



# Courage In Chaos

BOOK OF DANIEL SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE



Destroyed. Discouraged. Dejected.

That was reality for Jewish people in ancient Babylon. Yet from this hopeless situation, courageous people arose with both integrity and influence.

Daniel's story raises questions relevant to our own time: How do I stay hopeful when my dreams have died? How do I combine faith and work, and stay excellent at both? What if I'm terrified of the political landscape? In a culture of violence and vice, how do I stay faithful to my convictions, yet also remain a positive influence on culture?

In our series, you can access for free:

- **7 weeks of daily video meditations**

Available Monday-Friday at [tlc.org/daniel](http://tlc.org/daniel)

- **7 small group lessons**

In this booklet

- **7 video discussion starters**

Available at the QR codes in this booklet and at [tlc.org/daniel](http://tlc.org/daniel). Each short video features Sara Bentley, Adrian Moreno, and René Schlaepfer in a “small group” of their own, kicking off the discussion.

We believe that revival can be ignited — in your spirit, and also in our communities — when we learn how to live with both integrity and influence, believing God to be sovereign in every situation.

# Week One:

## Don't Give Up & Don't Give In

Daniel Chapter 1

Watch The Week 1 Small Group  
Discussion Starter Video



### Opening Up

In today's story, the young Jewish man Daniel and his friends are taken captive to Babylon and are then instructed in all the Babylonian customs. It must have been a shock for young Jewish men to be plunged into a totally different culture.

Have you ever moved to a new and different environment where you experienced "culture shock"? What were some of the challenges you faced?

### Digging In

**One theme of Daniel 1 is that God is always working behind the scenes.**

1. **Read Daniel 1:1-2.** What do these verses reveal about the author's perspective on how and why events in the world take place?

2. **Read Romans 8:28-31.** What do these verses teach about God's purpose over events? How does this parallel the verses from Daniel?

3. **Read Daniel 12:13,** the last verse of the book. In what way is this verse an encouragement to you?

How does this last verse fit into the worldview of the author in 1:1-2?

How can this give you peace as you deal with the uncertainties of life?

**Another theme of Daniel 1: Sometimes it's ok, and even wise, to adapt to your community or work culture. God wants us to bless our communities and our workplaces. But there are times we must stay distinct from culture.**

4. **Read Daniel 1:3-8.** Knowing the difference between secondary issues and primary issues is a challenge. Daniel and his friends accepted Babylonian names, education, and responsibilities, but not the food. They apparently believed that what the Babylonians were offering them would have compromised their Jewish identity (most scholars suggest that it was not kosher food).

What does this imply about when it's ok to adapt to your surrounding culture and when it's unwise to adapt to your culture?

5. **Read Romans 14:17-18.** This whole chapter instructs us not to confuse secondary issues with primary issues. There are times Christians "take a stand" on issues unnecessarily, and in ways that actually undermine the bigger Christian mission.

Interestingly, in the New Testament, the apostles teach that whether or not to eat non-kosher food is a personal choice and not a primary issue. For them, the primary things that define a Christian do not involve food but attitudes and actions: "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." These are the things that define Christian identity, not food.

Do you ever see Christians taking a stand against aspects of their culture that should probably be secondary issues in ways that hinder their witness and cause unnecessary division among Christians?

6. In what ways are you sometimes pressured to conform to your culture in unhealthy ways? Are there moral or ethical challenges at your school or workplace?

7. Read God's instruction to the Jews who were about to go into Babylonian captivity in **Jeremiah 29:7**. How do Daniel's attitude and actions toward his captors reflect this instruction?

8. Jesus prayed this for his disciples:

*"I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. They do not belong to this world any more than I do. Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world."* (John 17:15-18)

These verses are often summarized as **"We are in the world, but not of the world."** How do these verses reflect Daniel's attitude?

9. **Read James 1:27**. How does he define pure and undefiled (or uncompromised) religion? How can we demonstrate this kind of religion to our world?

10. How can we Christians, like Daniel, seek the prosperity of our society — and have godly ambition — without compromising our faith? In your own life, what does it look like to seek the good of your community while staying faithful to Christ?

## **Prayer Time**

Share prayer requests.

Here are some suggestions for your group prayer time:

Thank God that He is in control! Pray about some areas in your life or in the world where it seems He must not be in control. Ask Him for godly perspective.

Ask God to help you be a blessing to your society while retaining the distinctive “flavor” of a Christian.

## **Verse to Remember**

*His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. (Daniel 7:14b NIV)*

# Week Two:

## When Life Throws You Curves

Daniel Chapter 2

Watch The Week 2 Small Group  
Discussion Starter Video



### Opening Up

In today's story, Daniel is thrown quite a curveball. In what way do you feel like life has been throwing you a "curveball" lately?

