

*Use the following thoughts and questions to have one spiritual conversation. You can pick and choose, use them all or just allow the statement to be your guide. The emphasis shouldn't be about having all the answers, but simply having a conversation.*

**Scripture**

Daniel 1:1-21

## 1. Opening Statement

*Begin your conversation by asking about this main point:*

**Even in a hostile culture, Christians are called to remain true to their identity as God's chosen people.**

This main point is the biblical truth the student's study was built around. Each week there will be one statement that ties the whole study together. These would be great statements to remember together. The hope is that thoughts and ideas will stem from these statements. You can also begin by sharing a thought of your own that you learned during your study of the same session. Ask what thoughts were surprising as the study was taught.

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## 2. Thought From the Study

On the surface of these verses, it looks as if God's people were simply invaded and taken captive. From a different perspective, we see that God's people were able to take God's light into enemy territory. Shinar, Babylon, and the land of Ziggurats (remember the tower of Babel in Genesis 10?)—all these places teeming with idols were suddenly infiltrated by the Lord's army. Israel would be oppressed and her people scattered, but the nations would gain a witness among them to the one true and living God.

► **What challenges do Christians face today that might lead them away from God?**

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## 3. Quote for Discussion

*Discuss this quote together. How does this change your understanding of a relationship with Jesus?*

**"Sometimes God may allow hardships to reach us because he wants his mercy to reach beyond us." –Dale Davis**

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## 4. Conversation Questions

*Use these questions to begin thinking through and applying the lessons to your family life:*

1. Even in difficult circumstances, how can our family see ourselves as being "sent" to the people around us?
2. Why is knowing our identity such an important lesson for our family today?
3. As a family, discuss where we find our identity. Where should our identity be found?
4. How is our family actively seeking God's wisdom for our lives?

*Use the following thoughts and questions to have one spiritual conversation. You can pick and choose, use them all or just allow the statement to be your guide. The emphasis shouldn't be about having all the answers, but simply having a conversation.*

**Scripture**

Daniel 3:8-30

## 1. Opening Statement

*Begin your conversation by asking about this main point:*

**God alone deserves our ultimate allegiance.**

This main point is the biblical truth the student's study was built around. Each week there will be one statement that ties the whole study together. These would be great statements to remember together. The hope is that thoughts and ideas will stem from these statements. You can also begin by sharing a thought of your own that you learned during your study of the same session. Ask what thoughts were surprising as the study was taught.

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## 2. Thought From the Study

Nebuchadnezzar invited the three Jewish men out of the furnace for all to see that the fire had brought no bodily harm to them (v. 27). In fact, there was no evidence that these men were in the furnace: no singed hair, no burnt clothes, and not even the scent of fire. The king rightly attributed this to their God (v. 28), the God he called "the Most High God" (v. 26), and earlier called "God of gods, Lord of kings" (2:47).

- ▶ **What are some other examples in Scripture where we see God being a Savior who draws near to His people during their time of need? (See Ex. 3:6,12; Isa. 43:2; Matt. 28:18-20; Rom. 8:37-39; Heb. 13:5; 1 Pet. 4:12-14).**
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## 3. Quote for Discussion

*Discuss this quote together. How does this change your understanding of a relationship with Jesus?*

**"Enjoying favor in Babylon—in this world—is rare and short-lived. It is not something to rely on or become too used to."  
—David Helm**

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## 4. Conversation Questions

*Use these questions to begin thinking through and applying the lessons to your family life:*

1. What are some areas of life in which our family or other Christians may be criticized for obeying God rather than culture or popular opinion?
2. How can our family demonstrate to our surrounding culture that our ultimate allegiance is to God, not men?
3. What can our family learn from the Jewish men's confession of faith when they claimed they would follow God even if He chose not to deliver them?
4. What does this account teach us about the character of God and His relationship to His people? How does this encourage our family as we face difficulties?

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**Scripture**

Daniel 5:1-9,13-31

## 1. Opening Statement

*Begin your conversation by asking about this main point:*

**God opposes those who remain prideful against Him.**

This main point is the biblical truth the student's study was built around. Each week there will be one statement that ties the whole study together. These would be great statements to remember together. The hope is that thoughts and ideas will stem from these statements. You can also begin by sharing a thought of your own that you learned during your study of the same session. Ask what thoughts were surprising as the study was taught.

