

Pastor Tom Mortenson

Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

February 14, 2016

Daniel's Prayer of Thanksgiving

Daniel 2:21-23

Prayer: *Father, we do again thank you for your goodness, we thank you for your grace, we thank you for the gifts that you have bestowed on us, most especially for the gift of salvation. And Lord, we thank you for your word, we thank you for the light that it is, the beacon that it is, that we can look to it for truth and understanding and to live our lives. And so today, Lord, once again, we're opening up your book. We're in the book of Daniel and again we pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit, that you would guide and accompany us, that as we look into this material you would again give us your grace to make this a permanent part of our lives. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, Daniel, where we are right now, Daniel is in crisis. King Nebuchadnezzar has had this disturbing dream and he has demanded that his wise men and his soothsayers not only interpret it but first detail to him what the dream is all about. And when none of his wise men were able to say what the dream was, he flies into a rage and demands that all of the wise men in Babylon be executed.

Daniel was now one of those wise men. So were Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They'd been captured from Jerusalem, they'd been transported to Babylon, they were schooled in all of Babylon's learning and now having just graduated at the very top of their class as these newly minted wise men in Babylon, they saw God take the crisis of their capture and turn it into an opportunity to demonstrate that he was with them even in this particular crisis. As you recall, they had refused to eat the king's food and they wound up sleeker and fatter, in other words far more physically fit than all the other Babylonians around them. God says in addition to giving them physical strength, he made them ten times wiser than all the other students. But the result for the moment seemed to be all for naught, because they had almost overnight become wanted criminals who are now marked for death. And we spoke last time about how Daniel's life, like so many other lives that we see laid out in scripture, moves from one crisis to another. And the difference between Daniel and his companions' lives and the lives of those who are outside the kingdom is that what we so often see as crisis, God sees as opportunity.

You know, after my message two weeks ago, Ken Bontrager mentioned to me that the Chinese alphabet which is an alphabet that consists primarily of pictures, I'm told, it has two symbols that are used to describe the one word "crisis", and the symbols are actually

pictures that are stacked one on top of another and the top symbol describes danger, the bottom symbol describes opportunity. The symbol for crisis is danger/opportunity. And whether you've been a Christian your whole life or recently or whether you've never ever been a Christian, there is still one thing that all of us can agree to and that is crises are always opportunities. And another thing I think we can all agree on is that none of our lives are going to be free of crisis. What God is speaking to us through all the different crises that take place in the book of Daniel is that he is still sovereign, that he always has his hands on us and that he will always use crisis as a danger/opportunity to grow our faith by demonstrating how worthy he is of our trust. God is shaping and molding us into the very image of his Son, and the one thing that he is committed to forging in our lives is faith. I mean, faith is -- think of it, faith is the only currency of value in the kingdom. I mean it's the only thing that we can ever offer back to God that absolutely delights him. I mean seeing genuine faith expressed by someone was one of the only blessings that ever caused Jesus to marvel. And you know in almost every case, the faith that Jesus marveled at was being practiced by someone who was way, way out of the religious community. I mean there was the faith of the Roman centurion, and there's an outsider if you ever saw one, and he begs Jesus to heal his servant and that leads to this comment in *Matthew 8:10*, it says: *When Jesus heard this, he marveled, and*

said to those who followed him, "Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith." When a Canaanite woman -- now Canaanite is as out of the mainstream of religious communities you're ever going to get -- when a Canaanite woman approaches Jesus begging for her demon-possessed daughter, he says to her in *Matthew 15:28*: "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter is healed instantly. You see in both of these instances Jesus is marveling at great faith but it's faith produced by a crisis. When you follow Jesus and his disciples, you see them moving and it's always from crisis to crisis and you see them stumbling frequently, whether it's a crowd that they have to feed that they can't manage or a boat in a storm that's about to be swamped, time and again we see Jesus chiding them for their lack of faith. In *Matthew 8:26* it says: *And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?" Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.*

