

# DANIEL

## PATTERNS OF DISCIPLESHIP

### Week Three: Patterns of Prayer and Praise Daniel Chapter 2: 10-28, 44-48; Matthew 6: 5-13

**Opening Question:** Are you someone who dreams in your sleep? Do you have any recurring dreams? Or if you don't dream, what are common themes that seem to occur in other people's dreams?

#### 1: CONTEXT

**A quick look back:** Spend a few minutes reviewing the big picture of Daniel from Week One and the study from last week. What did we learn about Daniel? About God? About how our identities are shaped or mis-shaped by our culture? What does it mean to be known and named by Christ?

**Today's Passage:** As we enter today's story, we encounter a king who is VERY disturbed by a series of dreams. In an attempt to understand the meaning of his dreams, he calls in all the big-league dream interpreters of his time- magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and astrologers (vs 2). The king has a simple request- tell him the dream and its meaning and he will lavish you with gifts. Fail in this request and he will have you killed. In the first section of the chapter, none of the "wise men" who have been called can do what the king asks, and he is FURIOUS! This is where Daniel enters the story, and we get to watch how he responds to what seems like an impossible situation. Though we won't spend time looking at Daniel's interpretation of the dream, what he tells King Nebuchadnezzar reveals the truth of a promised coming kingdom of God, which will ultimately rule and reign in a way that no short term worldly kingdom will ever do.

#### 2: CONTENT

**Read Daniel 2: 10-28, 44-48 out loud and then pick ONE of the following ways (Option A or B) to help your group engage with this passage.**

**Option A. Notice/Wonder:** Ask everyone to read the passage again quietly on their own. As they read, ask them to make a list like the one below. Remember that what people notice or wonder can just be small, simple things.

What do I NOTICE about this text?

What do I WONDER about?

Once everyone has had the chance to make their list, come together as a group and share your observations, writing them on a board or a place where everyone can see the list as it develops.

#### **Option B. Guided Bible Study Questions:**

1. Look at verses 14-18 and notice each action that you see Daniel take in response to this crisis. What does he do? How would you describe his character from these verses?
2. In verse 18, Daniel invites his friends to "plead for mercy" as they pray together for God's intervention. The Hebrew word used here for mercy means compassion or tender love, and in its singular form, actually means womb- a place of nurture and safety. How does understanding that word perhaps change your sense of Daniel's emotional state? His sense of who God is? The nature of this prayer?

3. Daniel turns from a prayer of pleading to a prayer of praise when God reveals the mystery of the dream to him. What aspects of God's character are highlighted in this "psalm of Daniel"?
4. What word/words are repeated in this prayer? Why do you think these are highlighted?
5. What is the king's response after Daniel reveals the meaning of his dream (vs 47)?

### **3: CONNECTING THE STORY TO JESUS**

The gospel accounts are full of references to Jesus in prayer. Jesus prays in public and in private. He prays for his followers and for those who don't know Him. He prays before decisions, before meals, before miracles. Jesus prays to plead for His own life and to plead for the lives of others. He prays in heartache, in questions, in assurances, in confidence. Jesus prays forgiveness, blessing, and unity over His people. Jesus- as God incarnate Himself- has a life clearly punctuated by rhythms of prayer and praise. Read **Matthew 6: 5-13** and discuss what you learn here about prayer. What do you notice in this passage that perhaps connects with the story in Daniel? Jesus tells us that "your Father knows what you need before you ask him." This would have been true in Daniel's life as well. So why did he pray? Why did Jesus pray? Why do we pray?

### **4: APPLICATION**

***How does all of this connect to our lives? Here are some questions to help guide your discussion. Choose one or several.***

- What role, if any, does prayer play in your life?
- Our passage in Daniel has much to say and to show about wisdom. Do you think wisdom is valued in our culture? Is there a difference between growing *wiser* and growing *smarter*? Is wisdom something that you ever think about or long for in your own life?
- We wish that we all had the instinct to turn to prayer in times of stress or fear or uncertainty, but many of us turn first (or always) to other things. Think about your own life- where/to what/to who do you find yourself turning when things get scary or off-balance or stressful? Do these places help? Distract? Harm?
- In this passage, God spoke to the king through a dream and to Daniel through a vision. Are there particular ways that you find God "speaks" to you?
- Look again at Daniel's prayer. What truth about God in this prayer do you most treasure or long for?

### **4: PRAYER**

***Close your time together in prayer using one of the ideas below***

- Use words/images/themes from the passage to guide your prayer.
- Raise up your "wonderings" from the notice/wonder section to God in prayer
- Take prayer requests and pray over each other as a group or in small groups
- Use this written prayer from "A Deeper Look at Daniel" by Douglas Connelly:

*Father, we are overwhelmed with information. Every fact, opinion or report is just a click or tap away. We are surrounded, inundated, with knowledge, but we lack wisdom. You, Father, are the source of every good and perfect gift. You stand ready to give wisdom to anyone who asks and who is humble enough to receive it from you. So help us to be seekers after you and recipients of your truth. Give us a new hunger and thirst for a deeper relationship with you.  
Amen*