

This guide is to help you facilitate discussion with your Small Group. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God's Word. There may be questions you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on their relationship with God. Your role is to facilitate this experience not to complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid teaching task list.

Daniel

Daniel is set in the sixth century BC while Israel is exiled in Babylon. Daniel and his friends have been taken into exile as young men and are to be educated as diplomats and scholars in the court of Babylon. Though their training immerses them in the Babylonian worldview, culture, literature, and religion, they remain faithful to their God. Daniel stands as a witness to, and sometimes illustration of, God's sovereignty over even the greatest empire the world had known. People in the ancient world would have believed that Israel's defeat indicated the weakness of their God in relation to the great Babylonian Empire and its powerful gods. However, the purpose of the book of Daniel is to illustrate and proclaim the absolute sovereign power of Israel's God. He alone possesses sovereign authority over all nations and establishes and deposes kings and empires to serve His purpose. This is most clearly seen in Daniel 2 as God reveals to Daniel the content and interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream, thereby demonstrating His wisdom and power over all others.

Study the Text...

Nebuchadnezzar's Disturbing Dreams (Daniel 2:1-13)

In the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign he was plagued with dreams which left him restless and greatly disturbed. The ancient Babylonians believed that dreams were messages from the gods, therefore a right understanding of his dreams was critical for the future of his kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar responded by summoning his advisors to interpret the content of his dreams. Failure to do so meant death for the king's trusted advisors.

- Why was Nebuchadnezzar so troubled by his dream? Why was he so concerned that his dreams be interpreted?
- Why did Nebuchadnezzar want his advisors to not only interpret his dream but also to tell him the content of the dream? (2:8-9)
- What would happen to the king's advisors if they failed to explain the content of the king's dream and interpret it? (2:5)
- How did the king's advisors respond to the king's request? (2:10)
- According to the advisors, who alone is able to fulfill the king's request? (2:11)
- How did Nebuchadnezzar respond to the advisors failure to explain his dream? (2:12)
What implications did this have on Daniel and his friends? (2:13)

Group Discussion...

- Why do you think Nebuchadnezzar was so willing to dispose of his advisors?
- Was this a just penalty for their inability to explain his dream?
- What overall picture do these verses give you about the character of Nebuchadnezzar? (also note 2 Kings 25:7; Jeremiah 29:22; Daniel 3)

Study the Text

God Reveals Nebuchadnezzar's Dream (Daniel 2:14-30)

Unlike the king's advisers and gods, Daniel's God was able to reveal the king's dream. He alone is the sovereign One who is superior to all earthly kings, men and gods. He alone is the One who has the power to explain and interpret the dreams of men. Daniel responded appropriately by offering praise to His God. He acknowledged that His God is a God of wisdom, knowing the end from the beginning, and God of power, for whatever He determines, He can do. Evidences of His power are seen in His control of events ("He changes times and seasons") and of the destiny of nations ("He removes kings and sets up kings"). Nebuchadnezzar was on the throne because God determined to use Him there to fulfill His will. Evidences of God's wisdom are seen in His "giving wisdom to the wise" and in His revealing "deep and hidden things." It was God, not Daniel's insight, which allowed Daniel to understand and interpret the king's dream.

- How did Daniel initially respond to the threat of death? (2:14-16)
- When faced with a life-and-death situation what did Daniel urge his friends to do? (2:17-18)
- How did God answer the prayer of Daniel and his friends? (2:19)
- Who revealed Nebuchadnezzar's dream to Daniel? What did this reveal about Daniel's God? (note 2:11)
- How did Daniel respond to God's revelation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream? (2:19-23)
- In Daniel's prayer how long does he say that praise should be given to God? (2:20)
- What two primary characteristics of God does Daniel highlight in his prayer? (2:20)
- In light of the preceding events why does Daniel specifically mention these two attributes? (2:20)
- Daniel praises God because "He changes times and seasons" and "removes kings and sets up kings." What do these truths stress about God? (2:21)
- When Daniel goes before the king who does he credit for revealing the king's dream? (2:27-29)
- Why does Daniel say the king's dream was revealed to him? (2:30)

Group Discussion. . .

- What are your initial thoughts about how Daniel responded when his life was at stake?
- Why do you think Daniel responded with such courage?
- Any wisdom or knowledge we possess ultimately comes from whom? Why is this so important to remember? In what ways do we tend to forget this truth?
- God’s sovereignty extends over every ruler and king this world has ever known. Verse 21 tells us that “he removes kings and sets up kings.” Does this truth bring you comfort, confusion, fear, etc? What other questions does this truth bring to mind?
- What other truths and attributes of God does this passage bring forth?

Study the Text...***Daniel Interprets Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream (Daniel 2:31-49)***

Nebuchadnezzar had seen a great image (or statue) shaped like a human being and made of metals of diminishing value (gold, silver, bronze, iron mixed with clay). In his dream appeared a rock which struck and destroyed the statue. The rock had two important features. First, it was not cut out by human hands (v. 34). Second, it became a huge mountain which filled the whole earth (v. 35). The dream referred to what will happen in the days to come (v. 28). Since the head of gold was specifically identified as Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom (v. 38) we may assume that the other parts of the statue also represented specific empires or dynasties. Their identity was not yet unveiled to Daniel and his contemporaries. If they are to be identified in retrospect, the chest and arms of silver (v. 32) represent the Medo-Persian Empire. The belly and thighs of bronze (v. 32) would then symbolize the Greek Empire which would rule over the whole earth (v. 39) followed by the Roman Empire. This interpretation has often led to the understanding of the rock as Christ and its growth as a reference to the advance of the kingdom of God. The overall point of the vision is that God’s kingdom is supreme and is the only one which will endure.

- What did Daniel report about what the king saw in his dream? (2:31-35)
- What happened to the great image (or statue) in the king’s dream? (2:34-35)
- What do we learn about the stone that the king saw in his dream? Where did it come from? Who hurled it at the image (or statue)? Why is this important?
- What was the result of the stone that struck the image (or statue)? (2:35)
- According to Daniel’s interpretation, what are the different parts of the image (or statue) a reference to?
- What’s important about the fact that the list of metals on the image (or statue) shows a progressive decrease in the value and splendor of the materials?
- According to Daniel’s interpretation, what is the stone in the king’s dream a reference to?
- What important truths about God’s kingdom are revealed in this passage?
- How did Nebuchadnezzar respond to Daniel’s interpretation of his dream?

- In what ways does the king's answer in verse 47 summarize the main point of the entire chapter?

Group Discussion...

- One major truth is repeated throughout the chapter, namely that Daniel's God reigns supreme and is sovereign over all earthly kings and kingdoms (note 2:17-28, 36-38, 44-45, 47). What are the implications of this truth on your life?
- At the end of verse 45 Daniel says that "the dream is certain, and its interpretation sure." What does this reveal about God? How does this give you confidence and encouragement?
- In what specific ways does this passage help and encourage you to walk by faith and not by sight?