

Daniel Part 1
Leader Guide

(NASB and ESV)

LIVING OUT A BIBLICAL
WORLDVIEW
(CHAPTERS 1–6)

Daniel Part 1 Leader Guide (NASB and ESV)

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THE PURPOSE OF LEADER GUIDES

Leader guides are intended for you, the leader, to help plan your discussions. They are designed to help you reason through the theology of the lessons and to ensure you have understood what your group should have learned from completing their homework. Leader Guides are not designed to do the homework for you! Please refer to them after you have completed your assignment as a student.

These guides can assist you in preparing the lesson plans to use for leading the discussions. This is not the only way to lead your discussion of the Scriptures, but it is one way you could approach the material in the lesson.

The Holy Spirit must be your guide as you plan to lead these discussions. He is the one who knows what your group needs. Be in prayer for them as they study and for yourself as you plan to lead the discussions.

Keep in mind learning is enhanced when your group is encouraged to verbalize what they've learned. Asking questions will help them to reason through the Scriptures they have studied. Ask the "5 Ws and an H" kinds of questions (Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How). Asking these kinds of questions requires more than a yes or no answer.

Visual aids can be a tremendous asset in helping your group to reason through the Scriptures. These discussion guides will give you some ideas for visual aids, but please feel free to adapt, change, or even replace these with your own ideas.

These guides can be used for either the NASB or the ESV Precept Upon Precept courses. The ESV follows the NASB with a slash / or is set off with parentheses.

DANIEL
LEADER GUIDE
Lesson 1

Lesson emphasis

- Daniel 1–6 overview

NOTE: This is the overview and each chapter will be discussed in more detail in later lessons. Don't lose your time by discussing too much detail. Some of your group might want to spend more time than you should in a particular chapter. Keep encouraging them that they will study it in depth in later lessons.

DANIEL 1

You might begin the discussion of this chapter by asking for its timing, relating it to the “Daniel Time Line” chart. Also tell your group to look at “The 5 Ws and H of Daniel, Chapter by Chapter” for each chapter. Then ask about what they learned from their overview and how they might apply it to their lives.

Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon besieged Jerusalem for the first time in Jehoiakim's 3rd year as king of Judah. The Lord Himself gave Judah into the hands of Babylon.

It was 605 B.C.; Daniel was about 15 years old.

Daniel was one of the youths of the royal family or nobles of Judah. Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah, and he were given Babylonian names and educated in the literature and language of the Babylonians for three years.

Even at that young age, Daniel made up his mind / resolved not to defile himself with the king's food and wine. He sought permission from his overseer only to eat vegetables and drink water for ten days. The other three Hebrew youths did the same. At the end of the test period, they looked healthier than the other youths who had been eating the king's choice food.

At the end of three years, none of the others were like them, and they entered the king's service. God gave them knowledge and intelligence and wisdom. Daniel even understood dreams and visions. They were ten times better than the Babylonian conjurers and magicians.

Daniel was in the king's service until the 1st year of Cyrus the king of Persia.

Some of your group might mention how strong Daniel was to stand up for his beliefs, even in a foreign environment. Encourage them that they can be the same, and can raise teens to be exceptionally strong in faith, too.

DANIEL 2

What is this chapter about?

Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of a statue / image in the 2nd year of his reign. Daniel interpreted the dream to represent four kingdoms, Babylon being the first, and God's everlasting kingdom.

Daniel gave credit for the interpretation to the God of heaven who reveals mysteries.

There might be some in your group who think they will not understand the “mysteries” in Daniel. Encourage them to continue studying because the same God of heaven will reveal to them what Daniel is all about. And when they understand future events, they can be strong in times ahead.

Daniel was made ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men there. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were put over the administration of the province while Daniel was at the king's court.

Some in your group might have observed these key words: dream, interpretation, king/ kingdom, reveal, mysteries. The phrase “God of heaven” is also used a lot in this chapter.

How does Daniel 2 relate to the first chapter and “Daniel's Time Line”?

Daniel 1 said Daniel had ability to interpret dreams, and in Daniel 2 he did so. It seems the events of chapter 2 follow those of chapter 1 by only a year or a little more.

DANIEL 3

You could begin the discussion of this chapter by asking how it relates to the events of Daniel 2. Then ask for its place on the time line and for application.

It's possible that the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream that he was the “head of gold” put into his mind the idea of constructing the gold image for his people to worship.

This follows the appointment of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego to the administration of the province of Babylon in Daniel 2. So, on the time line it is after chapters 1 and 2.

Your group can be encouraged by these three not bowing to the statue / image but accepting punishment. They knew their God could deliver them, and He did.

As a result, the great Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar made a decree that nothing offensive about the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego should be spoken by anyone. He also made them prosperous in Babylon.

DANIEL 4

What is this chapter about? How does it relate to the first three chapters? Discuss relevant application.

It was still during Nebuchadnezzar’s reign as king of Babylon.

He wrote some or all of this chapter.

NOTE: If no one mentions Nebuchadnezzar writing this, then there is no need to discuss it at this point.

Nebuchadnezzar had another dream—this time visions of a large tree. Daniel interpreted it as the king himself.

God wanted the king to recognize that the Most High God is the ruler over mankind and not King Nebuchadnezzar. This chapter centers on his being humbled to recognize that fact.

God’s sovereignty is emphasized in this chapter. His kingdom is everlasting and extends over all the realm of mankind. He is the one who gives dominion to kings on earth.

God is the King of heaven.

The events of these first four chapters follow sequentially on the time line, but there is no hint as to where this fourth one fits into Nebuchadnezzar’s reign. The first three probably do not have a lot of time between them, but this chapter might have occurred after some time had passed.

DANIEL 5

When did this chapter take place?

The end of Belshazzar’s reign as king of Babylon
The end of the Babylonian Empire of that time

The beginning of Darius the Mede reigning over the Babylonian Empire
The beginning of the Medo-Persian Empire

You might ask your group if they’ve ever heard of the saying, “seeing the handwriting on the wall.” Discuss what they learned from this chapter.

King Belshazzar was involved in a feast using the vessels from the temple of God. Nebuchadnezzar had brought them to Babylon from Jerusalem, Daniel 1:1-2.

He saw a hand write on a wall, and the queen suggested Daniel interpret it. Daniel related how God humbled Nebuchadnezzar, but even knowing this, Belshazzar did not humble his heart.

The interpretation was that Belshazzar's rule was over. He was killed that same night and the Medes and Persians took over his kingdom.

DANIEL 6

What are the events of this chapter?

It was during the reign of Darius the Mede.

Verse 28 says Daniel enjoyed success / prospered under Darius and Cyrus the Persian.

Comparing this with 1:21, Daniel served the Babylonian king until the first year of Cyrus when the Babylonian kingdom fell to the Medes and Persians.

The Most High God made the Medo-Persian kings recognize Daniel as a valuable man in their reigns as well.

Daniel was around 80 years old.

