

## Welcome to BNEXT

I am excited to share this journey through God's Word with you. As we study Scripture, we see an unfolding revelation of who God is, the nature of Jesus, and how we can become stronger in our walk with Christ. It is important that we study Scripture for ourselves — allowing the Holy Spirit to enlighten us (Acts 17:11).

The Scripture covered by each lesson is listed on the top-right side of the masthead of the page. Read the Scripture passages and then begin working your way through the lesson. Each lesson in this series contains three pages of commentary, followed by three pages of questions that will assist you to dig deeper and reflect on God's Word.

We have also included a Leader's Guide that will enable anyone to facilitate a small group. Once you have completed this BNEXT study, I hope you will consider leading others through this material — whether it is a group of friends, your church, or as a ministry outreach. (See the Leader's Guide at the end of this study for more information.)

Again, thank you for allowing me to share this amazing journey with you.

Your brother in Christ Jesus,

Handwritten signature of William P. Campbell in blue ink.

**William P. Campbell**

Founder & President | Scripture Awakening

## BNEXT Participant's Guide

Thank you for choosing BNEXT Bible study curriculum. To help you get the most out of your study, please take a few minutes to read this information before you begin. Studying the Bible is much like going on a journey — it takes us to new places in our understanding and our walk with God. The Word of God is transformative — it's living and active, can build up our faith, and call us to move beyond where we are.

Using this curriculum, you may journey alone, or travel with others in a small group, or even engage as an entire congregation (with small groups as part of the program). Groups gather once a week to review what was read, to share answers to discussion questions, and to deepen their understanding.

## About This Study

This electronic version of the Participant's Guide contains the same material as the printed version. It allows you to electronically record your answers to the questions which are part of each lesson. Following each question, you will find a blue text box. Click or touch the box and the field within it will turn white allowing you to type in your answer. Your answer will automatically be saved when you exit the text box. Should you need more space for your answer, the text box will automatically expand and insert a scroll bar on the right-hand side.

## Things to Know

These studies are designed to be used in many different settings— individuals, congregations (separating into small groups), Sunday school classes, prison ministries, military, business groups— virtually anywhere a small group can be formed. Experience has shown that participants find the small group experience to be greatly beneficial. The input and interaction with others will broaden your perspective and stimulate your thinking about Scripture.

The lessons are designed to be done throughout the week. Each lesson contains a few pages of commentary, followed by study questions. There are three types of questions: Devotion (Personal Questions), Discussion (Small Group), and Digging Deeper (Further Study). While participants may use any Bible translation they prefer, all of the Biblical quotations in BNEXT studies are from the New International Version (NIV).

Plan your daily reading. The Scripture readings are located on the right side of the masthead of each lesson. Some lessons may cover a few chapters of a book (such as Genesis 1-11 in the series, *In the Beginning*). Longer readings may be broken down into more manageable daily readings, which may take some thoughtful planning. Some readings are as short as a few verses and will not present any difficulties. Some topical studies do not have assigned Scripture readings.

If you are meeting in a small group, be sure to first read and complete the lesson before the gathering. Once a week, your group will meet to spend time (about an hour) discussing the lesson and sharing personal insights.

More of our resources and study aids can be found at [ScriptureAwakening.com](http://ScriptureAwakening.com). Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or comments at [info@scriptureawakening.com](mailto:info@scriptureawakening.com).



Then Daniel praised the God of heaven and said: “Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are His. He changes times and seasons; He sets up kings and deposes them. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning. He reveals deep and hidden things; He knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with Him.

Daniel 2:19b-22

### Introduction

Mention the name Daniel to any child or adult and immediately “Daniel and the Lion’s Den” comes to mind. The “Lion’s Den” episode actually came when Daniel was much older (in his 80’s). So what about his earlier years? Were they as troublesome or fearful as the “Lion’s Den”? Had he ever experienced God’s mighty intervention to prepare him for such an experience? The book of Daniel is filled with the faithfulness of a few who totally depended upon the sovereignty of God in the midst of hopeless, helpless, and impossible situations. When others might question, “Where is God?”, Daniel constantly guides us to “Take it to the Lord in prayer.”

Daniel is one of the few Biblical writers who does not tell us his heritage. We do have clues, however. Isaiah 39:6-7 says, “The time will surely come when everything in your palace, and all that your fathers have stored up until this day, will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the LORD. And some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood who will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.”

Some commentators believe Daniel was royalty and may even have been next in line as king. What a king he would have made! However, God had even greater plans for him and what awesome plans they were!

### Daniel’s Faithfulness

In 605 BC, Nebuchadnezzar became King of Babylon and set about to conquer Jerusalem. To prove his preeminence, Nebuchadnezzar captured many of Israel’s wisest young men and beautiful women. One of these was a Jewish teenager named Daniel. Over a 70-year period, Daniel served under the reign of four kings: Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus.

Throughout the book of Daniel, we encounter Daniel’s unswerving, faithful allegiance and dependence upon the God of Israel—the One and Only True God!

Daniel 1:3-4 reads, “Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring in some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility—young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king’s palace...” Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were among those taken into captivity. The latter three (renamed by Nebuchadnezzar) are better known as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Nebuchadnezzar also gave Daniel a new name, Belteshazzar.

These young men were selected to be among an elite group. They were to be given special treatment, the best food and wine, and three years of intense training, after which they would serve the king. However Daniel 1:8 states, “But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.”

Daniel would not violate the dietary laws of God (Leviticus 11). This was an extremely courageous and dangerous decision. A tyrant like Nebuchadnezzar could have looked upon this as an act of defiance. But, “God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel” (Daniel 1:9). Daniel was able to persuade the official who oversaw him to agree to a test to see

But Blessed is the man  
who trusts in the Lord,  
whose confidence is in  
Him. He will be like a tree  
planted by the water that  
sends out its roots by the  
stream. It does not fear  
when heat comes; its  
leaves are always green.  
It has no worries in a year  
of drought and never  
fails to bear fruit.

Jeremiah 17:7-8

if God's prescribed diet was actually healthier than that of the king. After ten days, Daniel and his friends, "looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food" (Daniel 1:15). Only the providence of God can explain such a marked difference in such a short period of time. For their faithfulness, "God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds" (Daniel 1:17).