### Digging In

1. **Read Daniel 2:14-18.** The circumstances of Daniel's life were out of his control, but he always had control over his response to the circumstances. *What actions and attitudes stand out to you in the way he responded?*
2. **Read 1 Peter 4:19.** How does this verse reinforce Daniel's response?
3. Perhaps there are stressful things in your life that are out of your control. How can you "commit yourself to your faithful Creator and continue to do good" in your actions and attitudes right now?

How could that impact your sense of peace and your relationships?

4. **Read Daniel 2:20-22 and Psalm 103:19.** In what areas of life do you struggle with thinking you are the one who is in control?

If you think you are in control, how does that impact your response to life's "curveballs"?

If you think God is in control, how does that impact your response?

5. **Read Daniel 2:48-49 and Proverbs 3:3-6.** How should recognizing that all success is from God's hand impact how you handle success?

6. **Read Romans 8:26-39.** In the "curve ball" situations of life, how do these verses encourage you, and what specific difference could they make in your attitude and actions today?

## **Prayer Time**

Share prayer requests.

Here are some suggestions for your group prayer time:

Talk to God about the curveballs you're facing right now and ask Him to empower you and your faith to live out the verses you read today.

Thank God for the successes He has granted you. Pray that no matter what your success looks like, you'll give glory to Him and acknowledge Him in all you do.

Ask God today for strength to "continue to do good" even in the dark, uncontrollable times. God can empower you, no matter what the day brings!



## **Verse to Remember**

*Praise be to the name of God forever and ever; wisdom and power are his. He changes times and seasons; he deposes kings and raises up others. 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 2:20-22 NIV)*

# Week Three:

## Standing Up In A Bow-Down World

Daniel Chapter 3

Watch The Week 3 Small Group Discussion Starter Video



### Opening Up

In today's story, we see the surprising influence of three young men. Name one person (not a family member) who has had the greatest influence in your life, and explain why.

### Digging In

**One of the main themes of this passage is *identity*.**

1. **Read Daniel 3:4-5.** The king of Babylon set up a giant idol and commanded his officials to bow down before it. What do you think are some of the main “false gods” demanding worship in our culture?

Money  
Power  
Success (promotions, recognition, etc.)  
Fame  
Pleasure  
Celebrity worship  
Politics  
Sports  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

2. **Read Daniel 3:8-12.** Some of the young Jewish men refused to bow down. But the king's court astrologers inform on them. What do you think was Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego's core identity-- were they servants of the king first, or servants of God first?

In different phases of your life, has your **core identity** ever been any of the following:

Your political party

Your country

Your ethnicity

Your job

Your net worth

Your looks

Your athleticism

Your intellect

Your talent

Your hobby

Your faith

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Another theme of this chapter:  
Strong faith is not dependent on God's deliverance.**

3. **Read Daniel 3:16-18.** Note that their courage and faith were not dependent on God answering their prayers for deliverance from trouble. Why is there unshakable power in being able to say, "The God I serve can deliver me, **yet even if he does not, I still** choose to serve Him"?

4. Is there a specific circumstance where you need to apply the courage of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to your life right now?

**A third theme of this chapter:  
Even if I go through trials, God is always with me.**

5. **Read Daniel 3:19–25.** God was with them in the fire. Think about the “fires” in your life. How does it encourage you to know that God is with you in those fires today?

Wherever you find yourself, the key to peace is knowing that God *is* with you...even when you don't understand what He is doing. That is what *trust* means. Believe that He is God and that He has everything under control. Continue to seek Him earnestly... *even when you don't understand what He's doing.*

What is your obstacle to believing He is always with you?

**A final major theme:  
My integrity influences others.**

6. **Read Daniel 3:26–30.** What was the impact of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego's courage on the king?

7. We are always influencing people — for good or bad. Write down the names of **three people** in your life you hope to influence—one person in your **family**, one person at **your place of work, school, or worship**, and one person in your **neighborhood**.

Family:

Work, school, or church:

Neighborhood:

Share those names with your group.

8. Now what is your “influence goal” – in other words, what type of influence do you hope to have on them?

9. Write down three ways you can move towards that goal, then share them with your group:

1.

2.

3.

10. In this study, you see Daniel and his three friends serve their kings with integrity. You see them refusing to compromise their faith. But you never see them being disrespectful--not even when they are threatened with death! If they disagree, they do so firmly, yet gracefully. They are even polite to their persecutors!