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## 2. Thought From the Study

To those who knew the Scriptures, this was no surprise. God's prophets had already laid out Babylon's destiny. They knew this kingdom was a passing fad, here today and gone tomorrow, according to God's timing.

- ▶ **When have you faced something difficult and had to learn to trust God even though you didn't see Him at work in that situation?**
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## 3. Quote for Discussion

*Discuss this quote together. How does this change your understanding of a relationship with Jesus?*

**"There is no human wall so high, no human accomplishment so great, that it is secure against the judgment of God."  
—Bryan Chappell**

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## 4. Conversation Questions

*Use these questions to begin thinking through and applying the lessons to your family life:*

1. As a family, discuss some modern day examples of sin dulling our senses. Why do you think sin blinds us and often makes us oblivious to reality?
2. When has God warned our family away from sin or from self-exaltation?
3. What can our family learn from this account when it comes to listening to God's wisdom over the wisdom of this world?
4. What are some steps our family can take to make sure we're following God's wisdom instead of our own?

*Use the following thoughts and questions to have one spiritual conversation. You can pick and choose, use them all or just allow the statement to be your guide. The emphasis shouldn't be about having all the answers, but simply having a conversation.*

**Scripture**

Daniel 6:1-28

## 1. Opening Statement

*Begin your conversation by asking about this main point:*

**God glorifies Himself through the rescue of those who trust Him.**

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## 2. Thought From the Study

We see how God used this entire story to show His greatness to the pagan world. Darius was clearly impacted by God's miraculous deliverance of Daniel. His declaration accomplishes at least two important purposes: It recognizes the greatness, even the superiority, of Israel's God; and it cancels out the irrevocable edict of verses 6-9. This is an amazing example of how God can even use unbelievers to proclaim His glory. As Proverbs 21:1 says, "A king's heart is like streams of water in the Lord's hand: He directs it wherever He chooses."

- ▶ **Make a list of the attributes given to God in Darius' song. How is God's ultimate mission of receiving glory and honor from people of all nations revealed in this song?**

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## 3. Quote for Discussion

*Discuss this quote together. How does this change your understanding of a relationship with Jesus?*

**"I know without a doubt that you are a faithful God for all those who put their trust in you. When I am in darkness, you are my light. When I am in prison, you are there with me. When I am deserted, you are my comfort. In death, you are my life." —Menno Simons**

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## 4. Conversation Questions

*Use these questions to begin thinking through and applying the lessons to your family life:*

1. What was it about Daniel's faith that made him a model servant? How does our faith impact the things our family is involved in?
2. What are some areas in our own culture in which our family is called to obey God rather than men?
3. As a family, discuss the importance of a consistent prayer life. How can our family set aside time to pray together and for each other?
4. How can our family make sure that God receives the glory for what He accomplishes through us?

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**Scripture**

Ezra 1:1-8; 3:1-13

## 1. Opening Statement

*Begin your conversation by asking about this main point:*

**Worshipping God should be the first priority of His people.**

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## 2. Thought From the Study

After years of living in exile, the people of God were sovereignly given free passage to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. God moved within the heart of the king to not only allow His people to return and rebuild the temple, but to also provide the finances for their mission. The king encouraged people to give a voluntary gift to the Israelites as they returned, much like the type of offerings we are called to give today.

► **When have you witnessed God using unlikely people, like the pagan king here, to provide for His people? Explain.**

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## 3. Quote for Discussion

*Discuss this quote together. How does this change your understanding of a relationship with Jesus?*

**"It is only when we grasp God's unyielding desire to be with us that we begin to see the ultimate purpose of the cross. It is more than a vehicle to rescue us from death; it transports us into the arms of Life." —Skye Jethani**

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## 4. Conversation Questions

*Use these questions to begin thinking through and applying the lessons to your family life:*

1. What are some ways our family can communicate living a better way to our surrounding culture today?
2. God's promise of return was fulfilled under His sovereign direction after 50 years of exile. What can our family learn about the importance of waiting on the Lord and relying on His timing?
3. Just as the people gave of their own resources to rebuild the temple, our family is also called to give. How is the giving of our resources an act of worship?
4. How does this account teach our family about worshipping God? Discuss some ways worship might be outwardly displayed and the importance of our heart's engagement during worship.

