



MCG
Study Guide
Daniel 9 (part ii)
May 9th – 15th



Prayer Requests:

Introduction

Some of you may be wondering why our study guide is for Daniel 9 again. The truth is, with the snow day, Family Sunday, and Merv having to be away one weekend, all of our weeks got mixed up. So, in this study we are focusing on the idea of prayer which is the dominant theme of Daniel 9.

Daniel's prayer is one of the greatest confessions in all of Scripture. We have already read how it was Daniel's practice to pray facing Jerusalem three times a day. In chapter 9 we get a glimpse of Daniel's heart and passion in prayer.

Prayer is foundational to the Christian life and so this week we will focus upon what happens when we pray!

Wednesday May 9th – God Hears

Reading Jeremiah 29:11 - 13

“...you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.”

Sometimes God responds to our prayers in ways far more extravagant, generous and kind than anything our prayer might merit. This is because God delights in answering prayer even when our prayers are weak.

The popular novelist Andrew Klavan was raised in a non-practising Jewish home. For about the first 45 years of his life, he lived as a "philosophical agnostic and a practical atheist." Klavan explains some of the steps along the journey that eventually led him to faith in Christ:-

“Jesus never appeared to me while I lay drunk in the gutter, and yet, looking back on my life, I see that Christ was beckoning to me at every turn. When I was a child, He was there in the kindness of a Christian babysitter and the magic of a Christmas Eve spent at her house. When I was a troubled young man contemplating suicide, He was in the voice of a Christian baseball player who gave a radio interview that inspired me to go on, and always, he was in the day-to-day miracle of my marriage, a lifelong romance that taught me the reality of love and slowly led me to contemplate the greater love that was its source and inspiration. Perhaps most important for a novelist who insisted that ideas should make sense, Christ came to me in stories. Slowly, I came to understand that His life, words, sacrifice and resurrection formed the hidden logic behind every novel, movie or play that touched me most deeply.

I was reading a story when that logic finally kicked in. I was in my forties, lying in bed with one of Patrick O'Brian's great seafaring adventure novels. One of the characters, whom I admired, said a prayer before going to sleep, and I thought to myself, “well, if he can pray, so can I.” I laid the book aside and whispered a three-word prayer in gratitude for the contentment I'd found, and for the work and people I loved: "Thank you, God."

It was a small and even prideful prayer: a self-impressed intellectual's hesitant experiment with faith. God's response was an act of extravagant grace. I woke the next morning and everything had changed. There was a sudden clarity and brightness to familiar faces and objects; they were alive with meaning and with my own delight in them. I called this experience "the joy of my joy," and it came to me again whenever I prayed. Naturally I began to pray every day.

This would lead to a full acceptance of Christ as Lord. Later, Klavan was baptized and wrote a book about his spiritual journey titled *The Great Good Thing: A Secular Jew Comes to Faith in Christ*.¹

Meditation/Application

Ask yourself when the last time was that you prayed not out of a need, not even to thank God but just to seek God? When was the last time you came and prayed not for wisdom or strength but to know Him better? Why not allow yourself the luxury of seeking God this morning?

Reflecting on the reading:

What are the conditions by which we can claim the promise that we will find God?

Why do you think God wants us to seek Him?

Prayer Points:

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

- Pray for Mark Zammit and others in the prison

¹ Andrew Klavan, "How a Man of the Coasts and Cities Found Christ," Christianity Today (8-22-16)

Thursday May 10th – God Rewards

Reading Matthew 6:5 – 8

“...your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

God rewards us. He sees our hearts, He knows our faith, He watches our actions and He rewards us accordingly. However, I admit that sometimes I try to help God. I grow impatient with Him. I grow weary of waiting, and when circumstances get worse, or time seems to be running out, I find I am tempted to give up on prayer and try to get things done myself.

In his book *Beyond Jabez*, Bruce Wilkinson shares the story of an old African woman who demonstrated faith in God’s power to provide. Although she lived in a tiny mud hut, she had taken on the responsibility of caring for 56 orphans.