Read this quote out loud to the group:

“If you want to influence the world and those around you with God’s love, it is crucial to keep your focus on Him. Perhaps the reason some Christians become defensive, spiteful, or self-righteous when interacting with others is because they have lost sight of their first love: their relationship with God. If we do not constantly worship God, it’s easy to get caught up in proving others wrong and showing them we’re right. The solution to this is to remain grounded in our relationship with God so we’re motivated only by his love--a love that stands strong when necessary but also cares more about people than being right.” – Chris Hodges

These verses also speak to this:

*“Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called, so that you may inherit a blessing.” (1 Peter 3:9)*

*“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.” (1 Peter 3:15-16)*

When someone close to you expresses views different from your own, do you ever struggle with showing gentleness and respect? Why? What would it look like to respond in a way that reflects these two verses (responding with blessing, gentleness, and respect)?

## **Prayer Time**

Share prayer requests.

Here are some suggestions for your group prayer time:

Pray through your “influence goal” and ask God to give you the courage, humility and faith to influence these people for good.

Thank God today that you never stand alone — in good times or bad. Talk to Him about your struggles.

Thank God today for the example of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Ask God to give you wisdom to know where you should never compromise, and courage to stand strong.

## **Verse to Remember**

*Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be people of courage; be strong. Do everything in love. (1 Corinthians 16:13-14 NIV)*

# Week Four: Not God

Daniel Chapter 4

Watch The Week 4 Small Group  
Discussion Starter Video



## Opening Up

Today you'll meet a king who ate grass like a cow! What's the strangest thing you've ever eaten?

## Digging In

1. **Read Daniel 4:28-33.** The story of Nebuchadnezzar is stunning. He literally thought of himself as a god, and asked people to worship him.

The temptation to think that we are on equal footing with God is a sneaky one. When asked directly, very few people would say, "Yes, I think I'm equal to God!" However, our actions and thoughts can reveal that in some areas, we do desire god-like control over circumstances and people.

Where or when are you most likely to have a power struggle with God?

2. What is your response to this statement:

For many people, the first step to faith is not believing in God. It's realizing that "I am *not* God." Before I can get to God, I have to get my own self out of the way. Often my own self-centeredness, making myself the God of my own universe, gets in the way of everything, including meeting the true God.

3. **Read Psalm 95:3-7.** What do these verses tell you about God's power and position?

Realizing you are not God is a key to spiritual growth and health in many ways:

- It acknowledges being part of a larger universe and subject to something beyond individual control.
- It reduces stress and unhealthy striving from trying to control everything, or denying your limitations.
- Humility enables you to be more open to feedback and empathy
- It encourages a more realistic self-assessment

4. How have you recently been struck by the fact that you are *not* God? How does that realization tend to impact you: Does it bring comfort, discouragement, frustration?

5. One of the consequences of thinking we are on equal footing with God is that we tend to give ourselves all the credit when things are going well. Nebuchadnezzar definitely falls into this trap. Think about your life right now. Are you ever tempted to take credit for yourself instead of giving glory to God?

6. Nebuchadnezzar hits bottom with a bang! How can hitting bottom be a mercy from God? How have you seen this in your own life or someone close to you?



7. **Read Daniel 4:34-37.** How was Nebuchadnezzar restored to sanity? How does his prayer demonstrate a changed heart?

8. **Read Ephesians 2:8-9.** According to these verses, how do you get right with God? How do these verses remind you that you are not God? How do they encourage you?

9. **Read Psalm 40:1-3.** What “slimy pit” do you feel like you’re in right now? What is God’s role in helping us out of the pit? What is your role? How does this help you today?

## **Prayer Time**

Share prayer requests.

Here are some suggestions for your group prayer time:

Acknowledge that “God does as He pleases.” Thank Him for the reminder that you are not God.

Thank God today for the successes and triumphs He has given you. Ask Him to give you the desire to give Him the glory and point others to Him.

Thank God that in all His great power, He is loving and merciful.

Spend time today praying through the “not-God” prayer at the end of these notes.

### **THE NOT-GOD PRAYER**

God, I want to confess. I am not God. I am not infinite. I am not holy. I’m a sinner. So I lift my eyes to the King of all. I receive Your love and Your forgiveness as a gift of grace because of what Jesus did. I want to make Jesus my Lord, and as best I can, follow Him for the rest of this life and then forever in the world to come.

### **Verse to Remember**

*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)*

# Week Five: Weighed & Measured

Daniel Chapter 5

Watch The Week 5 Small Group  
Discussion Starter Video



## Opening Up

Today you'll meet a king who was told his days were numbered! If you knew you had just one month to live, how would you spend your time?