You see, there is a pattern that's taking place here. Over and over again we see that Jesus' desire is always to grow faith in his children. And more often than not when we see crisis, Jesus says opportunity. So if you belong to him or if God is inviting you into his kingdom by faith, don't be surprised if it's a very, very bumpy ride, 'cause I don't care where you are in life, you are going to experience crisis. I mean it may be a school yard bully

who decides to pick on you, it may be a workplace bully who threatens to get you fired, it may be your health, it may be your job, it may be your marriage or your family, you are eventually going to find yourself in some kind of a crisis. My guess is that every one of us can look back at periods in our own lives, those periods of time when every minute of life was a struggle. And then there's those periods of time when life seemed relatively easy and at those times you're sort of waiting for the other shoe to drop. Just remember, God causes all things to work together for one grand purpose, and that is to shape and to mold us into the very image of his Son. The book of Daniel gives us a peek into one life in which the shoe is constantly dropping, and God is using those crises as an opportunity to develop an attitude of trust in Daniel. And that attitude of trust not in yourself but in God is what will take you through any crisis you will ever find yourself in.

And so we're still looking at Daniel's first major crisis or actually I should say his second crisis, his first is being kidnapped in Jerusalem. This is the second crisis. He's now a marked man trying to figure out how best to respond to people who had first recognized him as brilliant and now, well, now they want him dead. And we saw last time that Daniel responded in three different ways to this crisis. First he applied godly wisdom, prudence and discretion in convincing Nebuchadnezzar's agent not to

take his life or the lives of his companions. And secondly, he sought out the fellowship of his companions and they together earnestly sought God in prayer for this crisis. Thirdly, we saw that Daniel went back to God after that problem was solved and he went back to God with a spirit of thanksgiving saying in verse 19: *Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven.*

I want to pick up from that spot in the narrative to look at Daniel's thanksgiving prayer in greater depth. What Daniel is doing is he's thanking God for giving him the means to escape the certain death that was awaiting all of the wise men by giving him what the dream was that Nebuchadnezzar had. This is how Daniel thanked God for that in *Daniel 2:20*. It says: *Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; he reveals deep and hidden things. He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him. To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of you, for you have made known to us the king's matter."*

So Daniel begins his prayer of Thanksgiving by acknowledging three

things that God is responsible for in Daniel's crisis. Number one is the understanding that he now has; Number two, the times and the seasons that he is part of; and number three, the politics and the power he is caught up in. And all of those are areas that God has complete and absolute control over in spite of the fact that so often it appears not to be the case. And just as the disciples had to learn that God had complete control over the weather and over the feeding of the crowd, so too, Daniel is growing in his understanding of God's absolute sovereignty. Daniel and his companions have just completed three intense years of the equivalence of an Ivy League Babylonian education. Nebuchadnezzar and all the professors responsible for educating them no doubt are very proud of the wisdom that they saw in Daniel, but it didn't come from them; it came from God. *Daniel 1:17 says: As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.* See, wisdom comes from God. You graduate from Harvard or Yale or Dartmouth or any of the other Ivy Leagues, you're considered to be full of wisdom and understanding. And the reason why you are considered wise is because the world no longer recognizes what real wisdom is and where it comes from. Now to be sure, if you've graduated from an Ivy League school or any other premiere college, you're probably very bright, but wisdom is not found in the intellect. Wisdom is found in the spirit. *Proverbs 9:10 says:*

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight. Daniel starts off his prayer of thanksgiving by acknowledging exactly where wisdom comes from. He says: *"Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might."*

Now I'm sure most of you know that the second year in college is known as your sophomore year. I think most of you probably know the word "sophomore" is actually an oxymoron. It's one of those words that contain two opposites like "jumbo shrimp" or "awfully good" or "deafening silence." "Sophomore" is one of those type of oxymorons. It contains two different words: "Sopho" which means "wise," it's where we get the word "sophistication," and you know what the second word is, it's "moron." "Moron" means dull or foolish. I mean a sophomore is literally a wise fool, someone who has just enough understanding to think he is wise but not enough wisdom to realize he's not. Well, the vast majority of what passes for wisdom today is of the sophomoric kind. I say that because any wisdom that doesn't originate in the fear of God is not real wisdom it's what, we call "sophistry," and that's something which sounds true, appears true but is not. You see, Daniel desperately needed real wisdom. The wisdom that only comes from God. I mean God was the only one who knew what was going on inside Nebuchadnezzar's head. He was the only one who knew what the dream was. Daniel