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**Scripture**

Ezra 4:1-7; 5:1-5; 6:13-22

## 1. Opening Statement

*Begin your conversation by asking about this main point:*

**God is able to transform hearts and minds to accomplish His will.**

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## 2. Thought From the Study

The reason the Jews declined their help was due to the simple reason that even though these neighbors made sacrifices to God, they didn't worship Him alone—they also worshiped the false gods in their pantheon. These returning Jews knew the history of their people all too well—how they would be drawn away from God because they participated in the idolatry of the surrounding nations. Having learned their lesson about falling into idolatry and risking God's judgment and discipline once more, the Jews decided that they alone would build the temple.

- ▶ **What are some ways you can guard your mind from idol worship? How can you make sure your worship is uninfluenced by those idols?**

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## 3. Quote for Discussion

*Discuss this quote together. How does this change your understanding of a relationship with Jesus?*

**"No spiritual discipline is more important than the intake of God's Word. Nothing can substitute for it. There simply is no healthy Christian life apart from a diet of the milk and meat of Scripture..." —Donald Whitney**

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## 4. Conversation Questions

*Use these questions to begin thinking through and applying the lessons to your family life:*

1. What kind of opposition or adversity comes against obedient Christians today? What can our family learn from the exiles' response to opposition?
2. As a family, discuss what it means to have spiritual apathy. What are some warning signs that we may be approaching spiritual apathy? How can our family guard against this?
3. How did this passage challenge our family as we face opposition in our own lives?
4. How does God's Word shape the priorities in our family? Why should we turn to His Word when fighting opposition and spiritual apathy?

*Use the following thoughts and questions to have one spiritual conversation. You can pick and choose, use them all or just allow the statement to be your guide. The emphasis shouldn't be about having all the answers, but simply having a conversation.*

**Scripture**

Esther 4

## 1. Opening Statement

*Begin your conversation by asking about this main point:*

**The Lord is working His plan even when we cannot see Him.**

This main point is the biblical truth the student's study was built around. Each week there will be one statement that ties the whole study together. These would be great statements to remember together. The hope is that thoughts and ideas will stem from these statements. You can also begin by sharing a thought of your own that you learned during your study of the same session. Ask what thoughts were surprising as the study was taught.

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## 2. Thought From the Study

In addition to her difficult family situation, Esther belonged to an immigrant family, which means she was part of a religious, racial, and cultural minority. The dominant culture in Persia was so unfriendly to Jews that Mordecai and Esther felt the need to hide their cultural identity. Esther knew what it meant to be an outsider.

► **When have you felt like an “outsider” because of your faith? How do you respond in these situations?**

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## 3. Quote for Discussion

*Discuss this quote together. How does this change your understanding of a relationship with Jesus?*

**“God is too good to be unkind and He is too wise to be mistaken. And when we cannot trace His hand, we must trust His heart.” —Charles Spurgeon**

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## 4. Conversation Questions

*Use these questions to begin thinking through and applying the lessons to your family life:*

1. As a family, discuss when God seemed distant in a difficult situation. What happened? How did the situation affect our family's relationship with God?
2. How can our family encourage one another to seek the Lord when His hand of providence is hidden from our view?
3. In what ways has our family's history made us more effective in serving Him?
4. When has our family been placed somewhere for “such a time as this”?

*Use the following thoughts and questions to have one spiritual conversation. You can pick and choose, use them all or just allow the statement to be your guide. The emphasis shouldn't be about having all the answers, but simply having a conversation.*

**Scripture**

Esther 6:6-11; 7:3-10; 9:1-2

**1. Opening Statement**

*Begin your conversation by asking about this main point:*

**God calls us to look beyond what we can see and trust in Him for deliverance.**

This main point is the biblical truth the student's study was built around. Each week there will be one statement that ties the whole study together. These would be great statements to remember together. The hope is that thoughts and ideas will stem from these statements. You can also begin by sharing a thought of your own that you learned during your study of the same session. Ask what thoughts were surprising as the study was taught.

