

06

AND PROPHETS PROVISION

PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE


the **GOSPEL** PROJECT.

© 2025 Lifeway Christian Resources

ADULTS



WINTER | 2025-26

GOD'S WORD FOR YOU

HOPE IN THE MIDST OF DARKNESS

God's plan to redeem humanity centered on Him forming a people through whom He would bring blessing to the world (Genesis 12:1-3). Through the descendants of Abraham would come the One to crush the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15) and put an end to sin and death. Not only would God's blessing come through the Israelites, it would be extended to them. God had promised to care for His people, to protect them, and to be their God and their Father.

Just as God promised to take care of Israel many times, He also warned them of the consequences of disobedience. But they failed to listen. Time and time again, they played the harlot with pagan gods, wanting the faithful blessings of the one true God without being faithful to Him.

God's response through the prophets can be summarized by one word: Repent. God called His people to turn from their sin and turn back to Him. If they did, He would receive them back, but if they did not, He would bring destruction upon them—not punitive destruction but restorative destruction. His discipline is always corrective.

And still, the people would not repent; so judgment came. First, the Assyrian army conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel and hauled off its people into captivity. But even witnessing this did not draw His people to repentance. And so the Babylonian army destroyed the Southern Kingdom of Judah and exiled its people.

God's people were prisoners in foreign lands, and the blessings of God seemed more distant than ever. But God was drawing His master plan together. At the close of the Old Testament, God restored His people to the land and the temple and Jerusalem were rebuilt. But then God went silent. For four hundred years, the people looked, listened, and waited—the stage was set for Jesus to come and crush the serpent's head.

CONTENTS

The Gospel Project Scope and Sequence	6
How to Use the Personal Study Guide	8
Prophets and Provision	12
The Doctrine of the Kingdom	40
Ezra the Priest	94
The Sanctity of Human Life	128
References	130

UNIT 16: GOD IN THE EXILE

SUGGESTED FOR
THE WEEK OF

Dec. 7	Memory Verses	15
	Session 1 Obedience (Daniel 1)	16
Dec. 14	Session 2 Courage (Daniel 3)	24
Dec. 21	Session 3 Faithfulness (Daniel 6)	32
Dec. 28	Session 4 Dominion (Daniel 7)	42

UNIT 17: GOD IN THE RESTORATION

	Memory Verses	51
Jan. 4	Session 1 The People Restored (Ezra 1; 3)	52
Jan. 11	Session 2 The Temple Rebuilt (Ezra 6)	60
Jan. 18	Session 3 The King Promised (Zechariah 9)	68
Jan. 25	Session 4 The People Rescued (Esther 3; 8)	76

UNIT 18: GOD IN THE RETURN

	Memory Verses	85
Feb. 1	Session 1 The Wall Rebuilt (Nehemiah 1; 6)	86
Feb. 8	Session 2 The Law Taught (Nehemiah 8)	96
Feb. 15	Session 3 The People Worshiped (Nehemiah 9; 12)	104
Feb. 22	Session 4 The Day Foretold (Malachi 3–4)	112
Mar. 1	Session 5 The Messenger Prepared (Luke 1)	120

THE EDITOR

Though exiled, God's people are never without His presence. God will discipline us, but He will never be far. And even in the discipline, He is longing to be restored into relationship and fellowship with His people.

We see this in the exile through the lives of Daniel and his friends. We see God's constant provision of protection when His people live out lives of faith, even under persecution and struggle. We see God's providential hand at work to show the world that He is Almighty God.

We see this in God orchestrating the return of the Israelites to Jerusalem, rebuilding their temple and their walls. God made a way for right worship to return because He longs for the hearts of His people to be made right with Him. And through the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah, the people repented and confessed and returned to a yearning for God's Word and true worship of Him.

But the cycle of sin would probably continue. What hope was there of permanence in God's family, of complete restoration to the Father? The prophets foretold of a day when a true King will come, when complete rule and restoration will cause God's people to celebrate. Jesus Christ fulfilled that role of a King who would lead and be victorious, but not just over earthly battles, but over spiritual ones. He has already done that through His death and resurrection, conquering sin and death. And we await the day when He will return to judge all completely, getting rid of evil and bringing perfect purity and peace to His people.

