to be gracious and humble in those things that are just not very clear!
  4. As Daniel processed this dream, verse 28 says he was alarmed. Do the things revealed in this dream cause you fear or alarm? Share those fears openly with your group. Discuss how the reality of Jesus as King can speak to those fears.
  5. Chris really stressed the hope and comfort that is found in Jesus ultimately winning, finally taking up His physical rule over the whole earth. How does that truth give you hope and comfort? How does that help you deal with chronic pain, loss of job, or painful relationships? How does this hope help you make sense of the violence and upheaval we see in the world around us? Discuss this with your group. This can be pretty abstract, and hopefully a discussion will help us see this in a more practical, down-to-earth way.





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## **Sermon Based Study Guide**

### **Daniel: Faithful to God, Far From Home**

#### **Daniel 8 – The Ram and The Goat**

July 24, 2016 – Josh Walker

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1. Think about what was happening 400 years ago, around 1600 (for example, the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock in 1620), and imagine that someone living then had written down a specific prophecy from God that we could now see unfolding perfectly (just use your imagination here). How would it affect your ability to persevere through the current circumstances that seem unstable and frightening?
  2. The events of Daniel 8 were fulfilled very precisely in history with the Medo-Persian Empire; Alexander the Great and his kingdom split into four pieces; and ultimately with Antiochus Epiphanes persecuting the people of God and desecrating the temple in Jerusalem. How does the detail of this prophecy and its fulfillment affect how you think about God and your current circumstances?
  3. There are many uncertainties in our world today (elections, terrorism, loss of jobs, diseases, racial tensions, wars, addictions, rampant immorality, etc.). How does Daniel 8 help you see those things differently? Share specifics with your group.
  4. Discuss and list some of the promises that God has made to us as believers in Christ. How can each of those promises bring us hope in our lives right now, even if they are to be fulfilled in the future?
  5. Hezekiah and Daniel both received prophecies about future judgment and destruction upon the people of God, but each responded differently (see Isaiah 38-39, especially 39:8 and 2 Kings 18-20, especially 2 Kings 20:16-19). Hezekiah expressed a selfish heart, only caring whether it happened during his days or after. But Daniel expressed a caring heart, being overcome and appalled. Honestly, how are you like Hezekiah? How are you like Daniel? Share your thoughts with your group. (And if you think you're never like Hezekiah, then I suggest you're self-deceived and need to look more carefully!)





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### **Sermon Based Study Guide** **Daniel: Faithful to God, Far From Home**

**Daniel 9:1-19 – *Because of Your Great Mercy***  
July 31, 2016 – Terry Earwood

*Leader's Guide:* Do not feel like you need to use all these questions for your CG discussion. Pick and choose what you think would be best for your group. After listening to the sermon, you may have your own points for discussion.

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In this chapter we learn about Daniel's heart and love for His covenant people. We also learn a pattern for prayer that Daniel demonstrates to us as he is praying for God's will to be completed in the life of Israel. Please also refer to the sermon notes in the bulletin to better understand Daniel's prayer.

1. In verse 2 Daniel was reading and studying the Old Testament book of Jeremiah. In our Bible reading and study, do we take ample time to reflect and meditate upon God's Word? Does it intersect our lives like it did here for Daniel? Discuss and share one commitment you can make beginning this week to make your Bible reading more engaging?
2. In verses 4-19 Daniel confesses the sin of the people of Israel (God's covenant people). Daniel knows that God will not bless his people if unrepentant sin is present. Discuss the differences between 'confessing your sin' and 'repenting from your sin'. Is there sin in your life that you have come to accept as normal ("everybody is doing it") and so you do not repent of it? Think through this prayerfully. Discuss with your group. Then acknowledge these sins, confess them to God and one another, and ask the Holy Spirit to give you power to repent of them.  
Terry talked about 3 possible reasons why we don't take our sin seriously: 1) no immediate judgment, 2) God is with us so all is good, and 3) we are seeking our own good. Discuss these. Which ones are more typical of you? Add any additional possible reasons.
3. Discuss the definition and characteristics of a covenant. Refer to the sermon notes in the bulletin. Do you approach God in prayer as if you are his covenant child?
4. Deuteronomy chapters 28-30 spells out the ways in which Israel was blessed when they obeyed the covenant and cursed when they disobeyed the covenant. This was Old Covenant. If you have time, read or skim these chapters.  
Now read these passages: Jeremiah 31:31-34; Luke 22:19-20; Acts 13:38-39; Hebrews 8:8-13, 9:11-28. What are some of the similarities and contrasts between the Old and New Covenants? Discuss the ways we tend to still live in 'Old Covenant' ways? (this is 'bondage!') Discuss the ways we tend to live in 'New Covenant' ways? (this is joy, freedom and privilege!)  
Now read and discuss Colossians 2:20-23.

**PRAYER TIME:** Follow Daniel's lead. Pray for Cornerstone. Pray for the covenant people. Repent of those sins that we have accepted as a church.



