



DAY *by* DAY SERIES

DAY *by* DAY
THROUGH THE
BIBLE

The Writings of the Minor Prophets

ALLEN J. HUTH

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FOREWORD

The nation of Israel was chosen by God to bless Abraham's offspring and to bless all the families of the earth through them. God called the Israelites to live different and separated from the other nations around them. However, the culture of the world was too appealing. Time and again, the Israelites found the ways of the world too attractive, straying from the path God wanted them to walk. The writer of Hebrews states, "*Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets*" (Heb. 1:1). Through the minor prophets, God called out to the Israelites, calling them to return to Him, and to stop practicing the ways of the world.

Much like the Israelites, God calls us as Christians to live a separated walk, to live differently from the culture and the ways of the world around us. All too often in my own life, though, I allow the culture of today to seep into my life. Rather than remaining on the path God calls me to, a manner of my life worthy of the gospel of Christ (Phil. 1:27), I find myself conforming to the standards of the world.

God recorded the words of the minor prophets to challenge us, much like His words through them, spoke to the Israelites. God protected and preserved these words, to call us to return to Him, to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel.

More than twenty years ago, Allen J. Huth followed a call God placed on his heart, starting a nonprofit corporation known as the Ezra Project. The mission of the Ezra Project is stated very simply – "Connecting God's people to God's Word, by encouraging Christians to engage in the Bible daily." In pursuit of that mission, Allen has written *Day by Day Through the Bible: The Writings of the Minor Prophets*. Allen takes a chapter each day of the writings of the minor prophets, sharing insight he gained in his life when he read from God's Word daily, and he takes you deeper into the meaning and impact these verses can have in your life.

My prayer for you, as you follow through this daily workbook, is God's Word will come alive in your life, and the words of the minor prophets will be as God Himself speaking to you. The words of God, spoken through the minor prophets, will challenge you to separate yourself from the culture of today, return to God, and live in a manner worthy of Christ. May the Holy Spirit be your guide.

—*Daniel J. Heighway*
Executive Director
The Gideons International

PREFACE

The Writings of the Minor Prophets is a guide of daily devotions in the thirteen books attributed to the so-called minor prophets of the Old Testament. Done day by day, it will cover seventy-nine days:

- Daniel
- Hosea
- Joel
- Amos
- Obadiah
- Jonah
- Micah
- Nahum
- Habakkuk
- Zephaniah
- Haggai
- Zechariah
- Malachi

Comments on Bible passages, life applications, and prayers are based on the audio daily devotion, ADDBIBLE, a free app that can be heard daily on your smartphone or tablet. The scripture verses in the daily readings are drawn from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless otherwise noted.

ADDBIBLE was recorded using written records from thirty-five years of my personal Bible reading journals. I started reading the Bible at fifteen years old and started journaling my quiet times in 1983. I have been blessed “*exceedingly abundantly*” (Eph. 3:20) by what God has revealed to me in His Word.

I count it an awesome privilege to share insights from my personal journals including personal stories of how God’s Word has specifically impacted my life and short prayers we can pray together, all in 10-15 minutes per day.

This workbook is one of a series of *Day by Day Through the Bible* “Writings of” daily devotions featuring other Biblical authors like Solomon, John, Paul, and more. Access them all by visiting ezraproject.net.

May God richly bless you as you enjoy a portion of God’s Word each and every day.

Abiding in the Word,

—**Allen J. Huth**
President
The Ezra Project

ABOUT THE MINOR PROPHETS

In this workbook, we include thirteen prophets of the Old Testament. In another workbook, we cover the writings of the major prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Daniel is often not included in the list of minor prophets. His seventy years of ministry, under various pagan kings, was longer than any other prophet. We include him in this grouping primarily due to the length of the workbook of major prophets. The common minor prophets are:

- Hosea
- Joel
- Amos
- Obadiah
- Jonah
- Micah
- Nahum
- Habakkuk
- Zephaniah
- Haggai
- Zechariah
- Malachi

Those twelve books appear as one book in the Hebrew canon. Together they contain only one more chapter than Isaiah, and their 1,050 verses, are fewer than the number of verses in the Book of Jeremiah. They are labeled “minor” prophets, not because their messages are less important than the “major” prophets, but because of the brevity of their books.

Not much is known about many of the authors known as minor prophets. They are a combination of priests, farmers, servants of royalty, and maybe even royalty themselves. The meaning of their names sometimes tell us a bit more about them, or relate to the messages they delivered:

- Daniel—God is my judge
- Hosea—help or deliverance
- Joel—Yahweh is God
- Obadiah—one who serves Yahweh
- Micah—who is like Yahweh?
- Nahum—comfort
- Zephaniah—Yahweh has hidden/protected
- Haggai—festal
- Malachi—my messenger

Enjoy the writings of Daniel and the minor prophets. Their messages not only applied to the era they lived in, but to us today, and into the future, as God unfolds His kingdom here on earth. If you read a chapter a day, this workbook will take seventy-nine days.

