



MCG
Study Guide
Daniel
February 7 – February 13

Wednesday February 7th – Integrity

Reading Daniel 6:1 - 5

“They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent.”

The verses we study today tell of Daniel’s co-workers, some under his authority, others at the same level with him. The king was planning to promote Daniel over them all. Perhaps this hurt their pride and soon jealousy and envy followed.

They were trying to find

grounds to accuse him and

maybe change the king’s mind about his promotion. They could not find anything that would qualify as a fault: his conversation, behaviour and conduct were beyond reproach. Daniel possessed something more valuable in God’s eyes than diamonds and rubies: he had integrity.

Integrity: Honesty, honour, uprightness of character or action. Integrity implies trustworthiness and incorruptibility to a degree that one is capable of being false to a trust, responsibility or pledge.

Merriam Webster Dictionary

It is not always easy to hang on to integrity. Sometimes a little compromise here and there could be highly advantageous.

Opportunities for just such compromises or little white lies occur regularly in each of our lives on any given day. When they do, the question before us is: what choice will we make?

Veronika Bankuti, a member of NBBC, had a neighbour who was unemployed for six months and the EI benefits were about to run out. The bills kept piling up and with every passing day it became more and more urgent to secure a job. A second job interview was granted and it went very well. The interviewer listed the responsibilities of the position and “familiarity with IT to solve technical problems that occur from time to time” was part of the list. The original job advertisement did not indicate any requirement for IT experience. She told the interviewer that she did not have technical knowledge or experience with IT and would not be comfortable taking on this particular responsibility. The

interview ended, she went home and within an hour received an email telling her that the job was given to someone else, who had IT experience.

In her response she thanked the interviewer for letting her know and stated that she would rather lose a job honestly than get it under false pretenses as it would not take long for the lack of knowledge to be discovered and cause possible damage to the productivity of the entire office. Another day went by and she received another email offering her the job that just a day ago was denied to her. The reason: the person who was hired had to move suddenly and the interviewer was so impressed with her integrity that she decided to give her the job and alter the job description so it no longer included IT experience.

The Lord knows what we do and - most importantly - why we do what we do. His eye is on us all the time. When we choose honesty and integrity even though a little white lie, in a particular situation, would give us immediate benefits – this is honouring to God and He promises to honour those who honour Him.

Meditation/Application

Can you recall a time when you did not compromise your integrity? Thank God for His grace. Is there a time when you compromised your integrity? Ask God to forgive you. Are you facing a situation where you are tempted to compromise? Imagine yourself doing what integrity desires and offer that situation to God.

Reflecting on the reading:

Notice the qualities attributed to Daniel in the observance of his conduct (vs. 4). Can you imagine a government leader with these same qualities today? Why do you think these qualities are so absent from public political life?

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer requests:

- **Tonight pray for the KIDS CLUB ministry that is reaching and connecting with community children**
- **Give thanks to God for a person you regard as having integrity**
- **Pray for the new people who came to the MCG potluck or study last night**

Thursday February 8th – Folly

Reading Daniel 6:6 – 9

“...issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered... So King Darius put the decree in writing.”

Folly: lack of good sense or normal prudence and foresight.

It is clear from the reading of Daniel 6 that King Darius regretted his decision to put into law the edict that would have Daniel thrown into the Lion’s den. This action can only be described as folly.

At times all of us have done things we have regretted but if we do not practise self-discipline, over time the danger of continually engaging in folly will make us into fools. In the book of Proverbs “fool” denotes a person who is morally and spiritually deficient, the opposite of one who is wise.¹

On Tuesday, September 8th, 2015, a British Airways jet caught fire at the Las Vegas airport, sending smoke billowing into the air, after suffering what the pilot described as a "catastrophic failure" of the left engine. The plane—a Boeing 777 heading from the U.S. city's McCarran airport to London Gatwick—could be seen with flames around its fuselage.