## Digging In

**Read Daniel 5:1-4 and Daniel 5:25-31.**

**Story summary:** King Belshazzar of Babylon is so convinced his empire is invincible that he throws a party while the Persian army advances on his city. Then it gets worse: he drunkenly uses holy goblets his father had stolen from the Jerusalem temple to raise a toast to his own pagan gods. Suddenly, mysterious writing appears on the walls! Daniel is called, and interprets the writing to mean the Babylonians have not measured up, and will be overthrown.

**The first word on the wall is related to the verb “numbered.”**

Daniel tells the king his days are numbered. While the king's number was up that very night, this is true of all of us:

Our days are numbered.

1. **Read Psalms 90:12 & 103:13-18.** How do these verses support the fact that, when it comes to our days, quantities are limited?

For some, it can be morbid or even depressing to think about the brevity of life. How can it be encouraging to face the fact that our days are numbered?

2. Think honestly about your life and actions. if God told you what your lifespan will be, what positive things do you think you would be motivated to do now?

What changes do you need to make right now to start living like that?

**The second word on the wall is related to the verb “weighed.”**

The king has been weighed and found wanting. He looks good, but is a “lightweight.” He does not measure up to God’s standards. While the king’s time had run out, in a real sense, this is also true of everyone: none of us measures up to God’s perfect standard.

3. **Read 1 Samuel 2:3, Matthew 6:19-34, John 10:10 & Galatians 5:14.**

Daniel tells Belshazzar that when his life was weighed, he was found “wanting.” No one wants to hear that! What do the verses you read today say about how to live a life that is *not* found “wanting”?

4. What are some parts of your own life where, if you’re honest, you would also be found wanting?

Please note: God does not “weigh” your good deeds to save you; we are only saved by His grace, not our deeds. But He does guide you to make wise choices so that you can live abundantly, bless others, and glorify Him. And he will reward us for our deeds.

5. What does it look like to live a life that reflects God's values when it comes to, for example, fun? When it comes to money? When it comes to relationships?

**The third word on the wall is related to the verb "divided."**

The empire will now be divided and reduced, torn from the king's hand that very night. This is a warning that there are consequences to our sin.

6. **Read Galatians 6:7-8.** Someone defined the law of sowing and reaping like this:

**You always reap *what* you sow**  
**You always reap *more than* you sow**  
**You always reap *later than* you sow**

How have you observed the law of sowing and reaping in the world?  
How have you experienced the law of sowing and reaping in your life?

7. How does it help you to remember that choices have "side effects"?

8. Think about the law of sowing and reaping. If you seek a more joyful or more fulfilling life, what could you plant now to harvest that crop?

9. **Read Psalm 139:23-24, Proverbs 21:2 & Hebrews 3:15.** Can you sincerely ask God to search your heart and tell *anything* that you need to change, or are you closed to change?

10. Where in your life right now do you suspect God might do some “writing on the wall” to direct you toward change?

**Please read Ephesians 2:4-10.** Remember that we are saved by grace, not works. The God has good works for us to do.

## **Prayer Time**

Share prayer requests.

Here are some suggestions for your group prayer time:

Ask God to search and weigh your heart.

Ask Him to show you the warning labels He has for you.

Pray that God will soften your heart to His voice and give you a willingness to change.

Thank God that though our days on earth may be numbered, our days with Him are as eternal as He is!

Pray for the courage to make the necessary changes to line up your actions with the truth of Scripture.

## **Verse to Remember**

*Teach us to number our days and recognize how few they are; help us to spend them as we should. (Psalm 90:12 LB)*

# Week Six:

## Growing My Courage

Daniel Chapter 6

Watch The Week 6 Small Group  
Discussion Starter Video



### Opening Up

Today, Daniel meets the lions! What is your most memorable experience with a wild animal (a whale, bear, raccoon, bird, fish, or...?)

### Digging In

**Daniel served his community and country with excellence.  
Yet he also kept a noticeably distinctive life as a God-follower.**

1. **Read Daniel 6:1–9.** In this section, the political leaders first tried to find a flaw in Daniel's character. What did their research turn up?
2. If you were being watched like Daniel was being watched, what changes (if any) might you make in your lifestyle?
3. **Read Daniel 6:10–15.** Name some disciplines or habits that help you express your love and devotion to Jesus:

4. “Spiritual disciplines” are practices that cultivate a closer relationship with God and foster spiritual growth. Some of the habits traditionally referred to as “spiritual disciplines” are:

Fasting  
Prayer  
Worship  
Bible Reading  
Silence & Solitude  
Meditation  
Memorization  
Sabbath-Keeping

What is a spiritual discipline you have tried to develop, or wanted to get going, in your life, but have found difficult to maintain? Why?

