



Kingdoms in Conflict

Life Group Participant's Booklet

Name: _____

Daniel: Study Outline

Series	Sermon Date	Passage	Title
Week 1	21 st July	Daniel 1	Making a Stand
Week 2	28 th July	Daniel 2	A Kingdom that Cannot be Shaken
Week 3	4 th Aug	Daniel 3	Faith in the Furnace
Week 4	11 th Aug	Daniel 4	Under the Mighty Hand of God
Week 5	18 th Aug	Daniel 5	The Writing on the Wall
Week 6	25 th Aug	Daniel 6	Serving God under Pressure
Week 7	8th Sept	Daniel 7	A Vision of Glory
Week 8	15 th Sept	Daniel 9	When God Puts an End to Sin
Week 9	22 nd Sept	Daniel 12	From Here to Eternity

How to Get the Most Out of This Study

LIFE GROUPS

As most Life Groups are fortnightly, you probably won't have time to do two studies each time you meet. Therefore, we suggest you choose one of the studies out of each block of two weeks when you meet. The studies you don't do together, we suggest you do individually in the off-week and have a 5 or 10 minute discussion about the study during your next Life Group meeting.

The greatest growth will come when you wrestle with the text rather than do a comprehension exercise. The questions in this booklet are designed to provoke discussion and have the group grapple with the text together. If there are counter viewpoints go back to the text to seek your answers. You may not always be sure of the answers you come to. If that is the case, make a note to do further study or ask one of the Ministry staff to help.