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**2. Thought From the Study**

Esther risked it all, this time to save her people. Esther had to make a choice: to act or not to act. Esther decided to act and respectfully appealed to King Ahasuerus on behalf of Israel, revealing that she was of Jewish descent. Moreover, without naming the perpetrator, she uncovered a treacherous plan to annihilate her people.

- ▶ **Read and consider Proverbs 5:22. How was this truth reflected in Haman's life? How does this Proverb serve as a warning for us when it comes to entertaining personal sins in our own lives?**

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**3. Quote for Discussion**

*Discuss this quote together. How does this change your understanding of a relationship with Jesus?*

**"In a world from which God appears to be absent he is nonetheless present." —McConville**

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**4. Conversation Questions**

*Use these questions to begin thinking through and applying the lessons to your family life:*

1. What can our family learn from this account when it comes to trusting God in the midst of difficult circumstances?
2. How can keeping an eternal perspective help our family persevere in the midst of difficult circumstances?
3. As a family, discuss Esther's courage in this passage. How does her willingness to take risks challenge your walk with Christ?
4. In what ways do Esther and Haman teach our family about humility and pride?



*Use the following thoughts and questions to have one spiritual conversation. You can pick and choose, use them all or just allow the statement to be your guide. The emphasis shouldn't be about having all the answers, but simply having a conversation.*

**Scripture**

Nehemiah 1:1-11; 2:1-8

## 1. Opening Statement

*Begin your conversation by asking about this main point:*

**Prayer demonstrates that we are completely dependent upon God.**

This main point is the biblical truth the student's study was built around. Each week there will be one statement that ties the whole study together. These would be great statements to remember together. The hope is that thoughts and ideas will stem from these statements. You can also begin by sharing a thought of your own that you learned during your study of the same session. Ask what thoughts were surprising as the study was taught.

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## 2. Thought From the Study

Notice that when Nehemiah called out to the God of Israel, he also confessed Israel's sin and recalled their commitment to obedience from the time of Moses. Nehemiah confessed that he and the entire people of God had become corrupt and had failed to keep the commands given to Moses (1:6-7). Moreover, he recognized that their sin had resulted in their current situation (1:8). Their disobedience had led to their exile in Babylon.

- ▶ **Take a look at the prayer of Nehemiah. What attributes of God did He appeal to? What characteristics did he use to describe the people?**

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## 3. Quote for Discussion

*Discuss this quote together. How does this change your understanding of a relationship with Jesus?*

**"To depend on God continually is to pray continually." —Jerry Bridges**

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## 4. Conversation Questions

*Use these questions to begin thinking through and applying the lessons to your family life:*

1. How often do we, as a family, feel burdened to pray for a specific person or group of people and how often do we follow through with prayer? What can we do to make this a priority in our lives?
2. When our family feels unsure or anxious about something, where do we reach first? What can we do to make sure our first step is to reach out to God?
3. Discuss how the picture of Christ carrying our burdens to the cross might make it easier for our family to endure hardships here on earth. What hardships are we currently facing? How might this perspective help us?
4. What does it say about our family if we know God's loving forgiveness but don't obey Him?

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### **Scripture**

Nehemiah 4:7-14; 5:1-13; 6:15-16

## **1. Opening Statement**

Begin your conversation by asking about this main point:

### **God calls us to do the right thing in the right way.**

This main point is the biblical truth the student's study was built around. Each week there will be one statement that ties the whole study together. These would be great statements to remember together. The hope is that thoughts and ideas will stem from these statements. You can also begin by sharing a thought of your own that you learned during your study of the same session. Ask what thoughts were surprising as the study was taught.

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## **2. Thought From the Study**

The good news is that while the enemies of God's people plotted together to stop their task (4:8), God's people stood confident in the face of conflict. The Israelites armed themselves with prayer and persevered in obedience. Simply put, in the face of opposition, God's people guarded one another and continued building the wall.

- ▶ **What are the "wise" aspects you see in Nehemiah's response to the opposition he faced? What would have been an unwise response?**

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## **3. Quote for Discussion**

Discuss this quote together. How does this change your understanding of a relationship with Jesus?