Y Bonesteele

Team Leader

The Gospel Project for Adults

The Gospel Project®
Adult Personal Study Guide
Winter 2025–26
Volume 2, Number 2

Y Bonesteele
Team Leader

Daniel Davis
Content Editor

Rachel Myrick
Content and Production Editor

Darin Clark
Design Team Leader

Chad Hunter
Contributing Graphic Designer

T. J. Norris
Contributing Illustrator

Dwayne McCrary
Manager, Adult Ongoing Bible Studies

John Paul Basham
Director, Adult Ministry

Send questions/comments by email to TGP.adults@lifeway.com or mail to Team Leader, **The Gospel Project: Adult Personal Study Guide**, 200 Powell Place, Suite 100, Brentwood, TN 37027-7707.

Printed in the United States of America

The Gospel Project®: Adult Personal Study Guide (ISSN 3065-3363; Item 005849182) is published quarterly by Lifeway Christian Resources, 200 Powell Place, Suite 100, Brentwood, TN 37027-7707, Ben Mandrell, President. © 2025 Lifeway Christian Resources.

No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, except as may be expressly permitted in writing by the publisher.

For ordering or inquiries including Autoship, visit Lifeway.com, call 1.800.458.2772, write Lifeway Resources Customer Service, 200 Powell Place, Suite 100, Brentwood, TN 37027-7707, or fax 615.251.5933. For address changes, email subscribe@lifeway.com. For bulk shipments mailed quarterly to one address, visit Lifeway.com/Autoship, email orderentry@Lifeway.com, or write to the above address.

We believe that the Bible has God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter and that all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. To review Lifeway's doctrinal guideline, please visit www.lifeway.com/doctrinalguideline.

All Scripture quotations are taken from the Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Christian Standard Bible® and CSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers.

THE WRITERS

PERSONAL PREPARATION

Caroline Chong

(Unit 18, Sessions 1-5)

Previously a nurse, Caroline graduated from Beeson Divinity School in 2024 with her Master of Arts in Theological Studies. She is passionate about teaching biblical theology for the average churchgoer and loves church history. She and her husband, Marn, live in Birmingham, Alabama, with their baby, Phoebe, and dog, Penny.

David McLemore

(Unit 16, Sessions 1-4)

David serves as an elder at Refuge Church in Franklin, Tennessee. He is a regular contributor to Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's For the Church website and writes on his own website, Things of the Sort.

Katie Orr

(Unit 17, Sessions 1-4)

Katie is the author of *Secrets of the Happy Soul*, seven FOCUSED15 Bible studies, and is the creator of the Bible Study Hub community, where women can receive training, encouragement, and accountability to enjoy God's Word. Katie holds an MA in Discipleship from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. She and her husband, Chris, along with their three children live in Central Florida.

GROUP EXPERIENCE

Pam Gibbs

(Unit 18, Sessions 1-5)

Pam is a freelance writer and spiritual director who earned her MDiv degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. She lives outside Nashville, Tennessee, with her husband of 23 years. They serve as volunteers in a church plant in their area.

Melanie Gillen

(Unit 16, Sessions 1-4)

Mel lives in South Carolina with her husband and two teenage children. She has faithfully served the church for over twenty years. With an undergraduate degree in Religion and a Master's in Education, Mel finds the most joy when she's leading Bible studies or teaching others about the truth of God's Word.

Jaclyn Mains

(Unit 17, Sessions 1-4)

Jaclyn has a heart for discipleship and global missions. She serves with the International Mission Board as a writer and editor, creating training resources for churches and missionaries. She holds an MA in Religion from Liberty University and has served in women's ministry. Her husband is a youth minister, and together they are raising their son, Judah, to love and follow Jesus.

SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

The Gospel Project for Adults aspires to point people to the gospel of Jesus Christ through weekly group Bible studies and additional resources that show how God's plan of redemption unfolds throughout all of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation. This curriculum provides theological yet practical studies that immerse your group in the STORY of the gospel, helping to develop a gospel CULTURE that leads to gospel MISSION.