5. Daniel was willing to cooperate with Babylon on many projects. But Daniel had some hard non-negotiables, including his faith practices. In your own life, how can you best discern the true non-negotiables—the difference between the minor and major issues?

6. How can you serve your community or company with excellence—yet also retain a distinctive godly presence?

7. Read these quotes to the group:

**“If a man hasn’t discovered something that he will die for,  
he isn’t fit to live.” — Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

**“Know what hill you’ll die on.”**

**“When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.”  
— Dietrich Bonhoeffer**



**“If I perish, I perish.” — Queen Esther (Esther 4:16b)**

What are the hills that you would die on?

8. In your opinion, what does it mean to have an “I don’t have to survive” attitude?

9. **Read Daniel 6:14–20.** How do these verses underscore the impact Daniel’s life had on the king?

10. **Read Daniel 6:25–27 and 1 Timothy 4:7.** What specific aspects of God’s character can you discover in Darius’ decree? How has Daniel encouraged you to be a more Christ-like example to those around you?

11. After six weeks of studying Daniel, what aspects of his character do you admire?

12. Describe someone you have known whose life exemplifies consistent, godly character, like Daniel:

**Remember the overall key to courage: Believing God rules.**

This is the moral at the end of every chapter in Daniel.

## **Prayer Time**

Share prayer requests.

Here are some suggestions for your group prayer time:

Ask God to help you have the character of Daniel!

Ask God to help you see what weaknesses He would like to work on in your life — then yield yourself to Him! Thank Him for His unconditional love for you!

Ask God to empower you to develop a plan of action for spiritual growth that suits your life and personality and yet also challenges you.

## **Verse to Remember**

*In my distress I prayed to the Lord, and the Lord answered me and set me free. The Lord is for me, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me? (Psalm 118:5-6 NLT)*

# Week Seven:

## How To Face The End Of The World

Daniel Chapter 7

Watch The Week 7 Small Group Discussion Starter Video



### Opening Up

Today Daniel gets a peek into the future. If you could peer into the future to learn one thing, what would it be?

### Digging In

What is one thing in your life that is worrying you right now?

**Story set-up:** Daniel has a vision and becomes very afraid-- partly because of the heavenly messenger and partly because of the content of the message.

**Read Daniel 10:15-19.** Let's take those encouraging words from God phrase-by-phrase.

### **“Don’t be afraid.”**

1. Read John 14:27. Sometimes it doesn’t feel possible not to fear — the frightening things in the world can seem so overwhelming. What reason does this verse give you not to fear?
2. In John 14, Jesus tells the disciples that he is giving them his peace. But gifts do need to be received. What stops you from accepting God’s peace?

### **“God loves you very much.”**

3. This phrase in Daniel 10 translated “God loves you very much” can also be rendered, “You are a man who is highly precious.” **Read Colossians 3:13-14.** These verses give a glimpse of how God can use each of us as we grow in our understanding of our “belovedness” in God’s eyes. In what way do you struggle with accepting that you are beloved of God?
4. How can understanding God’s love help you in your struggle with fear and worry? According to these verses from Colossians, how can understanding God’s love help your relationships?

### **“Peace be with you.”**

5. **Read Philippians 4:6-7.** How have the worries and fears you’re facing right now robbed you of rest and peace? According to these verses, what is the key to receiving the peace of Christ?

### **“Be strong now; be courageous.”**

6. **Read Isaiah 41:10.** In this verse, what is the main reason we don’t need to be ruled by fear and worry?

7. Which of these phrases do you need to hear most right now, and why?

**“Don’t be afraid.”**

**“God loves you very much.”**

**“Peace be with you.”**

**“Be strong now, be courageous.”**

## **Prayer Time**

Share prayer requests.

Here are some suggestions for your group prayer time:  
Thank God today that He is in charge of the future. Thank Him that He has a plan. Talk to him about the thing(s) you’re worried and frightened about. Ask God to help you grow in your trust in Him.

Talk to Him about you’re the fears you’re facing right now. Ask Him to give you the desire to dwell in His peace instead of your fears.

If you were to “present your requests to God” right now, what would be the first three things on that list?

## **Verse to Remember**

*“Do not be afraid, you who are highly esteemed,” he said. “Peace! Be strong now; be strong.” (Daniel 10:19)*



# Courage In Chaos

Questions by René Schlaepfer

Some questions adapted from

*Pursuing Integrity*, Kevin and Sherry Harney

*Daniel: Spiritual Living in a Secular World*, Douglas Connelly

*Daniel: Standing Firm for God*, Gene A. Getz

*The Daniel Dilemma*, Chris Hodges

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