

# **BACKBONE**

**THE STORY OF DANIEL**



## **Group Discussion Guide**

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# Backbone

## Group Discussion Guide

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### Series Overview

It’s a challenge to stay firm in your faith when society around you blurs the lines. In this series, we explore the story of Daniel to gain inspiration from the “backbone” he demonstrated.

### Purpose of This Guide

The primary purpose of this group guide is to reinforce and deepen the lessons of the Grace Church message series: **Backbone**.

You may choose to use this guide:

- with your Grace Group.
- with any group of people interested in knowing what the Bible says about these topics.

# 1-Daniel and Friends Obey God

Scripture: [Daniel 1](#)

## Icebreaker: Vegetarian?

- What is the longest you have gone without eating meat?
- Who do you know that is a vegetarian?
- What are some reasons people decide to be vegetarian?

## Discussion Questions

- Daniel and his companions were part of the faithful remnant. Not everyone who professes faith in Christ is truly a child of God ([Dan 1:3-4](#) and [Mat 7:21-27](#)). Discuss what it means to truly be a child of God.
- Here is what one educator thinks about the Bible.  
“The Bible is not merely another book, an outmoded and archaic book...It has been and remains an incredibly dangerous book.”  
-Educator John Dunphy  
  
God expects us to do what is right according to His Word ([Acts 4:18-20](#)). From that observation, how important do you think it is for us to read the Bible regularly? If we don't read the Bible regularly, where do we get guidance on what is right?
- Obeying God rather than men doesn't mean you have to be aggressive and disagreeable. What approach did Daniel use when the overseer wanted them to eat from the King's table ([Dan 1:8-16](#) and [Col 4:5-6](#))? Discuss how living a simple life with the Lord is healthier than feasting on the delicacies of the world.

## **Dig a Little Deeper: Conformer or Transformer**

“Each believer is either a CONFORMER or a TRANSFORMER. We either let the world squeeze us into its mold or we transform things in the world where God has placed us.” -Warren Wiersbe

- How did this principle play out in the lives of Daniel and his friends in [Daniel 1](#)?
- How does this principle apply in your life ([Rom 12:1-2](#))?

### **Application Exercise: Pray to be a Transformer**

Pray, thanking God for your place in His family. Ask Him for guidance on how to be an effective TRANSFORMER in your daily life.

## 2-Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Scripture: [Daniel 2](#)

### Icebreaker: It's Good to be the King

You've heard the expression, "It's good to be the King." Is that really true? Consider this quote from Shakespeare (*Henry IV*), "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of being a person of great political power.

### Discussion Questions

- We are often fascinated with people's ability to "tell the future." Sometimes they do seem to be correct, though even a broken clock is correct twice a day.
  - ▶ When the King threatened to kill all the wise men, including Daniel and his friends, how did Daniel react ([Dan 2:16-18](#) and [Jas 5:16](#))? How does this apply to our lives today?
  - ▶ When God gave Daniel the interpretation of the dream, what did Daniel do ([Dan 2:19-23](#))? How is Daniel's reaction an example of how we should react when God answers our prayers?
  - ▶ Who is in charge of all nations ([Dan 2:21](#))? If God is in charge of all nations, as believers, what is our responsibility to national leaders?
  - ▶ Who alone can predict the future ([Dan 2:22](#) and [Isa 41:20-24](#))?
- The expression "without hands" ([Dan 2:34](#)) means without human power, something only God can do. What are some things only God can do ([Col 2:11-12](#), [Heb 9:11-12](#), [Heb 9:24-26](#))?
- What is the only kingdom that will stand forever ([Dan 2:44](#))? Who are the only citizens of that eternal kingdom ([John 3:1-18](#))?

## Dig a Little Deeper: Return of Christ

Study these verses about Christ returning to establish His Kingdom.