The pictures of a burning jetliner in Las Vegas were certainly riveting. But as the plane burst into smoke and flames, some observers saw something even more startling: people stopped during their evacuation to grab their luggage. Authorities are certainly concerned about planes that burst into flames, but they're also worried that we'd risk our lives to grab our carry-on bags.

So what's the big deal with grabbing one carry-on bag? The FAA requires planes to be evacuated within 90 seconds, but as a Chicago-based air traffic controller wrote:

¹ *Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. 1995, p. 459.

“Let's say the average delay time per bag is 5 seconds. This includes the time needed to reach up to open the overhead compartment, pulling the bag down, and the extra delay hauling it through a crowded aisle. If half of the 170 people on board Flight 2276 took the time to take their bag the evacuation would have taken an additional 7 MINUTES longer than necessary.” Imagine being the last one to exit the smoke-filled cabin knowing that your one-minute evac time is now over 7 minutes!

One veteran pilot with a major U.S. airline said, "We're always shaking our heads. It doesn't matter what you say, people are going to do what they do." Or as one blogger summarized this news story: "people love their carry-ons more than life itself."²

Our character is shaped by hundreds of daily decisions that ultimately drive how we act and respond in emergencies. These crises reveal our true nature; whether we are wise or foolish. Foolish people continue to allow their folly to go unchecked. The wise person disciplines himself.

Meditation/Application

Take time to do a self inventory asking God what areas you've been avoiding self-discipline. Consider the possible (and likely) long-term consequences of your folly. Ask God for grace to take one small step in addressing your foolishness.

² Justin Pritchard and Sally Ho, "Vegas Plane Fire Passengers Escaped With Lives—And Bags," Associated Press (9-12-15); Bob Collins, "People love their carry-ons more than life itself," NewsCut (9-11-15)

Reflecting on the reading:

Just as the king was bound by the laws of the Medes and Persians, the Bible talks about “spiritual forces of evil in heavenly realms”¹ that seek to bind the church’s efforts. It seems that there are powers at work that keep us from seeing progress in areas even when everyone wants progress. For instance, consider how someone on social assistance gets penalized if they work. The system seems to keep people dependent even though the government would like for them to become independent. What forces do you see at work that keep us from being more effective in reaching our community?

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer requests:

- Undoubtedly folly is evident in our faith community. Pray for God’s work of redemption and restoration to have its way as our community develops meaningful relationships
- Pray for your specific neighbourhood (street, apartment level) that community would begin to form by your intentionality to it. God build your kingdom here. (possibly sing the chorus to yourself)

*“Build Your Kingdom Here, let the darkness fear
Show Your mighty hand, heal our streets and land
Set Your church on fire, win this nation back
Change the atmosphere build Your Kingdom here we pray.”*

Friday February 9th – Prayer Habits

Reading Daniel 6:10 - 14

“Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.”

On Wednesday we looked at Daniel’s integrity and the fact that his envious co-workers were trying to prevent his promotion by meticulously observing Daniel’s every move. Hard as they tried they could find no fault in him. This however did not mean that they were going to give up their goal to discredit him in front of the king. They lived out the familiar saying: “Don’t confuse me with the facts – my mind is made up!”

Certain of Daniel’s integrity, they now conspired to use it against him. They convinced the king to issue an edict in full opposition to Daniel’s faith. Knowing that he would defy this order they gleefully looked forward to his demise.

Daniel was in the habit of praying to his God three times a day, facing Jerusalem. He did this in good days and in bad. He did this when he was happy, sad, ill or healthy. He did this when his life was blessed or when he was in trouble. It was his habit to pray. When we think of habit, we tend to think of automatic pilot. We drive to work each day, we brush our teeth, we charge our phones – we do these tasks without giving it too much thought or even being aware of doing it. It’s a habit.

