

Gratitude

January 3 & 4, 2026

All Bible passages are quoted from the New International Version of the Bible unless otherwise noted.

Daniel 6:7-10 | ⁷ 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. ⁸ Now, Your Majesty, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.” ⁹ So King Darius put the decree in writing. ¹⁰ 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.

- 1. Gratitude must become a HABIT.**
- 2. Gratitude is COUNTER-CULTURAL.**
- 3. Gratitude will make chaos IRRELEVANT.**

Daniel 6:22a | My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions ...

This year: Start the habit of keeping a gratitude journal.

Further Study & Discussion Questions

Getting to Know You:

1. Looking back at the holiday season, what was one moment that brought you genuine joy or laughter?
2. What is a funny or weird habit you have (or used to have) that you do without even thinking? (e.g., checking the fridge when you aren't hungry, tying your left shoe first).
3. As we step into 2026, on a scale of 1 to 10, how optimistic are you feeling? What is one "Lion" (stressor or anxiety) you are already anticipating this year?

Quick Review:

1. Is there anything from the message that resonated with you, surprised you, or gave you real hope for the year ahead?
2. Daniel gave thanks to God "just as he had done before." Why was it so important that Daniel had established his habit before the decree was signed? How does this change the way we view our current peaceful moments?

Digging Deeper:

Read **Habakkuk 3:17–19**.

Habakkuk 3:17–19 |¹⁷ Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, ¹⁸ yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. ¹⁹ The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights. For the director of music. On my stringed instruments.

1. Habakkuk lists a total economic collapse (no figs, grapes, olives, meat). This was his version of the "Lions' Den." How does his reaction in verse 18 ("Yet I will rejoice") mirror Daniel's reaction? Is this kind of gratitude denial, or is it something else?
2. In verse 18, Habakkuk doesn't rejoice in the circumstances (which are terrible); he rejoices in God. What is the practical difference between being grateful for what you have vs. being grateful for Who you have?
3. Verse 19 gives the image of a deer navigating dangerous, high terrain with sure-footed confidence. How does the habit of gratitude give us "sure footing" when our circumstances feel slippery or dangerous?

Putting It Into Practice:

Here are three goals to aim for as we start the New Year:

Goal #1: Mimic Daniel's "three times a day" habit for just this next week to jumpstart your neural pathways.

- **Action:** Set three silent alarms on your phone for Morning, Noon, and Night.
 - Morning: Thank God for Hope (something coming up).
 - Noon: Thank God for Help (strength for a current stressor).
 - Night: Thank God for Healing (a good thing that happened today).

Goal #2: Practice gratitude as a "counter-cultural" act.

- **Action:** Identify one environment this week where people usually complain (the breakroom at work, a specific family group chat, the pickup line at school). Commit to being the one person who "opens a window" by speaking something positive or grateful in that specific space.

Goal #3: Start the Journal.

- **Action:** If you haven't yet, write your first entry in the Gratitude Journal tonight. Don't worry about being poetic. Just write three bullet points. If you are stuck, start with the basics: "I have breath. I have friends. I have Jesus."