- [Psa 118:22-23](#)
- [Isa 8:13-14](#)
- [Isa 28:16](#)
- [Mat 21:42-44](#)
- [Acts 4:10-12](#)
- [1Cor 10:4](#)
- [1Pet 2:4-8](#)

### Application Exercise: Eternal Kingdom

- Find a place to be alone with God. Tell Him how amazed you are about His kingdom that will last forever. Ask Him to show you how to speak the truth to those around you.
- Read [John 3:1-18](#). Write the verses that appear most significant to you. Seek opportunities to discuss those verses with others.

# 3-Fiery Furnace

Scripture: [Daniel 3](#)

## Icebreaker: Will You Bow Down?

Make a list of things our society pressures us to bow down to today. Next to each one, rate the amount of pressure you've experienced (hint, mild suggestion, firm request, threat).

## Discussion Questions

- Faith means obeying God regardless of our fears:

- ▶ [Dan 3:12](#)
- ▶ [Isa 43:1-2](#)
- ▶ [Exo 20:3](#)

Though we may not have someone in power insist that we bow down to a 90' tall golden image, we do have challenges to our faith. Discuss some fears that challenge our faith.

- Sometimes God does not perform the miracle you seek. What will you do if He says, "No"? Can you say, "**But if not**, I'll still love Him. I'll still trust Him. I'll still serve Him."

- ▶ [Dan 3:17-18](#)
- ▶ [Mat 26:39](#)
- ▶ [1John 5:14](#)

*Biblical convictions > Biblical confidence > Biblical comfort*

Burge Troxel defines biblical comfort as the certain knowledge that Jesus will be with you in the midst of your "fiery furnace."

- ▶ What can we do to grow increasingly firm in our Biblical convictions?
- ▶ What can we do to grow increasingly sure in our Biblical confidence?



- Times of adversity can be times of opportunity. When you stay true to your faith in extreme trials, you affect those around you. In the case of Daniel's three friends, Nebuchadnezzar was so astonished at their faith and how God responded that he publicly admitted to God's greatness ([Dan 3:28-29](#)). Discuss how your demonstration of faith affects your family, your friends, your coworkers, and others who see how you behave.

## **Dig a Little Deeper: Fiery Trials**

Study these verses for encouragement during fiery trials.

- [1Sam 2:30](#)
- [Psa 5:11](#)
- [Isa 41:10](#)
- [Rom 15:4](#)
- [1Pet 4:12-13](#)
- [Rev 2:10-11](#)

## **Application Exercise: True to Your Faith**

During the coming week, look at each area of your life. Ask God to show you how well you are being true to your faith in each area. If there's an area where you are struggling, ask Him to allow you to feel His presence during your trials ([2Cor 1:5](#)). Be faithful in reading His Word each day so that He can refresh you and give you peace ([John 16:33](#)).

# 4-Dream and Humbling

Scripture: [Daniel 4](#)

## Icebreaker: Can You Hear Me Now?

- When people aren't listening to you, what do you do to get their attention?
- When you aren't listening to God, what does He do to get your attention? Discuss how His methods vary with different people and at different times with the same people.

## Discussion Questions

- One of the times that God does things to get our attention is when we begin to take credit for things that we shouldn't ([Dan 4:30](#)). What things did Nebuchadnezzar credit to himself? What things do we credit to ourselves? When things are going well and we hear ourselves begin to take credit, what should we do ([Psa 105:1-3](#))?
- There's an expression, "Your strength is your weakness." One reason for this is that we sometimes overdo our strengths. Another reason is that we come to rely on our strengths and forget the source of our strengths. Things may go well for a time. God waited for Nebuchadnezzar to repent for a whole year, then BAM, He got his attention ([Dan 4:31-33](#) and [Ecc 8:11](#)). Discuss what we can do to avoid the BAM.
- God wants us to know that He is God ([Dan 4:34-37](#)). Depending on how well we listen to Him, He may go to extreme measures to get our attention ([Pro 16:18](#)). Discuss what we can do to hear Him sooner rather than later ([1Pet 5:5-7](#)).