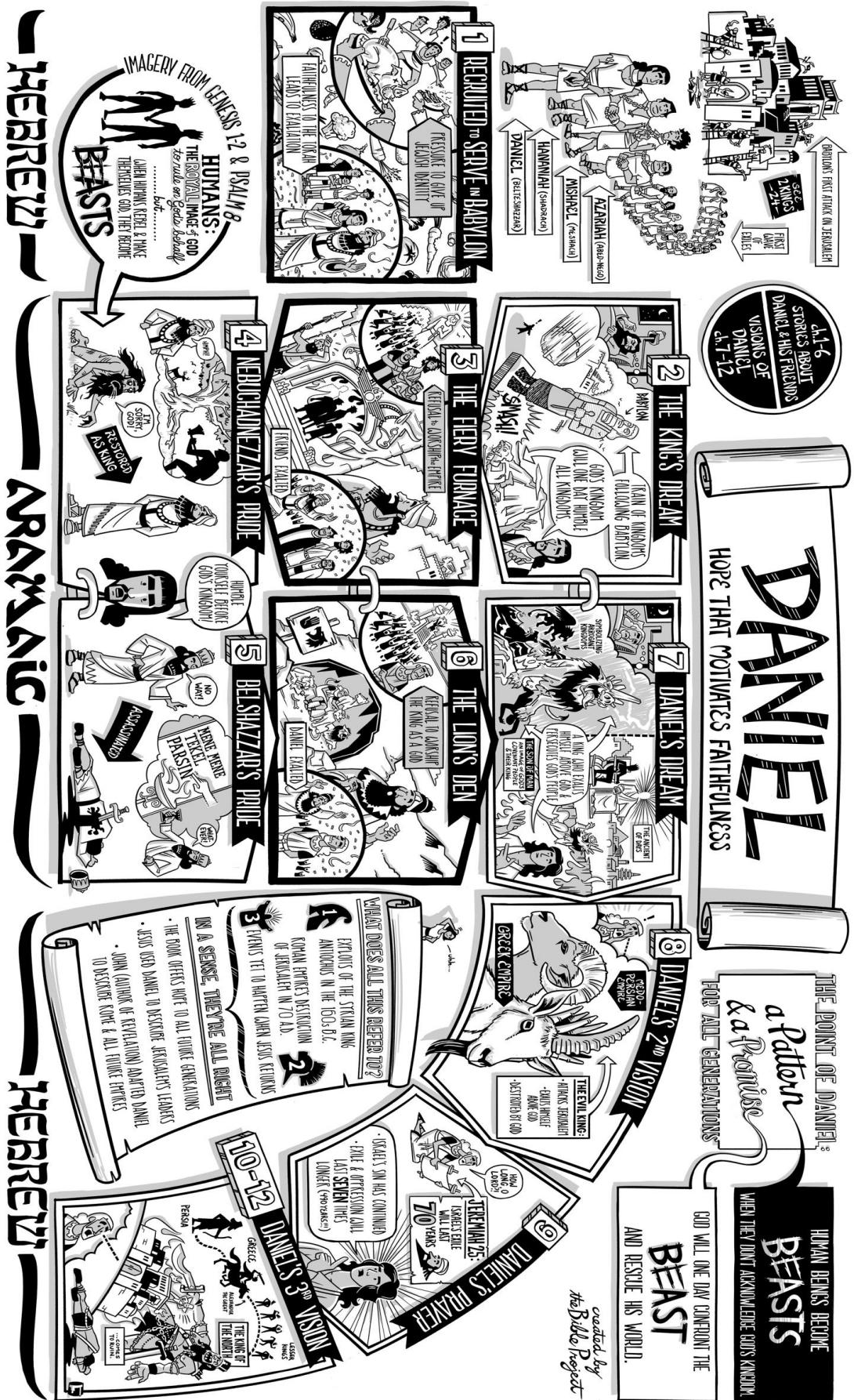
INDIVIDUALS

As these studies are designed for groups to provoke discussion you may not easily come to answers on your own. You are encouraged to write down your questions and take them to your Life Group and Life Group Leader for discussion at an appropriate time. If you are struggling with the questions in this booklet then we encourage you to use the COMA method instead which is attached as an appendix to this study.

Further Resources

It is always helpful to have further resources on hand. Here are some suggested resources to help you with Daniel:

1. <https://thebibleproject.com/explore/daniel/> - the short video gives a good overview of purpose, structure and the narrative of the entire letter. Highly recommended and worth the Life Group watching this together before beginning the first study.
2. *Kingdoms in Conflict* by Andrew Reid



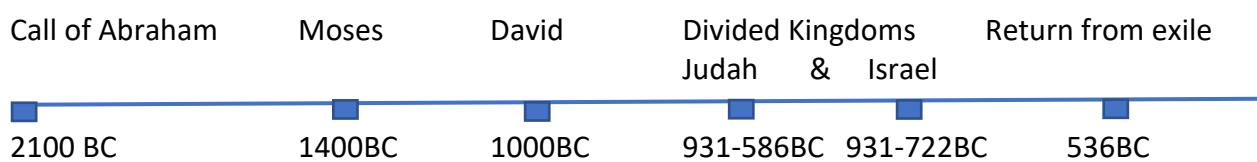
Introduction to Daniel

The book of Daniel is a Sunday School favourite. It has all the makings of a great story – memorable characters, cliff-hanger drama, and science-fiction like visions. Because of this, it is tempting to fix our gaze on the human characters in the story, and see them as the heroes of the story. But the book is not so much about Daniel and his three friends, but about God and his victory in the world.

The book of Daniel teaches us that God is the Sovereign Lord of history, the one who establishes kingdoms and brings them down. From the opening chapters and the story of Daniel's exile to Babylon, to the closing chapter and its vision of the future, we see how God achieves his victory in the world.

The main purpose of the book is to reveal to us who God is – his character, his purposes, his way of working in the world for the good of his people. The main lesson of Daniel is not, *Dare to be a Daniel*, but, *Dare to trust in Daniel's God!*

Context



Daniel's life as recorded in the book:

- 1:5 - Exile to Babylon - 605BC
- 10:1 - Return from Exile under Cyrus - 536BC

Daniel was a Hebrew man of faith and prayer, who knew God intimately and to whom God revealed his secrets. He was a visionary who received revelations of the future. He was taken into exile to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar in 605BC. The Babylonian strategy was to gather to Babylon all the 'cream of the crop' of the people they conquered. The book covers the 70-year period of exile which ends with the overthrow of Babylon by the Persian empire under Cyrus. Cyrus reversed the process of gathering and assimilating people, and returned the exiles to their homeland. Behind all this we clearly see the hand of God, preserving his people, and using his servant Daniel in this purpose.

