



MCG
Study Guide
Daniel 7
April 4th – 10th



Prayer Requests...

Wednesday April 4th – Journaling

Reading Daniel 7:1 – 6

“He wrote down the substance of his dream.”

Writing down reflections, thoughts, musings and details of one’s life has long been a spiritual discipline that is traditionally called journaling.

In its April 26, 1999 edition, *Newsweek* carried a story entitled “Pen, Paper, Power!” by Claudia Kalb. “Confessional writing has been around at least since the Renaissance.” she wrote, “but new research suggests that it’s far more therapeutic than anyone ever knew. Since the mid-1980s, studies have found that people who write about their most upsetting experiences not only feel better but visit doctors less often and even have stronger immune responses. A study published in *The Journal of the American Medical Association* showed that writing exercises can help alleviate symptoms of asthma and rheumatoid arthritis. “It’s hard to believe,” says James Pennebaker, a psychology professor at the University of Texas at Austin and a pioneer in the field of expressive writing, “but being able to put experiences into words is good for your physical health.”

“Even the best-adjusted and healthiest people acquire emotional baggage in the course of a lifetime – be it childhood angst over parental

divorce, conflicts with friends and family or remorse over missteps and lost opportunities. In the scientific studies, researchers ask participants to write about a disturbing experience for fifteen to twenty minutes a day for three or four consecutive days. Never mind polish and politeness, they say, the point is not to craft a perfect essay but to dig deeply into one's emotional junkyard, then translate the experience into language on a page.

"In one study, published last year, researchers found direct physiological evidence: writing increased the level of disease-fighting lymphocytes circulating in the bloodstream, and preliminary research shows that writing can cause modest decline in blood pressure."¹

It is not so much the end product that matters in journaling. It is not so others can read it or even, necessarily, that you might re-read it later. The point of journaling is to coax what is on the inside, out, and in the process of thinking about our inner turmoil, exposing its cause and laying out the path that led to it, we find that we defuse the explosive and damaging effects that pent up, unexamined emotions can wreak on our lives.

It has been said that "A journal is an aid to concentration, a mirror for the soul, a place to generate and capture ideas, a safety valve for the emotions, and a powerful tool for spiritual growth."²

Meditation/Application

Try journaling about an experience. Allow yourself to not simply write about what the experience was, but the feelings associated with it and why you felt that way.

¹ Cladia Kalb, "Pen, Paper, Power!" *Newsweek*, April 26, 1999.

² Ron Klug, "How to Keep a Spiritual Journal," *Decision Magazine*, January 1983, pg. 5.

Reflecting on the reading:

When dealing with apocalyptic literature there is a great deal of symbolism. Images stand as representations of attributes or qualities. Consider the following images and write down what attributes you feel they represent:

- Lion (vs. 4) –
- Bear (vs. 5) –
- Wings (vs. 6) –

Prayer Points:

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

- Please pray that the Easter story would continue in the minds, hearts and lives of those who heard it
- New weather brings communities outside; pray for new ways to be visible and available in your neighbourhood

Thursday April 5th – Arrogance

Reading Daniel 7:7 – 8

“This horn had... a mouth that spoke boastfully.”

In order to discover if pride and arrogance are the same in God’s eyes, I went to Proverbs 8:13 “...I hate pride and arrogance, evil behaviour and perverse speech”. From this statement it seems that God considers pride and arrogance two sides of the same coin. Pride, which is inward and invisible, manifests itself in arrogant words and actions.

Throughout history, pride has been recognized as the deadliest of vices but is now almost celebrated as a virtue in our culture. Pride and arrogance are conspicuous among the rich, the powerful, the successful, the famous, celebrities of all sorts, and even some religious leaders. But it is also alive and well in ordinary people, including each of us, yet few of us realize how dangerous it is to our souls and how greatly it hinders our intimacy with God and love for others. Humility, on the other hand, is often seen as weakness, and few of us know much about it or pursue it.