The following is a true story showing a modern-day example of God's faithfulness to those who put their trust in Him. Several years ago a young man, who was valedictorian of his high school graduating class, faced a challenge to his faith much like Daniel's. As he prepared his valedictory address, his advisor informed him that he could not mention the Word of God in his speech. This teenager had been raised in a strong Christian home and believed God when He said, "Those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise me will be disdained" (1 Samuel 2:30c).

The advisor could not convince the young man to remove God from his speech and sent him to the principal's office where he was told that he was speaking for the whole class not just for himself. Such pressure would be extreme for any teenager, however, he stood firm and said he could not speak unless he gave credit where credit was due—his strength and ability came from God. The principal finally gave in. At the graduation ceremony, as the youth gave honor to God, he received a standing ovation. (The principal and vice principal were the only ones in the auditorium who did not stand.)

Amazingly this courageous boy's younger brother also graduated from the same school three years later and also was faced with the challenge of giving the valedictorian address. He too was strong-armed by the principal but did not compromise and gave God the glory in his graduation speech. Once again a standing ovation rewarded obedience to God. One boy's boldness inspired another. May Daniel's example so inspire us to live for God's glory!

### God's Mercy

Trials for servants of God are designed to strengthen them for greater trials to follow. We will see this pattern throughout the life of Daniel. He and his friends had proven their faithfulness to God, and God had blessed them. Not only did they flourish on the diet they chose, but they also excelled in their studies and were suitably rewarded by Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 1:19,20). But a greater test was coming.

Nebuchadnezzar, a cruel and tyrannical king, began having disturbing dreams. He summoned the greatest scholars available and demanded that they interpret the dreams for him. He also insisted that they tell him the content of the dream. The penalty for failure would be death and destruction of their homes (Daniel 2:5). The magicians and scholars were frustrated and horrified. They said, "There is not a man on earth who can do what the king asks!" (Daniel 2:10a). This cruel and harsh king flew into a rage and demanded the annihilation of all Babylon's wise men. The decree included Daniel and his friends.

When the captain of the guard came to Daniel to inform him, Daniel sought and was given an audience with the king. Daniel asked the king for time in order to interpret the dream. His

We do not make requests of You because we are righteous, but because of Your great mercy. O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For Your sake, O my God, do not delay, because Your city and Your people bear Your name.

Daniel 9:18b-19

request was granted. Daniel knew that he couldn't interpret the dream himself, but he knew the One who could. He approached his friends, Shadrach, Meschach, and Abednego, and asked them to plead for God's mercy in interpreting the dream.

Their prayer sought, "to plead for mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that he and his friends might not be executed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon" (Daniel 2:18).

There are two key points that need to be understood. The first is that the term, "God of heaven," is found only in the books of the exile, including Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel. It is a realization that God is not limited to Jerusalem or to the temple both of which would be destroyed. Daniel and his three friends directed their prayer to God who is not limited to time and place (John 4:19-24).

The second point is that their plea was for mercy. Despite their demonstrated faithfulness, they knew that whatever God granted them would be solely because of His mercy. They did not rely on any merit that they may have had. The prayer was answered, and Daniel responded with a wonderful prayer of praise (Daniel 2:19-23).

### Final Thoughts

Because of his worldly conquests and accumulation of wealth, Nebuchadnezzar believed he was the greatest. However, when he conquered the little nation of Judah he soon discovered a God who would not share His glory with anyone.

What difficult person or circumstances are you up against today?

"Are you weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care? Precious Savior, still our refuge—take it to the Lord in prayer."

### Spending Time With God

This four-week study series, "Daniel, Man of Prayer," is designed to supplement your personal and small group Bible study. The devotion questions are written for your personal study. The discussion questions are especially for small groups. Members who answer the questions ahead of time can bring more insight into their small group meeting. The digging deeper questions are for those who wish for more personal or small group study. As you spend time with God, may His Word enrich your life and enhance your daily walk with Him. Pray, asking God for special insight into His Word.



SERIES

DANIEL | MAN OF PRAYER

LESSON 1

Take it to the Lord in Prayer | Daniel 1

### Devotion (Personal Study)

1. Read the first two chapters of Daniel. From Scripture and the commentary, record at least one insight that especially blessed or challenged you.

5. Record what the following Scriptures have to say concerning our vulnerable positions.

Galatians 6:1

James 1:2-8

2. What temptations were Daniel and his friends presented with and how did they deal with them?

1 Corinthians 10:12-13

3. Do you think they should have made such a big issue out of refusing to eat the royal food? Why or why not?

Pray, asking God for His help for added strength and victory in your life this week.

### Discussion (Small Group Study)

6. Daniel clearly lived for the glory of God. Read 1 Corinthians 10:31-33 where Paul urges us to “do all for the glory of God.”

How might a concern to do all for God's glory change your life? Be specific.

4. How do you handle compromising situations or temptations?



SERIES

DANIEL | MAN OF PRAYER

LESSON 1

Take it to the Lord in Prayer | Daniel 1

Have each person in the group complete this sentence: "The key factor in living for the glory of God is..."

9. What advice might you give a young person today who is faced with a compromising situation, based on the account in Daniel 1?

7. Read Daniel 1:8. In what area was Daniel striving to avoid compromise?

10. In Daniel 2, why won't Nebuchadnezzar tell his dream to his men (Daniel 2:8-9)?

If you are comfortable doing so, share in which part of your life it is most tempting to compromise.

11. What is Daniel's immediate reaction to learning he could be killed (Daniel 2:16-18)?

8. Do you think young people today have it easier or harder (than you did) to follow God's principles? Explain.

How can this be an example to us when we face a crisis in our lives?



SERIES

DANIEL | MAN OF PRAYER

LESSON 1

Take it to the Lord in Prayer | Daniel 1

12. In Daniel 2:27-30, why does Daniel go to great length to point out about the interpretation of the dream?

15. Read Daniel 2:31-46. Use Biblical resources (Commentary or Study Bible) to correlate the King's dream with the Kingdoms of the world. Write a short prayer of thanks or praise to God for His sovereignty.

Take time to pray that God will strengthen and enable you to “do all for His glory.”

