

MEETING  
G O D  
IN SCRIPTURE

A HANDS-ON GUIDE TO  
LECTIO DIVINA

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# Relying on the Kingdom, Illustrated

*Daniel 6*

## **RELAX AND REFOCUS (*SILENCIO*)**

Inhale and exhale a few times. Let go of distractions. Quiet your thoughts and open yourself to God.

*Optional*—Consider this question: When, if ever, have you been in a situation you never would have chosen? How did you respond? Was it easy to depend on God or not?

## **READ (*LECTIO*)**

Read the passage to yourself. Then read the notes below it about the key words and phrases. Consider how these details affect your understanding of the story. Then read the passage aloud slowly. Take time to let the words “fall on your ear.”

## **REFLECT (*MEDITATIO*)**

*Questions and cues to help you enter into the story.*

1. How might Daniel have coped with being a Jew in Babylon? What might have been some of his thoughts? Consider some of the facts of Daniel’s background and character.

## Daniel 6:3-7, 10-11, 13-14, 16, 19-23, 26-27

<sup>3</sup>Now **Daniel** so distinguished himself among the administrators and the **satraps** by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. <sup>4</sup>At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. <sup>5</sup>Finally these men said, "We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God."

<sup>6</sup>So these administrators and satraps went as a group to the king and said: "May King Darius live forever! <sup>7</sup>The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or human being during the next thirty days, except to you, Your Majesty, shall be thrown into the lions' den."

<sup>10</sup>Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. <sup>11</sup>Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help.

<sup>13</sup>Then they said to the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, Your Majesty, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day." <sup>14</sup>When the king heard this, he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him.

<sup>16</sup>So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!"

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**Daniel** A Jewish teenager who had been taken captive and had served first the Babylonians and now Darius, king of the Persians. He would have been about eighty years old by this time.

**satraps** Governors or "kingdom-protectors."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>19</sup>At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. <sup>20</sup>When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?"

<sup>21</sup>Daniel answered, "May the king live forever! <sup>22</sup>My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, Your Majesty."

<sup>23</sup>The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

<sup>26</sup>"I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel.

"For he is the living God

and he endures forever;

***his kingdom will not be destroyed,***

his dominion will never end.

<sup>27</sup>He rescues and he saves;

he performs signs and wonders

in the heavens and on the earth."

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***his kingdom will not be destroyed*** Darius recognized that Daniel's God was a powerful being with a "kingdom"—a place where whatever God wanted done was done (even by lions).

- When the powerful nation of Babylon invaded the southern tribe of Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the temple and took all its treasures. He and his army took captives from Judah back to Babylon (about five hundred miles away) and made them slaves. Daniel was educated and put to work in the government. If Daniel was about sixteen years old when he was taken captive (605 BCE) he would have been at least eighty-two in this account (since the Persians captured Babylon in about 539 BCE).

- No mention is ever made of Daniel being bitter. Instead he seemed to grow close to and even fond of his captor, Nebuchadnezzar.
  - The text notes that Daniel was “trustworthy and was neither corrupt nor negligent” (verse 4).
2. Darius seems to have fallen prey to flattery through the proposal that his subjects pray to him and no one else. When have you suffered the consequences of someone in authority over you making an unwise decision? How did you feel? What did you do?
3. Which part of Darius’s description of the kingdom of God is most meaningful for you today (verses 26-27)?
- God is a living God, not a “force” or barely in existence.
  - God perseveres and never gives up.
  - The kingdom of God is indestructible (endures forever).
  - God rescues people and brings wholeness.
  - God does miraculous things on earth and in the cosmos.
4. Daniel exhibited exemplary character. He never sought honor or personal gain. He was a trustworthy and incorruptible government official. He became friends with kings who could easily have been his enemies. The key to his character was his relationship with God, cultivated in the many spiritual disciplines he practiced:
- fasting and healthy eating (1:8, 12; 9:3; 10:3)
  - prayer (2:18, 20-23; 6:10; 9:3, 20)
  - confession (9:4, 20)
  - service (6:4, 5)
  - study of Scripture (9:2, 23; 10:12)
  - frugality (5:17)
  - worship (2:20-23)

How do these disciplines contribute to a person's character?

5. *Fly on the wall cue: Picture Daniel in the pit.* Edward J. Young writes that “in all probability there was an opening at the top through which Daniel had been lowered into the den, and through which the king later spoke with Daniel, and also an opening at the side through which the lions were fed. It was probably such a side entrance which was closed by the stone and seal; the entrance at the top was evidently too high for any man to escape through it.”<sup>2</sup>
6. *Scriptural connections: Jesus and his kingdom.* The kingdom of God existed in Old Testament times (Psalm 145:13; Daniel 2:44; 7:14, 27), but Jesus brought the kingdom of God to earth in a new way, saying, “The kingdom of God is in your midst” (Luke 17:21; see also Matthew 12:28; Luke 10:9-10). We will experience the kingdom in an even fuller way at the end of this age (Revelation 11:15).
7. *Scriptural connections: Kingdom of God timeline.* The kingdom was in existence even in Old Testament times. The table below shows how the revelation of the kingdom of God unfolds.