C.S. Lewis, called pride “the great sin.” In the chapter with this title in his brilliant work *Mere Christianity* he writes:

According to Christian teachers, the essential vice, the utmost evil, is Pride. Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness, and all that are mere flea bites in comparison: It was through Pride that the devil became the devil: Pride leads to every other vice. It is the complete anti-God state of mind... it is Pride which has been the chief cause of misery in every nation and every family since the world began.

If this sounds like exaggeration, it will help us to know that Lewis is not simply giving us his private opinion but summarizing the thinking of great saints through the ages. It is the devil’s most effective and

destructive weapon, and it exists not only in society, but also in the church.

Commenting on the revival in Northampton, Massachusetts, in 1737, Jonathan Edwards said, “The first and worst cause of errors that abound in our day and age is spiritual pride. Until this disease is cured, medicines are applied in vain to heal all other diseases.”

Pride first appears in the Bible in Genesis 3, where we see the devil, that “proud spirit” as John Donne described him, using pride as the avenue by which to seduce our first parents. First, he arrogantly contradicted what God had said to Eve about eating the forbidden fruit and charged God with lying. This shocking rejection of God’s word introduced Eve to the hitherto unknown possibility of unbelief and aroused doubt in her mind about the truthfulness and reliability of God.

In the next breath, the devil drew her into deeper deception by contending that God’s reason for lying was to keep her from enjoying all the possibilities inherent in being Godlike.³

The enemy is consistent and he only has a limited number of weapons. So, it is no wonder he appears in Daniel 7 using the same tactic as he did in the Garden of Eden; speaking boastfully. He has not changed, he remains what he has always been, a liar and the father of lies, because there is no truth in him. Whenever we see arrogance and pride we would do well to recognize its source and not allow our hearts to be seduced or our minds deceived.

Meditation/Application

Where have you heard boasting and witnessed arrogance? Ask God for a spirit of discernment and wisdom in sorting truth from error. Pray too, that your own heart is protected from the insidious allurements of pride.

³ From the Winter 2011 issue of “Knowing and Doing” *Pride & Humility* by Thomas A. Tarrants III, Vice President of Ministry, C.S. Lewis Institute

Reflecting on the reading:

Try to place yourself in Daniel's shoes as he sees this vision. What emotions do you think he is experiencing?

Prayer Points:

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

- Tonight at 8pm we worship together at NBBC; consider joining as we share stories, Scripture and song.

Friday April 6th – Indestructible Kingdom (By NBBC's Blair Clark)

Reading Daniel 7:9 – 14

"...his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed."

We live in a world in which we are constantly reminded, day in and day out, that "nothing lasts forever". In fact, the life cycle of things is getting shorter and shorter as the increasing speed of change and innovation accelerates obsolescence. The iconic Canadian department store, Eaton's – gone, with the only surviving legacy being the company's name on the Eaton Centre in Toronto. Sears in Canada is also gone now. Think of all the communities in the GTA that are no more, swallowed up into ever larger cities. Think of all the companies, perhaps one that you worked for at one time, that no longer exist.

It can be depressing to think of investing your whole life in something, only to see it suddenly and sadly cease to exist. We can glibly respond, "Well, that's life." But if you worked for one of those companies all or most of your life, how are you left feeling, and what of your investment? For many of the Sears employees, they are not even receiving the full pensions that they had been promised. Talk about misplaced trust.

And then there is God's Kingdom, a kingdom that will never be destroyed, never be merged with another, never face bankruptcy proceedings. The parallel passage to this one is Revelation 7:9-12, also describing a vision and written hundreds of years later, but containing the same basic themes, elements and assurances.

The singular question that confronts us from these passages is, "In what am I investing my life and how secure is that investment?" Jesus addresses this question in terms of our material wealth, in the sermon on the mount. In Matt.6:19-24 He counsels us. "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal."