GOSPEL STORY

Our aim is to help people understand the storyline of Scripture and to see the thread from the beginning to the end that weaves through it all—God's plan to rescue and redeem His creation through His Son, Jesus Christ.

GOSPEL CULTURE

Our hope is that the message of the gospel saturates our understanding of Christ, increasing our joy in Him and helping doubters become believers who become declarers of the gospel.

GOSPEL MISSION

Our desire is to encourage believers to live on mission, declaring the good news of the gospel in word and deed for God's glory and the growth of His kingdom.

3 YEAR PLAN

VOL 01: CREATION AND COVENANT

(Genesis; Job)
Fall 2024

VOL 02: LAW AND LIFE

(Exodus–Deuteronomy)
Winter 2024–25

VOL 03: LAND AND LOSS

(Joshua–1 Samuel)
Spring 2025

VOL 04: FOOLISHNESS AND WISDOM

(1 Samuel–1 Kings; Wisdom Literature)
Summer 2025

VOL 05: DIVISION AND DEFIANCE

(1 Kings–2 Chronicles; The Prophets)
Fall 2025

VOL 06: PROPHETS AND PROVISION

(The Prophets; Ezra–Esther)
Winter 2025–26

VOL 07: THE SON HAS COME

(The Gospels)
Spring 2026

VOL 08: THE SON HAS AUTHORITY

(The Gospels)
Summer 2026

VOL 09: THE SON HAS TRUTH

(The Gospels)
Fall 2026

VOL 10: THE SON HAS RISEN

(The Gospels; Acts)
Winter 2026–27

VOL 11: THE CHURCH HAS A MISSION

(Acts; The Epistles)
Spring 2027

VOL 12: THE CHURCH HAS A FUTURE

(The Epistles; Revelation)
Summer 2027

HOW TO USE THE PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

The Personal Study Guide is a vital tool in your personal and group experience with The Gospel Project for Adults. Here's how to make the most of your time with it:

1) READ THE WORD DAILY

Begin each week by reading the Scriptures according to the Daily Readings. These Bible readings will help you mentally and spiritually prepare for the group experience each week while also building healthy Bible study habits for personal growth. The daily readings will help you understand the context of the Bible story for each week's session and fill in the gaps between sessions. The weekly psalm reading will help you think worshipfully and prayerfully about the story's place in the greater redemptive narrative of the Bible. And the timeline will give you a visual perspective so you can place the Bible story in the larger context of the Bible's storyline.

- Daily Readings
- Chronological Timeline



2) STUDY THE PERSONAL PREPARATION

The Personal Preparation section contains the Scripture passages you will examine and discuss with your Bible study group. As you read each Scripture passage, a Bible study prompt will help you highlight, underline, or jot notes to help you engage with the Scripture and to provoke discussion with your group on the following Sunday. A brief commentary with thought-provoking questions will help you dig deeper into the text and reflect on what the text teaches you about God and yourself. You have the full week to work on your personal preparation, so whether you prefer to break it up into parts or do it all in one day, the flexibility is there for your schedule.

- Scripture
- Commentary
- Questions

PERSONAL PREPARATION

DANIEL 3:14-18

GOD IS ALWAYS ABLE TO SAVE.

Circle all the conjunctions, the connecting words, in the passage below, but, if there, when, etc.)

14 Nebuchadnezzar asked them, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, is it true that you don't serve my gods or worship the gold statue I have set up?" **15** Now if you're ready, when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, string, harp, drum, and every kind of music, fall down and worship the statue I made. But if you don't worship it, you will immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire—and who is the god who can rescue you from my power?" **16** Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied to the king, "Nebochadnezzar, we don't need to give you an answer to this question. **17** If the God we serve exists, then he can rescue us from the furnace of blazing fire; and he can rescue us from the power of you, the king. **18** But even if he does not rescue us, we want you as king to know that we will not serve your gods or worship the gold statue you set up."