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### **Sermon Based Study Guide** **Daniel: Faithful to God, Far From Home**

**Daniel 9:20-27 – Seventy Weeks**  
August 7, 2016 – Michael Bibelheimer

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1. Daniel was stirred up in his heart to pray for God's plan to restore him and his people back to the land. He was so motivated after reading the word of God to pray for the will of God, that he humbled himself before God when he prayed and God heard and answered him. Discuss ways your own prayer life can be improved based on how Daniel prayed.
2. A message came from God through Gabriel to Daniel, very quickly. The message was an affirmation of God's love for Daniel, even though Daniel was in a land far from home. Have you ever questioned God's love and care for you because of bad things that happened to you? Share some of those things. Think about (and discuss) how misfortunes and hardships can effect how we think God loves us. What is a biblical way of looking at these misfortunes? (James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:6-7).
3. Did God answer Daniel the way he wanted him to answer? Discuss how Daniel's prayer and God's answer were different. Have you ever had God answer your prayer differently than you imagined? How did you process that?
4. Discuss the following significant pieces that Michael mentioned in verses 24-27. Do you agree with his view? Share your thoughts graciously!
  - a. TIME: The seventy weeks (sevens) of years
  - b. PERSON: The anointed one cut off
  - c. END: The antichrist making a covenant with Israel for 7 years (vs. 27: "And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week")
  - d. Presently we are in the time between the 69<sup>th</sup> week and the 70<sup>th</sup> week.
5. God's plan for Jerusalem in Daniel's day was to rebuild it, but then He would destroy it again (this happened in 70 A.D.). Discuss how this reality helps us think through the future, the uncertainty we face, the seeming crises in our day, and how God orders the future. If you want more reading on the 70<sup>th</sup> week, read Matthew 24 and 25 where Jesus lays out the future for the world.

If you have any questions, or want more resources on the Seventy Weeks, feel free to email Michael at [mbibelheimer@cornerstonesimi.com](mailto:mbibelheimer@cornerstonesimi.com).



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**Daniel 10:1-11:1 – *The Terrifying Man & the Spiritual Realm***

August 14, 2016 – Todd Nighswonger

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1. Go around the group and have everyone share a brief answer to this question: What is the most bizarre experience you have ever had?
  2. Todd talked about the idea of Daniel praying and fasting. He mentioned that one reason for Daniel's fasting was due to his great despondence over the failure of God's people to embrace their call to return to Jerusalem. The other was his choice to have solidarity with those suffering back in Jerusalem. The Bible calls us to fast, but for many Christians it isn't a discipline. Why do you suppose it is so hard to practice fasting? Share about a time you have fasted. Explain why you did, and the benefits of it.
  3. Todd mentioned that we live in a culture that sees a god as "a buddy" or a mild-mannered deity that resembles "a good grandpa" who is far too calm and gentle to send anyone to hell. Besides being wrong, why is this a dangerous view to the church? How does this do damage to how we relate to God? Why so you suppose that God provided this fearful vision to Daniel in this circumstance?
  4. Twice in the chapter, the angel told Daniel that he was "greatly loved" by God. What is the significance of God displaying his glory and greatness, but then reminding Daniel of his love? How is this important for us?
  5. Why was it important for Daniel to see the angelic realm in action in this chapter? Why is it important for us? What does this teach us about the spirit world?

[Understand that this is a very difficult topic and subject to much debate. The point of Todd's sermon was not to dive deep into trying to understand the spiritual realm, but clearly Daniel 10 gives us insight into that realm. You might want to discuss this, or maybe save it for a later group study. Feel free to email the Cornerstone staff with specific questions about the spiritual realm.]



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### **Sermon Based Study Guide** **Daniel: Faithful to God, Far From Home**

**Daniel 11:2-12:13 – *The Time of the End***

August 21, 2016 – Christian Burkhardt

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1. Go around the group and have everyone share about a time when you had pretty much lost all hope in life or in a specific situation.
2. Look at how Daniel 11:36 describes the epitome of a rebellious human leader: “...*he shall do as he wills. He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods...*”
  - Why are these such contemptible characteristics for a human ruler?
  - Discuss how these same characteristics have been present in some of the other rulers we’ve read about in Daniel.
  - If we’re honest, we battle this same desire to “exalt ourselves” every day. Discuss how scripture instructs us to wage this battle with our pride (e.g., James 4:6-10; 1 Peter 5:5-7).
3. Throughout the vision in ch. 11-12, it is clear that God’s people will suffer greatly at the hands of rebellious human rulers. In the midst of this suffering, God offers his people two things to hang their hope on:
  - 11:35 - Through suffering, God’s people will be “*refined, purified, and made white* (clean).”
  - 12:2-3 - In the end, God’s people will be resurrected to everlasting life and glory.

Discuss how these things have given you hope and encouraged you to persevere in the midst of suffering.

4. After receiving a big-picture vision of what is to come, Daniel is commanded to “*Go your way...*” (12:13), to be faithful with the path that God had laid out for him. The charge for us is the same.

What is the path that God has laid out for you? What is in your sphere of influence and responsibility? How are you pursuing faithfulness with those things right now?

Take time to pray for one another and encourage each other to faithfully “*go your way*” in the coming week.