This is the third time in chapters 1–6 that a man, or men, of God refuses to compromise his belief in the Lord. Daniel petitioned his God during the 30-day injunction.

A pagan king again saw God deliver men from certain death.

Again a Gentile king decreed that his people reverence the living God, the Hebrew God.

To end your discussion, ask about Daniel 1–6 as a whole.

These first six chapters cover the period Daniel was in Babylon under the kings of Babylon and Media-Persia who rule his people.

Chapters 1–6 are about kings, primarily Babylonian, over whom the King of heaven rules.

Daniel interpreted dreams and visions revealing future kingdoms.

The kingdom of God is the only one which lasts forever.

Give time for your group to discuss application, especially about God Most High or Daniel's example.

DANIEL
LEADER GUIDE
Lesson 2

Lesson emphasis

- Daniel 7–12 overview

REVIEW

To begin this discussion, tell your group to look at their At a Glance chart and “Daniel’s Time Chart.” Then ask for a review of the events in Daniel 1–6.

Daniel 1—

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon
Daniel and 3 put in his service

Daniel 2—

Nebuchadnezzar’s 2nd year
Daniel interpreted king’s “statue / image” dream—4 kingdoms
God of heaven

Daniel 3—

Nebuchadnezzar’s reign
Statue / image of gold, 3 didn’t bow
Most High God delivered them

Daniel 4—

Nebuchadnezzar’s reign
Daniel interpreted king’s “tree” dream
King recognized Most High rules over mankind

Daniel 5—

Belshazzar, king of Babylon; Darius the Mede received the kingdom
Daniel interpreted handwriting on wall
Most High God is sovereign

Daniel 6—

Darius’s reign, Medo-Persian Empire
Daniel in the lions’ den
Living God delivered him

The first six chapters of Daniel cover chronological events, including parts of Daniel’s life from his youth until he was about 80 years old. He interpreted dreams and/or visions for kings.

DANIEL 7

Ask your group what they learned from their overview of this chapter and how it relates to the first six and to their lives. Tell them to look at “The 5 Ws and H of Daniel, Chapter by Chapter” as a visual aid to discuss each chapter.

1st year of Belshazzar, king of Babylon
Chronological order is broken with this chapter.
Events of Daniel 7 fit between those in Daniel 4 and 5.

Daniel had the dream/ visions, and an angel interpreted for him.
Daniel saw four beasts representing four kingdoms before God’s eternal kingdom.

The interpretation continues the theme of kingdoms from Daniel 1–6. “Dominion” and “kingdom” are key words.

“The Ancient of Days” is another description of God in this chapter, along with “Most High” and “Highest One.”

NOTE: Some in your group might relate this chapter to Daniel 2. The statue / image in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream represents four coming kingdoms, and Daniel’s dream of the four beasts represents four coming kingdoms. Both qualified God’s kingdom as everlasting. But if no one mentions this comparison, then leave it for later in the study.

DANIEL 8

What is this chapter about? When?

3rd year of Belshazzar’s rule over Babylon

This chapter’s events come after those in Daniel 7 and between those in Daniel 4 and 5.

NOTE: Some might notice that first person pronouns are used for Daniel in this chapter and Daniel 7. But there is no need to discuss at this point.

Daniel had a vision of a goat and ram.
Gabriel told Daniel the meaning of the vision, but not completely.

The ram represented kings of Media and Persia, and the goat represented the kingdom of Greece.

The visions of Daniel 7 and 8 caused Daniel alarm and exhaustion.

DANIEL 9

What happened in this chapter? When?

1st year of Darius the Mede
This chapter immediately follows Daniel 5.

As Daniel read Jeremiah, he calculated when the Babylonian captivity was to end. According to the time line, the end of the captivity was not far ahead from the time of this chapter.

Daniel's prayer is the main emphasis of this chapter. It's a confession of sin. Based on what he read in Jeremiah, he asked for the Lord to turn away His wrath from His people.

Gabriel, whom Daniel had previously seen, revealed the future—the return of his people to the “holy mountain / hill of my God,” Jerusalem.

70 weeks were decreed for Daniel's people and holy city.

DANIEL 10

What are the events of this chapter? When? How does this relate to Daniel 1–9?

3rd year of Cyrus, king of Persia
The message of this chapter fits two years later than Daniel 9 because Darius the Mede ruled at the same time as Cyrus, the Persian king.

Chapter 10 begins Daniel's vision of great conflict. Daniel was by the bank of the Tigris River, and the man dressed in linen spoke with him for understanding of the vision. It is what will happen to Daniel's people in the latter days.

Daniel was referred to as a man of high esteem (ESV—greatly loved).

Persia and Greece are mentioned again in this chapter. The prince of Greece is “about to come / will come.”

In this chapter another angel is named “Michael your prince.”

DANIEL 11

What is this chapter about?

This continues what the man dressed / clothed in linen, Daniel 10:5, told Daniel about the great conflict.

The connection between Daniel 10:21 and 11:1 is that the one who spoke to Daniel told of Michael standing with him in Cyrus’s 3rd year, 10:1. Two years before, in Darius’s 1st year, the man in linen had been an encouragement and protection for Michael.

Persia and Greece are mentioned in this conflict, but the chapter is primarily about kings of the South and North.

NOTE: Some might observe that the South is Egypt, but if not leave this for later discussions.

A holy covenant, a sanctuary / temple, and an abomination of desolation (ESV—that makes desolate) are mentioned.

Reference is made to the Beautiful / glorious Land or Holy Mountain three times.

Ask your group where they think these refer to.

DANIEL 12

What is this chapter about? What is the connection with previous chapters?

Chapter 10 began Daniel’s vision of great conflict. Daniel was by the bank of the Tigris River, and the man dressed / clothed in linen spoke to him. In Daniel 12:5-6, he was still by the river hearing from the man in linen.

“At that time” is a reference to the time at the end of Daniel 11.

“Michael the prince” stands guard over Daniel’s people. Consider what a comfort that was to Daniel who was captive with his people in a pagan nation.

This chapter offers hope after conflict.

There are quite a few time references used in this chapter.

The abomination of desolation (ESV—the abomination that makes desolate) is mentioned again.

Daniel was told to conceal / shut up the words of this book until the end time.

At this point, you can review all of Daniel by asking if any in your group identified segment divisions in Daniel.

The main division is between Daniel 6 and 7.

Daniel 1–6: Daniel interprets.

Daniel 7–12: angels interpret.

Daniel 1–6 is in chronological order.

Daniel 7–12 is in chronological order, but fit into the events of the first six chapters.

Other possible segments in Daniel:

1–5 and 7–8, Babylonian kingdom reigning

6 and 9–12, Medo-Persian kingdom reigning

NOTE: Your group might not observe all of the above segments, and you do not need to teach the ones they don't.

To end your discussion, you can ask your group why they think Daniel was written and what the main theme is.

It's a prophetic book telling of coming earthly kingdoms and God's everlasting kingdom. The earthly kingdoms will rule over Daniel's people Israel.