### Digging Deeper (Further Study)

13. Read Daniel 2:46-47. What effect does Daniel's miraculous interpretation have on Nebuchadnezzar? Does witnessing a miracle always lead to a change of heart? Explain your answer.

14. Read Daniel's prayer in Daniel 2:20-23. What can we learn about Daniel's attitude toward God and himself from this prayer?

### Scripture for Meditation

Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever, wisdom and power are His.

Daniel 2:20



I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed in all the earth.

Romans 9:17

### Introduction

The picture of historic eras is often spawned by Hollywood productions. We view Rome as grand and luxurious. We see the rulers as powerful and proud. Yet even in a Roman setting, there remained the need for tempering humility. Historically, when a victorious general returned home to receive his honors, a slave was delegated to follow behind him and whisper in his ear: *Homo es* which meant, “You are only a man.”

That description fit Nebuchadnezzar perfectly. He was a proud and arrogant tyrant. Yet even so, Daniel remained humble before God and was used by God to be a positive witness to the king. Perhaps he was the one to remind this powerful king, *Homo es* (You are only a man)!

### Nebuchadnezzar's Pride

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon was a prideful and troubled man. He was capable of great brutality and often flew into tremendous rages. Despite this gross behavior, God calls him “my servant” several times in the Book of Jeremiah. “I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon...” (Jeremiah 25:9a). In ways unfathomable to us, God uses the ungodly to accomplish His purposes (Pharaoh/Moses; Potiphar/Joseph; Xerxes/Esther).

Nebuchadnezzar had placed Judah's last king, Zedekiah, on the throne as his puppet. Zedekiah was wicked for Scripture tells us, “He did evil in the eyes of the LORD his God and did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke the word of the LORD” (2 Chronicles 36:12). God used Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian army to attack Jerusalem and destroy the city and burn the temple. When Nebuchadnezzar confronted the captured Zedekiah, he rebuked him for his ingratitude and according to Roman/Jewish historians said, “God is great who hateth that conduct of thine and hath brought thee under us.” A remarkable statement from a pagan king!

Even more remarkable is the fourth chapter of Daniel which contains a letter from Nebuchadnezzar. It begins, “To the peoples, nations and men of every language, who live in all the world: May you prosper greatly! It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me” (Daniel 4:1-2).

Nebuchadnezzar wrote a letter describing how God gave to him another dream (Daniel 4:10-17). The dream warned the king that his pride would lead to judgment. Nebuchadnezzar learned that God would not be mocked. God gave him an opportunity (12 months) to repent (Daniel 4:29), but he refused. God then humbled him, taking away his sanity so that the king actually ate grass like cattle (Daniel 4:33a). “His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird” (Daniel 4:33c).

So what is pride? Pride is saying, “I'm in control and God isn't.” Scripture says God hates an attitude of pride. “These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren” (Proverbs 6:16-19 KJV). We would do well to note that

All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time.

1 Peter 5:5b-6

pride is listed first.

Jesus, the Son of God, shines as the supreme example of humility. He said, “For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted” (Matthew 23:12).

Nebuchadnezzar had witnessed and even acknowledged that God was “a” god. But God says, “You shall have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3). “Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done” (Romans 1:28).

Nebuchadnezzar never humbled himself before God and consequently he was given over to a depraved mind.

### **Daniel's Humility**

Let us look at Daniel 4 again, noting how God gives grace to the humble. At the beginning of the chapter, we find the king to be “contented and prosperous” (Daniel 4: 4). But frightening dreams and visions again trouble him. He summons his “magicians, enchanter, astrologers and diviners” (Daniel 4:7) to interpret. And once again they fail!

Enter Daniel. The interpretation is so frightening that Daniel is reluctant to reveal it. However, Nebuchadnezzar said, “Belteshazzar (Daniel), do not let the dream or its meaning alarm you” (Daniel 4:19b). Was Nebuchadnezzar so full of himself that he believed he was above reproach? Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar, “My lord, if only the dream applied to your enemies and its meaning to your adversaries!” (Daniel 4:19b).

What follows is one of the greatest confrontations in Scripture. Daniel, after interpreting the king's dreams, pleads with him, “Therefore, O king, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue” (Daniel 4:27).

Daniel made a daring and dangerous move in speaking frankly to a king of such stature, a man who was known for his violent wrath. Daniel so feared God that he was not controlled by the fear of man. He exhibited true courage and genuine humility before God.

Daniel's sermon and the interpretation of the dream did not change the heart of the king. Nebuchadnezzar still had lessons to learn. He had to be broken. Evidence of any change would not take place for another year.

At the end of 12 months, Nebuchadnezzar was walking about his palace boasting of his accomplishments. “He said, ‘Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty’ “ (Daniel 4:30)? Evidently, he hadn't learned that God will not be mocked!

“The words were still on his lips when a voice came from heaven, ‘This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you’ “ (Daniel 4:31).

The shining light in this sad account is Daniel's concern for his king as expressed in verse 19. He

Therefore, O, king, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue.

Daniel 4:27

respected Nebuchadnezzar and may have even loved him. While we are not told specifically that Daniel prayed for him, it is inconceivable that he, who lived a life of prayer, did not persist in prayer daily for the king and for his salvation. Daniel 6:10 gives a vivid picture of a man of prayer. “He (Daniel) went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before” (emphasis added).

### Final Thought

Daniel's humility stands in marked contrast to Nebuchadnezzar's pride. Daniel 4 can be summed up by the verse, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6). Daniel prayed for Nebuchadnezzar for many years. He had a burden for the king and took that burden to the Most High God. We, too, have the privilege of intercessory prayer...that of bringing others before the Lord (1 Timothy 2:1-2). The Bible exhorts us to humble ourselves before the King of Kings and to pray for those placed in authority. Daniel did.

The chapter concludes with the king's great praise to God and his acknowledgment of the true Sovereign. The king wrote, “And those who walk in pride he (God) is able to humble” (Daniel 4:37b).

Did the king ever repent and come to know God as the One and Only True God? We don't know, but when we get to heaven, we'll find out!

### Spending Time With God

This four-week study series, “Daniel, Man of Prayer,” is designed to supplement your personal and small group Bible study. The devotion questions are written for your personal study. The discussion questions are especially for small groups. The digging deeper questions are for those who wish for more personal or small group study. As you spend time with God, may His Word enrich your life and enhance your daily walk with Him. Pray, asking God for special insight into His word.