DANIEL 1

No Meat Please

Today, we begin the Book of Daniel. I will use my English Standard Version Study Bible book introduction to introduce us to this fine prophetic book in the Old Testament. The Book of Daniel, named after, and written by, Daniel in the sixth century B.C., records the events and visions of his life from the time of his exile in 605 B.C. until the third year of King Cyrus in 536 B.C.

**If we resolve to stand
spiritually, God can give
us favor.**

Daniel's name means God is my judge. He was a young man of noble blood who was exiled from Judah to Babylon where he served in the Babylonian court until that empire fell. He finished his service with King Cyrus of the Medes and Persian Empire that succeeded the Babylonians.

The theme of Daniel is God's sovereignty over history and empires; setting up and removing kings as He pleases. Some of Daniel's visions are so precise some scholars think they were written after the events actually occurred, not as prophecy in advance.

The detail of Daniel's prophecies is unparalleled in the rest of the Bible. His prophecies served his own generation well and are the key to unlocking much of the prophecies in the Book of Revelation today. As we look at the Book of Daniel, see it for more than great stories about a fiery furnace and a lion's den. Study it to also understand the last book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation. Please read or listen to Daniel 1.

COMMENTS

To help us through the Book of Daniel, I selected three of my personal Bible reading journals. I started journaling in 1983 and I am going to use one of my early journals from 1988, my journal from 2005, and my journal from 2012. Let's begin with that early journal from 1988.

Concerning Daniel 1, I wrote, "Daniel stands by his convictions; did not want to defile himself with worldly pleasures like the king's food. God blessed their convictions by blessing their bodies with strength, their minds with wisdom. Help me stand for Jesus. Bless my body with strength and my mind with wisdom so I may be wise counsel."

In 2005, I wrote concerning Daniel 1 (NASB), "God's favor. Daniel and the others were blessed, With *'no defect, . . . good-looking, showing intelligence in every branch of wisdom, endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge'* (v. 4). Nice gift package. Daniel was also spiritually strong, *'Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself'* (v. 8). God honored Daniel's decision and granted him favor in the sight of the commander of officials. Daniel didn't buckle to political pressure or the enticement of the world, the king's table. He stood on his inner convictions and God granted him favor."

In 2012, concerning Daniel 1, I wrote, "First, God keeps His promises. Israel is overrun by Babylon for disobedience. Next, God endows each of us with natural gifts, *'youths without blemish, of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning and competent'* (v. 4). That's a good list of gifting for Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Next, we learned Daniel had inner strength. He resolved that he would not defile himself. His culture and religion mattered to him. Though in a strange place far away from home, he keeps his resolve, *'And God gave Daniel favor and compassion'* (v. 9). Furthermore, God gave them learning and skill. Behind the scenes, God is working. What is He doing behind the scenes in my life? What gifting has he endowed me with?"

The Book of Daniel opens with the fulfillment of the prophecies of others as Israel and Jerusalem fall to the Babylonians. Prophesied by many other prophets well

before it happened, Jews were taken out of Jerusalem and taken to Babylon. Daniel was among them.

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon looked for some bright, Jewish, young stars to help him build his kingdom, *“Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility, youths without blemish, of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and competent to stand in the king’s palace”* (vv. 3-4).

Verse 6 says, *“Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah.”* Those characteristics describe Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. That is how we know Daniel came from nobility or a royal family. The names of these young Jewish stars were changed by the Babylonians. Daniel’s Jewish name meant “God is my Judge”. They changed it to Belteshazzar, “O lady, protector of the king”. Hananiah meant “Yahweh is gracious”. His name was changed to Shadrach, “I am very fearful of the moon god”. Mishael, whose name meant “Who is what God is?” was changed to Meshach, “I am a little account” or “Who was like Aku?”, one of the Babylonian gods. And Azariah, whose name meant “Yahweh is a helper”, was changed to Abednego, “servant of the shining one” or another Babylonian god. Their names were changed because Nebuchadnezzar sought to assimilate the exiles into Babylon culture by obliterating their religious and cultural identity and creating dependence upon the Royal Court.

These young Hebrews were schooled in the language and mythology of the Babylonians, and their food was a sign from the king’s table reminding them constantly of the source of their daily bread. But in verse 8, we see the character of Daniel, *“But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king’s food, or with the wine that he drank.”* Because of his resolve, *“God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs”* (v. 9).