asked God for that particular wisdom and he received it. He understood first and foremost that all wisdom belongs to God. And the amazing and wonderful thing is that God loved to share that wisdom with any and all who ask for it. I've said it over and over and over again, the requirements for gaining wisdom from God is acknowledging that you don't have it, that he does have it, and that you're trusting that he will give it to you if you ask. James makes that clear in *James 1:5*, it says: *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.* I want you to think about that just for a moment. Just think about what this entails, 'cause what we're saying here is what gurus and life coaches and philosophers and what pundits would kill for, God says is yours just for the asking. I suppose I should add a fourth qualification that God speaks of in James because when you ask God for wisdom, the fourth qualification is you actually have to believe that he's going to give it to you. The full quote in *James 1* says this: *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.* You see, Daniel asked for the specific wisdom that he needed to answer the

challenge of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and it was a wisdom that was unavailable from any other source but God.

Well, the wisdom that we seek from God is no different, I mean, it's not knowledge, it's not intellect, it's not information but rather the ability to skillfully manage all that life is throwing at you in a way that glorifies God and blesses you. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom doesn't mean that if you're scared of God you're going to get smart. That's not what the verse is saying at all. You know, "fear" means awe and respect. It means giving God the preeminence in your thinking, not just on Sunday mornings but 24/7, 365. Daniel had that awe, that respect, that fear, and so when life presented him with this crisis, he knew precisely where to turn for wisdom. Now I want to ask you this question: When you are in a crisis, what's the first thing that you do? I mean, do you look to the sophomoric wisdom of the world? Or do you recognize what that crisis is pointing you towards and drop to your knees?

The second thing that Daniel thanked God for was his understanding of the times and the seasons. *Daniel 2:21*, it says: "*He changes times and seasons.*" You know, it's a brief little mention right there but I want you to understand, this is a lot more serious than it appears on the surface. You see what Daniel is noting, what

he's acknowledging is something that has virtually disappeared from our understanding of what causes the changes in the times and the seasons. For Daniel it was quite simple. Who changes times and seasons? God changes times and seasons. The reason why Daniel said so is because God said so. In *Genesis 1:4* it says: *And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years."* So it's God who gives us the times marked out as a 24-hour day by the spinning of the earth on its axis, and it's God who gives us the seasons by the earth's orbit around the sun which is another planet that he created. *Genesis 1:16* says: *And God made the two great lights -- the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night -- and the stars.* So Daniel thanks God for the times and the seasons.

Well, to do that today, for us to thank God for the times and the season is to put yourself at odds with a world that now gives all the glory of creation to three other entities. Specifically they are: Nobody, no one, and nothing. See, the materialist naturalist evolution, that's the standard fare that's being taught in our schools today that's been taught now for a generation, is that everything in existence has come about through purposeless random acts of chance directed by nobody, provided by no one, and

attributed to nothing. I mean let me explain why this is so serious an error. God says in *Romans 1* that there is one great overarching sin that man is guilty of. It's really where all other sin comes from. It's the sin that provokes his wrath, and it's probably not the sin that you think it is. This is what God says in *Romans 1:18*. It says: *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.* God says that the great sin that provokes his wrath is suppressing the truth in unrighteousness. And what God is pointing out here is something far, far greater than mere ignorance, it's far broader than even willful ignorance it's taking a truth that is self-evident and obvious and making a conscious decision, a conscious effort not only to reject it but to suppress it. Now God says that his wrath is revealed from heaven because mankind is guilty of suppressing this truth about him and it's his truth revealed in creation. God says his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly perceived in what he has made and yet mankind suppresses that particular truth in unrighteousness. See, what God is accusing us of, what God is stating his case as, is the fact