SERIES

DANIEL | MAN OF PRAYER

LESSON 2

Grace for the Humble | Daniel 4

### Devotion (Personal Study)

1. For background purposes, we will briefly delve into Daniel 3 and 2. Read Daniel 3:1-6. Considering the dream given the king in Daniel 2, what do you find ironic about this huge statue? Why do you think the king set it up?

2. As humans, we can relate to the king. Our lower nature cries out for recognition and power, even to the exclusion of God. Look up the following references and record others who have fallen into this trap. Also note what they did.

Genesis 11:1-4

1 Samuel 15:12

Luke 12:13-21

3. Examine your own heart. Have you set up any monuments for yourself? If so, take time to rededicate them to God in prayer.

4. Read Daniel 3:16-18. Ponder in your mind the boldness of Daniel's friends and yet the lack of presumption regarding the will of God. Why do you think boldness and humility are never alone but are born as twins in the human heart?

5. See Daniel 3:24-27. Who was the fourth man who suddenly appeared in the fire? Record from the following verses why you can trust that God will be with you when you go through the fiery trials of life.

Psalm 91

John 16:5-16

Matthew 28:20



SERIES

DANIEL | MAN OF PRAYER

LESSON 2

Grace for the Humble | Daniel 4

### Discussion (Small Group Study)

6. What thought from the personal study questions, commentary or sermon especially stuck with you? Explain.

7. Why do you think God hates pride?

8. Review the commentary portion of this lesson. Go around the group and share in simple adjectives what you think Nebuchadnezzar was like. Also, list names of rulers, past or present, who have a personality similar to Neguchadnezzar.

9. Are there some people that you have taken off your prayer list because they seem hopeless? Are you willing to share an example of such a one?

10. Skim Daniel 4:4-27. God sometimes humbles those who will not humble themselves. What are practical steps we can take to avoid the dangerous sin of pride?

11. Notice Daniel's words of warning to the king (Daniel 4:27). Considering that the king has twice tried to kill Daniel (Daniel 1 and 3), discuss Daniel's attitude toward the king. Compare his attitude with your perspective on authority and government leaders placed over you.

12. From the following verses, what should our attitude and actions be like as we contemplate the government officials who rule over us?

Romans 13:1-7

1 Samuel 24:6



13. Read Daniel 4:28-37. Contemplate the fact that any of us could be humbled by a mental breakdown. Thank God for mental health and pray for the needs of one another and those you are aware of with special needs in this regard. As you are praying, some may want to read aloud relevant passages of Scripture (Isaiah 26:3, Philippians 4:8-9, 1 Thessalonians 5:23).

Mark 11:24

Psalm 66:18

Luke 18:7

### Digging Deeper (Further Study)

14. Why pray if God already knows what we are going to say?

15. George Müller found five guiding principles for prayer based on the verses that follow. List guidelines on prayer that you find helpful from these same scriptures.

1 John 5:14

John 14:14

#### Scripture for Meditation

Now I ... praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything He does is right and all His ways are just. And those who walk in pride He is able to humble.

Daniel 4:37



The Lord rewards every man for his righteousness and faithfulness... may the Lord value my life and deliver me from all trouble.

1 Samuel 26:23-24

### Introduction

It's a jungle out there! How many times have you felt that way about the world? Although the probability of any of us literally being thrown into a den of lions is remote, many of us may feel as if the "king of the jungle" is looking over our shoulder and ready to pounce on us. This may be the case in our work, in our families, and yes, even in our churches. Peter tells us that Satan is like a roaring lion "looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

Consider Daniel's world. Here he is in his 80's. Surely it's time for retirement! Time for a little rest and relaxation from exile and persecution and especially from more trials. But God had the biggest trial of all awaiting His faithful servant.

### Daniel's Great Trial

The Medes and Persians had conquered Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian King, and Daniel was serving under another prideful king, Darius. Evidently Daniel's reputation preceded him because Darius immediately appointed him to an administration position (Daniel 6:3). He not only appointed him to rule over 120 satraps (provincial heads) but was also grooming Daniel for the "vice presidency"...second only to himself.

Daniel's Babylonian contemporaries were so jealous they could hardly see straight! Why do many people hate to see someone else get ahead in life even when the one succeeding is a person of integrity?

The other administrators and satraps scrutinized Daniel to the Nth degree but were unable to find one accusatory thing against him. Their first tactic was character assassination. However, they could find nothing in his life or his past that could be used against him. Amazing! Who of us could stand against such scrutiny?

How could they catch this "do gooder?" The only avenue left was Daniel's religion. They concocted a wicked and devious plan by inventing a conflict between the law of his God and the law of their land (Daniel 6:5).

Darius was easily duped. His common sense was overruled by his pride and he fell for the plot. The rulers came to him with a proposition. "The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or man during the next thirty days, except to you, O king shall be thrown into the lions' den" (Daniel 6:7).

The king agreed to issue such an edict, forgetting Daniel. Daniel, the man of character, the man of prayer, was about to be tested greatly.

### Daniel's Great Faith

The king's decree was in effect for 30 days. Rationalization would be so easy, "It's just 30 days without prayer." Daniel wasn't asked to deny his faith or worship idols. In fact, he could pray silently in his heart, couldn't he?" How easy it would have been for him to compromise.

Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.

Daniel 6:10

When trials test our faith, we need to rely upon the One who increases our faith if we but ask. “The apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith!’” (Luke 17:5).

Daniel drew great faith from God and continued to follow his normal custom.” Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before” (Daniel 6:10).

He had been praying this way for years—three times a day with the windows open. He must have been greatly tempted to forgo his normal practice. He was familiar with Jeremiah's seventy-year prophecy. The 70 years were almost up and Daniel truly believed that God would soon fulfill His promise to send the people back to rebuild Jerusalem.

There are three things that should be noted about Daniel's prayer life. First, he normally prayed with his windows open toward Jerusalem. Perhaps this reminded him of God's covenant promises—that He would dwell with His people and make Himself known to them. For many centuries God had done this in Jerusalem. It was to Jerusalem that His people would return.