Outline

1:1-6:26 Daniel & his three friends in the Babylonian court

1:1-21 Daniel & his three friends prosper at the King's court

2:1-49 Nebuchadnezzar's dream interpreted by Daniel

3:1-30 Daniel's three friends refuse to bow to Nebuchadnezzar's statue

4:1-37 God humbles Nebuchadnezzar

5:1-31 The writing on the wall during King Belshazzar's feast

6:1-28 God saves Daniel in the lion's den

7:1-12:13 Daniel's Visions

7:1-28 The vision of the four beasts and the heavenly court

8:1-27 The visions of the ram, the goat & the little horn

9:1-27 Daniel's prayer and God's answer

10:1-12:13 Daniel's vision of the final conflict

Week 1 – Daniel 1:1-21 - Making a Stand

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

READ DANIEL 1:1-21

1. Verses 1-7 sets the stage for Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Jerusalem (v. 1). But what comes next is shocking "And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand" ... (v. 2) What does this teach us about Daniel's view of God?
2. What is Nebuchadnezzar trying to do with his policy of selecting and training nobles (vs 3-8)?
3. Notice how verse 8 begins with a sharp contrast: "But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the King's food." Why did Daniel believe eating the king's food or drinking his wine would defile him?
4. Vs 9 tells us God had caused the official to show favour and compassion to Daniel. How does the Lord's favour and compassion manifest itself in Daniel's life in verses 8-16?

5. This first chapter climaxes when King Nebuchadnezzar tests Daniel and his friends in their learning. They pass with flying colours vs 20. Why is this emphasized?

APPLYING GOD'S WORD

6. Notice the three times in these verses it says '*God gave ...*' (vs 2, vs 9 and vs 17). What God gives shapes the flow of this passage. How does this remind us of the gospel (see John 3:16)?
7. What is so important about being God's people in the world?
8. As Christians we are to be in the world but not of the world (John 17:15-16). What can we do to ensure our identity as God's people is not compromised? Where do you personally compromise your faith?

PRAYER POINTS FOR THE COMING WEEK/S:

How did God's Word convict/challenge/encourage me in this session?

Prayer for concerns in my Life Group

Week 2 – Daniel 2:1-49 - A Kingdom that can't be Shaken

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

READ DANIEL 2:1-49

1. Verse 1 tells us Nebuchadnezzar was deeply troubled by his dreams. In the ancient world dreams were viewed as communication from the gods and this was thought to anticipate the future. How does this shed light on his response?
2. Archaeological digs in Babylon and Egypt have unearthed a number of dream manuals. These manuals were compilations of dreams and their meanings. Once you knew a dream, its interpretation came easily. Compare vs 10-11 & 27-28a. What does this tell us about the contest between the gods of the nations and the God of Israel?
3. Daniel hears of the impending executions of the astrologers (vs 14). What does he do vs 15-23)? What does Daniel praise God for?

4. How does Daniel ensure that God alone gets the credit for being the revealer of mysteries?

5. In verse 36-43 Daniel describes the content of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. The parts of the statue represent four kingdoms, beginning with the head of gold (vs 38), which is Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian empire. While it is impressive, it is weak. How is this pictured? In light of verses 44-45, what is the stone? How does this relate to what Jesus says about his own life and ministry?

APPLYING GOD'S WORD

6. What does vs 47 tell us about the God we serve? Do you believe this? How does it show in your life?

7. How does Daniel respond to impossible odds stacked against him? On what basis does he make his response?

8. Where do you find yourself caught up in conflict between God's kingdom and the kingdoms of this world. How should we react and how can we help and support each other in this conflict?

PRAYER POINTS FOR THE COMING WEEK/S:

How did God's Word convict/challenge/encourage me in this session?

Prayer for concerns in my Life Group

Week 3 – Daniel 3:1-30 – Faith in the Furnace

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

READ DANIEL 3:1-30

1. What does the statue Nebuchadnezzar builds tell us of his view of himself and his empire?
2. Daniel's three friends refuse to pay homage to the statue erected (vs 12). Look at their response to Nebuchadnezzar in verse 16-18. How confident are they of being delivered from the fiery furnace? What other fate do they consider a possibility?
3. Nebuchadnezzar looked into the fiery furnace and saw not only the three friends alive and well but a fourth man with them, who looked "like a son of the gods" (vs 25). Who is this person? What does this tell us about God's relationship with his people (see Isaiah 43:2-4)

4. This passage is careful to describe how the three friends appeared after they came out of the fire – vs 27. What does this teach us about God's ability to deliver, protect and care for his people??