Think of habits as trained instincts. That’s how fighter pilots can react immediately to rapidly changing situations as they operate \$27 million war machines. When a threatening aircraft is closing in, there’s no time for pilots to reason through what to do. They have to rely on instinct—but not just natural instinct. They need instincts shaped deep within them through years of regiment. The countless little decisions they make in the cockpit are automatic, but that doesn't mean they're

involuntary. The pilot voluntarily trained for them, and in the cockpit, he reaps the instinctive benefits of that training.³

Like the fighter pilot's hours of training, our hearts are under a regimen of beliefs and values that are formed by our habits. Some are aligned with Scripture and others are drilled into us through what we put in our heads as wisdom from other sources, what we accept as normal from culture.

When stress mounts and the pressure is on, our habits will shape our reaction. Will we fall to our knees in prayer like Daniel or lean upon some other vice or distraction like comfort food, shopping, pornography, a drink, video games, or exercise? Daniel built a habit of prayer as a foundation to his life. What foundational habit have you built?

Meditation/Application

Think of the last time you were under stress and pressure. How did you respond? What was your habit? Was it a habit that reflected your life hidden in Christ? Imagine yourself in that same situation responding in a manner that was more Christ-centered. Offer this imagined response to God as a prayer of what you desire your habit to be and then begin to live out of that habit.

Reflecting on the reading:

We are told that Daniel prayed towards Jerusalem. Muslims pray towards Mecca. Do you think it is important for Christians to pray facing a certain direction? Why do you think Daniel did this? Consider King Solomon's prayer of dedication for the temple in 1 Kings 8:22 – 53 (especially vs. 46 – 51).

³ Dr. Jeremy Pierre, "Involuntary Sins," TABLETALK (June 2016)

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer requests:

- Pray in a different position today.
- Find a Scripture to pray through. (ie. Matthew 6:9-13, Isaiah 6, Psalm 42, Psalm 4)

Saturday February 10th – Remorse

Reading Daniel 6:15 - 18

“Then the king... spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep.”

The restless night of king Darius is evidence of his own regret and remorse regarding the decision he made which ensured Daniel would be thrown to the lions.

We’ve all experienced remorse for things we wish we hadn’t done. Often we wish that we could have known in advance what the consequences would have been so that we could have avoided the action or decisions that led up to the unfortunate events - at least we’d like to think we would.

Bonnie Ware, an Australian nurse, has spent several years working in palliative care, caring for patients in the last 12 weeks of their lives. As Ware walked with her patients through the final stages of their lives, she witnessed how many of her patients gained "phenomenal clarity of vision" as they approached death. Ware claims, "When questioned about any regrets they had or anything they would do differently, common themes surfaced again and again." According to Ware, these are the top five regrets of the dying:

1. I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me. Bonnie Ware added, "Health brings a freedom few realize, until they no longer have it."
2. I wish I hadn't worked so hard. Ware observed, "This [regret] came from every male patient that I nursed."
3. I wish I'd had the courage to express my feelings. "Many people suppress their feelings in order to keep peace with others Many [patients] developed illnesses related to the bitterness and resentment they carried as a result."

4. I wish I'd stayed in touch with my friends. "There are many deep regrets about not giving friendships the time and effort that they deserved. Everyone misses their friends when they are dying."
5. I wish I'd let myself be happier. "Many did not realize until the end that happiness is a choice. They had stayed stuck in old patterns and habits."

Now we know what remorse we might have on our death beds, why don't we live in such a way that we might not have those types of regrets?

Meditation/Application

To which one of the regrets that are listed above, do you already relate? Are there any you might add to this list? Come prepared to share with your MCG why this is so, in order that you might pray with one another.

Reflecting on the reading:

How was the King's stress manifest? When you are stressed how does it manifest itself? What are some healthy ways that you have found to deal with stress?

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer request:

- Valentines Day approaches: love can take various forms in our relationships. Pray that God's love is something that you and your neighbourhood would experience and give.

