

J.D. GREAR

Lifeway Press®  
Brentwood, Tennessee

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ISBN 978-1-0877-8361-1 • Item 005842048

Dewey decimal classification: 224.5

Subject heading: BIBLE / PROPHETIC BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT / DANIEL

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Printed in the United States of America

Adult Ministry Publishing • Lifeway Resources • 200 Powell Place • Brentwood, TN 37027

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# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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J.D. Greear is the pastor of The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina. Under Pastor J.D.'s leadership, the Summit has grown from a plateaued church of three hundred to one of over twelve thousand. Pastor J.D. has led the Summit in a bold vision to plant one thousand new churches by the year 2050.

J.D. has authored several books, including *Just Ask* (2021), *What Are You Going to Do with Your Life?* (2020), *Searching for Christmas* (2020), *Above All* (2019), *Not God Enough* (2018), *Gaining by Losing* (2015), *Gospel* (2011), *Stop Asking Jesus into Your Heart* (2013), and *Jesus, Continued...* (2014). He also hosts *Summit Life*, a daily, thirty-minute radio broadcast and weekly NRBTv program.

J.D. completed his PhD in Theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He recently served as the 62nd president of the Southern Baptist Convention. Pastor J.D. and his wife, Veronica, are raising four awesome kids: Kharis, Alethia, Ryah, and Adon.

# HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

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This Bible study provides a guided process for men and groups of men to discuss the book of Daniel and what we can learn from his story about being faithful in a hostile culture. Eight sessions of study work through the book of Daniel and offer wisdom for men as they seek to embody courage and live faithfully in the places where God has called them as Daniel and his friends did in Babylon.

## INTRODUCTORY GROUP SESSION

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The first week of study begins with an introductory group session to help establish the group and the course of study. In this introductory session, you'll be introduced to the themes of Daniel and how they influence our lives and Christian men.

Weeks 2–8 follow the format outlined below.

## PERSONAL STUDY

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### BIBLE STUDY

Three days of personal study are provided prior to the group session each week. These personal studies include a prompt to read a portion of Daniel then offer commentary, devotional thoughts, and questions to discover Scripture's meaning and apply it to our lives. Each day of study can be completed in around fifteen minutes.

### WRAP UP

The personal study section ends with a reflective activity designed to help members tie together all they've studied during the week.

# GROUP STUDY

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## START

The group session will begin with a few questions designed to help you introduce the session's topic and encourage everyone to engage with the study.

## WATCH

This page is left blank intentionally to create space to take notes during the video teaching.

## DISCUSS

This section is the main component of the group session. The questions provided are designed to facilitate group discussion about the week's teaching from Daniel.

## DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE

A discipleship guide is provided in the back of this resource to adapt the group study for smaller groups of three or four men.

# ABOUT DANIEL

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## AUTHOR

Daniel, whose name means “God Judges” or “God’s Judge,” was a sixth-century BC prophet living in exile in Babylon. Daniel recounts key events firsthand that occurred during the Jewish captivity and also shares visions that were given to him by God. He likely wrote this book sometime shortly after the end of the Babylonian captivity. Internal testimony supports this claim. In the text itself, Daniel claimed to have written down visions given by God (see 8:2; 9:2,20; 12:5). Additionally, Jesus attributed the book of Daniel to Daniel himself (see Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14).

## BACKGROUND

The historical setting of the book of Daniel is the Babylonian captivity. The book opens after King Nebuchadnezzar’s first siege of Judah (605 BC) when he brought Daniel and his friends to Babylon along with other captives among the Judean nobility. Nebuchadnezzar assaulted Judah again in 597 and brought ten thousand captives back to Babylon. In 586 he once again besieged Jerusalem, this time destroying the city, the holy temple, and exiling the people of Judah to Babylon. Daniel’s ministry began in 605 when he arrived at Babylon with the first Jewish captives, extended throughout the Babylonian captivity (which ended in 539), and concluded sometime after the third year of Cyrus the Great, the Medo-Persian king who overthrew Babylonia (see Daniel 1:21; 10:1).

## MESSAGE AND PURPOSE

The theme of the book of Daniel is the hope of the people of God living in a dark and hostile culture. The book promotes hope by teaching that at all times “the Most High God is ruler over human kingdoms” (5:21). Daniel’s purpose was to exhort Israel to be faithful to the sovereign God of Israel. He accomplished this by recounting examples of godly trust and prophecies of God’s ultimate victory.