Second, Daniel's prayer life was disciplined and regular. All his life he prayed three times a day. Even pagans knew he served God continually (Daniel 6:16). There is a lesson here for us: It is a mistake to pray only when we feel like it. The regular habit of prayer is what leads to the spontaneous overflow of prayer.

Third, in his prayers, Daniel regularly included both thanksgiving and supplication (Daniel 6:10-11). His spiritual focus was not destroyed by the sudden crisis. The situation was critical but he began, as always, with worship, adoration, and appreciation of his God.

Contrast Daniel's calm response with the agitation of King Darius when he learned the results of his frivolous decree. “When the king heard this, he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him” (Daniel 6:14). Darius frantically looked for a loophole in the law, but he couldn't find one. Once a law of the Medes and Persians had been passed and sealed by the king, not even the king himself could overturn it! “Remember, O king, that according to the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or edict that the king issues can be changed” (Daniel 6:15).

Darius had no choice but to have Daniel thrown into the lions' den. Scripture records that the king said, “May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!” (Daniel 6:16). An interesting comment from a pagan king! Note that Daniel rested better than the king did that night (Daniel 6:18)!

A teacher once asked a group of children, “Why wasn't Daniel afraid of the lions?” One little girl answered, “Because one of the lions was the Lion of the Tribe of Judah and He was there with him.”

“The next morning the king hurried to the lions' den and calls out to Daniel and Daniel says, ‘My God sent His angel, and He shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king’” (Daniel 6:22).

But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength... And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to His heavenly Kingdom. To Him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

2 Timothy 4:17-18

God rescued Daniel and also vindicated him. The king commanded that the men (and their families) who had falsely accused Daniel be brought in and thrown to the lions. Scripture says that “before they reached the floor of the den, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones” (Daniel 6:24).

### God's Great Promise

Dr. C. I. Schofield once gave this testimony:

“Shortly after I was saved I passed the window of a store in St. Louis where I saw a painting of Daniel in the lions’ den. That great man of faith, with his hands behind his back and those beasts circling him, was looking up.

“As I stood there, great hope flooded my heart. Only a few days had passed since I, a drunken lawyer, had been converted; and no one had yet told me anything about the keeping power of Jesus Christ. I thought to myself, there are lions all about me too such as my old habits and sins. But the One who shut the lions’ mouths for Daniel can also shut them for me! I knew that I could not win the battle in my own strength.

“The painting made me realize that while I was weak and helpless my God was strong and able. He had saved me, and now He would deliver me from the wild beasts in my life. O what a rest of spirit that truth brought me.”

“When the lions are about to attack, trust the Lord and claim His promises.” —Warren Wiersbe.

A jungle may surround us, but Jesus, the Lion of Judah, is with us constantly. Call upon Him in time of trouble. He will keep you from the lions in this dangerous world!

### Spending Time With God

This four-week study series, “Daniel, Man of Prayer,” is designed to supplement your personal and small group Bible study. The devotion questions are written for your personal study. The discussion questions are especially for small groups. The digging deeper questions are for those who wish for more personal or small group study. As you spend time with God, may His Word enrich your life and enhance your daily walk with Him. Pray, asking God for special insight into His word.



SERIES

DANIEL | MAN OF PRAYER

LESSON 3

Kept From the Lions | Daniel 6

### Devotion (Personal Study)

1. Read Daniel Chapter 6 and the commentary for this lesson. Record any thoughts or challenges that touched your heart.

2. Finish this sentence, "I am impressed with Daniel's life because..."

3. Read Daniel 6:1-3.

a. Daniel has been elevated to a place of prominence more than once. Review the past few chapters. How many times has this man of God been put into a high position in the land of Babylon? What were they?

b. Record why you think Daniel was so honored by rulers and the society around him. (Proverbs 14:35; 22:29)

c. See John 15:18-20. Is there any guarantee that just because we live to the best of our ability with God's help, we will be honored with health, wealth, and worldly recognition? Why or why not?

4. Read Daniel 6:4-9. Has there ever been a time when you remained faithful to God's precepts and were hurt by or misunderstood by others? Explain.

5. Do you think Daniel harbored bitterness toward those who sought to hurt him?

What gave him the strength to keep his heart pure?



### Discussion (Small Group Study)

6. From Daniel 6:10-11 discuss what kinds of rationalization a person could give in Daniel's place for not continuing to pray regularly?

8. Can you give an example of how the Lord has delivered you (or someone you know) from danger or from the hand of the enemy?

7. Daniel had clear-cut convictions regarding the importance of prayer.

a. List reasons for the importance of a regular prayer life.

9. God calls us to live for Him without compromise. This is not only difficult; without God's help it is impossible. Read the following Scriptures and discuss how much God expects from us.

a. Matthew 22:37-39

b. What has been successful or not so successful about your own personal prayer life?

b. 1Peter 1:14-16

c. What area of conviction in your faith would you refuse to compromise, even at the threat of losing your life?

c. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22



### Digging Deeper (Further Study)

10. In this study of Daniel's prayer life, we skipped Daniel 5. Read Daniel 5:1-4. Imagine yourself at this great banquet. What feelings would be churning inside you as God's holy vessels from the Jerusalem temple were being added to the wild party?

11. From Daniel 5:5-6, again record how you might have felt if you were present in the room.

12. From Daniel 5:7-23. Why should Belshazzar have known better than to dishonor God by profaning the temple vessels?

13. If you took more time to reflect on how God has worked historically in Scripture, in great Christians' biographies and especially in your own life, how might your heart and actions be influenced? Be specific.

#### Scripture for Meditation

He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions.

Daniel 6:26b



Do not let this book of the law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

Joshua 1:8

### Introduction

“It was the best of times. It was the worst of times.” Charles Dickens’ opening sentence in *A Tale of Two Cities* is probably one of the most familiar beginnings in literary history. It certainly applied to Daniel.

It was the worst of times: He was captured and exiled from his beloved Jerusalem.

It was the best of times: He was given palatial residence and the best schooling.

It was the worst of times: He was required to participate in practices that violated his Jewish beliefs.

It was the best of times: He grew in wisdom and God sustained him.

It was the worst of times: He had to confront a wicked king.

It was the best of times: God protected him and revealed His power in Daniel’s life.

