

GROWTH + GROUPS

NAVIGATE LIFE TOGETHER

Maranatha Chapel Sermon Based Study Guide
SB 04.14.2024

A PRAYER FOR THE NATION - DANIEL 9:1-19

PART 1: Receiving the Message and Relating to the Study

What insights, principles or observations stood out to you from this week's message? Discuss with your group.

One of the stand-out features from Daniel's story is his prayer life. The book that bears his name is littered with references and allusions to his prayers. However, for as much talk as there's been about Daniel's prayer life, up to this point, none of his prayers have been written down. That all changes here, in the ninth chapter. The entire first half of this chapter is dedicated to recording Daniel's prayer. What's the theme of the first recorded prayer in Daniel? Does he use the occasion to pray for himself or for his health or his finances or his family? Nope. He prays for the nation of Israel. This is something I need to do more of. Far too often, I limit my prayers to things that directly impact my own life or the lives of the people in my immediate circle. While I know that praying for such things is good, texts like this one are a good reminder of the profound impact our prayers can have on a national level. Let's get into our lesson...

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

1. What struck you most from Pastor Daniel's sermon?
2. Can you think of a time when you were utterly compelled to pray? What prompted you to do so?
3. Can you also think of a time when God clearly answered or responded to your prayer?

PART 2: Digging Deeper in God's Word: Life Lessons

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DANIEL 9:1-2.

Most of us would say that we desire to hear from God. We may even desire a dramatic burning-bush-type encounter (see Ex. 3). And though we might strive to be faithful and committed in prayer, it is usually in moments of desperation—in trying circumstances or great pain—that we hastily demand to hear from God. Yet, how often do we seek Him in constant prayer? How often do we lay our sin before Him? How often do we seek repentance over a response? What we see throughout God's Word is that He desires to commune with His children—to hear from us, to speak with us.

1. What was the significance of the time and setting of Daniel's writing?
2. What prompted Daniel's prayer of confession and supplication?

As was common practice, Daniel oriented the time of his recorded prayer by way of the current ruler and the year of his reign. He was writing during the first year of Darius the Mede's rule. This would have been when Babylon—where the Israelites were in exile—fell to Persian rule, about ten years after Daniel's vision in chapter 8. It is clear from the text that Daniel was prompted to pray because he had been reading from the prophet Jeremiah (see Jeremiah 25:11-12). He took the prophet Jeremiah's words as "the word of the Lord." Accordingly, he knew that the seventy years of captivity before the desolation would soon be coming to a close. This led Daniel to go to the Lord on behalf of the exiled Israelites.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DANIEL 9:3-14.

1. How did Daniel structure his prayer?
2. What aspects of God's character did Daniel appeal to in his prayer?
3. In what ways did Daniel contrast God's character and actions with Israel's character and actions?

In response to the truth of the Scriptures, Daniel sought the Lord in prayer. With a penitent heart on behalf of his people, he begged God for mercy. He had lived in captivity alongside his fellow Israelites, and he, too, wanted God to relent and restore His people. Daniel began praying based on the foundation of God's character—declaring His greatness and His covenant loyalty (see Nehemiah 1:5). Ultimately, Daniel knew that Israel's only hope was that God would be true to Himself in covenant faithfulness to His people. We see here a model for prayer that would be taken up by many, including Christ Himself (Luke 11:2-4) as He taught His disciples. Daniel began with praise, followed by confession and supplication. Daniel did not hold back in his confession, articulating the breadth of their communal sin. He used four different Hebrew words to articulate the many ways in which they had sinned against God. Daniel was very aware that Israel had done more than just miss the mark. Israel had openly rebelled against God, and their wickedness rendered them guilty. God had spoken repeatedly, yet Israel had failed to listen. God had explicitly outlined for His people the consequences of their disobedience, and that their only hope would be found in His mercy and forgiveness.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DANIEL 9:15-19.

1. On the basis of what specific past actions did Daniel appeal to God?
2. What petitions did Daniel make on behalf of Israel?

Having proclaimed the truth of God's character and confessed the depth of Israel's failings, Daniel made his supplication to God for mercy. He began with one of the most distinct markers in Israel's history: God's great deliverance out of Egyptian enslavement. Daniel appealed to God's nature as the One who rescues and saves. With increasing boldness, Daniel prayed in faith knowing that his prayers would not fall on deaf ears. Five times in these verses, Daniel reminded God that it was for His sake or His name's sake that he was pleading and Daniel sought God's glory above all else. Daniel pleaded that God would avert His wrath and that His favor would be restored to Israel and be shown upon the sanctuary in Jerusalem. He entreated God to hear, forgive, pay attention, and act—and to do so without delay. We see here in Daniel's fervency a model not just of prayer, but also of utter trust that God would make good on His promises.

PART 3: Applying God's Word

What did you learn from this study and how does this personally speak to you? Discuss with your group.

If you want to improve your prayer life, learn from Daniel, and begin to pray through your Bible. Allow your prayers to be inspired by the Word, and then let the Word inform how you pray. Don't just read the word. Pray the word.

1. What was the essence of Daniel's appeal to God? On what grounds and in what manner did Daniel approach God? How does his prayer inform your own view of sin and your own view of God?
2. How does Daniel's prayer challenge your practice of prayer in your daily life? Where else in Scripture do we see prayer modeled in this way?
3. Do our prayers actually make a difference? How do you know?

ENCOUNTER GOD in 2024

PRAYER: Follow Daniel's pattern of prayer as you spend time in prayer. Begin by praising God for who He is—declaring the truth of His character and His nature. Remember the ways that God has been true to Himself in the past. Then confess your own sin—the ways you have fallen short of His glory and disobeyed His instruction. Confess not only your individual sin, but also the ways that your surrounding community has acted contrary to the gospel. Then bring your requests before Him. In light of who He is and despite how you have strayed, tell Him what you need, that only Jesus can provide.

“If you faithfully obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all His commandments that I command you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth.”
(Deut. 28:1)