## Dig a Little Deeper: Avoid Eating Grass

Ponder these thoughts and Scripture passages:

- Our choice is either to acknowledge God's sovereignty or eat grass ([Dan 4:32-33](#) and [Pro 3:6-7](#)).
- God's promises may seem slow at times, but they are sure ([2Pet 3:9](#)).
- Keep looking up to God Most High, Elyon:
  - ▶ [Rom 11:33-36](#)
  - ▶ [Dan 4:2](#)
  - ▶ [Gen 14:19-20](#)
  - ▶ [Psa 9:2](#)
  - ▶ [Psa 57:2](#)

## Application Exercise: Listen to God Most High

- Read [Daniel 4](#) aloud. Write each passage that shows our God is God Most High.
- Thank Him for His mercy with all people and with you in particular.
- Renew your commitment to listen to God. If you've wandered from your daily Bible reading, get back on track. If you don't have a Bible reading plan, choose one from [OWNit365.com](#).

# 5-Writing on the Wall

Scripture: [Daniel 5](#)

## Icebreaker: Writing on the Wall

Ask each person in the group to answer this question:

If you could give a warning to yourself by writing something on the wall, what would it be?

## Discussion Questions

- Belshazzar was indulgent, indifferent, and irreverent ([Dan 5:1-4](#)). While his city was under attack, he had a lavish party, ignored the danger, and was disrespectful of God. [Luke 13:3](#) tells us that unless we repent, we will perish. Repentance is turning away from idols and to God ([1The 1:9](#)). What are common idols in our culture? Discuss examples of indulgence, indifference, and irreverence.
- The writing on the wall terrified Belshazzar ([Dan 5:5-12](#)). It was public and decisive ([Luke 12:1-3](#) and [1Cor 4:4-5](#)). We all face judgment. It will either come as condemnation (for those outside God's family) or as correction (for those inside God's family).
  - ▶ What is the purpose of God's correction ([Heb 12:5-11](#))?
  - ▶ What should our attitude be in times of correction ([1Pet 4:19](#))?
- When Daniel spoke to the king, he was respectful, but not afraid to tell the truth ([Dan 5:13-29](#) and [Titus 2:8](#)). God wants us to speak truth. In what circumstances is it difficult for you to maintain a respectful manner? In what circumstances is it difficult for you to speak truth? Discuss tips for respectfully speaking truth.

## Dig a Little Deeper: Meaning of Writing on the Wall

Meditate on the meaning of the writing on the wall ([Dan 5:25-28](#)).

Mene, Mene	numbered and numbered again	<a href="#">Psa 90:12</a> <a href="#">Eph 5:16-17</a> <a href="#">John 9:4</a> <a href="#">Rom 13:11-14</a>
Tekel	weighed in the balance and found deficient	<a href="#">Mat 25:28-29</a> <a href="#">Heb 9:27</a> <a href="#">2Cor 5:10</a>
Upharsin (Peres)	divided and given to the Medes and Persians	<a href="#">Rom 6:23</a> <a href="#">Jas 1:14-15</a>

### Application Exercise: Weighing Your Character

There will come a time when God will weigh your character. Will He find you pleasing or deficient? Look back over your previous week to see if you want to make adjustments for the week ahead. Consider where you spent your time and how you represented Him.

# 6-Daniel and the Lion's Den

Scripture: [Daniel 6](#)

## Icebreaker: Suffer for Doing Right

Discuss examples of people who have suffered for doing the right thing. If you have ever suffered for doing the right thing, tell the group what helped you through the experience.

## Discussion Questions

- Think about why people get jealous of one another. What reasons could the other rulers have had to be jealous of Daniel ([Dan 6:1-4](#))?
- Since the other rulers could find no valid complaint against Daniel ([Dan 6:5](#) and [Php 2:15](#)), what area of his life did they decide to use against him? What reasons would some people have to be unhappy with you for simply being a believer ([Luke 21:17](#))?
- What are some current societal pressures that conflict with your faith ([Dan 6:6-9](#) and [2Tim 3:12-13](#))?
  - ▶ If we are ashamed of God, what will happen ([Mark 8:38](#))?
  - ▶ Why do we sometimes worry more about what others think and less about what God thinks ([Eph 6:19-20](#))?
  - ▶ What is more important, your current circumstances or your soul ([Mark 8:34-37](#))?
  - ▶ Do you complement or contrast the behaviors of the world ([1Pet 2:11](#) and [1The 5:22](#))?