- Tomorrow morning we meet together to share together in worship and stories about God's amazing love. Pray that God would prompt some to share and others to listen to what He is doing.

Sunday February 4th – Lyin’ and the Lion

Reading Daniel 6

Sermon Notes:

Lessons from Daniel 6:

- _____ is no barrier to spiritual usefulness.
- Though we live _____ a place does not mean we live _____ that place.
- Daniel would rather be _____ than _____.
- There is no _____, or _____, or _____, or _____ that is able to _____ God!
- God calls us to live our lives for Him even when it costs us _____ and, seemingly, changes _____.

Meditation/Application

As you think about today’s sermon what is one action point that you are taking away?

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer requests:

- Pray for our Neighbourhood Connections ministries that shared today at our gathering. (Fall Fair, Garden Patch, PACT, movie night, ESL)
- Discipleship is partly about modelling what it is to follow Christ. Who is watching you and who are you watching? Pray for them.

Monday February 12th – Anticipation

Reading Daniel 6:19 – 23

“At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions’ den.”

I do not know if the king anticipated seeing Daniel alive. He may have hoped he would be but I’m sure he did not allow his hope to rise because his expectation was that Daniel was surely going to be dead.

Hope and anticipation have an interesting relationship. Hope is the outcome you long for but anticipation is when you allow yourself to imagine and feel what it will be like when it comes about. We like to anticipate holidays, or retirement, or winning a large sum of money because it allows us a momentary escape from the feelings and emotions of our present realities. To anticipate something is to allow yourself a foretaste of that which you are looking forward to.

Hope leads to the possibility of anticipation and by anticipating we actually strengthen our hope in that which we are looking forward to. While in the English language hope and anticipation are two different words, in the Greek, hope includes the idea of anticipation.

If we are right to believe that God wants us to live as people of hope, then He wants us to live anticipatory lives, He wants us to get our hopes up, as long as those hopes are grounded in Him and His promises.

In his book, *Eyes Wide Open: Enjoying God in Everything*, author Steve DeWitt writes:

This world and its history are prelude and foretaste; all the sunrises and sunsets, symphonies and rock concerts, feasts and friendships are but whispers. They are a prologue to the grander story and an even better place. Only there, it will never end. J. I. Packer said it so well: "Hearts on earth say in the course of a joyful experience, 'I don't want this ever to end.' But it invariably does.

The hearts in heaven say, 'I want this to go on forever.' And it will. There can be no better news than this."⁴

It is as if God wants to keep our hope in our eternity alive and so He has sent reminders so that we can live now in the hope of heaven by allowing ourselves to anticipate what is to come. Perhaps this is why we are told that the Holy Spirit has been given as a type of down payment or deposit for what is to come.⁵ He allows us to experience, in anticipation, what God is preparing for us.

Meditation/Application

Spend the next 5 minutes to allow yourself to anticipate heaven. Look forward to it as you would a dream vacation that you know is coming and drawing closer. Anticipate the sights, the sounds, the smells, the friends, the glory, the wonder. As surely as you sit where you are now, the real you will physically be present in Heaven! Give yourself permission to let your hope rise!

Reflecting on the reading:

Our reading today starts with the words, "At the first light of dawn..." Can you recall another time when someone ran at the first light of dawn? How is that story foreshadowed in this one of Daniel?

⁴ Steve DeWitt, *Eyes Wide Open: Enjoying God in Everything* (Credo House Publishers, 2012), page 168.

⁵ 2 Corinthians 1:22, 5:5, Ephesians 1:14

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer requests:

- Pray for several unspoken deep needs of our NBBC family. If you do not know what to say ask the Holy Spirit to guide you.
- Our Youth Drop-in tonight has 24 Jr. high students. We need prayer for leaders who would care and bring structure/creativity to this group. Pray. Does someone come to mind?

Tuesday February 13th – Fear God

Reading Daniel 6:24 – 28

“I issue a decree that... people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel.”

