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# KINGDOM OF DREAMS



9 INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDIES FOR  
SMALL GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS



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## » HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF THESE STUDIES

### 1. What is an Interactive Bible Study?

Interactive Bible Studies are a bit like a guided tour of a famous city. They take you through a particular part of the Bible, helping you to know where to start, pointing out things along the way, suggesting avenues for further exploration, and making sure that you know how to get home. Like any good tour, the real purpose is to allow you to go exploring for yourself—to dive in, have a good look around, and discover for yourself the riches that God's word has in store.

In other words, these studies aim to provide stimulation and input and point you in the right direction, while leaving you to do plenty of the exploration and discovery yourself.

We hope that these studies will stimulate lots of 'interaction'—interaction with the Bible, with the things we've written, with your own current thoughts and attitudes, with other people as you discuss them, and with God as you talk to him about it all.

## 2. The format

The studies contain five main components:

- sections of text that introduce, inform, summarize and challenge
- numbered questions that help you examine the passage and think through its meaning
- sidebars that provide extra bits of background or optional extra study ideas, especially regarding other relevant parts of the Bible
- ‘Implications’ sections that help you think about what the passage means for you and your life today
- suggestions for thanksgiving and prayer as you close.

## 3. How to use these studies on your own

- Before you begin, pray that God would open your eyes to what he is saying in the Bible, and give you the spiritual strength to do something about it.
- Work through the study, reading the text, answering the questions about the Bible passage, and exploring the sidebars as you have time.
- Resist the temptation to skip over the ‘Implications’ and ‘Give thanks and pray’ sections at the end. It is important that we not only hear and understand God’s word, but respond to it. These closing sections help us do that.
- Take what opportunities you can to talk to others about what you’ve learnt.

## 4. How to use these studies in a small group

- Much of the above applies to group study as well. The studies are suitable for structured Bible study or cell groups, as well as for more informal pairs and triplets. Get together with a friend or friends and work through them at your own pace; use them as the basis for regular Bible study with your spouse. You don’t need the formal structure of a ‘group’ to gain maximum benefit.

- For small groups, it is *very useful* if group members can work through the study themselves *before* the group meets. The group discussion can take place comfortably in an hour (depending on how sidetracked you get!) if all the members have done some work in advance.
- The role of the group leader is to direct the course of the discussion and to try to draw the threads together at the end. This will mean a little extra preparation—underlining the sections of text to emphasize and read out loud, working out which questions are worth concentrating on, and being sure of the main thrust of the study. Leaders will also probably want to work out approximately how long they'd like to spend on each part.
- If your group members usually don't work through the study in advance, it's extra important that the leader prepares which parts to concentrate on, and which parts to glide past more quickly. In particular, the leader will need to select which of the 'Implications' to focus on.
- We haven't included an 'answer guide' to the questions in the studies. This is a deliberate move. We want to give you a guided tour of the Bible, not a lecture. There is more than enough in the text we have written and the questions we have asked to point you in what we think is the right direction. The rest is up to you.

## 5. Bible translation

Previous editions of this Interactive Bible Study have assumed that most readers would be using the New International Version of the Bible. However, since the release of the English Standard Version in 2001, many have switched to the ESV for study purposes. So with this new edition of *Kingdom of Dreams*, we have decided to quote from and refer to the ESV text, which we recommend.

## 6. Before you begin

We recommend that before you start on study 1, you take the time to read right through Daniel in one sitting. This will give you a feel for the direction and purpose of the whole book and help you greatly in looking at each passage in its context.

## 7. Suggestions for further reading

Because the book of Daniel is quite complicated in places it may be helpful to read a bit more widely. Andrew Reid, one of the authors of these Bible studies, has written an easy-to-read commentary on Daniel which may be helpful: *Kingdoms in Conflict: Reading Daniel Today*, Reading the Bible Today, Aquila Press, Sydney 1993.