that his calling cards are everywhere. You know, you cannot wake up in this earth without being bathed in his light, without breathing his air, without stepping out onto his earth, stepping onto his grass, reaching out and touching his trees, looking up at his skies, his clouds, his stars, his universe, all of it belongs to him. We see an abundance of God's creative glory all around us. Yet the collective response of the world is to completely and utterly reject God as the source of his own creation. Instead we have these different entities to whom we ascribe all the glory that belongs only to God and his creation and we insist that everything that we see in creation came about due to nobody, no one, and nothing. I mean, I understand there's all kinds of evidence for the big bang. There's evidence that points to the fact that the planets and all the celestial bodies are moving apart from each other and that they all are moving from some central point. We know that the big bang -- by the way, the big bang theory was a theory before it was a TV show. It says that all matter came about from an infinitely compacted point of matter that blew up essentially into what was our universe. Okay. That's what the basic premise is but when you ask what produced that infinitely compacted matter, the answer according to the world is: Nothing. Nothing produced that matter. And it's given with a straight face. I mean when you ask who's responsible for blowing it up, the answer is simple: It's nobody. So nothing put it there, and nobody

caused it to explode. I mean, when you point to the planets coalescing from this cosmic dust into our solar system and you ask what put those planets there, the answer is: Nothing. Nothing and nobody hung the stars and the planets in space. You know what that truly is? That's suppressing the truth in unrighteousness. God says in *Psalm 19*: *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.* So when you ask who made planet earth to be so perfectly balanced for life, and the answer once again is: No one. Or if you ask who tipped the earth 23 degrees on its axis so that as it travels around the sun it gives us the very seasons that Daniel is thanking God for, the world will tell you time and time again it knows precisely who tipped the world on its axis, two individuals: no one and nothing. I mean we call that suppressing the truth in unrighteousness. Listen to what God says in *Job 38*, he says: *"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements -- surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"*

Daniel in his thanksgiving prayer that he's giving is simply giving to God something that we've taken away from him many, many years ago. The changing of the times and the seasons. I mean, I know

we're stuck right in the middle of winter and I know that this has been a particularly tough night, I got frozen pipes, I don't know if anybody else does but it's brutally cold but at least we know the end is in sight and we also know that as soon as the weather warms up and things begin to green up that everyone or at least almost everyone is going to be giving praise and honor and glory not to God, and strangely enough, not to nobody, no one, and nothing. I mean that evidently is too much to ask everybody to believe in. So instead we have collectively agreed to give all the glory to a benign benevolent overseer who now guides all of our natural processes. It's not nothing, but it certainly isn't God. It is what has become our culture's demigod. It's mother nature. I mean can I break it to you right now? This is going to be a hard truth for you to grasp. There's no such thing as mother nature. Doesn't exist. I mean given the fact that so many want to embrace an atheistic naturalistic evolution that says that every single thing that happens in this world is a mindless accumulation of random chance happenings that produced everything we know of, it seems amazing to me how tightly we cling to the idea of mother nature.

Consider these headlines that just shout out our attachment to her. Here's one. "Clean Energy? Mother Nature Still Knows Best." That was from the European Commission on Energy. "Mother Nature Fights

Back Against Climate Change." That was from Nature World News. Here's one that Science Daily offered, it says this: "Scientists Enhance Mother Nature's Carbon Handling Mechanism. Taking a page from Nature herself, a team of researchers developed a method to enhance removal of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and place it in the earth's oceans for storage." Lawrence Livermore Laboratory had this headline: "Speeding up Mother Nature's Very Own CO2 Mitigation Process."

You look and you see, there are literally hundreds more of these headlines. I just Googled "mother nature headlines," boom! they're everywhere. See, the reason why mother nature remains front and center in spite of the fact that science itself insists that no one and nothing is responsible for everything is because God created us as creatures designed to bring honor and glory to him. And so we're all born with an innate need to worship, to worship something. And when that something becomes no one, nobody or nothing, we're forced to invent something to fill that void, and that something is now mother nature. As G.K. Chesterton once said: "When a man stops believing in God he doesn't then believe in nothing, he believes anything." Now you might say, oh, you just need to lighten up. It's a literary convention. No one takes it seriously. I would say, no, you need to lighten up. See, there's a reason why mother nature has such staying power in our culture,

why its use is ubiquitous, why you see it everywhere, particularly among scientists and that's because the alternative that everything comes from nothing I think is just too hard for everyone to swallow.