**Reflect on the invitation.** Read the passage aloud again. Picture what the scene might look like as if you were watching a movie. Hear the words clearly in your mind.

- As you watch the action unfold, what do you see?
- What moment or idea in the story stands out to you? Imagine what Daniel may have thought or felt. Does this resonate with you?
- Why do you think that is? What significance might this have for you?

**Reflect a little further.**

- How does this passage connect with your life?
- Is there some idea, feeling or intention you need to embrace from it? If so, what?

<b>Before Jesus Came</b>	Daniel, who lived in pagan Babylon after Israel's temple was destroyed, spoke of an everlasting kingdom and understood that it would never be destroyed (2:44; 4:3; 6:26). The psalmist spoke of the glorious splendor of God's everlasting kingdom (Psalm 145:11-13).
<b>During Jesus' Life</b>	Jesus brought the kingdom of God to earth in a fuller way so that the kingdom was <i>near</i> to his hearers. Jesus said the kingdom was "on your doorstep" (Luke 10:9, 11, <i>The Message</i> ), and "in your midst" (Luke 17:21). Jesus' teaching was centered on the kingdom of God (see, for example, Mark 1:15; 4:11-30; 10:14-15). Jesus displayed the presence of the kingdom with miraculous works of power and authority.
<b>Jesus' Post-resurrection Preaching</b>	His topic was the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3).
<b>The Early Church Through the Present</b>	The apostles taught the kingdom of God (Acts 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 28:23, 31) and manifested it through miraculous works (Acts 3:1-10; 5:12-16; 9:34; 14:9). Paul spoke of himself and his companions as "coworkers in the kingdom of God" (Colossians 4:11; see also Romans 14:17; 1 Corinthians 4:20).
<b>At Jesus' Return and Afterward</b>	The kingdom of God will be realized in a fuller way (Luke 22:16, 18) with God reigning as King in fullness (Revelation 22:4-5).

- What might God be inviting you to be, know, understand, feel or even do?

Be open to the quiet and don't feel pressured to come up with an answer.

### RESPOND (*ORATIO*)

Take a few minutes to respond to God about this in prayer. What do you most want to say to God about this experience in Scripture?

### REST (*CONTEMPLATIO*)

Soak in what has stood out to you in this passage and consider: How did God (or God's actions) seem to you in this passage? What does this tell you about what God is like?

Spend a few minutes noticing the thoughts that have come to you. This may take the form of worship or simply resting in God's presence.

**TRYING IT ON (INCARNATIO)**

Consider kneeling and thanking God (verse 10) for sustaining you in situations that have felt awkward.

### Openness to the Spirit

*We like to exert control over what we see and hear—such as watching television without commercials, for instance. We also try to manage or control the Bible by seeking out verses that seem to prove what we already believe to be true or hope is true. We come to the Bible looking for a solution to a particular problem and read it through that lens. Our Scripture study and meditation should be free from such maneuvering. Instead, we should seek to surrender control to the Holy Spirit. We should let the text stand on its own and wait to see how the Spirit may address us through it.*

*Such vulnerability to the Spirit requires that we “welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls” (James 1:21 NRSV). We ought to come to the Word ready to hear whatever the Spirit might have to say to us. We should be careful not to make anything up based on what we want to hear. What comes to us may not be new or exceptional. It may be something we already know, but we need to embrace it at a deeper level. Or perhaps it is exactly what we need to hear today—right now—because of life circumstances.*

*A. W. Tozer describes this phenomenon:*

[The Bible] is not only a book which was once spoken, but a book which is now speaking. . . . If you would follow on to know the Lord, come at once to the open Bible expecting it to speak to you. Do not come with the notion that it is a thing which you can push around at your convenience.<sup>1</sup>

*We “push around” Scripture by interpreting it within preconceived ideas of what it means, or what it means for us today. Trying to cover as much*



*material as we can in a hurried manner generally blocks vulnerability or meekness (and how they help us sense what God is saying). The goal of interaction with God in the Word is not to finish a chapter or book, but to meet God.*

*Dr. Robert Mulholland calls this experience of God speaking to us through Scripture “dynamic inspiration.” He says the phrase “All Scripture is inspired by God” (2 Timothy 3:16-17 NRSV) is translated in various ways because Paul intended several layers of meaning. The inspiration of Scripture is “dynamic” because, in addition to the writer of the book being inspired, the Spirit also inspires us as we read it.<sup>2</sup>*

*We will find it easier to be open to the Spirit’s inspiration if we keep a “holding pattern” over the words or phrases that stand out to us. This openness to the Spirit allows God to address a problem we thought we had solved, a relationship we thought had healed or a conclusion we’ve already made but that needs to be rethought. The meditation experience may help us “re-see” a situation so that we understand the heart of the other person and have a mercy we didn’t have before. We come away with the eyes of our hearts enlightened (Ephesians 1:18).*