## KEY EMPHASIS

Daniel emphasizes that the Lord has dominion over all the kingdoms of the earth, even in evil days when wicked empires reign. Two key words in the book are “king” (used over 150 times) and “kingdom” (used over 50 times). Above all, Daniel teaches that the God of Israel is the Sovereign of the universe, “for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation” (4:34). Because of this, followers of Jesus can live with hope and confidence in God in a dark and hostile culture.

## STRUCTURE

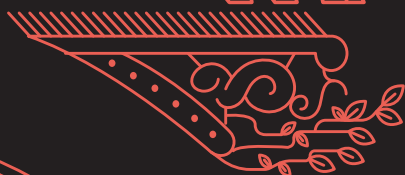
Daniel is narrative book, recounting historical events for the purpose of present and future instruction. The narrative contains history, prophecy, and apocalyptic visions. Apocalyptic literature refers to revelation by God given through visions and symbols with a message of eschatological (end-time) triumph. Although Daniel contains apocalyptic elements, it is not an apocalyptic book; rather, it is a narrative that includes apocalyptic visions.

Noting that the book of Daniel contains both history (chapters 1–6) and prophecy (chapters 7–12), some divide the book into two sections. A better way to view the book’s structure is based on the two languages it uses: 1:1–2:3 (Hebrew); 2:4–7:28 (Aramaic); and 8:1–12:13 (Hebrew). The Hebrew sections pertain primarily to the people of Israel, which is fitting since Hebrew was Israel’s national language. Aramaic was the international language of that time. Fittingly, the Aramaic section of Daniel demonstrates God’s dominion over all nations.<sup>1</sup>



SESSION 1

Faithful



The book of Daniel is about how to be a faithful witness in a dark and hostile environment. You see, unlike other books in the Bible, this book was not written from inside Israel. In the first few verses of Daniel, we learn that God's people had been taken into exile. Following the reign of King Solomon, Israel was stuck in a downward spiral of unbelief, compromise, and disobedience. God warned Israel that if they continued to walk this path, He would send them into exile. And so, in 605 BC, God kept His promise. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon laid siege to Jerusalem and took the best and brightest from Israel back to Babylon where they would serve the king who conquered them.

This is where the book of Daniel begins. And yet the book doesn't take us further down the spiral; rather, it shows us that even in the middle of a sinful culture, godly men can follow God and thrive no matter where He's placed them.

The book of Daniel is a manual for how to thrive in Babylon.

### KEY IDEA

*We can be faithful in Babylon.*

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# START

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*Use this section to get the conversation started.*

**Where is the most difficult place you've had to live out your faith?**

**What do you think it means to live out your faith at work, in your hobbies, or in your relationships?**

The book of Daniel is the story of a young Hebrew man abducted from his country and his home to go and serve the wicked king who conquered his people. The book of Daniel doesn't give us a play-by-play of the Babylonian invasion, but we know from history and from other places in the Bible that the Babylonians were ruthless and vicious warriors. They didn't just come in and take over; they used all the instruments of war to bring Judah into submission—killings, torture, starvation. Imagine being in Daniel's place. It would be difficult to thrive in that setting.

But that's just what Daniel did, and that's what God is calling all of us to do. Daniel helps men answer the question, What does faithfulness to God look like in a secular realm controlled by secular powers at war with the gospel?

# WATCH

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*Use this space to take notes during the video teaching.*

# DISCUSS

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*Use this section to guide the group discussion.*

## **READ DANIEL 1:1-7.**

While Babylon was a city in modern-day Iraq, the Bible also talks about Babylon as a spiritual reality that we all inhabit (see Revelation 18:2,10,21). When have you felt like the culture you live in is a kind of Babylon?

When Daniel and his friends were taken to Babylon, their names were changed to reflect Babylonian culture and heritage. How does the culture we live in seek to conform you to its ways? What are some ways this particularly affects men?

It appears that these young men accepted their Babylonian names without conflict. (Joseph does this as well in Genesis 41:45). How does that challenge our assumptions of what faithfulness looks like in a sinful culture?

How do we determine which part of our culture to accept and which parts to reject?²

## READ DANIEL 12:3.

Why is ordinary faithfulness to God attractive and noticeable in a dark culture? Can you think of any examples of someone who has shined in Babylon?

What challenges do you face being a faithful witness in the places God has called you?

What does it look like practically to focus on the promise from this verse when it seems like the world is forcing us to make a choice between faithfulness and compromise?

What remaining questions or comments do you have about this session's teaching video?  
What was challenging, convicting, encouraging, or timely for your current circumstances?

*Close your time in prayer.  
Remember to complete the personal study prior to the next meeting.*

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