God Most High rules over the realm of mankind (ESV—kingdom of men); kings and kingdoms.

Daniel: Most High God rules over mankind, kingdoms

- 1—Daniel and 3 in king’s service
- 2—Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar’s statue / image dream
- 3—3 didn’t bow or burn; God delivered them
- 4—Nebuchadnezzar’s tree dream
- 5—Belshazzar saw handwriting on wall
- 6—Daniel delivered from lions’ den

- 7—Daniel’s vision of 4 beasts (kingdoms)
- 8—Daniels’ vision of ram and goat
- 9—Daniel prayed, 70 weeks for his people and city
- 10—Message of great conflict revealed to Daniel
- 11—Kings of South and North in conflict
- 12—Daniel’s people and the end time

DANIEL
LEADER GUIDE
Lesson 3

Lesson emphasis

- History of Israel leading up to Daniel 1
- Daniel 1

REVIEW

To help your group remember Daniel, begin most of your discussions with a brief review of the theme of Daniel and main segments of the book.

Daniel is about kings and kingdoms.
The theme is: God Most High rules over the realm of mankind / kingdom of men.

Chapters 1–6 are chronological.
7–12 fit chronologically into the events of 1–6.

In the first six chapters, Daniel interprets
In the last chapters, an angel interprets.

DANIEL 1

Verses 1-2

What are these verses about?

The 3rd year of Jehoiakim king of Judah
Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon besieged Jerusalem.

The Lord gave Jehoiakim to Nebuchadnezzar and he was taken to Shinar. Babylon is in the area named Shinar.

He also gave the Babylonian king some of the vessels of His temple in Jerusalem, which Nebuchadnezzar put into his god's treasury.

Why did these things happen? Why was Judah taken captive by Babylon? Why did the Lord give His temple to be emptied by a pagan king? Ask what your group learned from the cross-references in Deuteronomy and 2 Kings.

Deuteronomy 28

In verses 1-9 God told Israel that if they obeyed Him, He would set them high above all the nations of the earth. Blessings everywhere would be theirs, and they would be a holy people to Himself.

But in verses 15-57 is the contrast: if they didn't obey, curses would come on them.

Verses 36-37 and 49-57 speak of a nation ruling over Israel if they disobeyed the Lord. That nation was Babylon. Verses 52-57 prophesied the siege against Jerusalem. Relate verse 49, not understanding the nation's language, to Daniel 1.

In verses 63-65, the Lord said He would tear them from the land, make them perish, and destroy them. He would scatter them from one end of the earth to the other.

Deuteronomy 30

Basically, this chapter says that the curses and captivity would indeed come on Israel because they would not obey God.

It also tells of future restoration to their land.

NOTE: Some in your group might not have looked at Deuteronomy 30 because the directions said to do this if they had time.

2 Kings 15:29; 17:1-23

Israel sinned against the Lord from the time He led them out of Egypt. In 931 B.C. the kingdom of Israel divided into two kingdoms.

The Southern Kingdom of Judah knew what happened to the Northern Kingdom. Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria captured part of Israel during the reign of Pekah king of Israel. The exact year isn't given, but it would have been before the end of the reign of Pekah in 732 B.C.

Shalmaneser king of Assyria laid siege to the capital Samaria for 3 years.

Assyria took the rest of Israel captive in 722 B.C.

Tell your group to look at the chart "The Three Babylonian Sieges of Judah" and "Israel's Division and Captivity." Ask what they learned about the sieges against Jerusalem and how they relate to Daniel 1.

1st Siege, 605 B.C.

Jeremiah prophesied to Judah, but they did not listen. Therefore, the Lord spoke through Jeremiah that he would bring Nebuchadnezzar to overtake Judah, and they would serve Babylon for 70 years.

Jehoiakim served Nebuchadnezzar for three years of his 11-year reign, then rebelled.

Nebuchadnezzar came up against him, and took royals and nobles of Judah and some of the vessels of God's temple to Babylon.

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were taken at that time.

Nebuchadnezzar had bound Jehoiakim in bronze fetters to take him to Babylon but evidently did not take him since Jehoiakim reigned eight more years in Jerusalem, 2 Chronicles 36:5, and died.

2nd Siege, 597 B.C.

When Jehoiakim died, his son Jehoiachin ruled for only three months before being taken captive to Babylon in the 8th year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign according to 2 Kings 24:12.

Nebuchadnezzar took captains, mighty men, craftsman, smiths, and ten thousand others captive, leaving only the poorest people of the land. He also took all the treasures of the Lord's house.

Nebuchadnezzar made Jehoiachin's uncle Mattaniah king of Judah, but changed his name to Zedekiah. Jeremiah refers to Jehoiachin as Jeconiah.

This siege took place about eight years after Daniel was taken to Babylon, and maybe five years after the end of Daniel 1.

3rd Siege, 588–586 B.C.

In the 5th year of Jehoiachin's exile, about 4 years before the 3rd siege, Ezekiel prophesied, saying 1/3 would die by plague or famine, 1/3 would fall by the sword, and 1/3 would be scattered. They would be bereaved of their children. Because they were disobedient, God would execute these judgments on them.

This final siege began 9 years after the second and lasted 2 years. This must have been the time which Deuteronomy 28 foretold, because the cannibalism is also prophesied in Jeremiah 19.

In his 19th year as king, Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem in Zedekiah's 9th year as king of Judah. The siege lasted to Zedekiah's 11th year when his sons were killed and he was blinded and taken to Babylon.

Jerusalem and the temple were burned and the city walls broken down. The exiles would remain in Babylon for 70 years, until the time of the Persian kings. All of this fulfilled the word of the Lord.

Daniel had been in Babylon about 17 years at the time of this last siege and destruction of Jerusalem.

Lead your discussion back to Daniel 1 and ask about the content of this chapter.

During the first siege, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were taken captive to Babylon. They were among the royal family or nobles of Judah.

They were in Babylon because of the rebellion of their nation against their God. Israel had been warned, but they turned against God.

Daniel and his friends were youths. According to “Daniel’s Time Chart” used in Lessons 1 and 2, he was about 15 years old.

They were good-looking, intelligent guys with skills to serve in Nebuchadnezzar’s court. So Nebuchadnezzar put them into training and assigned them new names.

Most of the time people refer to Daniel’s friends by their Babylonian names, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, rather than their Jewish names. Daniel became Belteshazzar—not to be confused with the later king of Babylon, Belshazzar.

Verse 8 is significant. Daniel decided / resolved he would not defile himself by eating things unclean according to the law of the Lord. He knew what the Lord said, and he had seen what happened to his people for disobeying the Lord.

Ask your group what they learned from the cross-references in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 6.

Leviticus 11

In this chapter is the record of what Israel was to eat and not eat. This is of particular interest when studying Daniel 1. God said there were certain unclean things, which if eaten, would defile the one who ate it.

He is holy, and His people were to be. Verses 44-47 summarize this chapter.

Israel was commanded to distinguish between clean and unclean.