It was the very worst of times: He was thrown into the lions’ den.

It was the very best of times: God shut the mouths of the lions, rescued Daniel, and crushed his enemies.

Daniel is a tremendous book on the sovereignty of God in the affairs of nations. Daniel was a faithful, praying man who glorified God even in the worst of times.

### Preparation for Prayer

A lot can be revealed about each of us in our private prayer. The seventeenth century Puritan writer, John Owen, taught that what an individual is in secret, on his knees before God, is what he is and no more.

Regular, disciplined prayer was a part of Daniel’s life. And although the Lord had revealed much to him, Daniel did not neglect God’s written Word (Daniel 9:2). John Calvin said, “Although Daniel was an interpreter of dreams, he was not so elated with confidence or pride as to despise the teaching delivered by other prophets.”

As the chapter opens, Daniel is reading the seventy-year prophecy of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 25:1-14; 29:10). God promised: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jeremiah 29:10-11). Could the return from exile be far off? What was preventing God from now releasing His people? Daniel didn’t know, but this was his reaction: “So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes” (Daniel 9:3).

The prophecy of Babylon’s destruction had already taken place. Daniel had faithfully served the Lord for 70 years in a foreign country that was hostile to the Jews and their God. Daniel prayed

Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them...

Daniel 10:12

for what God had already promised. This was definitely not a casual prayer, but a prayer accompanied by "...fasting, sackcloth, and ashes."

The New Bible Dictionary defines fasting as a time to express grief and penitence. It was often directed towards securing the guidance and help of God. Jesus taught his listeners when they fasted to face God-ward, not man-ward (Matthew 6:16-18).

Sackcloth was rough and irritable to the skin. It constantly reminded the wearer of his/her sinful state. It was a sign of mourning for the dead, penitence for sins or of special prayer for deliverance (Daniel 9:3). The ashes signified worthless objects or ideas and in this connection represented the humility of the intercessor before God. In preparation for prayer, Daniel read God's Word and humbled himself.

"Humbling ourselves in dust and ashes means gaining a sense of our meagerness and God's greatness, our sin and His purity, our humanity and His divinity." —Joni Eareckson Tada

### **Pleading in Prayer**

Notice the character of Daniel's prayer (Daniel 9:4-19). This is a prayer of pleading and confessing. Daniel repeatedly identifies himself with his nation and his people. He uses the words "we" and "us." He does not say "they have sinned," but, "we have sinned." He is specific. He mentions iniquity, wickedness, rebellion, disobedience, and refusal to hear God's prophets.

Daniel is one of the few people in Scripture about whom we know of no specific sin, yet we know he was a sinner. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

It's not easy to confess sin when we call it what God calls it. But Daniel did. He said, "We have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our fathers, and to all the people of the land" (Daniel 9:5-6).

This principle should apply to our own prayers. It is not enough to go to God and simply say, "I have sinned." We, too, need to be specific about our own sins. Confession means to call sin what God calls it. Sometimes we don't want to do this because it is so ugly, but He already knows how ugly it is. We aren't revealing anything He doesn't already know.

1 John 1:9 reminds us, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

Daniel understood that the Word of God and prayer go hand in hand. "If anyone turns a deaf ear to the law, even his prayers are detestable" (Proverbs 28:9).

Daniel's prayer was one of believing based on the promises of God. True prayer is based on the fact that God speaks. This is what drove Daniel to seek Him in the first place, "...the word of the Lord given to Jeremiah the prophet" (Daniel 9:2). God is not silent. Daniel throughout his prayer shows his awareness of this. He mentions God's "covenant" and His "commands" (Daniel 9:4).

Not to us, O Lord, not to us but to Your name be the glory, because of Your love and faithfulness.

Psalm 115:1

He confesses his people's unfaithfulness, "we have not obeyed the LORD our God or kept the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets" (Daniel 9:10).

The basis of all prayer is what God has promised to do. This is the true prayer of faith. Daniel's trust is in the one and only true God—the One who keeps His Word. Daniel pleads for the fulfillment of the promise of deliverance and restoration.

Genuine prayer seeks the glory of God. Daniel prays for mercy for the people because they bear God's name; he appeals for the restoration of Jerusalem because it is God's own city; he wants the temple restored because it is God's sanctuary. He magnifies God and humbles himself. His prayer is full of the adoration and admiration of the character of God. It is a pleading prayer. It is a prayer of praise to Almighty God!

### Final Thought

Most of us will probably never experience the worst of times that Daniel endured. We may also never experience the best of times in regards to God's miraculous answers to prayer based on His Word. Between Daniel chapters nine and ten, King Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem. Not all were able or willing to go. Daniel, himself, may not have been able to go because of frailty (he was over 80 years old) or because God called him to remain and minister to those who stayed behind. But together with the people of God, Daniel could rejoice in God's answers to prayer! Let us follow Daniel's example. We too should go to God's Word...

- for guidance for wisdom for strength for assurance,
- for promises for direction... then pray, confessing our humanity and praising His divinity.

Praise Him through His Word. Adore Him through His Word. Remind Him of His Word. Rely upon His Word. He loves it. He wrote it!

What a mighty man of prayer this Daniel! No wonder he was inducted into the Bible's Hall of Fame—Hebrews 11!

Dare to be a Daniel,

Dare to stand alone!

Dare to have a purpose firm!

Dare to make it known!

— Philip P. Bliss

### Spending Time With God

This four-week study series, "Daniel, Man of Prayer," is designed to supplement your personal and small group Bible study. The devotion questions are written for your personal study. The discussion questions are especially for small groups. The digging deeper questions are for those who wish for more personal or small group study. As you spend time with God, may His Word



enrich your life and enhance your daily walk with Him. Pray, asking God for special insight into His word.

### Devotion (Personal Study)

1. Read the commentary portion of this study guide. Write down one insight that was intriguing or helpful for you.

2. Compare Daniel 9:1-3 with Jeremiah 25:8-12 and 29:10-13. What specific things did God promise the prophet Jeremiah regarding Jerusalem and Babylon?

3. Read Daniel's prayer (9:4-19). Check the best answers to describe this prayer.

- |                     |                       |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Timid               | Bold                  |
| God's promise based | Human ability focused |
| Demanding           | Respectful            |

4. Give a few adjectives that:

a. describe your personal, private prayers.

b. tell what you would like your prayer-life to become.

