

SHARING SCRIPTURE

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From Dust to Stars

For use: March 22 - 28

Texts: Daniel 12; Romans 8:34; Luke 10:20; Romans 8:18; Hebrews 2:14, 15; John 14:29; Revelation 11:3

One of the potential casualties of the current COVID-19 crisis and the requisite social isolation is our personal mental health. In such a time of stress, just when we need the support of friends and loved ones to maintain our emotional well-being, we are urged to distance ourselves from our social support networks to protect our physical health. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), recognizing that problem, suggests some strategies to practice mental and emotional self-care.

It advises people to take care of their physical well-being by eating right and exercising. They also suggest connecting with others through phone calls and video chats—being sure to express how we are feeling during this time. Taking breaks from the stress by finding pleasant things to focus on is also recommended. Staying informed on the current situation by tuning in to reliable news sources for garnering necessary information is OK, as long as we monitor how much we watch to prevent being overwhelmed by it! [1]

Like the CDC, God knows that we can't survive a steady onslaught of distressing news. During the previous five chapters that we've studied—spanning several years of Daniel's life—he received prophetic messages that were oftentimes confusing and disturbing, containing visions of frightful beasts and images. Several times Daniel became physically ill from the stress of it all. But God knew Daniel also needed to receive some encouraging news.

Fortunately, God concludes the message to Daniel with words of hope. After absorbing the deeply intense visions of Daniel chapter 11, Daniel heard these words: "At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise.... Your people will be

delivered.” God doesn’t sugarcoat the situation, however. There will be a time of trouble, but God gives this promise: “Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake.... Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.”

The only downside for Daniel, though, is this: he wouldn’t get to see this in his lifetime. On the bright side, Daniel could finally rest from the exhaustion of being God’s messenger of these bizarre prophetic visions. He could spend his final days in the blessed assurance that his eternity in God’s heavenly paradise is sealed. This is a reassuring message that we can all treasure in our hearts, even in spite of the current circumstances. At Christ’s second coming, Daniel will rise to receive his allotted inheritance, and so can we.

~Chuck Burkeen

[1] <https://emergency.cdc.gov/coping/selfcare.asp>

For Reflection

Connecting: Set up a group text with your class. Text in one-word or short phrase responses to this question: What do you find most fearful about this current COVID-19 situation? Now text to each other Bible promises that have helped you through times of crisis. Designate a class member to record these texts and distribute the collection to the members of your group.

Sharing: How do you think Daniel felt when he received the news that he could finally retire from his duty as God’s messenger?

1. Relieved that he wouldn’t see such frightening images any longer
2. Relieved that he didn’t need to feel responsible for accurately sharing messages that he didn’t understand and couldn’t explain
3. Distressed to learn that he would never (in this life) understand the interpretation of the messages
4. Disappointed that he would not see (in his lifetime) the culmination of his messages—the Rock cut out without human hands coming to set things right in this world
5. Daniel was pretty numb at this point and just accepted this news without much emotion at all
6. Other:

Applying: Do you have an adequate setup to connect with the less technologically savvy members of your congregation or your neighbors? What can your group do to help them stay connected? Do you have access to extra laptops or tablets that can be shared with them? Can any of you help them learn how to use the devices? Determine what you can reasonably do and outline a plan to provide this practical help.

Valuing: Pick two or three Bible promises that you will commit to memory over the next few days. Share your texts with the others in your group through whatever media you are using right now. Commit to praying for each other during the week.

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