We have become so accustomed to things not lasting, our long-term commitments not being honoured and valued, and our investments not being secure, that we can hardly imagine an alternative world where that is not the case. But that is what God offers to us. This assurance is celebrated in the Hallelujah Chorus in Handel's Messiah as it affirms "And He shall reign for ever and ever, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, forever, forever." His Kingdom is indeed forever, and that is why investing our lives in it makes sense. There may be short-term periods where the opposition is fierce, but as we have seen in the 2,000 years since Jesus came to announce his Kingdom, it cannot be defeated. It is the forever Kingdom that will not, that cannot be destroyed.

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).

Prayer Points:

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

- Pray for world issues around poverty, hunger, exploitation etc.
- Find a Scripture to pray through. (ie. Matthew 6:9-13, Isaiah 6, Psalm 42, Psalm 4)

Saturday April 7th – Disturbed

Reading Daniel 7:15 – 18

“...the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me.”

Have you ever been disturbed? Have you experienced that which caused you to be afraid and confused? Daniel looks into the abyss of human evil and into the very throne room of God. No wonder he is shaken by the experience.

How should we respond when we find ourselves disturbed? Very often the temptation is to run. Our default reaction to circumstances that are disturbing is to avoid them. The church is not a stranger to this kind of tendency.

When you experience conflict or pain in a church setting, don't run away to another church - stay put and work through it - that's the advice from two early Christian sources.

An anonymous 4th century Christian leader wrote:

If a trial [with other people] comes upon you in the place where you live, do not leave that place when the trial comes. Wherever you go, you will find that what you are running from is ahead of you. So stay until the trial is over, so that if you end up leaving, no offence will be caused, and you will not bring distress to others who live in the same neighbourhood.

In the 12th century, Anselm of Canterbury compared a restless believer to a tree that can't thrive because it is "frequently transplanted or often disturbed." Anselm warns: "If he often moves from place to place at his own whim, or remaining in one place is frequently agitated by hatred of it, [he] never achieves stability with roots of love."⁴

⁴ Jonathon Wilson-Hartgrove, *The Wisdom of Stability* (Paraclete Press, 2010), pp. 82-83, 149

Daniel's response to what disturbed him was to inquire. Very often I have found myself upset or disturbed without being able to pin point what it was that was causing my distress. Running will not solve my problem, only delay it.

The wise course of action, when faced with things that disturb you, is to walk towards the mess in order to better understand its cause. It may not be pleasant but it will be helpful to your Christian maturity.

Meditation/Application

Think back over the last week or so. Has there been something niggling at you? Something disturbing you? Rather than ignoring it or writing it off, explore what is causing it. In prayer, take it to God and begin to address the distress.

Reflecting on the reading:

One of the frustrations that we have with this type of literature is the lack of specificity. Notice the interpretation of the dream. What details do you wish were included in the interpretation? Why do you think they are not included?

Prayer Points:

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

- *Relying on God's power in times of weakness means we must know Him. Pray for eyes to see His true character and know He lives in you.*

Sunday April 8th – Monsters at Midnight

Reading Daniel 7

Sermon Notes:

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)
- Pray for ongoing health concerns of our NBBC family

Monday April 9th – Inquisitiveness

Reading Daniel 7:19 – 25

“...I wanted to know the meaning...”

It seems that curiosity and inquisitiveness is deep within the hearts of humans. We like to explore and understand, to unravel mysteries and solve problems. We are hard-wired this way and like most appetites and desires they can be steered toward good or evil, legitimate inquiries and forbidden inquiries. Inquisitiveness in and of itself is not bad thing as long as it is directed correctly.

The human brain weighs three pounds. It is the size of a softball, and yet with it we have the capacity to learn something new every second of every minute of every hour of every day for the next three hundred million years. God has created us with an unlimited capacity to learn. What that tells me is that we ought to keep learning until the day we die.