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

MIRACLES: A miracle is an event in which God makes an exception to the natural order of the world, raised from the purpose of demonstrating His glory and/or delivering His message. Miracles are recorded throughout Scripture, signs and wonders were often times evident when a prophet or an apostle was speaking God's message to the people. Because we believe God to be all-powerful and personally involved in this world, we believe He can and does perform miracles.

26 (Web ID: 3) Session 2 | Chapter

Key Concept: God is worthy of our trust and obedience, even if the result is death.

King Nebuchadnezzar set up a gold statue to be the center of worship for his subjects. But Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (previously called Hananish, Miskael, and Azariash) determined not to bow to it—they worshipped the Lord alone, even while facing a gruesome death. Some Chaldeans, likely jealous these Jews were set over Babylon's affairs, told the king these three men would not serve his gods nor worship his statue, which enraged the king (vv. 1-13).

Daniel's friends determined to obey God's commandments: "Do not have other gods besides me. Do not make an idol for yourself" (Deuteronomy 5:3-4). As Nebuchadnezzar, himself jealous for the worship and total submission of his subjects, did what all people do who set themselves against the one true God—he persecuted God's faithful people, threatening them with death by fire.

What are some ways believers today experience difficulties and persecution for their faith?

Meshach, and Abednego remained firm in their faith. They would worship God alone, no matter the outcome. The Lord could rescue them with a miracle, but He might not. Both were acceptable outcomes because the Lord alone is the true God who is worthy of worship.

These friends embodied Paul's words from Philippians 1:8: "For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." For the Christian, there is no losing situation. As Jesus said, "Don't fear those who kill the body but are not able to kill the soul; rather, fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). The greatest fear of God is the end of all other earthly fears.

How can we become people who exhibit faith and courage even in the face of death?

VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

"Let faith be yours, and God will be with you in your trouble."
—Augustine of Hippo (c. 354–430)

The persecution coming for these three courageous Jews was a very real threat, yet they saw this as an opportunity for them to give glory to God. Nebuchadnezzar mocked their God, claiming to have supreme power in this matter (Daniel 3:15). Still, Shadrach,

3) PARTICIPATE IN THE GROUP EXPERIENCE

The Group Experience for each session includes an activity and interactive questions designed to make the most of your group experience. Depending on your leader, he or she may have you do the activity on your own before doing it together as a group, or your leader may want you to wait until group time. Either way, the personal prep you've put into the days leading up to your group time will provide a richer discussion and more thoughtful theological applications to mutually encourage each other during group time.



- Group Activity
- Interactive Questions
- Theological Applications

4) TAKE THE NEXT STEPS

At the conclusion of your group time, consider how to apply the day's Scripture lesson by walking through the Head, Heart, and Hands application questions. Share and discuss answers to the questions for the mutual benefit of everyone in the group. Then take time in your group, and during the week after, to read and pray through the designated psalm, focusing your thoughts and words once more upon God's Word. And finally, record prayer requests and praises as you wrap up your group time. Space is provided to jot those down in your guide for prayer during the following week.

Key Concept: God is worthy of our trust and obedience, even if the result is death.

HEAD
Why is it important that we believe the miracles in the Bible?

PLAYING SCRIPTURE
Read Psalm 14. Confess and pray for forgiveness for the things you acted as if God did not exist (vs. 5-6). Thank the Lord and rejoice for his faithful actions and promises to be a refuge for His people who trust in him. (vs. 6-7).

HEART
What in your life keeps you from trusting God and obeying with courage?

HANDS
How will you act with faith and courage this week, trusting the Lord for direction, words, and boldness?

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

31



- Application Questions
- Scripture-Based Prayer
- Prayer Requests

PROPHETS AND PROVISION

By David McLemore

When my wife and I began dating, we quickly realized we had different vibes. I was a laid-back, go-with-the-flow kind of person, while she was a planner. When I asked her out on a date, she wanted to know where we were going, when we were going, how long we would be there, and what would happen after that. My “we’ll play it by ear” answer wasn’t good enough. She needed to know what her future held.