Deuteronomy 6

The generation of Israel which came out of Egypt died in the wilderness for disobeying the Lord. He brought the next generation to the border of the land of promise and Moses gave the Law to that second generation.

Israel was to fear the Lord and keep His commands so that they might live long in their land.

They were to listen to Him and love Him with all their heart, soul, and might. His words were to be in their hearts, and they were to teach them diligently to their children.

God is a jealous God, and they were to worship Him alone.

Verses 20-25 tell them how to answer sons who asked about the Law.

Go back to Daniel 1 and ask if it relates to Deuteronomy 6.

Evidently the parents of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah had taught them God’s Law and why they should keep it. If not their parents, someone had. They knew the dietary laws of the Lord, and were willing to obey them.

As the Lord gave Daniel favor and compassion from the commander of the officials, he received the commander's permission not to eat the king's food and wine.

He proposed a ten-day test to his overseer appointed by the commander. The overseer agreed, and the Hebrew youths were successful.

They obeyed the Lord, and He took care of them, even in the king's training. When they were presented to King Nebuchadnezzar, he found them ten times better in understanding and wisdom than all of his magicians and conjurers.

Daniel stayed in the king's service for the entire 70 years of captivity, into the 1st year of Cyrus, king of Persia.

You could end your discussion by asking your group what they learned about God from this lesson, especially from Daniel 1.

DANIEL
LEADER GUIDE
Lesson 4

Lesson emphasis

- Daniel 2
- Basic understanding of the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream

REVIEW

Begin by asking what Daniel is about, then review the history and chapter 1. Tell your group to look at “Daniel’s Time Chart” as a visual aid.

Daniel is about kings/ kingdoms of the earth.
The main theme is that God Most High rules over the realm of mankind.

God instructed Israel how they were to live as His people. They didn’t obey, so at the time of Daniel, they went into exile—70 years of captivity because of their sin.

In Daniel 1, the sons of royals and nobles were being educated to serve in the court of the pagan king Nebuchadnezzar who took them captive. God was still in control—He gave Judah to Nebuchadnezzar.

God gave Daniel favor and compassion from the commander of the officials and gave Daniel and his friends wisdom and intelligence beyond others in the king’s court. He also gave Daniel the ability to understand visions and dreams.

DANIEL 2

You might begin this part of your discussion by asking for the setting of this chapter.

Since Daniel 2 took place in Nebuchadnezzar’s second year, then Daniel and his friends would have still been in their education process.

NOTE: Some in your group might have seen the following explanation in commentaries. Accession years were often not counted as a year of reign. 605 B.C., when Daniel was taken captive, was Nebuchadnezzar’s accession year, so 603 B.C. is considered the 2nd year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign. Thus the second year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign was still at the end of the 3 years (605, 604, 603) of education for Daniel. This counting system accords with 2 Kings 24:12, which places the 2nd siege in the 8th year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign, or 597 B.C.

So Daniel 2 would have taken place shortly after chapter 1—Daniel and his friends were then considered part of the wise men of Babylon.

Since the time is not the most important element of this chapter, don't spend much time on this, nor allow your group to get off track on debate.

Verses 1-11

What happened?

Nebuchadnezzar's dream troubled him so much that he wanted to be sure the interpretation of it was accurate. Wisely he asked his magicians, conjurers / enchanters, sorcerers, and Chaldeans to tell him the dream as well as the interpretation. He recognized they were probably just making up interpretations, and were therefore bargaining for time.

Verse 11 summarizes their response to the king.

Verses 12-16

Ask how Daniel handled the situation and how it relates to chapter 1.

Arioch looked for Daniel and his friends to be killed also.

Daniel used discretion and discernment (ESV—prudence and discretion) when he replied to Arioch. He had done the same thing in Daniel 1 as he respectfully sought permission about refusing the king's food and then presented the 10-day dietary test.

Daniel had just been told that he was to be killed, but he replied with discretion and discernment (prudence and discretion), and he was still a young man at this time.

Believers today need the same discretion and discernment (prudence and discretion) when dealing with situations of life, especially those which can lead to trauma or panic.

Verses 17-23

Who did Daniel go to in this situation? What did he do when his life was threatened? Give time for discussion about God. Tell them to look at their page of what they learned about God as a visual aid.

He told his friends so they could pray, seeking compassion / mercy from their God.

God is described as "the God of heaven" who has wisdom and power, the one who changes the times and removes and establishes / sets up kings.

He reveals the hidden, knows what is in the darkness.

He answered their request.

Give time for your group to discuss application.

Verses 24-30

How do these verses relate to verses 20-23?

Daniel took no credit for himself, but told Nebuchadnezzar about the God of heaven who reveals mysteries. Relate this to verse 11.

God told Nebuchadnezzar through Daniel what would take place in the latter days, literally, “end of the days.”¹ From verse 29, it seems like Nebuchadnezzar was thinking about the future, then God gave him the dream which told the future.

Verses 31-35

Ask what these verses contain. Tell your group to look at the diagram of the statue / image in the lesson as a visual aid for the rest of this discussion.

Detail about the dream.

The great statue / image was large / mighty and extraordinary splendor / exceeding brightness.

Each part was made of a different material.

Head—gold

Breast / chest and arms—silver

Belly / middle and thighs—bronze

Legs—iron

Feet—part iron and part clay

A stone was cut without hands.

It struck the statue on the feet and crushed them.

Then the whole was crushed and was carried away by the wind.

No trace was left.

The stone became a great mountain which filled the whole earth.

Verses 36-45

Relate the interpretation to the dream and the setting of Nebuchadnezzar’s rule.

Verses 37-38 are about Nebuchadnezzar, the king at that time to whom God gave dominion. He was the “king of kings” with power, strength, and glory. He was the statue’s / image’s head of gold.

Verse 39 tells of a kingdom after Nebuchadnezzar which was inferior to his. That was the silver breast / chest and two arms of the statue / image.

After this, a third kingdom of bronze was to rule over the earth. The statue’s / image’s belly / middle and thighs were that bronze part.

¹ *New American Standard Bible: 1995 update*, marginal note (Dan. 2:28) (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

From this much information it seems like the kingdom after the Babylonian was to be inferior to it and to the third as well. Nebuchadnezzar ruled over all, and the third was to rule the whole earth, but the second was inferior.

A fourth kingdom is described in verses 40-43, very different from the others. Like iron, it crushes and shatters and will break the other kingdoms in pieces. The iron and clay mixed represents a divided kingdom—part strong and part brittle.

The ten toes of the feet are specifically mentioned in verses 42-44. They are kings during whose time the kingdom of God will be set up.

Verses 44-45 reveal the final kingdom of God which is represented by the stone and mountain. It will put an end to the earthly kingdoms and endure forever.

Ask what your group learned from Daniel 2 and the cross-references about the stone.

It was cut without hands, put an end to the kingdoms of the earth, and became the kingdom of God.