5. Daniel begins "O Lord, the great and awesome God...". Record some of the descriptions of God used in Psalms 96 and 97.

Read aloud Psalm 103 as a prayer to God. Pause after each verse, reflecting on who He is.

### Discussion (Small Group Study)

6. Daniel confesses in 9:5: "we have sinned and done wrong." Go around the group, each reading a few verses of 2Kings 21:1-16, and pausing to comment on specific sins committed by the Israelites during the reign of the wicked king Manasseh.



7. Why do you think confession is a necessary part of prayer (1 John 1:9)?

c. How is your intercessory prayer life? Do you wish it could improve? In what way?

8. As a group, allow a minute for everyone to quietly read through the prayer in Daniel 9:4-19, with each person counting the number of times the pronoun “we” appears. (Compare your answers.) Discuss the following:

a. How could a righteous man like Daniel, who had suffered exile some 70 years because of the sins of the nation of Israel, now so fully identify with the people's shortcomings and sins?

d. Can you think of a time when you saw powerful answers to intercessory prayer either by you or for you? Explain.

b. Do you agree or disagree with this phrase: “Intercessory prayer (requests for God to help others) is only truly effective when breathed from a heart of compassion and identification for the one in need.”

### Digging Deeper (Further Study)

9. Read Daniel 9:15. Why did the people of Israel have no excuse for their sins?



10. Why do we have no excuse for turning away from God (1 Corinthians 10:11-13)?

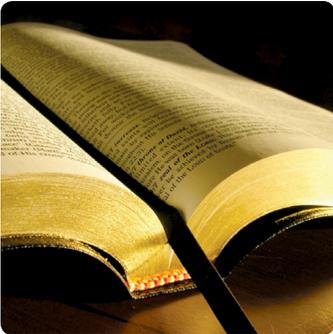
11. On what basis did Daniel make his plea? (See Daniel 9:19)

12. Using your answer in the previous question, on what basis can we ask God to make our prayer lives constant and effectual?

#### Scripture for Meditation

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

James 5:16



## BNEXT Small Group Leader's Guide

This BNEXT Leader's Guide is for facilitator/leaders. Please read this information before you begin. As the facilitator of a small group, you will have the experience of not only sharing this journey through God's Word with others but of aiding them along the way. You do not need previous experience or special training to lead a group. (Your primary responsibility is to serve as facilitator, not to teach.)

### MATERIALS NEEDED FOR A SUCCESSFUL EXPERIENCE

- Either the electronic version or a printed copy for each participant. (The electronic version of this BNEXT Study can be printed. When printed, the blue boxes that were visible in the electronic version will print as blank spaces for participants to record their answers.)
- Bible for each participant, preferably the same version (these studies use the NIV)
- Pen or pencil for each participant
- Watch or clock to monitor time

### ABOUT THIS STUDY

This BNEXT study series is versatile and may be used by individuals, small groups, or even entire congregations. The use of a small group as part of the program will enhance each one's experience. BNEXT studies have successfully been used in a variety of environments, including home groups, churches, prisons, and businesses.

These lessons are designed for the individual to read the Scripture passages, read the three pages of commentary, and answer the questions throughout the week. The participants then attend a weekly meeting with the small group to share insights and discuss the material. Total time for each weekly lesson should be about 1 to 1½ hours in length. Suggested lesson plans with timing guidelines are found at the end of this Guide.

If you use this study in a large group or an entire church, there are two possible approaches. One approach is for the entire group to first gather for a welcome and opening prayer, after which participants can meet in small groups for discussion using the BNEXT questions. After a specified amount of time, all would reconvene into a larger setting to present highlights from each group, and for closing words of encouragement and prayer. The other approach is to begin together as a larger group for a welcome and then split into smaller groups for the remainder of the time/lesson.

## ABOUT SMALL GROUPS

**Group Size:** Experience has shown that a group size of 10–12 people works best. If your group is significantly larger, we suggest that you create additional small groups.

**Group Leaders:** Each group should have its own facilitator/leader. It is good to also have at least one back-up facilitator in case the primary facilitator is absent. If you have several groups meeting at one time, decide who will be responsible for facilitating the larger group gatherings for the welcome time and so forth.

## ABOUT FACILITATOR/LEADERS

These lessons are designed to easily be used by a first-time leader as well as an experienced leader. The ideal small group facilitator/leader should have:

- a hunger for God's Word and a deep desire to see others grow in their knowledge of God and His Word,
- a commitment to the group, emphasizing seeing the program through to the end,
- the ability to facilitate and moderate discussion rather than teach, and
- a willingness to follow the "Discussion Group Rules of Engagement" (found in this Leader's Guide).

As facilitator, pray for your small group. Spend time preparing your own lesson (you should attempt to answer all of the questions before the class) and be thinking about how to present the questions to the group. Group members should be encouraged to at least answer the first two sets of questions — Devotion (Personal Study) and Discussion (Small Group Study) questions — before each class, to enhance their learning experience. Even better, encourage them to find time to complete Digging Deeper (Further Study) questions on their own. One of the goals of this approach is to encourage participants to develop the habit of delving into Scripture and studying on a regular basis.

You are not expected to be a Biblical expert. You are a facil-

itator, so resist the attempt to teach. You are there to guide the group, keep them on track, and avoid getting caught up in doctrinal debates. If you want to facilitate the group with a broadened background knowledge, see our "Background Study Option" below.

Recognize that not everyone is comfortable answering questions. Gently keep discussion going by asking questions like, "Does anyone else have something to add?" It can be helpful at times to have a volunteer read Scripture texts that are referred to in the questions.

Recognize and affirm all who contribute to the discussion. Do not dismiss someone's answer as wrong. If an answer is obviously off-base, thank them for their answer, then ask what others think. Remind the group to let Scripture interpret Scripture.

If you feel that a certain statement or question is inappropriate for your group, you may omit it or at least recognize that not everyone needs to answer it. However, do not be afraid of letting the group tackle tough topics.