5. Compare the endings of chapter 2 & chapter 3? What common themes do you see? What larger message is this intended to convey about God's victory and the faithfulness of God's people?

APPLYING GOD'S WORD

6. What ideas, practices and beliefs do we Christians have today that (1) bring us into open conflict with those around us or (2) are misunderstood by those around us?

7. Are there things we should take a stand on as Christians, and in what way should we take a stand? Categorize them under the following & explain why you categorized them the way you did.

Things we would die for

Things we would fight for, but not die for

Things we believe in, but would give up without too much fuss.

PRAYER POINTS FOR THE COMING WEEK/S:

How did God's Word convict/challenge/encourage me in this session?

Prayer for concerns in my Life Group

Week 4 – Daniel 4:1-37 – Under the Mighty Hand of God

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

READ DANIEL 4:1-37

1. Daniel 4 is written by a non-Israelite. It's written by King Nebuchadnezzar in a form that resembles a royal document. Verse 1-4 is an introduction to the story that draws the Jewish readers in. What are the signs and wonders that the Most High has done for him. Why does he affirm God's everlasting Kingdom in this context?
2. Nebuchadnezzar's dream involves a giant tree being chopped down by a holy one or messenger. But this messenger (or angel) is instructed to leave a stump (vs 15) what is the meaning of leaving a stump?
3. Daniel says that Nebuchadnezzar will experience this humbling until he acknowledges that "the Most High is Sovereign over all the kingdoms of the earth, and gives them to anyone he wishes" (vs 25). But what would it mean for Nebuchadnezzar to be humble (see vs 27)?

4. Vs 29 tells us that 12 months elapsed between the initial warning and the judgement against Nebuchadnezzar to humble him. What does this imply about God's ways with us?

5. Why is Nebuchadnezzar's punishment fitting for the sin of pride - see vs 33?

6. What does Nebuchadnezzar mean when he says he "lifted his eyes to heaven" vs 34? What immediately follows as a result of him doing that?

APPLYING GOD'S WORD

1. God is the true king of this world, and he delegates his rule to human beings in history. What does this mean for all rulers?

2. Read Deuteronomy 17:14-20, Ezekiel 34:1-6 and 1 Peter 5:1-4. According to these passages, what are the marks of true godly leadership?

3. What have you learned from this story that leads you to praise God, repent of sin, and trust in his gracious promises?

PRAYER POINTS FOR THE COMING WEEK/S:

How did God's Word convict/challenge/encourage me in this session?

Prayer for concerns in my Life Group

Week 5 – Daniel 5:1-31 – The Writing on the Wall

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

READ DANIEL 5:1-31

1. Belshazzar is Babylon's last king to rule over the empire before it was defeated by the Persians. He is enjoying a lavish feast with many guests, and decides to drink out of the gold and silver cups brought from temple in Jerusalem. It's not as if he ran out of drinking cups and had to use them. Why did Belshazzar do this, and what was he trying to suggest (vs 3-4)?
2. When the fingers appear and write on the wall, Belshazzar is overtaken by extreme fear, so much so “his limbs gave way” (vs 6). Why is his immediate reaction one of fear and dread? And why does it get worse, so that he is greatly alarmed (vs 9)?
3. Daniel (who had no doubt been side-lined by the godless Belshazzar) is summoned to interpret the writing on the wall. But before he does so he first compares Belshazzar to Nebuchadnezzar. What are the points of difference and similarities between the two kings?

4. The words on the wall are Aramaic verbs which describe various coins: a mena, a shekel, and a half mena. But taken as verbs they read “Numbered, numbered, weighed and divided.” How does Daniel apply this message to Belshazzar. What does it mean for him and his Kingdom?

5. The writing on the wall is a declaration of divine condemnation. Like Romans 1:18 the wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and wickedness of men”. This is the writing on the wall, today. How can we escape this wrath of God and why?