So if we go back to that great sin that I spoke of in Romans 1, the sin of suppressing the truth in unrighteousness, we see an ominous response to that sin from God. It's not lightening bolts, it's not earthquakes, it's something considerably worse. *Romans 1:22*

describes what happens when you suppress the truth. It says this: *Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man.* Let me just interrupt right here and say, that's precisely what mother nature is, an image resembling mortal man or woman. Again: *Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore God gave them up.* Time will not let me go into all the consequences of suppressing the truth in unrighteousness. I would just direct you to Romans 1 to see for yourself. I mean it describes the descent of a culture into absolute depravity and it reads like a perfect ongoing description of our culture. I mean what God is saying there is that when he encounters this kind of behavior, he gives people up. And when God encounters that willful level of suppression of his truth, he

basically says to that culture, okay, you guys are on your own. He simply gives us up to our own folly. And we begin to substitute our own wisdom for the wisdom of God and the results of that insanity are self-evident to anyone who clearly looks where we've been and where we're going now. In fact we're in the midst of that process right now.

G.K. Chesterton made yet another observation that seems even more apropos to our worship of mother nature. He said: "It's the first effect of not believing in God that you lose your common sense."

Daniel had the common sense to acknowledge God and to thank him for the times and the seasons. That brings me to my third point.

First point, Daniel acknowledges God in his wisdom. *Daniel 2:20: Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might."* Secondly, he acknowledges God as the God who changes times and seasons. Verse 21: *"He changes times and seasons."* Now thirdly, he acknowledges God as the sovereign ruler over what we see as this seemingly amazingly immensely chaotic process known as politics. *"He removes kings and sets up kings."*

You know, there's one thing that's extremely hard to avoid in our country and that's presidential politics. You know, one way of looking at this process is to say well, okay, it says right here

God is the one who removes kings and sets up kings, therefore I have nothing to do with this political process. Well, let me explain to you why that is wrong thinking. You see, God, God instituted government with one very simple goal in mind, and that's to keep people from slaughtering each other long enough for them to hear the gospel. I mean it really is that simple. People who live with no government live in absolute chaos with the very worst of human nature on display. We think about our brothers and sisters under ISIS rule in Syria and we get a glimpse of what that's like. We have a unique form of government known as a constitutional republic, that is we get to choose the people who represent us. Well, you know, in Jesus's day that was a completely foreign concept. Governments were established by heredity, intrigue, or violence, and the common man had absolutely no say whatsoever in whose government was going to be. But you know in spite of that, God still says that government, all government, is divinely appointed. In *Romans 13:1* he says: *Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.* What's unique about our situation is that because we choose who governs over us, we therefore share in the responsibility of who that person is. I mean, God does remove kings or presidents and he sets them up as well but he does it through people. I mean, if 130 million people voted in the last election, then you could say each

and every one of us has 1/130 millionth of the responsibility for who we selected. I mean that may be a tiny percentage, but a blizzard is made up of snowflakes whose individual percentages are much tinier than that, and God will hold us responsible for what we did with that tiny responsibility. I've said this many, many times before, President Obama is God's appointed man chosen by his sovereign power, put in place by you and me. I'll leave you to decide whether that selection was a blessing or a punishment. But there's no question in my mind that it was God who ultimately made that selection. And the same is true for the presidential election that is coming up this year. It is God who sets up kings and removes them. But he will not hold us guiltless for pretending we have absolutely no responsibility for our elected representatives or for politically supporting any person who flouts God's will either by allowing the killing of the unborn or by mocking God's standard in marriage. People say why are you focusing on those two sins in particular, that's all we ever hear people focusing in on. What about adultery, what about greed, what about lying, something that's endemic to politicians? Well, I'm focused on those two sins only because the political process is focused on them in particular right now. I've heard folks who support politicians who support those kind of things and they say but what about social justice? My answer is that abortion trumps every single social justice issue because social justice means nothing to someone who's already dead.