God called Jesus the chief cornerstone. He was rejected by the builders, Israel's leaders, who did not believe in Him as the Messiah, but He is the foundation stone for all who do.

He is a choice, tested, costly, precious cornerstone for the foundation. Believers are living stones being built into a spiritual house for a holy priesthood.

To those who do not believe, who are disobedient to the Word, He becomes a stone of stumbling and rock of offense. Genesis 49 calls Him the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel who came from Jacob, Israel.

Jesus the Christ is the firmly placed foundation of the kingdom of God.

Lead your discussion back to Daniel 2.
Compare verse 35 with verses 44-45.

After crushing the statue, the stone in the dream became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

God sets up His eternal kingdom. It will bring all other kingdoms to an end.

Verses 46-49

How does this chapter end?

The king recognized Daniel's God is a
God of gods
Lord of kings
revealer of mysteries

He gave Daniel gifts, set him over the whole province of Babylon, and appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego over the administration of Babylon.

Ask your group how knowledge of the future kingdom of God affects them.

You might end by letting them share what they learned about God from this lesson.

DANIEL
LEADER GUIDE
Lesson 5

Lesson emphasis

- Daniel 3
- Idolatry

REVIEW

To establish the setting of chapter 3, ask your group what they remember about Daniel 1 and 2.

Daniel 1

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah chose not to defile themselves with food or wine from King Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of their training, they were ten times better than all the magicians and conjurers in King Nebuchadnezzar's personal service.

Daniel 2

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah asked the Lord to reveal to Daniel the king's dream and interpretation. God, the revealer of mysteries, answered and gave the interpretation of the statue dream to Daniel—four kingdoms crushed by a stone.

The head of gold represented Nebuchadnezzar.

The king promoted Daniel over the whole province of Babylon and appointed the other three over the administration of the province.

DANIEL 3

Ask your group why they think Nebuchadnezzar got the idea to make a gold image for all to worship. What happened in verses 1-18?

Maybe he didn't want to be only the head of gold on the statue / image.

He made an image entirely of gold, possibly a statue of himself, for everyone to bow down to. It was 90 feet high and 9 feet wide. It might have been on a high platform or base, making it more proportionate.

He set it in the plain of Dura.

All the leaders and nobles at the dedication of the image bowed to worship it, except Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.

A report was made to the king that the three men didn't bow to his image.

This report enraged the king, since they held important positions in his service.

But he still gave them a second chance to bow to the image.

His question of verse 15 and their reply in verses 16-18 are powerful.

Their decision about idolatry was not a hurried one. They didn't need to consider how to answer Nebuchadnezzar. They would not bow, no matter the outcome.

At any point in this discussion, give your group opportunity to talk about application.

Ask what your group learned from the cross-references about idolatry.

At the end of this guide is a possible visual aid, a simple list about God and one about idolatry.

Exodus 20:1-6

The first two of the Ten Commandments address idolatry.

- You shall have no other gods before Me.
- You shall not make for yourself an idol / a carved image

God reveals part of His character in the 2nd commandment.

He is a jealous God—He doesn't want to share what is rightfully His.

Deuteronomy 4

The first generation of Israel who had come out of Egypt had been killed in the wilderness for rebellion against God. In Deuteronomy Moses told the 2nd generation that when they went into the land of promise, they should hold fast to the Lord and keep His commands.

The sin he warned against the most in Deuteronomy 4 was idolatry. Why? Because the nations of the land of Canaan were idol worshipers, as had been the Egyptians with whom Israel lived for over 400 years.

God wanted His people Israel to be different from the other nations, and He didn't want them making and worshiping idols like the people around them.

Moses reminded that in Exodus 20 the Lord Himself spoke the Ten Commandments, but no one saw His form. Therefore, they were not to make images to worship.

He warned them about breaking the covenant of the Law.

Again, it says God is a jealous God—a consuming fire.

Verses 25-31 are prophecy. When Israel entered the land and lived there a long time, they made idols / carved images and provoked God to anger. They were destroyed from the land and scattered among the nations, few in number from what had been numerous as the sand on the seashore. That is why the Babylonians took them captive—idolatry.

But in the latter days, they will return to the Lord and listen to / obey His voice. Because He is a compassionate / merciful God, He will not fail / leave them, destroy them or forget the covenant with their fathers.

As your group discusses what they learned in Ezekiel, tell them to look at the chart in the lesson and also “Israel’s Division and Captivity.”

Ezekiel 6:9 and Ezekiel 23

Ezekiel spoke to the people of Israel who were still in Judah and Jerusalem at the same time Daniel and others were in Babylon.

Israel and Judah were portrayed as sisters who became harlots.

Ezekiel said Israel was idolatrous since the days they lived in Egypt.

Israel, the Northern Kingdom whose capital was Samaria, was called Oholah. She went after the Assyrians, and they eventually turned against her.

In 722 B.C. the last tribes of the Northern Kingdom were taken captive by Assyria.

Judah, the Southern Kingdom who was called Oholibah, saw what happened to her sister with the Assyrians, but became worse in idolatry than Israel. Some of her kings even sacrificed their children to the fire like the pagan nations of Canaan before them.

Through Ezekiel, God warned Judah that the Chaldeans, Babylonians, would come against her and judge her according to their customs. They would cut off noses and ears as was their custom with captives.

Verse 25 says God’s jealousy would be against her.

Judah forgot God, and they paid the penalty for worshiping idols.

Ezekiel 6:9 says God had been hurt / broken by Israel’s idolatry, and that the people would loathe themselves for all their evil and abominations.

Galatians 5:19-21

Idolatry is a deed / work of the flesh, and those who continue in it are not saved; they are not part of God’s kingdom.

Colossians 3:5-11

Greed amounts to (ESV—covetousness is) idolatry. Believers have the ability to put aside sin, including greed, from their lives. Those who continue in sin, as Galatians 5 also says, suffer the wrath of God.

1 Corinthians 8:4-6 and 10

Israel’s idolatries and punishments in the Old Testament are warnings for New Testament believers to flee from idolatry—flee from greed and other deeds of the flesh.

Idols are nothing, but sacrifices to idols are sacrifices to demons.
Don't provoke the Lord to jealousy like Israel did; they suffered terrible consequences.

Revelation 13

In the future there will be idolatry all over the earth. Only those who don't participate in it will have life. A world ruler will make those who dwell on the earth take the mark of the beast to buy or sell. Those who do not worship the beast will be killed.

Lead your discussion back to the events of Daniel 3:19-30.
What happened?

The king was filled with wrath / fury. He commanded for the oven to be seven times hotter and for the three to be bound.

The three were cast into the fire, but a fourth man appeared with them.

Nebuchadnezzar saw four men walking around in the furnace. He said one was like a son of the gods.

You can give your group time to talk about what they think about the fourth man and why.

NOTE: Some think this was a "christophany," an Old Testament appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ in the form of a man.

What happened next?

He called the three out of the fire, referring to them as servants of the "Most High God."