I learned later that such knowledge calmed her. She could relax and enjoy herself if she knew what was coming next. Aren’t we all that way to some degree? While I didn’t need to know what was next, I have always longed to know if I would be okay while waiting for an uncertain future. No one likes to be in the dark.

The Bible opens with God saying, “‘Let there be light,’ and there was light” (Genesis 1:3). That verse isn’t only a comment on creation; it is a comment on revelation. God doesn’t keep us in the dark. God doesn’t make us go without. Through His prophets, the Lord tells His people what’s ahead, and through His provision, He cares for them while they wait.

PROPHETS

The Bible’s first great prophet, Moses, was sent to the Israelites with a message of God’s concern for their oppression and His promise to deliver them (Exodus 3:7-10). But Moses originally pleaded for God to send someone else, claiming he had a sluggish tongue (4:10). But a sluggish tongue is no problem for God. As the Lord told the apostle Paul thousands of years later, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is perfected in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). Since Moses was God’s prophet, he didn’t need any of his own power. He had the power of the Almighty with him, as did every Old Testament prophet.

From Moses to Elijah to Jeremiah to Malachi, God’s prophets proclaimed God’s desire to dwell with His covenant people and for them to keep covenant with God by obeying His commands. They failed to listen to the prophets, and His warnings of judgment came to pass (2 Chronicles 36:16). But God’s heart was always for His people, and His prophets were His voices in the exile calling them to return to Him and be restored (Jeremiah 29:10; Ezekiel 39:25; Daniel 9:25; Zechariah 10:6; Malachi 3:7). If only they would return to Him, their weeping and sadness would only last the night; joy would come in the morning (Psalm 30:5).

Through the prophets, God's people could know what was coming, the good and the bad. But God did more than inform—He assured His people that His provision would accompany His prophecy. They could trust His heart.

PROVISION

When the news wasn't good and the days ahead looked grim, God's provision was racing alongside His prophecy. The hard truths were wrapped in sweet truths of mercy, grace, and forgiveness. God would not abandon His people, for He had bound Himself to them through His covenant of grace. He would remain faithful, and when they needed Him, He would be there. When they passed through the waters, He would be with them. The rivers would not overwhelm them. And when they walked through the fire, they would not be scorched, and the flame would not burn them (Isaiah 43:2).

That was true for Israel as they walked on dry land through the Red Sea (Exodus 14). It was true for Daniel's three friends, whom Nebuchadnezzar threw into the fiery furnace (Daniel 3). It was true for Daniel, who was thrown to lions (Daniel 6). God provided for His people. And it was true for Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, who experienced God's provision and favor to protect their people.

Biblical prophecy works on several levels. It can be fulfilled in multiple ways and at various times. Often there is an immediate fulfillment and an ultimate fulfillment. We are not Israel hemmed in by the Red Sea and the Egyptian army, but we face sin and

death daily. We are not Daniel's friends facing brazen idolatry or the fire, but we face the trials and tribulations of life as a Christian in this broken world.

What is our hope in such times? We find the answer in the prophets. The greatest provision promised from their mouths was not relief from the waters or flames of this world but from the waters and flames of death and hell. The greatest provision was not in earthly and temporal redemption but in eternal salvation in Christ: "He was pierced because of our rebellion, crushed because of our iniquities; punishment for our peace was on him, and we are healed by his wounds" (Isaiah 53:5).

The greatest Prophet is also the greatest Provision: "Long ago God spoke to the ancestors by the prophets at different times and in different ways. In these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son" (Hebrews 1:1-2). Jesus is the ultimate prophet who speaks a better word than all the rest, and He is the ultimate provision that secures our future forever.

In Jesus we have a prophet who lets us know what's ahead and a provision to sustain us as we wait. No one likes to be in the dark. Praise God that the light has come in Christ!

David McLemore serves as an elder at Refuge Church in Franklin, Tennessee. He is a regular contributor to Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's For the Church website and writes on his own website, Things of the Sort.

THE GOSPEL PROJECT

UNIT 16

GOD IN THE EXILE



DANIEL



MEMORY VERSES

“I continued watching in the night visions, and suddenly one like a son of man was coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was escorted before him. He was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, so that those of every people, nation, and language should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will not be destroyed.”