## » STUDY 1

# GETTING SOME PERSPECTIVE

[DANIEL 1:1-2]

**T**HIS FIRST STUDY IS DELIBERATELY short in order to allow you to get a feel for the context of the book of Daniel. The idea is that you read this introduction together and use the extra time to introduce yourselves, talk about how you will function as a group, spend some time praying, and so on.

*If you are studying in a group*, start with a large piece of paper (butcher's paper would be ideal) and draw a straight line with creation at one end and Jesus at the other.

On page 12 you will find a list of names, events and passages from the Old Testament. Photocopy the page and then cut out the pieces. Hand them around the group so that each person has a mixture of the pieces.

Go around the group and ask each person that has a 'name' piece to place it on the line at the appropriate place and to share with the group anything they know about the person. This is a whole group experience, so everyone can help. The aim is simply to get the names in some sort of order.

Once the 'name' pieces are on the paper, link up the events and passages with them, explaining how they connect with each other.

*If you are studying on your own*, draw lines on page 12 to connect the people with the correct passages and events. When you've done this, look up the Bible references to see if they help you place the people and events.

Creation Jesus

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WHEN GOD CALLS ABRAHAM IN Genesis 12, he promises Abraham three great things:

1. a land
2. that he will be a great nation
3. that he will bless him and cause him to be a blessing to all the world.

By the beginning of the book of Exodus, Abraham's children have indeed become large in number, but they are in captivity in Egypt and far from the land of God's promise.

The books of Exodus through to Joshua tell of how God rescues his people from Egypt, enters into covenant with them, and brings them into the land he promised Abraham. At first things go well and God rules his people directly through Spirit-filled leaders called 'judges' (see the book of Judges). However, the Israelites become unhappy with these sorts of leaders and ask God for a more steady sort of leadership

such as a king would offer (1 Samuel 8). Although God considers that such a request really amounts to a rejection of his kingship over them, he allows the Israelites to have a king. He even makes an eternal covenant with King David, promising him that his children will always rule over God's people (2 Samuel 7).

Soon after David, the kingship fails and Israel is split into two: ten tribes in the north ruled by a series of various kings, and two tribes in the south ruled by the descendants of David. The ten tribes in the north turn against God and are eventually punished by him using the kingdom of Assyria. The two tribes in the south don't act any better, and eventually God judges them as well. This time it is by means of King Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon. He overthrows them and carts them and their king (Zedekiah) off into exile. It is these events that set the context for the book of Daniel.

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## Read 2 Kings 25:1-21 and Daniel 1:1-2.

1. Describe the events recorded in these passages in your own words.

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**Read Psalm 137.**

2. This psalm was written about the Israelites' experience of the exile. What does it tell you about the way the Israelites were feeling in exile? (If you want to do some more study on this, read the short book of Lamentations.)

**» Give thanks and pray**

- Thank God for being a just God who does not let sin—even the sin of his own people—go unpunished.
- Ask God for insight and understanding over the next eight studies as to what the book of Daniel means, and for the wisdom to know how to apply it to your situation.
- If you are studying in a group, pray for good relationships with each other so that you can gain the most benefit from the studies and be supportive of each other.
- Pray for opportunities to use what you learn in your conversations with other people.

<b>People</b>	<b>Passage</b>	<b>Events</b>
DAVID	1 Kings 8	Promise of return from exile
ISAIAH	Genesis 32:22-32	God's covenant promise
JOSHUA	Jeremiah 31:31-33, 27:22	Entry into the Promised Land
SOLOMON	Daniel 1	Temple established
DANIEL	2 Samuel 7:1-17	Creation
JEREMIAH	Deuteronomy 34:4-9	
ADAM	Isaiah 39:1-8	God's promise of the exile
ABRAM	Genesis 12:1-3	Kingship
MOSES	Genesis 2:15-17	Living in exile
JACOB	Exodus 6:6-8	Exodus