When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego came out of the fire, there was no effect on their bodies, hair not singed, clothes undamaged, didn't even smell like fire.

Nebuchadnezzar then made a decree that no one was to speak against their God since no other one could deliver / rescue like this. And he promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.

Give your group time to discuss how they can prepare for the future trials and testing which will come their way. What do they know about God that can help them prepare for their future?

GOD	IDOLATRY
<p>Have no gods before Him</p> <p>A jealous God, consuming fire</p> <p>Compassionate / merciful</p> <p>Hurt by disobedience</p> <p>Most High, able to deliver from fire</p>	<p>Don't make images to worship</p> <p>Making a form to worship</p> <p>Greed / covetousness</p> <p>Demonic</p> <p>Has consequences</p> <p>Future for whole world</p>

DANIEL
LEADER GUIDE
Lesson 6

Lesson emphasis

- Daniel 4
- God's sovereignty

REVIEW

Ask your group for the main theme of Daniel and what they remember about chapters 1–3 and about Nebuchadnezzar. Tell them to look at their At a Glance chart as a visual aid.

The theme of Daniel is repeated in Daniel 4.

God Most High rules over the realm of mankind / kingdoms of men
and bestows it on whom He wishes (ESV—gives it to whom he will).

Nebuchadnezzar was the Babylonian king who captured God's people Israel. He destroyed Jerusalem and God's temple and brought the treasures of God's temple into his own treasury.

He was a great and proud king over a vast empire, the dominant one at that time. He was told by God through Daniel's interpretation of the statue dream that he was the head of gold, but God set him in that position. He was also told the next kingdom to rule after his would be inferior to his.

He remarked, Daniel 2, that God is *a* God of gods and *a* Lord of kings and *a* revealer of mysteries, which implied he did not recognize God as *the* God.

Daniel 3 tells of his anger and rage when his orders weren't obeyed. Then he recognized that God is able to deliver from fire. He called God the Most High and said that there is no other god who is able to deliver / rescue in this way.

Daniel appealed to the commander of Nebuchadnezzar's officials while in training in chapter 1 and was appointed to Nebuchadnezzar's personal service. Daniel sought the Lord's help to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter 2. Then in Daniel 3 Nebuchadnezzar heard witness from Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego that God is able to deliver them from death, and they chose to trust Him instead of bow, whether God chose to deliver them from the fire or not.

DANIEL 4

Ask your group who wrote this chapter of Daniel and why they think, based on the text, that was the case. There are two simple lists at the end of this guide which you can use as a visual aid.

Nebuchadnezzar himself wrote this chapter.

He seemed compelled to tell what God had done for him. This appears to be a formal announcement to read in all his kingdom, similar to the decree he made in 3:29.

Then ask about the content or events of this chapter. Discuss application at any point. Tell them to look at their sketches of Nebuchadnezzar's dream and their list about God, "What I Learned about God from the Book of Daniel."

Verses 1-3

Nebuchadnezzar began with praise of God Most High whom he recognized as being the only one whose kingdom is everlasting.

Verses 4-9

He told about the dream he had and that Daniel came to interpret it when no one else could.

He described Daniel as one who had a spirit of the holy gods in him.

John 16:13, all believers have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them to guide and teach.

Verses 10-18

Nebuchadnezzar told Daniel the dream.

Verses 19-27

Daniel interpreted the dream for the king with sadness and humility. His words show that he cared for Nebuchadnezzar.

The tree represented Nebuchadnezzar who was about to be humbled by God Most High.

A watcher, a holy one from heaven, gave the decree saying for seven periods of time, maybe years, the king was to be like a beast—until he recognized God, not himself, is ruler of all. His kingdom would be preserved for him during that time.

Daniel then called the king to repent of his sins by doing righteousness and showing mercy.

Several times Nebuchadnezzar referred to God as the Most High. In verses 17 and 25 he repeated the theme statements of Daniel.

At this point, you can ask your group what they learned from Daniel and the cross-references about God Most High or El Elyon.

Daniel 3:26

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego served the Most High God. None is able to deliver like He can. Nebuchadnezzar recognized this.

Daniel 5:18, 21

Daniel spoke to Belshazzar telling him God Most High gave his forefather Nebuchadnezzar his sovereignty and majesty. He is over all kings and their greatness or lack of it. Verse 21 repeats the theme of Daniel.

Daniel 7:18, 22, 25

This is about the end times. The saints of the Highest One / Most High will possess the kingdom forever. At some point one will speak out against the Most High and wear down His saints. They will be given into his hand for a specific time.

Genesis 14:19-22

Melchizedek was priest of God Most High.
He brought out bread and wine to Abram and blessed him.
The Most High is possessor of heaven and earth.
He delivers His people from their enemies.

Deuteronomy 32:8

He gives the nations their inheritance and divides mankind. He decides where a nation is located and who is in it.

Psalms 46:4; 47:2; 57:2 and 83:18

There is gladness in the city of His habitation. He's the great King over all the earth. He fulfills His purpose for each of His people. He alone is over all the earth and He is to be feared.

Hosea 11:7

The NASB translates the Hebrew that though the prophets call the people to the Most High, the people don't exalt Him.

The ESV translates that though the people call out to the Most High, He will not raise them up.

The context is that the Most High loved Israel and raised them up as a nation, but they are bent on turning away from Him.

Lead your discussion back to Daniel 4:28-33. What happened to Nebuchadnezzar?

A year later when Nebuchadnezzar was reflecting on the greatness of the kingdom he built for his own glory, he heard a voice from heaven.

God had given him 12 months to repent. This shows God's mercy, patience, justice.

Nebuchadnezzar's sovereignty / kingdom was removed, he was driven away for seven periods of time, and he became like a beast. The judgment period was stated again—until he recognized / knew that God Most High rules over mankind (ESV—the kingdom of men) and bestows / gives rulership on whom He wills.

What is the contrast with David in Psalm 21?

David realized that all he had, including his kingship was from God, and he praised God for all those blessings.

What happened in Daniel 4:34-37?

What the Lord showed Nebuchadnezzar in the tree dream happened just as the Most High said it would.

At the end of the appointed time, he recognized that God rules and honored and exalted Him as the King of heaven, the one able to humble those who walk in pride. Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom was restored to him and surpassed its earlier greatness.

The Lord humbled the great, proud king.

Daniel 4:34-35 are statements about God you might suggest your group memorize. Ask how they can apply the truths of these verses to their own lives.

Ask what the Most High rules over.

Psalm 59:13; 66:7 and 103:19

He rules over Israel and all nations to the ends of the earth. He rules over all from His throne in heaven.

Compare this with which nation ruled Israel in Daniel and why.

Then ask what else they learned about God's sovereignty.

Isaiah 14:24, 27; Job 42:2

What He intends happens. No one thwarts His plans.

Psalm 139:13-16; Deuteronomy 32:39; Job 14:5

He rules over life and death. He wounds, and He heals. He determines the number of our days.

Isaiah 45:5-7; 46:9-10

He is God and there is no other.