—Daniel 7:13-14



OBEDIENCE

CORE PASSAGE: DANIEL 1:8-21

CONTEXT

In 605 BC, a few short years into King Jehoiakim's reign over Judah, the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar took control of Jerusalem, made Judah's king his vassal, and carried off some high-profile young men as exiles to Babylon. Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. They were brought to the palace to be educated in Babylonian ways so they could serve their new king. For three years they were trained in all things Babylonian—language, customs, and religion—and faced the temptation of losing their identity as God's people.

KEY CONCEPT

Obedience to God leads to greater wisdom from God.

As you examine Daniel 1:8-21:

- Recognize that Daniel determined to remain faithful to God and His law with its dietary restrictions.
- Consider how our obedience to the Lord helps us grow in wisdom and knowledge of the Lord.



TIMELINE

Nebuchadnezzar Takes the First
Exiles to Babylon, Including Daniel
and His Three Friends (2 Kings 24)

Daniel Interprets Nebuchadnezzar's
First Dream (Daniel 2)

Daniel Interprets Nebuchadnezzar's
Second Dream (Daniel 4)

**SESSION STUDY: Daniel and His Friends Remain
Faithful to God's Dietary Laws (Daniel 1)**

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego Refuse to
Worship Nebuchadnezzar's Statue (Daniel 3)

Daily Readings

☐ **Day 1:** Daniel 1:1-7

☐ **Day 2:** Daniel 1:8-21

☐ **Day 3:** Daniel 2:1-13

☐ **Day 4:** Daniel 2:14-24

☐ **Day 5:** Daniel 2:25-49

☐ **Day 6:** Psalm 112



Scan this QR code
to access this session's
Scripture passages.

PERSONAL PREPARATION

DANIEL 1:8-14

PURSUING OBEDIENCE TO GOD IS ALWAYS RIGHT DESPITE THE OBSTACLES.

Underline the steps Daniel took in order to obey the Lord.

8 Daniel determined that he would not defile himself with the king's food or with the wine he drank. So he asked permission from the chief eunuch not to defile himself. **9** God had granted Daniel kindness and compassion from the chief eunuch, **10** yet he said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who assigned your food and drink. What if he sees your faces looking thinner than the other young men your age? You would endanger my life with the king." **11** So Daniel said to the guard whom the chief eunuch had assigned to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, **12** "Please test your servants for ten days. Let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. **13** Then examine our appearance and the appearance of the young men who are eating the king's food, and deal with your servants based on what you see." **14** He agreed with them about this and tested them for ten days.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Our obedience to God comes from faith in His character and works. He has always been faithful, even in suffering. Christ obeyed the Father through suffering. And from His example, our obedience to Christ demonstrates our faith in Him.



Obedying God is not always easy, but imagine being in Daniel's shoes: far from home, a captive of Babylon, and forced to assimilate to their culture and serve their king. Most people in such a situation would try their best to stay on their captor's good side, not wanting to draw any additional attention to avoid further suffering. Daniel's conscience, however, wouldn't allow such a route. He determined not to defile himself with the king's food and wine. His obedience to God meant more to him than any suffering that may come as a result.

How Daniel was being obedient in rejecting the king's food is somewhat unclear. Some scholars say the king's food was offered to idols, but might vegetables have been offered as well? The most reasonable option may be that Daniel wanted to obey God in keeping his Jewish identity and rejecting full assimilation into Babylonian ways. He couldn't control what others called him. He couldn't control what they taught him. But he could control what he put in his body, and that act of obedience would help him remain close to God. Beyond any specific dietary law, faithfulness was Daniel's goal. This was a risk, as obedience often is, but it was a risk worth taking for Daniel.

How have you felt the riskiness of obedience to God in this world?

Verse 9 tells us that God granted kindness and compassion to Daniel from the chief eunuch. When we follow God's call on our lives, He will prepare the way and give us wisdom for the road ahead (James 1:5). It was with wisdom that Daniel intended to obey the Lord. He began by asking permission. He didn't throw a fit; he was respectful. Yet he was also clear. He had reasons beyond personal preference and the need to prove a point—he didn't want to defile himself. This was a matter of faithfulness to him, and God blessed that act of faith.