APPLYING GOD'S WORD

6. Is the best ruler necessarily Christian? Why? Why Not?

7. Proverbs 16:18 says “Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.” Leaders (not only leaders though) can easily fall to pride. How can we avoid pride in leadership?

8. Read 1 Timothy 2:1-4. What does Paul urge us to do for those in authority? Why?

PRAYER POINTS FOR THE COMING WEEK/S:

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Prayer for concerns in my Life Group

Week 6 – Daniel 6:1-28 – Serving God under Pressure

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

READ DANIEL 6:1-28

1. Clearly Daniel is a responsible and faithful senior servant of the empire. In the opening verses, what indication do we have of Daniel's trusted status?
2. How does Daniel's faithfulness and reliability pose a challenge to the administrators in their plot against him? What do they focus on to try to catch him out?
3. The administrators hatch a plot to catch Daniel violating the King's decree, prohibiting prayer to any god or man other than Darius for 30 days. How does Daniel respond (vs 10)? Why?
4. According to Daniel, why does God deliver him from the lions' den (vs 21-23). Is there anything surprising or perhaps unsettling to you about what Daniel says? If so, what is it? And Why?

5. From Darius's perspective, why did God deliver Daniel from the lions' den (vs 25-27)? And what does God's deliverance of Daniel reveal about who God is?

APPLYING GOD'S WORD

6. How should we as Christians, respond to persecution for the sake of the gospel? Compare your answers with those given in 1 Peter 2:23.
7. God is a God who saves. Vs 26-27 is a message of praise to the Living God. List the things in this message that we also can praise God for
8. Daniel lived by faith in the Living God. Hebrews 11 lists the saints of old that lived by faith. Hebrews 12:1-4 tells us how we in light of their witness ought to live. Compare the list with your own life. Where do you need to make adjustments?

PRAYER POINTS FOR THE COMING WEEK/S:

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Prayer for concerns in my Life Group

Week 7 – Daniel 7:1-28 – A Vision of Glory

Understanding God's Word

READ DANIEL 7:1-28

1. Review the content of Daniel's vision in verse 1-8. What is the author trying to communicate through the imagery of darkness, the blowing of four winds, the stirring of the great sea, and the appearance of mutant beasts (representing the rules of various kings and kingdoms), out of all this frothy chaos. What does this teach us about history, earthly kings and kingdoms?
2. Vs 9-14 describes a change of scene. How would you describe this new scene and the characters of the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man?
3. There is a contrast between the two types of rule shown in verses 1-8 & 13-24. What are the differences?

4. Jesus most often used the self-designation, “Son of Man” in the gospels. He says “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected, killed and after three days rise again” (Mark 8:31). What does Daniel 7 tell us about Jesus mission?

5. Describe the sequence of events that will result in the saints possessing the kingdom (see vs 19-27). How does this compare with what we know of the unfolding of the end times from the NT, especially the book of Revelation.

APPLYING GOD’S WORD

6. What are the issues and difficulties that cause the most concern in our world at the moment? What does Daniel 7 have to say to our world?

7. Are there times in your life when you’ve felt overwhelmed by the way things are going for you because of the forces at work in society, and the cost you have to pay for being a Christian? How does this passage encourage you as you face these circumstances?

8. What things can we praise and thank God for from what we have learned about God and his Son in Daniel?

PRAYER POINTS FOR THE COMING WEEK/S:

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Prayer for concerns in my Life Group

Week 8 – Daniel 9:1-27 – When God puts an End to Sin

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

READ DANIEL 9:1-27

1. Daniel is motivated to pray after having read from the book of the prophet Jeremiah (vs 1-2). Read Jeremiah 25:8-11 and 29:10-14. What does Daniel realize about the Jewish people time in exile? How does this shed light on his motivation to pray?
2. What words and phrases does Daniel use to describe his people's sin?
3. Daniel offers several reasons for God to hear his plea for mercy. What are those reasons, and what does that teach us about how we ought to plead with God?
4. The angel Gabriel is sent in response to Daniel's prayer. What does Gabriel say that ought to encourage Daniel (vs 22-23)?