He forms light and creates darkness.

He causes well-being and calamity.

Ezekiel 14:12-23

When He decides to punish a nation for its unrighteousness, no one can deliver it.

Job 36:30-32 and 37:10-13

God commands the lightning, clouds, moisture, and ice.

2 Samuel 16:5-14

King David didn't take action against the man cursing him. Instead, he said God told him to do that. Maybe God would avenge it in the future.

Luke 22:31-32; Job 1:8-12 and 2:3-6

God rules over the devil.

Satan has to get permission from God Most High to do anything against God's people.

John 19:10-11

Authority on earth is given only by the Lord above.

This can be life-changing for some of your group. Help them grasp how knowing God's sovereignty gives assurance and security to their lives.

You can end the discussion by asking how knowing God's sovereignty makes a difference in their lives.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR	GOD
Great Proud <u>Humbled</u> Recognized Blessed Praised	Most High Everlasting kingdom Ruler over realm of mankind Bestows it on whomever He wishes King of heaven <u>Able to humble</u> those who walk in pride

DANIEL
LEADER GUIDE
Lesson 7

Lesson emphasis

- Daniel 5
- Pride

REVIEW

Ask your group what they remember about the main events of Daniel 1–4 and the overall theme of Daniel. If you do this consistently, they will more easily remember Daniel.

Tell them to look at their At a Glance chart as a visual aid for this part of your discussion.

Some key words in Daniel are:

king(dom), dream(s)/ vision(s), interpretation, “Most High”

The overall theme of Daniel is:

The Most High is ruler over the realm / kingdom of mankind and bestows it on (ESV—gives it to) whomever He wishes.

Chapters 1–6 are chronological chapters in which Daniel interpreted dreams and/ or visions of Babylonian kings about coming Gentile kingdoms.

Chapters 7–12 are chronological, but fit into the first six chapters.

In these chapters Daniel had dreams/ vision also about coming kingdoms in relationship to his people Israel.

Then you could ask about the historical setting of Daniel 5.

Tell them to look at Daniel’s Time Chart as a visual aid also.

Daniel and his friends were taken captive to Babylon in the first siege of Jerusalem in 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar was king of Babylon at that time.

Chapters 1–4 occurred during Nebuchadnezzar’s reign.

1—Daniel and 3 entered king’s service, ten times better than others

2—Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar’s statue / image dream

3—3 didn’t bow to Nebuchadnezzar’s image, put in furnace but delivered from fire

4—Most High humbled Nebuchadnezzar, he recognized God rules

Daniel 5 is at the end of the Babylonian Empire, when Darius the Mede received the kingdom, verse 31.

DANIEL 5

Verses 1-4

What happened in these verses?

Belshazzar the king of Babylon had a great feast for a thousand of his nobles / lords. They drank from the vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from God's temple in Jerusalem in 605 B.C., Daniel 1:2. While they were drinking from the vessels belonging to the only true God Most High, they praised other gods.

“Daniel’s Time Line” shows Belshazzar as the fifth king of Babylon after Nebuchadnezzar who was the greatest of all the kings of the Neo-Babylonian Empire and who reigned the longest—43 years. Belshazzar reigned for about 14 years.

NOTE: The text says Nebuchadnezzar was Belshazzar’s father, which might have literally been the case. But since the word “father” can also mean grandfather or forefather, Belshazzar might have been Nebuchadnezzar’s grandson through his mother the queen of this chapter. She might have been Nebuchadnezzar’s daughter and Nabonidus’s wife. It’s also possible she had been Nebuchadnezzar’s wife.

Verses 5-12

What are these verses about?

While they were praising false gods, a hand appeared and wrote on the wall. In alarm Belshazzar called for someone to interpret the message, which evidently was written in a language he didn’t understand.

The queen knew of Daniel’s ability to interpret such things. Since Belshazzar’s wives and concubines were at the feast and the queen was not until she heard about the handwriting, it seems that she was not one of Belshazzar’s wives. Maybe she was his mother. She referred to Daniel as one in whom was a spirit of the holy gods, the same thing Nebuchadnezzar wrote in Daniel 4.

Verses 13-16

What did the king say to Daniel?

The king told Daniel what he’d heard from the queen about him, and asked if he were that same Daniel who was one of the exiles from Judah.

Daniel had been exiled in Babylon for about 66 years. He was an old man of about 80.

Belshazzar offered Daniel gifts and to be the third ruler in his kingdom if he interpreted the message. Compare this to Daniel 2:6 and 46-48.

Verses 17-23

What was Daniel's response?

Daniel told the king to keep his gifts and rewards or give them to someone else. Daniel had been through all of that before. He'd seen the greatest of all Babylonian kings turn to the Lord, as a result of the Lord working through him and his three friends.

Daniel reminded Belshazzar of what he, Belshazzar, had known about God Most High's dealings with Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel 4.

Daniel told of how the Most High God had granted Nebuchadnezzar sovereignty / kingship, and that because of this, Nebuchadnezzar killed, spared, elevated, and humbled men as he wished. When Nebuchadnezzar's heart was lifted up, the Most High humbled him. He related how Nebuchadnezzar had lost his mind until he recognized that the Most High rules and gives rule to whomever He desires.

Belshazzar knew it all, but instead of humbling himself, he exalted / lifted himself up against the Most High, the Lord of heaven.

At this point, ask your group what they learned about pride from their study.

God hates pride and opposes the proud.

Proud men don't seek God; they say He doesn't exist.

Pride comes before dishonor, destruction, and being brought low (humility).

Not only is God *able* to humble those who walk in pride, but He actually *does* so.

Nebuchadnezzar and Hezekiah (both great kings) humbled themselves before God and did not suffer His wrath. But Belshazzar praised the gods of gold and silver, denying God Most High.

Lead your discussion back to Daniel 5:24-30. What was the message and its interpretation?

MENĒ, MENĒ

God numbered the days of Belshazzar's kingdom and put it to an end.

TEKĒL

He had been weighed on God's scales and found deficient.

PERĒS

His kingdom had been divided and given to the Medes and Persians.

There was no sign of repentance from Belshazzar; but he gave the gifts and authority to Daniel.

The king was killed that night of the feast, and Darius the Mede “received” the kingdom. Ask your group who they think gave Darius the kingdom; compare this to Daniel 2:21.

Compare this with Daniel 6:28 and ask your group what they learned from the passages in Day 5. Tell them to look at “Israel’s Division and Captivity” along with the time chart.

“Daniel’s Time Chart” shows that Darius the Mede began his reign of Babylon at the same time as Cyrus the Persian.

NOTE: The Persians had defeated the Medes, whose forces formed a coalition called the Medo-Persian Empire, in which both Medes and Persians ruled, but Persia dominated.

Isaiah 45:1-13

Isaiah prophesied to the Southern Kingdom of Judah during the last 17-19 years of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, before they were completely taken captive by Assyria in 722 B.C. and for another 40 or so years after that.