A small group of Wilkinson’s “Dream for Africa” volunteers had arrived in this grandmother’s native Swaziland to plant gardens. On the final day of their visit, they came upon her tiny home, surrounded by the many children in her care. A number of little gardens had been dug up all around the hut, but oddly, no plants were growing in any of them.

The volunteers learned that, earlier on the same day, the woman had told the children to dig lots of gardens. When the children asked her why—since they had neither seeds nor money—she responded, “Last night I asked God to send someone to plant gardens for us. We must be ready for them when they come.”

Wilkinson’s volunteers had come with hundreds of ready-to-plant seedlings. God sent them to the very place where one of His servants had begged for His intervening hand. The faithful grandmother and her children were ready when the answer came.²

The next time you are praying for something, keep persevering. Eugene Peterson has written, “In prayer, we are aware that God is in action and

² Bruce Wilkinson with Brian Smith, *Beyond Jabez (Multnomah, 2005)*, pp. 147-148

that when the circumstances are ready, when others are in the right place, and when our hearts are prepared, He will call us into the action. Waiting in prayer is a disciplined refusal to act before God acts.”³ Do not allow doubt to rob you of God’s reward.

Meditation/Application

What is it that you are waiting on God for? Are you growing tired of waiting? Are you losing faith? Have you been praying less often, less fervently, less confidently? Tell God of your struggle and consider confiding in another person so they can help carry your prayer burden.

Reflecting on the reading:

What does this passage teach us about how not to pray?

Do you think this teaching tells us that we should not pray out loud and corporately?

Prayer Points:

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

- Pray for those in our Missional Communities that are lonely; maybe you know a few on your street; pray how God might encourage you to reach out in a simple way

³ Eugene Peterson, *Leadership*, Vol. 8, no. 2.

Friday May 11th – God Encourages

Reading Psalm 10:16 – 18

“You, Lord, hear the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them...”

God is in the encouragement business and most often He encourages us through others.

A 2009 article in the Chicago Tribune told the story of Bettye Tucker, a Christian cook who works the night shift at Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago, Illinois. She has been doing her job for 43 years - 28 of them on the night shift. She sees a steady stream of parents in her job, many of them frightened and weary. On one particular night around the time the article was written, Miss Bettye (as she is referred to by all who know her) served food to a mother whose three-year-old fell out of a second story window that morning; another mother whose seventeen-year-old was battling a rare form of leukemia, and a third mother whose eighteen-year-old had endured seven hours of brain surgery. Their stories break the heart of Miss Bettye, and - as one co-worker interviewed for the article says - "that's why she feeds every last one of them as if they had walked right into the 'too-small' kitchen of [the] South Side brick bungalow [where she lives]." A member of the hospital's housekeeping crew adds this about Miss Bettye: "You need someone to bring you life, and she brings it in the middle of the night."

A picture of Miss Bettye that accompanied the article shows a woman with a beautiful smile. It's hard to imagine how much that smile would mean to a suffering parent or child. She says, "When I ask, 'How you doin' today?' and they say it's not a good day, I say, 'Don't lose hope.' When the nurses tell me it's a bad night, I say, 'I understand it's a bad night, but guess what? I am here for you. I'm going to get you through the night.'"

Another picture shows Bettye sitting down, head bowed, over a meal. "I'm a praying lady," she says in the article. "I pray every night, for every room and every person in the hospital. I start with the basement, and I go up, floor by floor, room by room. I pray for the children, I pray for the

families, I pray for the nurses and the doctors. ... I pray every night while I'm driving in on the expressway, 'Oh, Lord, I don't know what I'll face tonight, but I pray you'll guide me through.'"

The reporter behind the article, Barbara Mahany, offers these words about Miss Bettye: "Just might be, that a divine helping on the side is the most essential item on Miss Bettye's menu. The one she stirs in every broth and every whisper. The ingredient that makes her the perpetual light shining in the all-night kitchen."