5. List the major events of the promised restoration of God's people from Gabriel's reply in verse 24-27. How are these things fulfilled in Jesus?

APPLYING GOD'S WORD

6. Read James 5:13-18 and 1 John 5:13-17. In what ways is the content of these passages similar to that of Daniel 9? How can we be confident that God hears and answers prayer?
7. Are you willing to not always see the answer to your prayers in this lifetime and still believe in the God of history? Why is it important that we are?
8. We know much more than what was revealed to Daniel about the saving work of God in Christ, and his Kingdom coming in this world. How can our lives reflect God's mission in the world?

PRAYER POINTS FOR THE COMING WEEK/S:

How did God's Word convict/challenge/encourage me in this session?

Prayer for concerns in my Life Group

Week 9 – Daniel 10:1-21 – Reassurance from Heaven

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

READ DANIEL 10:1-21

1. Verses 2-3 describe Daniel mourning in a time of fasting. We are not specifically told here why he was doing this, but wider OT history tells us that the 70 years of exile in Babylon had ended, and God's people were able to return to the promised land. From your knowledge of Ezra, Nehemiah, why would this godly old man who longed and prayed for this day and God's Kingdom to come set aside three weeks of fasting and prayer?
2. Chapters 7-12 record Daniel's 4 visions. Chapter 10 is a prelude to the 4th vision (chapters 11-12) It is itself a vision, not of the future, but of unseen spiritual realities. Why did the vision of vs 4-6 cause Daniel to react the way he did (v 7-11)?
3. What do the Messenger's words to Daniel (vs 12-14) tell us about God's response to those who seek him?

4. Who are the three beings: (1) the unnamed messenger (v5-6,12), (2) Michael (vs 21) and (3) the prince of Persia (v 13, 20) (also the prince of Greece)?

5. In this chapter the veil is lifted on spiritual warfare. Daniel may not have realized it, but his genuine, humble, persistent prayer had an impact in this unseen realm. What happened as a result of Daniel's prayer?

APPLYING GOD'S WORD

6. How might Daniel's experience encourage us to be persistent in faith, hope and prayer (esp. for God's Kingdom)? How should we approach God in prayer?

7. How does a glimpse of unseen spiritual realities help us and humble us as 21st Century humans?

8. What does Ephesians 6:10-18 tell us about spiritual warfare and standing against the Devil?

PRAYER POINTS FOR THE COMING WEEK/S:

How did God's Word convict/challenge/encourage me in this session?

Prayer for concerns in my Life Group

Week 10 – Daniel 12:1-13 – From Here to Eternity

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

READ DANIEL 12:1-13

1. Daniel is told that there will be an intensification of trouble at the end, “such as not happened from the beginning of nations until then.” (vs 1). It is within this context that he hears of both the promise of the resurrection, and the threat of “shame and everlasting contempt” (vs 2) How do the promise and threat relate to the news of a coming tribulation? (See also Jesus words about the end in Mark 13 & Matthew 24)
2. Daniel asks the messenger two questions: “How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?” and “What will the outcome of all this be?” Why do you think these are concerns for Daniel? And how does the angel respond to these questions?
3. The angel says to Daniel in verse 10, “Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand.” What does it mean to be wise in this context? And what understanding will the wise have that the wicked will lack?

4. What promise does Daniel receive in vs 13? What is the angel telling Daniel to do in practical terms? What would this mean for the first readers of Daniel? What does it mean for us?

5. Daniel 12 capture a great reality of Christians experience – God's pattern is that life comes through death. Paul captures this in 2 Corinthians 4:7-12. What does this passage tell us about the expectations we should have as Christians?

APPLYING GOD'S WORD

6. Think about the whole book of Daniel. Does God care for his people and always have their best interest in mind? Explain? Is God so great that he can do whatever he pleases whenever he please with whomever he pleases? How do you react to this?
7. Does God allow his people to suffer, even to the point of death? How would you answer a critic who says if that's the case God is not good?

8. When things are going badly for you because of your resolve to be a Christian what is your first reactions? What have we learnt in thus study that might change this reaction?

PRAYER POINTS FOR THE COMING WEEK/S:

How did God's Word convict/challenge/encourage me in this session?

Prayer for concerns in my Life Group