## BACKGROUND STUDY OPTIONS

Again, facilitators are not expected to be Biblical experts. If the group looks to you for an answer you do not have, it is perfectly fine to say, "I'm not sure. Perhaps we can all think about that one and bring it up again next week?" Or, "Let's bring this one up to the larger group when there is time allotted for such discussion." Or, "Let's see if this doesn't answer itself over the weeks as we continue our study. Remember, the Bible interprets itself."

For extra study, you may wish to approach your pastor or to read commentaries and use other resources. The internet contains a wealth of information ... and also disinformation. Some internet sites that provide reliable (and free) commentaries and articles include: [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com), [biblestudytools.com](http://biblestudytools.com), [biblehub.com](http://biblehub.com), and [blueletterbible.org](http://blueletterbible.org).

Another useful source of general Biblical knowledge is *The Essential Bible Companion*, by the same contributors of our *Bible*

in 90 Days study series: John Walton, Mark Strauss, and Ted Cooper Jr., Zondervan Publishing (also available as an e-book).

## LEADING THE CLASS (Suggested Lesson Plans)

### First Class

Decide where you want to meet weekly and decide on a time. Once this has been done, actively publicize the *BNEXT* study throughout all your circles — at your church, workplace, friends, family, etc. There are some free publicity aids on our website at [ScriptureAwakening.com/bnext/freebies/](http://ScriptureAwakening.com/bnext/freebies/). (If the study is being done by the entire congregation, recruit facilitators for each group and have one facilitator designated to lead the closing session when all come back together.)

Be sure that every participant has downloaded the electronic version or has a printed copy of the study at least one week prior to the first small group meeting. Have everyone complete the first lesson's reading and answer the questions in preparation for the first gathering of the group(s).

The first class is unique in that a little more time is spent on introductions and explanations of how the classes will function.

1. Opening prayer, welcome, and introduction of members (13 minutes)
 

(NOTE: Entire church groups meet together for opening prayer only and then break into their small groups.)

  - a. Think of something brief each participant could say about themselves such as: "Tell us something unique about yourself." Or perhaps, "What do you hope to get out of this BNEXT study?"
  - b. Remind them to keep their answers brief (one minute or less).
2. Give an overview of the class and expectations (7 minutes)
  - a. Inform the class of how many weeks it will take to cover the study and the date of the last class.
  - b. Discuss the format of the BNEXT study and ask if

there are any questions.

- c. Review the "Rules of Engagement" which are located at the end of this Leader's Guide.
3. Discuss lesson questions (35 minutes)
    - a. Ask if there are any Devotion questions that anyone would like to discuss with the group.
    - b. Give primary attention to the Discussion questions, which are provided to promote dialogue and conversation.
    - c. If time permits, you may wish to use one or more of the Digging Deeper questions.
 

(NOTE: For an entire church, allow an extra 10-15 minutes to allow for the groups to come back together at a specified time. Allow each group to share a highlight of their small group discussion.)
  4. Closing prayer (5 minutes)
    - a. If time is short, then as the leader, pray for the group.
    - b. If you have more time, you may ask if there are any prayer requests and either pray on behalf of the group or open it up for the group to pray.
  5. If you are providing printed copies of lessons to participants, distribute the lesson for next week
  6. Dismissal

### Subsequent Classes

1. Opening prayer, welcome, and introduction of any new participants (10 minutes)

(NOTE: Entire church groups meet together for opening prayer only and then break into their small groups.)

- a. If there are new members, have them introduce themselves. Remind them to be brief (one minute or less).
- b. Think of a good ice-breaker that somehow relates to the study. For example, if you are studying "The Ten

Commandments – Exodus 20,” you may ask, “Why do you think Exodus or the Ten Commandments are important?” Or, “How do the Ten Commandments relate to the cross of Jesus Christ?” Remind them to keep their answers short. Set a time limit for this opening section; not everyone needs to answer.

- c. If you think it's necessary, remind the group of the “Rules of Engagement” at the end of this Guide.

## 2. Discuss lesson questions (45 minutes)

- a. Ask if there are any Devotion questions that people in the group would like to discuss.
- b. Give primary attention to the Discussion questions, which are designed to promote dialogue and conversation.
- c. If time permits, you may wish to use one or more of the Digging Deeper questions.

(NOTE: For an entire church, allow an extra 10-15 minutes for the groups to come back together at a specified time. Allow each group to share an insight of their small group discussion.)

## 3. Closing prayer (5 minutes)

- a. If time is short, then as the leader, pray for the group.
- b. If you have more time, you may ask if there are any prayer requests and either pray on behalf of the group or open it up for the group to pray.

## 5. Dismissal

### SMALL GROUP RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

It is important to treat one another in Christian love. These “Rules of Engagement” will be helpful, so read them aloud during the first class; thereafter, refer to them as needed by the group.

1. Begin each reading/study session with prayer, expecting God to speak to you through His Word.

2. Come prepared for each week's session by completing the reading and the study questions.
3. Your small group will have a facilitator. Please be respectful of the facilitator's leadership.
4. The facilitator's responsibility is to guide or shepherd the discussions. Do not expect your facilitator to be an expert on Scripture — each group member should seek the answers from Scripture on his/her own.
5. Each group member is invited to join the discussion but should not feel required to do so. If called upon, it is okay to say, “Thank you, but I would prefer to pass on answering that question.”
6. Alternatively, do not dominate a discussion. Time is limited, so please be sensitive to everyone in the group to help ensure that each person has the opportunity to participate.
7. Respect everyone's answers and views on Scripture. However, let Scripture interpret Scripture and expect the Holy Spirit to speak/teach through His written Word.
8. In preparation for each lesson, you are not expected to do extra study or research. If you wish to dig deeper, then here are a few helpful resources:
  - Go to [ScriptureAwakening.com/bnext/](http://ScriptureAwakening.com/bnext/) for key tips and guidelines for best use of BNEXT study series in your small group or whole church.
  - The internet contains a wealth of information (and sometimes disinformation). Some useful Bible study sites include: [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com), [biblestudytools.com](http://biblestudytools.com), [biblehub.com](http://biblehub.com), and [blueletterbible.org](http://blueletterbible.org).
  - *The Essential Bible Study Companion* (hard copy), by John Walton, Mark Strauss, and Ted Cooper Jr., Zondervan Publishing (also available as an e-book).