Meditation/Application

Ask God if there is someone who He would like to encourage through you today? Ask God to help you be creative in what that encouragement might look like.

Reflecting on the reading:

Today's passage tells us that God hears the desire of the afflicted. Why do you think it says "desire" and not "prayer"? What difference does this make?

Prayer Points:

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

- Pray for our annual meeting coming up at the end of May
- Pray for those who are dealing with loss at NBBC

Saturday May 12th – God Comes Near**Reading** Psalm 145:17 – 20

“The Lord is near to all who call on him...”

God draws near but not always the way we expect. He comes to us not as we want but as we need. Sometimes our need is not known to us.

Author, Damien Spikereit, tells the following story:

When I was in high school my father passed away rather suddenly. It was just two days before my high school graduation. At that time in my life I was a baby Christian; immature and shallow. I was still drying off the baptistry waters. All I cared about was not going to hell.

Then my dad died and I found myself in a place I'd never been before. I wanted to hear God speak. I wanted to know what He had to say about this situation; how He was going to get me and my family through this difficult time. So I prayed, and I waited for God to speak.

Then came the day of the funeral. The church was packed. I sat on the front pew with my mother and two younger sisters. The Lutheran priest spoke, but I don't remember what he said. I continued to wait for God to say something. Then the service was over. It was the tradition of this church to have the family line up in the foyer. Everyone would file past us and offer words of condolence and encouragement. Tears were shed, hugs offered, and words were given. I don't remember what anybody said to me during that time, but I continued to wait for God to speak.

Then I saw Kim O'Quinn. She was my age. We were in the youth group together. When she got to me, she didn't say a word. She had tears in her eyes and she simply hugged me and walked off, but I heard God speak. It dawned on me. Just months before, I had attended another funeral; the funeral for Kim O'Quinn's father. In that moment she knew exactly what it meant to be me.

If you want to hear God's voice in your life look no further than the one who knows exactly what it's like to be you. He knows what it is to be human, He knows what it is to suffer, He knows what it is to be rejected, and He knows what it is to be human. If you want to hear God's voice, allow your soul to be quieted long enough so that you can hear the one who was in the beginning say to you, "draw near to me and I'll draw near to you."⁴

Meditation/Application

Try to focus your thoughts on God's presence with you. What might He be saying to you? Try to tame your thoughts from distractions and simply be still and present before God. What are you feeling? Take time to tell God what you think He might be saying and how you feel.

Reflecting on the reading:

What does today's passage tell us about God's character?

What does it tell you about God's activity?

What does it tell us about our responsibilities?

Prayer Points:

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

- *Give thanks to God for the growth and changes at NBBC that influence its community with the Good News*
- *Pray for our mothers and Give thanks! (pray for those making special arrangements to show love to moms)*

⁴ Damien Spikereit in "The Story Before the Story," preached at Lincoln Christian College, 11-25-03

Sunday May 13th – A Pleading, Petitioning, Prayer.

Reading Daniel 9

Sermon Notes:

Fundamentals of a Devotion Time

- When you pray:
 - _____ your request to _____.
 - Approach God with _____ and _____.
 - Acknowledge God's _____.
 - Ask on the basis of God's _____.
- When you read Scripture:
 - Discover what it _____.
 - Take your _____ before God.
 - _____ the learning to _____.

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:

- What characteristics does your mom display that resemble Christ's character? How do these relationships influence our culture/homes? Pray that we would clothe ourselves in God's character
- Pray for those who are orphaned or feel orphaned as they live without a mother

Monday May 14th – God Responds

Reading 2 Chronicles 7:13 – 16

“...I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”

Sometimes when I do prayer walks with my MCG I wonder if our small, and often few, prayers are making a difference - and yet answers to prayer are seldom instantaneous and this is why we are encouraged in Scripture to pray and not give up.⁵

David Fitch shares how the prayers of a church vanquished Satan's grip on a neighbourhood:

In 2010 a group of eight people from two churches felt called to the Detroit Boulevard neighbourhood of Sacramento. It was known as one of the most notorious crime-ridden neighbourhoods in all of Sacramento. Each house in that neighbourhood was a place of danger. Nonetheless this group of eight decided to walk through the neighbourhood praying over each home and praying for the presence of Christ to reign over violence, addiction, and satanic oppression. They began walking through the neighbourhood, praying over each home and rebuking the demonic strongholds of addiction and violence.