Leonardo da Vinci once observed that the average human "looks without seeing, listens without hearing, touches without feeling, eats without tasting, inhales without awareness of odour or fragrance, and talks without thinking." But not da Vinci. The quintessential Renaissance man called the five senses the ministers of the soul. Perhaps no one in history stewarded them better than he. Famous for his paintings of The Last Supper and Mona Lisa, da Vinci trained himself in curiosity. He never went anywhere without his notebooks, in which he recorded ideas and observations in mirror-image cursive. His journals contain the genesis of some of his most ingenious ideas - a helicopter-like contraption he called an orinthopter, a diving suit, and a robotic knight. While on his own deathbed, he meticulously noted his own symptoms in his journal. That's devotion to learning. Seven thousand pages of da Vinci's journals have been preserved. Bill Gates purchased eighteen pages for \$30.8 million a few decades ago.⁵

⁵ Adapted from Mark Batterson, *A Trip Around the Sun* (Baker Books, 2015), pages 142-143.

Da Vinci is a great example of someone who used his inquisitiveness for legitimate ends. Daniel is another positive example. Not all curiosity is to be satisfied – consider the curiosity of Adam and Eve regarding the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil - but curiosity is a gift that God has given to us. How have you been stewarding this gift in your life?

Meditation/Application

We live in an age where information is literally at your fingertips. Yet, not all information we're curious about can be found on the internet and not all curiosity is satisfied through the intellect. How would you rate your "curiosity quotient"? Are you still inquisitive? Take time this week to explore one area of inquiry.

Reflecting on the reading:

We are told that the beast in Daniel's dream "...crushed and devoured its victims" Given the symbolic nature of this type of literature, which would suggest that this is not a physical description, in what ways do you think the victims are "crushed and devoured"?

Prayer Points:

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

- **Pray for our college/university young adults who enter into the exam portion of the school year**
- **Summer Camps at NBBC**

Tuesday April 10th – Troubled

Reading Daniel 7:26 - 28

“I, Daniel, was deeply troubled by my thoughts...”

We sometimes get the impression that if God would reveal Himself or more of the spiritual world we would be enraptured with beauty and worship in awe, but Daniel’s experience might make us question this perspective.

In his lecture on this chapter, English theologian Iain Provan says this,

“I think that this is simply testimony to the fact that when people have encounters with the divine it is a very troubling thing. And it doesn’t really matter whether you are a wicked king or a relatively righteous prophet like Isaiah; when you intersect with the world of the gods it is potentially very dangerous, troubling and alarming, and people have very extreme reactions. Ezekiel falls down and Isaiah’s reaction we know well and Daniel is clearly equally troubled... The mere fact that you are close to the sphere of holiness and divinity is enough.”

He then relates a story about an ancient abbey in Scotland that was rebuilt and serves as a place of retreat. The pastor who ran the retreat centre said he would not personally spend too much time alone there. It is a very sacred place with a long ancient history that goes back to Celtic

Christianity. He said that several times he had had this experience which he would describe as “the veil between heaven and earth being quite thin” and he would talk about the tremendous sense of the awe and the awfulness of that - and it wasn’t something he coveted. He actually shrank back from this closeness with God. Provan concludes by saying, “To be close to God is not necessarily pleasant.”

<p>It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Hebrews 10:31</p>

We tend to assume that troubling experiences are not Godly experiences, yet those who found themselves closest to God found themselves very troubled. What if the next time you are troubled, instead of running from it, you looked for God's presence in the midst of it? Maybe He is trying to speak to you out of a disturbing situation.

Preparing for MCG

Come to the MCG Celebration Potluck (register @ nbbc.ca)

6-8pm @ NBBC

All MCG join together for an open potluck.

POTLUCK: Please bring a salad or dessert (main meal is covered)

STORY: Prepare to share a story or ask questions about MCG

PRAYER: Pray that several will join and experience the power of living out God's mission together in community.

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.