## Dig a Little Deeper: Purpose in a Crisis

The outcome of Daniel's ordeal was that Darius issued a decree that Daniel's God was the true and living God ([Dan 6:25-27](#)).

God has a purpose even in a crisis:

- [Gen 50:20](#)
- [Pro 11:8](#)
- [Rom 8:28](#)
- [Gal 6:8-9](#)
- [1Pet 3:14-17](#)
- [2Pet 2:9](#)

### Application Exercise: Am I Like Daniel?

Take this "Am I Like Daniel?" self-assessment.

	<i>never&lt;.....&gt;always</i>
I serve God continually ( <a href="#">Dan 6:16-20</a> ).	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
I am innocent before God and men ( <a href="#">Dan 6:21-22</a> ).	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
I believe in God and trust Him ( <a href="#">Dan 6:23</a> ).	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

# 7-Four Beasts vs. Ancient of Days

Scripture: [Daniel 7](#)

## Icebreaker: Certainty

Discuss your reaction to the following quote.

“Fear comes from uncertainty.” -William Congreve

## Discussion Questions

- Daniel saw a churning sea ([Dan 7:1-8](#)). The sea represents the world of nations ([Isa 17:12-13](#) and [Rev 17:15](#)). The churning represents the nations in turmoil. Discuss why we cannot find security in nations.
  - ▶ What happened to Babylon?
  - ▶ What happened to Media-Persia?
  - ▶ What happened to Greece?
  - ▶ What happened to Rome?
- Daniel saw four beasts come from the sea. These represent four kings ([Dan 7:17](#)). There is no more security in a king or mighty national ruler than there is in a nation. Why is that ([Dan 7:11-14](#) and [1John 3:8](#))?
- People in Persia greeted their king with, “O King live forever” ([Dan 6:6](#) and [Dan 6:21](#)). A king is only as strong as God allows him to be ([Dan 7:17-18](#)). Discuss how that affects your attitude toward current national rulers. What types of prayers would God like us to make for our rulers ([1Tim 2:1-4](#) and [1Pet 2:17](#))?



● What is the only true source of security?

▶ [Dan 7:27](#)

▶ [Mat 24:30-31](#)

▶ [Dan 7:18](#)

▶ [2Pet 3:18](#)

As a group, pray that we focus on Jesus in times of uncertainty [[Mat 14:27](#)].

## **Dig a Little Deeper: Fire and Wheels**

Keep in mind that **fire** pictures God's holiness and judgment against sin and **wheels** picture His providential working in the world.

Compare [Daniel 7:9-10](#) to [Ezekiel 1:16-28](#).

## **Application Exercise: Pray for Rulers and Nations**

Pick a day during the coming week to do some focused prayer for today's rulers of nations.

# 8-Seveny-Week Prophecy

Scripture: [Daniel 9](#)

## Icebreaker: Inquiring Minds Want to Know

If God agreed to answer just one question for you, what question would you ask Him and why?

## Discussion Questions

- Daniel knew that Babylon would fall to the Persians, because he had read what God told Jeremiah to write ([Jer 25:11-13](#)). This was in spite of King Jehoiakim trying to destroy what God said ([Jer 36:27-32](#)). God will not permit destruction of His Word, because it tells **His Story** ([Mat 24:35](#) and [Isa 40:8](#)). Discuss how knowing this helps us appreciate God's Word.
  