One of the eight, former Sacramento police officer and gang detective Michael Xiong, reported that "each time we prayed over the houses, we felt the weight of oppression becoming lighter." A woman from one of the houses confronted them. When she discovered they were praying for the community, she asked for healing, and God healed her.

The group soon physically moved into the neighbourhood and started what they called Detroit Life Church. A couple of years later a local newspaper, the *Sacramento Bee*, reported that there were no homicides, robberies, or sex crimes, and only one assault in Detroit

⁵ Luke 18:1

Boulevard between 2013 and 2014. Detroit Boulevard had been transformed by a small group of people who began their ministry in the neighbourhood by praying around houses, streets and parks, for the power of Satan to be vanquished. Kingdom prayer in body is what it means to be faithfully present to His presence in the world.⁶

God will respond to our prayers. Keep praying. Don't give up!

Meditation/Application

Think about your MCG's prayer walking activity. How might it be more creative? Think back to those times you have prayed. Is there something God has been saying out of those times? Discuss your prayer walking thoughts and ideas at your MCG.

Reflecting on the reading:

In today's reading there are four conditions which need to be met in order for God to hear and forgive. What are they, and what do you think each of them involves?

Prayer Points:

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

- Pray for our dropin jr high group (still in need of leaders/mentors)

⁶ David E. Fitch, *Seven Practices for the Church on Mission (IVP Press, 2018)*, pages 120-121

Tuesday May 15th – God Gives

Reading 1 John 5:13 – 15

“...we know that we have what we asked of him.”

We read verses like this and we can't help but wonder if it is completely true. After all, we've all prayed for things and found that God did not give what we asked of Him.

Certainly, we understand that our prayer must be aligned with God's will but even then, we may feel as if our prayer has not been answered.

The 20th century Norwegian pastor [Ole] Hallesby likens prayer to mining as he knew it in Norway. Demolition to create mine shafts took two basic kinds of actions. There are long periods of time, he writes, "when the deep holes are being bored with great effort into the hard rock." To bore the holes deeply enough into the most strategic spots for removing the main body of rock, was work that took patience, steadiness, and a great deal of skill. Once the holes were finished, however, the "shot" was inserted and connected to a fuse. "To light the fuse and fire the shot is not only easy but also very interesting One sees 'results.' Shots resound, and pieces fly in every direction." He concludes that while the more painstaking work takes both skill and patient strength of character, "anyone can light a fuse."

Pastor Tim Keller comments:

This helpful illustration warns us against doing only "fuse-lighting" prayers, the kind that we soon drop if we do not get immediate results. If we believe both in the power of prayer and in the wisdom of God, we will have a patient prayer life of "hole-boring." Mature believers know that handling the tedium is part of what makes for effective prayers. We must avoid the extremes - of either not asking God for things or of thinking we can bend God's will to ours. We must combine tenacious importunity, a "striving with God," with deep acceptance of God's wise will, whatever it is.⁷

⁷ Adapted from *Prayer*, Tim Keller (Dutton, 2014), page 137

Perhaps our failure to see answers to prayer is less about God's reluctance and more about our impatience. Let us become the type of people who pray with confidence because "we know that we have what we asked of him."

Preparing for your MCG

As you come to 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's study. What from chapter 9 of Daniel made an impression on you or what confused you?
- **PRAYER WALK/ACTIVITY:** be creative and intentional as you pray/work together.

Prayer Requests:

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

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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.