What a lesson from Daniel! If we resolve to stand spiritually, God can give us favor. Maybe Daniel did not want to eat the king’s food because it was sacrificed to idols. We do not really know why, but we know he did not want to defile himself in a foreign land. So he puts the eunuchs to a test saying, just feed us vegetables and see how we do. Verse 15 says, *“At the end of ten days it was seen that they were better*

in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king's food.” That is God's favor. Verse 17 continues that favor, “As for these four youths, (Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego), God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.”

At the end of their three-year training, and they were trained with many others, verses 19 and 20 proclaim, *“And the king spoke with them, and among all of them none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Therefore they stood before the king. And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom.”* That is God's favor. That is God's compassion because Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself in a foreign land.

DIGGING DEEPER

How about you? Do you cave into the culture around you or do you have resolve to stand against the cultural pressures of our day? Daniel did in a foreign land. You too can stand on your convictions. And God gave Daniel favor and compassion. He may give the same two gifts to you. How would you like to be found ten times better than everybody else around you because of God's favor in your life? It happened to Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. It can happen to you. Let's pray.

Prayer

Father, thank You for the opening chapter of the Book of Daniel. Thank You for the excitement we see as this young man, Daniel, stands firm in his convictions even as an exile in a foreign land. And because of that, You grant him favor and compassion and raised him up to be a leader, serving the King of Babylon.

Help us see the same things in our life. Help us stand firm against the cultural pressure of our day. And Lord, grant us favor and compassion so we may be examples to those around us because we serve the living God. In Your name, we ask it and we pray. Amen.

MY THOUGHTS

DANIEL 2

Impossible!

In Daniel 2, the king demands something impossible. Do you face something impossible? Please read or listen to Daniel 2.

COMMENTS

In 1988, when I read this chapter as a young man myself, at thirty-three years old, I wrote, “God gives wisdom, blessings to young men in authority. God blesses His people for His glory. Daniel’s obedience saves lives and results in promotions for him and his friends.”

In 2005, in my Bible reading journal, I wrote, “I missed reading this morning. Up late booking Florida cruise flights, then alarm didn’t go off, but had to leave by 6 a.m. for Cheyenne, Wyoming for a cabinet meeting for The Gideons. And I woke up at 5:45, and I had to go in the snow.” My journal entry is noted at 10:20 p.m., “Reading with Terry, Daniel 2:1-24.”

Yes, I missed reading in the morning, but I did not miss reading the Bible that day, as I picked it up late that night when I got home. I wrote, “Impossible. No one can interpret a dream you don’t even know but God. Those great words God gives to Daniel, the dream and interpretation, thanks to prayers of him and his three buddies. Lord, increase my faith, even in the impossible.”

In 2012, I read Daniel 2 on two different days, breaking up the chapter. On the first day, I wrote, “Dreams or nightmares? The king’s dream causes his spirit to be troubled and his sleep left him. Sounds like a nightmare to me. He gathers all his wise men to give him the dream and its interpretation. He doesn’t seem to have much respect for this bunch, referring to verse 9, and he is okay with destroying them all. They do answer correctly, though, by reminding the king no human can do what he asked, only the gods. Daniel, part of the king’s wise men, is also rounded up to be killed, but Daniel responds with prudence and discretion. By faith, he asks the king for time to fulfill his request, and Daniel shares his need with his three friends for prayer support. God answers their prayer, and Daniel gives God the glory.”

The next day, I finished the chapter and wrote in my journal, “Daniel gives God the credit and the glory for his ability to interpret the dream. Why would God show Nebuchadnezzar the future, an evil, Gentile king?” Then I quoted verse 47 “*Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings*’. Amen!”

DIGGING DEEPER

Our application out of Daniel 2 is God is the God of the impossible. It is impossible for any man to interpret a dream he does not even know. Another application is to go to the Lord. “*Then Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery . . . Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven*” (vv. 17-19).

**Go to the Lord even
when things appear to
be impossible.**

Go to the Lord even when things appear to be impossible, and give God the glory in your prayer closet and in public. Verses 27 and 28 say, “*Daniel answered the king and said, ‘No wise men, enchanter, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery that the king has asked, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries’*”. Proclaim God’s glory even in public.

Lastly, watch for God's result of your obedience to Him. Verse 47, "*The king answered and said to Daniel, 'Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings'*". Hallelujah! We serve a God of the impossible and He gets the glory.

Prayer

Father, we give You praise and thanks for Daniel 2. We thank You when Daniel heard of an impossible situation, he went to You in prayer. And You graciously heard his prayer and gave him the dream and the interpretation for the king, so the king could honor You and give You the glory. Bless us, Lord, as we believe in You, even when it seems impossible. And then remind us to give You the glory. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

MY THOUGHTS