- Warren Wiersbe observed that Daniel is an example of a “worshipping intercessor” ([Dan 9:13-19](#) and [Jas 5:16](#)). When Daniel prayed, he began by worshipping God. Then he asked for mercy for himself and others. Try this as a group.
  - ▶ Spend a few minutes worshipping God through words of praise or song.
  - ▶ Pray, asking for mercy for yourselves and others.
  
- Gabriel didn't tell Daniel about the gap between the 69th and 70th weeks ([Dan 9:24-27](#)).
  - ▶ Read [Ephesians 3:1-13](#). Discuss why God did not have Gabriel tell Daniel about the gap.
  - ▶ Even though the gap now makes sense to us, we still don't know the exact day Christ will return. Discuss why we don't know ([Acts 1:7-8](#)).

## Dig a Little Deeper: Contrast

Compare how Antichrist contrasts Christ.

<i>Christ</i>	<i>Antichrist</i>
Came in God's name ( <a href="#">John 5:43</a> )	Comes in his own name ( <a href="#">John 5:43</a> )
Humbled Himself ( <a href="#">Php 2:5-8</a> )	Will exalt himself above God ( <a href="#">2The 2:4</a> )
Came to save ( <a href="#">Luke 19:10</a> )	Will destroy ( <a href="#">Dan 8:24</a> )
The Truth ( <a href="#">John 8:32</a> )	A liar ( <a href="#">2The 2:11</a> )
The Holy One of God ( <a href="#">Mark 1:24</a> )	The lawless one ( <a href="#">2The 2:8</a> )
The sinless One ( <a href="#">Heb 4:15</a> )	The man of sin ( <a href="#">2The 2:3</a> )

### Application Exercise: Spiritual Sacrifice

God sees heartfelt, humble prayer as a spiritual sacrifice to Him:

- [Dan 9:3-4](#)
- [Dan 9:17](#)
- [Psa 141:1-2](#)

During the coming week, use Daniel's manner of praying as your example. Offer a spiritual sacrifice to God with your heartfelt, humble prayer.

# 9-Three-Week Prayer

Scripture: [Daniel 10](#)

## Icebreaker: Now People

Discuss the disadvantages of living in a society where immediate gratification is the norm.

## Discussion Questions

- Daniel prayed intensely about something that troubled him, but it took 21 days to get an answer ([Dan 10:1-3](#)). Prayer should be an active ministry. We should PUSH: **Pray Until Something Happens** ([Luke 18:1-7](#)). If you have taken one of Pastor Tim Howey's 40-Day prayer challenges, tell your group about it.

- ▶ What did you notice about your personal outlook over the 40 days?
- ▶ What types of answers did you get (no, not now, unexpected answer, exactly what you requested)?

When you take another 40-Day prayer challenge, is there anything you will do differently? If you haven't taken a 40-Day prayer challenge, discuss times when you've prayed many days.

- Sometimes, we don't get an answer to our prayers immediately. It could be because we are asking for something that is not God's will ([Jas 4:3](#)). Other times, there may be something happening behind the scenes that is delaying an answer ([Dan 10:12-14](#)). Discuss what to do if you are not getting an answer to your prayers.
- Divine delays can build our faith if we cooperate.
  - ▶ What reason did Jesus give for His delay in [John 11:1-6](#)?
  - ▶ Why was Jesus glad He had not been there to heal Lazarus ([John 11:14-15](#))?
  - ▶ Besides Lazarus coming forth, what was the result of the delay ([John 11:32-45](#))?

## Dig a Little Deeper: Clearer Picture

The whole point of prophecy is to get a clearer picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Compare the following visions.

	Dan 10:5-9	Rev 1:13-15
clothing		
loins, girdle		
body, overall		
face, hair		
eyes		
arms, feet		
voice		

### Application Exercise: Pray during the Delay

Talk to God about any delays in answering your prayers. First, praise God for who He is. Acknowledge Him as the Authority in your life. Ask Him if there is anything you are doing that is causing the delay. Ask for His help in making any changes you need to make. Ask Him what He wants you to learn during the delay. Pray back **Psalm 8** to Him.

## Notes





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