God revealed through Isaiah that a king named Cyrus would build His city Jerusalem and let His exiles go free. That prophecy was given between 722 and 681 B.C., and Cyrus didn’t reign in Persia until 559 B.C. and didn’t defeat Babylon and begin reigning there until 539 B.C.

When Isaiah named Cyrus, Judah was still many years from captivity and exile.

What God says will happen does happen.

It says that God would subdue nations before Cyrus—Babylon was one of them. He would loose the loins / belts of kings—Belshazzar was one of them.

God spoke Cyrus’s name so he and Israel would know that He is God.

Jeremiah 25:1-13

Jeremiah began to prophesy to Judah about 23 years before Daniel was taken to Babylon in the first of Nebuchadnezzar’s three sieges and continued prophesying about 30 years into Daniel’s captivity.

The Lord gave this particular prophecy to Jeremiah in the first year of Nebuchadnezzar, the year Daniel was taken captive to Babylon, and the 23rd year of Jeremiah’s prophesying. The king of Judah at that time was Jehoiakim.

He warned Judah that Nebuchadnezzar would come against them, destroy their land, and take them as servants for 70 years because they hadn’t listened to the word of the Lord. Daniel 5 was near the end of those 70 years.

God said that when the 70 years were completed, He would punish the king of Babylon and the nation. The king at the time was Belshazzar.

How do 2 Chronicles 36 and Ezra 1 and 3 relate to what Isaiah and Jeremiah prophesied?

2 Chronicles 36

This was written after the exiles returned from Babylon.

This sad chapter tells of the sins of God's people, their unwillingness to listen to Him and the wrath which came upon them as a result.

Verse 20 specifically says they would be in captivity until the time of the Persian kingdom—Daniel 5.

In the 1st year of Cyrus, also the 1st year of Darius—the date of Daniel 5, the Lord stirred up his spirit to fulfill what He'd spoken through Jeremiah. Cyrus decreed that the Lord, the God of heaven, appointed him to build God's house in Jerusalem. He told the exiles of Judah to go build the house.

Compare Cyrus's statements about God with those of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4. He served the Lord, recognized that the God of heaven had given him dominion and has appointed him to do a special task.

Give time for your group to discuss any application.

Ezra 1:1-11

Verses 1-3 restate 2 Chronicles 36:22-23.

Cyrus gave the returning exiles the things Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the house of God in Jerusalem—the vessels which Belshazzar drank from at his feast for the gods. They took the 5,400 articles of gold and silver with them as they returned to Judah.

Ezra 3:1-13

When they returned to Judah, they built the altar so they could make sacrifices to the Lord who had preserved them in captivity. The foundation of the temple had not been laid at this time.

In the 7th month, they celebrated the Feast of Booths—which memorializes Israel living in temporary shelters on the Exodus from Egypt, but also reminds them God lives among His people Israel.

When the foundation of the temple was laid, there was much rejoicing and weeping because of the goodness and lovingkindness of the Lord.

In closing this discussion, ask your group what they learned about their Lord God in this lesson, or so far in this whole study.

DANIEL
LEADER GUIDE
Lesson 8

Lesson emphasis

- Daniel 6
- Daniel's integrity

REVIEW

To review, you could ask your group to share what they've learned from Daniel's character in chapters 1–5. For this part of the discussion you could direct them to look at the list they've been compiling about Daniel.

Daniel 1—wise and respectful, not willing to defile himself

Daniel 2—humble though able to interpret visions others could not

Daniel 4—caring but not fearful of the king, respectful but strong

Daniel 5—able to confront a king in his sin

DANIEL 6

Ask how Daniel is described in this chapter and what your group learned from his example which they can apply in their own lives.

Distinguished among men in his job
Extraordinary / excellent spirit
No ground for accusation / complaint
Faithful to authorities
No corruption / fault
Held to God's law
Man of continual prayer
Thankful toward God
Constantly served God
Innocent / blameless
Trusted God
Enjoyed success / prospered

Discuss the main events in chronological order.

Darius appointed Daniel as one of three commissioners / high officials in his kingdom.

Daniel distinguished himself among his peers in the government.

Darius planned to appoint / set him over the whole kingdom.

Jealousy evidently caused the others to accuse / complain about Daniel before the king.

Since they could find no ground for accusation / complaint against him, they had to use his faith to snare him.

Daniel's accusers flattered Darius into trapping Daniel, whom he admired the most.

Daniel was faithful to God even in danger of death—kneeling, praying, and giving thanks. He had learned to be consistent in his life. Kingdoms come and go, but God Most High remains the same. Daniel trusted God instead of man.

Unable to reverse his decree and rescue Daniel himself, Darius told Daniel his God would deliver him. Darius spent the night fasting and sleepless because of Daniel. In the morning, hoping Daniel had survived the lions, he hurried to check on Daniel. His words indicate he recognized God as the living God, but acknowledged Him as Daniel's God.

God's angel protected Daniel from the hungry lions.

Justice was given to those who accused Daniel.

Compare Darius's words in verses 25-27 with statements made by Nebuchadnezzar.

Either before discussing what your group learned about integrity or as a closing for your discussion ask what they learned about God in this chapter.

INTEGRITY

Now ask your group what they learned about integrity from this lesson and how Daniel exhibited it.

integrity—*tom*, “blamelessness . . . innocence, i.e., a state or condition of moral goodness in a life”¹

Daniel was a man of integrity.

Therefore, he didn't fear what men could do to him.

He didn't try to impress men, but only did his best to bring honor to God Whom he constantly served.

Ask what other examples of integrity they studied in the lesson and what they learned from each.

¹ J. Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.) (HGK2876). (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

You can list, as a visual aid, the names of the men (David, Job, and Solomon) as each is mentioned and one or two main things your group says about each.

David

Psalms

A man of righteousness and integrity

Opposed by those around him

Trusted God with his care, calling on Him for vindication

1 Kings 9 and 11:4

Integrity came from his heart.

His heart was wholly devoted to the Lord.

His integrity was following God's commands

Job

God's description of Job:

- Blameless
- Upright
- Fearing God
- Turning away from evil
- No one like him on earth

Even when suffering great loss, Job didn't sin or blame God.

He held fast to his integrity.

Both Job and Daniel were willing to trust God. They understood that He is sovereign.

Job was blameless and upright before God. He made a covenant with his eyes to not look at women with adulterous thoughts.

Relate this to Matthew 5:27-28.

It's a matter of the heart. Sin and integrity both originate in the heart.

Adultery begins in the heart.

Solomon

Built God's temple

A man of prayer

Led astray from the Lord by women who worshiped false gods

Loved his foreign wives more than he loved the Lord

Heart not wholly devoted to God

As a result, God took the kingdom away from his descendants.

He gave ten tribes of Israel to another to rule, leaving only Judah and Benjamin to the house of David.

It's as important to end with integrity as to begin with it, as Daniel, David, and Job did.

You could end by asking your group to examine their lives in light of God's Word. Are they men and women of integrity?