What does it mean to fear God? We might get the impression that it means we are to be afraid of Him and yet we know it can't mean that so what does it mean?

Suppose you were exploring an unknown Greenland glacier in the dead of winter. Just as you reach the sheer cliff with a spectacular view of miles of jagged ice and mountains of snow, a terrible storm breaks out. The wind is so strong that the fear rises in your heart that it might blow you over the cliff, but in the midst of the storm you discover a cleft in the ice where you can hide. Here you feel secure.

Even though secure, the awesome might of the storm rages on, and you watch it with a kind of trembling pleasure as it surges out across the distant glaciers. Not everything we call fear vanishes from your heart, only the life-threatening part. There remains the trembling, the awe, the wonder, the feeling that you would never want to tangle with such a storm or be the adversary of such a power.

So it is with God. The fear of God is what is left of the storm when you have a safe place to watch right in the middle of it. Hope turns fear into a trembling and peaceful wonder; and fear takes everything trivial out of hope and makes it earnest and profound. The terrors of God make the pleasures of his people intense. The fireside fellowship is all the sweeter when the storm is howling outside the cottage.⁶

We live in a culture where we see people who are known as “adrenaline junkies” – people who live for an experience that will make them be in awe. To sense the thrill of living on the edge, the adrenaline rush of fear and wonder, is why we ride roller coasters, go sky-diving, or stand close

⁶ John Piper, *The Pleasures of God* (Multnomah, 1991), pp. 205-206

to Niagara Falls. It is as if we are drawn to fear even while we are repelled by it. What if this desire is really meant to be met in our experience of God?

Perhaps in our emphasis and our understanding of a personal relationship with Jesus as our friend, we have accidentally domesticated Jesus, tamed Him. When we allow God to be as great and grand and wild as He is portrayed in Scripture (see Hebrews 12:29 for example) then we might be less prone to be intimidated by those influences that tempt us to pull away from obedience.

Nebuchadnezzar's command is a good one for us to heed also, "fear and reverence the God of Daniel."

Preparing for your MCG

As you come for you MCG be prepared to share:

- **POTLUCK:** Be mindful about a story you might share regarding the importance of MCG regular group meeting together. (ie. what it means to you, or how the group has seen God work through them or in them)
- **STUDY:** Share from your time of Meditation/Application from each day study. What from chapter 5 of Daniel made an impression on you or what confused you?
- **PRAYER WALK/ACTIVITY:** be creative and intentional as you pray/work together.

Prayer Request:

Record the prayer requests that are shared at your MCG to inform your prayers this coming week.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Missional Community Group (MCG) Covenant

We desire to grow as followers of Jesus who represent Him and His Kingdom well in all of our life. We recognize that God's plan is for us to grow in and through relationships with other like-minded disciples. As those who identify as neighbourhood missionaries we enter into this covenant so that we might be transformed by God's grace and that together we might be transforming agents in our neighbourhood.

To this end, this year, we therefore covenant to:

- Meet regularly for weekly encouragement, accountability, and fellowship in our Missional Community Group and corporately with all of NBBC.
- Seek to grow in likeness to Jesus by engaging in NBBC MCG's shared practices.
- Nurture loving relationships within our Missional Community, accepting others as Christ has accepted us.
- Faithfully steward the resources that God has given us: time, abilities, resources and energy.
- Together discern where God is at work and join Him in His mission to bring the Kingdom of God to our neighbourhood.

In all that we covenant, we recognize that we are dependant upon the grace of God to enable us and so we joyfully enter this covenant in hope of what He might do in and through us.

Missional Community Group Shared Practices

1. Daily engage in reading Scripture and pray for God to bless NBBC in its missional calling.
2. Weekly purposely and intentionally bless another person.
3. Monthly practise table fellowship with someone in your Missional Community.
4. Respond to the Spirit's prompting as you sense Him leading and directing.
5. Share with others the stories of what God is doing in your life as opportunities arise.