With wisdom, Daniel also offered a test to the guard: vegetables and water for ten days followed by an evaluation. This reasonable option gave the guard, and the eunuch, an opportunity to honor Daniel's request and not put himself in jeopardy. If it didn't work, the supervisors had an out. If it did work, Daniel and his friends wouldn't have to defile themselves. Through it all, God was at work, and no matter the outcome, He would get the glory through Daniel's actions.

How can God get the glory from our obedience, whether the outcome is positive or negative?

PERSONAL PREPARATION

DANIEL 1:15-21

WHEN WE OBEY GOD, KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM INCREASE.

Highlight the result of Daniel and his friends' faithful obedience.

15 At the end of ten days they looked better and healthier than all the young men who were eating the king's food. **16** So the guard continued to remove their food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables. **17** God gave these four young men knowledge and understanding in every kind of literature and wisdom. Daniel also understood visions and dreams of every kind. **18** At the end of the time that the king had said to present them, the chief eunuch presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. **19** The king interviewed them, and among all of them, no one was found equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. So they began to attend the king. **20** In every matter of wisdom and understanding that the king consulted them about, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and mediums in his entire kingdom. **21** Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

JUSTIFICATION AND WORKS: Justification is not the result of human effort or good works but through faith in the righteousness of Christ. Although good works do not lead to justification, justification leads to good works in the life of a believer (Ephesians 2:10). Faith without works is dead (James 2:17). While good works do not establish justification, they do verify a genuine faith and make our justification evident to others.

Daniel's "risk" paid off. After ten days, Daniel and his friends looked better than all the rest. Yet this was but the first "better than" for God's people in the king's court because their obedience gave rise to more wisdom from the Lord.

Verse 17 shows how obedience is a wise step we take on the path toward wisdom. In fact, wisdom cannot be gained any other way—it is a gift from God that grows as we cultivate it and our relationship with the God of all wisdom. A young doctor who wants to make it big in his field cannot skip the obedient study and preparation required. An athlete who wants to play at the top of his game for a long time cannot forsake the obedience required to eat the right foods, do the right exercises, and care for the body. Obedience is the path to grow toward what we ultimately want, but it is born from what God does for us.

How does obedience help cultivate wisdom in the Christian life?



Daniel and his friends' obedience was used by God to grant them knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. In fact, no one was found to be their equal (v. 19). This is even more remarkable when we realize that what they excelled in was not the things of God but the things of Babylon. They became Babylonian literary experts, and Daniel understood visions and dreams. They surpassed all the king's advisers in providing him helpful counsel. Even in captivity, Daniel and his friends pursued the well-being of the city that it and they might thrive and be a testimony to the greatness of the one true God (Jeremiah 29:7). Still, Daniel and his friends would face a fiery furnace and a lions' den in the days ahead. Faithful obedience will result in increased godly wisdom but may also come with a worldly cost.

What can we learn from this? Not just that God will always grant wisdom, but that He will always be with us in whatever He sends us to do. We can trust His plan even when we can't see the path. Our call is to obey Him and let Him prove His goodness to us.

How can our obedience shine a light on God's glory for others to see?

WHOM SHALL WE FEAR?

Read Daniel 1:8-21. Compare and contrast the reasons Daniel and his friends had for fearing the king of Babylon versus fearing and obeying the Lord.

FEAR THE KING

FEAR THE LORD

What reasons do we have to fear the Lord and obey His commands?

Key Concept: Obedience to God leads to greater wisdom from God.



HEAD

How does the fear of the Lord relate to our obedience to the Lord?

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

Read Psalm 112. The best way to read the psalms is to hear them as the songs of Jesus. Praise the Lord that Jesus perfectly obeyed His Father so that He could save us from our sin and that we would be blessed through our faith in Him.



HEART

Under what circumstances do you find it most difficult to obey the Lord, and how can you prepare yourself for those times?

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



HANDS

How will you determine to obey the Lord so He gets the glory through your actions?