**"Wisdom is the power to see, and the inclination to choose, the best and highest goal, together with the surest means of attaining it." —J. I. Packer**

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## **4. Conversation Questions**

Use these questions to begin thinking through and applying the lessons to your family life:

1. Fear is a strong force that often keeps us from fulfilling God's will for our lives. What are some specific ways that we, as a family, can fight fear with faith?
2. Why is it important for our family to keep a close watch on our own lives as we seek to be obedient to the will and commands of God?
3. When has our family witnessed God doing something so amazing that we realized "only God could have done this"?
4. What are some areas of compromise and blind spots our family tends to fall into? How can we guard against this?

*Use the following thoughts and questions to have one spiritual conversation. You can pick and choose, use them all or just allow the statement to be your guide. The emphasis shouldn't be about having all the answers, but simply having a conversation.*

**Scripture**

Nehemiah 8:1-12

## 1. Opening Statement

*Begin your conversation by asking about this main point:*

**Biblical community must be centered on God's Word.**

This main point is the biblical truth the student's study was built around. Each week there will be one statement that ties the whole study together. These would be great statements to remember together. The hope is that thoughts and ideas will stem from these statements. You can also begin by sharing a thought of your own that you learned during your study of the same session. Ask what thoughts were surprising as the study was taught.

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## 2. Thought From the Study

As Christians, we do not have to wait for the availability of God's Word. We're blessed to hear God's Word proclaimed, not every seven years, but every seven days. That doesn't even include our ability to read God's Word on our own throughout the week. The beauty of gathering together to hear a pastor teach God's Word (2 Tim. 2:15; 4:2) is that we are then equipped for every good work God has called us to do for His glory (Eph. 2:10; 4:11-16).

- ▶ **How can you tell if a church is centered on the proclamation of God's Word or centered on something else? Why is gathering to hear God's Word so important for believers?**
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## 3. Quote for Discussion

*Discuss this quote together. How does this change your understanding of a relationship with Jesus?*

**"A Christian needs the Bible like a human needs food and water. The need never goes away." —Andy Naselli**

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## 4. Conversation Questions

*Use these questions to begin thinking through and applying the lessons to your family life:*

1. As a family, discuss what things in our lives may be taking our focus off of the importance of craving God's Word. How can we work to reduce or eliminate these distractions?
2. What are some ways our family members can hold each other accountable to obeying God's Word?
3. How does this passage encourage or challenge our family in our study of God's Word?
4. In what ways can our family increase our desire to spend time in God's Word and obey what it says?

*Use the following thoughts and questions to have one spiritual conversation. You can pick and choose, use them all or just allow the statement to be your guide. The emphasis shouldn't be about having all the answers, but simply having a conversation.*

**Scripture**

Malachi 1:6-14; 3:7-12; 4:1-6

## 1. Opening Statement

*Begin your conversation by asking about this main point:*

**Worship involves giving God our very best.**

This main point is the biblical truth the student's study was built around. Each week there will be one statement that ties the whole study together. These would be great statements to remember together. The hope is that thoughts and ideas will stem from these statements. You can also begin by sharing a thought of your own that you learned during your study of the same session. Ask what thoughts were surprising as the study was taught.

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## 2. Thought From the Study

Notice that God gave two indictments against His people at the beginning: they showed Him no honor, and they showed Him no fear. Not only did they not honor and fear Him, but they despised His name.

Despising means having an attitude of ongoing disrespect for someone or something; it refers to the act of conveying insignificance or worthlessness upon an object, idea, or individual. The text shows us that the people did this to God by offering crippled, lame, or blinded animals to the Lord rather than the perfect, blameless sacrifice He requested. He even asked them, "Do you think that if you gave even the governor what you're giving me that he'd be okay with it?"

- ▶ **In what ways do people "despise" God's name today?**
- ▶ **How can you guard against this in your own life?**

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## 3. Quote for Discussion

*Discuss this quote together. How does this change your understanding of a relationship with Jesus?*

**"It is possible to worship God with our lips and not worship God with our lives. But I want to tell you that if your life doesn't worship God, your lips don't worship God either." —A. W. Tozer**

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## 4. Conversation Questions

*Use these questions to begin thinking through and applying the lessons to your family life:*

1. Sometimes people assume they are in a right relationship with God, but they are not. What are some ways our family can guard against having such a false notion?
2. What are some areas of life in which our family struggles to give God our best?
3. How does this passage relate to Jesus' words about our hearts being where our treasure is? Where would you say our family's treasure lies?