And 53 million dead babies overwhelmingly trumps any social issues that might come up in this country. Same-sex marriage again goes to the very heart of the image of God that we bear as well, I mean, it's a sin issue just like any other sin issue, but politics has put it front and center. See, in my view, both of these issues are absolute deal breakers and I will not stand before my God responsible for giving my support to any politician who embraces these views, views that are antithetical to God's word. Daniel didn't have to worry about his personal responsibility for the political process. I mean, he knew only that his God removes kings and sets up kings. But we know. And we do. And God will hold us responsible.

Daniel completes his thanksgiving prayer by saying of God this, he says: *"He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; he reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him. To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of you, for you have made known to us the king's matter."* Daniel's celebrating the wisdom, the knowledge and the understanding of deep and hidden things that God had given directly to him, and he acknowledges that God knows all things including those things that are shrouded in darkness and that light dwells within him.

Well, here's what I want you to take away practically from Daniel's prayer. If you are a child of the King, if you are one of his own, if you understand that Jesus Christ was God in the flesh who came to this earth, lived a perfect life and then died on the cross bearing every one of our sins only to rise from the dead victorious three days later and that by faith in his sacrifice on the cross, you, too, can number yourself among those for whom Christ died. By faith you can stand before God with every one of your sins completely paid for, forgiven not by some great act of penance on your part but by the sacrifice of Christ on your behalf, well if you've done that, then you are his child. And everything that Daniel sought for and received from God, the wisdom, the knowledge, and the understanding of deep and hidden things, it's all sitting there. It's all sitting there in God's storehouse waiting for you to access it as well. If you are a child of God, there is virtually no limit to the wisdom and understanding that can be yours merely for the asking. I mean I know this to be true because I've experienced it personally myself. I've experienced it in two of my children, my twin boys, Dan and Ben, they're known for their spiritual wisdom. That's not to say that my other kids don't have wisdom. I don't want them to get ticked off at me. But my boys Dan and Ben are known for their spiritual wisdom and I'm not bragging. I say this because most of you know that they were born 10 weeks premature, and we were told right from the start that they

would be severely developmentally disabled and probably mentally handicapped, and I'm thankful the doctors were incorrect. But for all of their days in elementary school and high school they struggled enormously academically. I mean I'd spend literally hours and hours every single night going over every single homework assignment over and over and over again till my boys could make the connection and fully understand the material. And once they got it, they got it, they had it down, but surviving in a school where everything moves forward at a pretty brisk pace was beyond challenging for them. Somehow by God's grace they managed to pass. However because we knew they had these challenges, we did one thing consistently with them every single day, day after day after day, and that was we prayed, we asked God to give them the wisdom that he would promise to give if we would only ask. They never made it to college but the one thing that I continually marvel at which in some ways mirrors this prayer of Daniel is that now as adult men with their own families, they have demonstrated to us and to all those or around them that God answers that prayer. I consistently get reconfirmed by those around them and by my own relationship with them that they are both men of great spiritual wisdom. I mean it's such a joy to see these two young men so filled with wisdom that folks frequently seek wisdom from them, and to know for a fact exactly where that wisdom came from. And perhaps that's why I'm so passionate about asking people to pay for wisdom. I've seen the

results. If you could only see how desperately these boys as little boys needed that wisdom and how we prayed for it over and over and over again, and how much wisdom they have now. Say my goodness, I know what I'm talking about. God's word is absolutely true, and he gave to Daniel that we're studying right now wisdom. And the wisdom that he gave to that Daniel he gave to my Daniel and my Ben. And here's my point, he's willing to give it to you if you would just ask. *"He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; he reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him. To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of you, for you have made known to us the king's matter."* Let's pray.

Father, what an incredible gift we have, what an incredible promise we have, what an incredible example we see in Daniel, desperately needing wisdom, deep in a crisis, and calling out to you and finding that you are the God who answers prayer. Father, I just want to pray for each and every one of us that may be in a crisis today that may be thinking how in the world am I going to get out of this? What am I going to do? Lord, I want to pray for each and every person in that circumstance to stop and think and realize, God says if any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God who gives

generously without finding fault and it will be given. I pray that you would give each and every one of us the faith to understand that what you say you do, the ability to trust that you will give us that wisdom if we but ask, and I pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen.