

STUDY GUIDE

FOUR SESSIONS



THE **DANIEL PLAN**

FIVE _____
ESSENTIALS
_____ SERIES

FITNESS

Essential Three

STRENGTHENING YOUR BODY

featuring

SEAN FOY, BASHEERAH AHMAD
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Becoming Daniel Strong

"Each time [God] said, 'My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.' So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me."

2 Corinthians 12:9 (NLT)

When we think of physical fitness, we may get a picture of a body builder proud of his perfect physique, congratulating himself on his hard work, flexing his muscles as an emblem of his self-sufficiency. That's not what it means to be Daniel Strong, however. Forget the perfection, lose the pride, and dump the self-sufficiency. In this study on Fitness, we'll learn a very different model of strength.

We'll begin in this session by looking at Daniel himself, the man in the Bible. What was the source of his strength?

COMING TOGETHER

If this is your first time meeting together as a group, take a moment to introduce yourself.

Also, pass around a sheet of paper on which each person can write his or her name, address, phone number, and email address. Ask for a volunteer to type up the list and email it to everyone else this week.



Finally, you'll need some simple group guidelines that outline values and expectations. See the sample in the Appendix and make sure that everyone agrees with and understands those expectations.

When you're finished with these introductory activities, give everyone a chance to answer this icebreaker question:

- » What did you enjoy doing physically when you were ten years old? What did "play" look like for you? (Organized team sports, pick-up games, jump rope, freeze tag, riding your bike, make-believe games?) Were there places outside where you liked to play, such as the woods, the sidewalks, or the park?

LEARNING TOGETHER

AN INTERVIEW WITH **Sean Foy**

Play the video segment for Session 1. As you watch, use the outline provided to follow along or to take additional notes on anything that stands out to you.

- » Becoming Daniel Strong means pursuing excellence in body, mind, heart, and soul – all for the glory of God.
- » The key to becoming Daniel Strong is the ability to lean on God. Daniel did that. He relied on God’s power, not willpower. Self-sufficiency is not desirable.
- » Daniel was intentional about his faith, praying three times a day. We can pray in the morning, check in with God at noon to see if we’ve been relying on God, and check in again at the end of the day.
- » Daniel showed his strength by continuing to rely on God through prayer. He showed his strength through a declaration of his weakness and need for God.




- » We can set an alarm to remind us to ask ourselves, “Are you relying on yourself? Or are you relying on God?”

- » There’s a greater reason to be healthy than just looking good. The greater reason is to be fit to serve God.

- » Small steps equal big results. Progress, not perfection.

- » We need to cultivate a picture of ourselves as healthy. What would we do for God with our lives if we had the strength?

- 
- » The best exercise that will get you in shape is the one you will do. What do you enjoy?

 - » Identify your fitness personality. Are you a solo exerciser, a social exerciser, or a little of both?

 - » Schedule your exercise each day like any other appointment.

 - » Get a buddy to encourage you in your fitness goals.

GROWING TOGETHER

Discuss what you learned from the video. Don't feel obliged to answer every question. Select those that most resonate with your group.

1

Read Daniel 6:6–10 below. How was Daniel's commitment to prayer—issued after a decree forbidding prayer to anyone but the king—a demonstration of strength? How was it a demonstration of weakness?

“So the administrators and high officers went to the king and said, ‘Long live King Darius! We are all in agreement—we administrators, officials, high officers, advisers, and governors—that the king should make a law that will be strictly enforced. Give orders that for the next thirty days any person who prays to anyone, divine or human—except to you, Your Majesty—will be thrown into the den of lions. And now, Your Majesty, issue and sign this law so it cannot be changed, an official law of the Medes and Persians that cannot be revoked.’ So King Darius signed the law.

“But when Daniel learned that the law had been signed, he went home and knelt down as usual in his upstairs room, with its windows open toward Jerusalem. He prayed three times a day, just as he had always done, giving thanks to his God.”

Daniel 6:6–10 (NLT)

2

Why is it important for us to rely on God for everything, including physical fitness?

3

Take a couple of minutes on your own to ask yourself, "What is my big dream? What would I do to honor God if I were physically fit?" Ask God to guide your thoughts on this. Picture yourself as healthy and fit as you could possibly be. Write your big dream in the space provided, and then share it with the group if you feel comfortable doing so. (If you need a jumpstart, see the box below.)

To inspire you to dream big, here are a few dreams from others who have embarked on The Daniel Plan:

- » Get my blood sugar under control.
- » Feel enthusiastic and energetic when I get out of bed in the morning.
- » Lift my mood and manage my stress.
- » Complete a 5K run.
- » Get a black belt in karate.
- » Learn to swim.
- » Spend an active day with my grandkids without getting exhausted.

- » Cycle across the state with grandkids.
- » Have the energy to actively invest in my marriage.
- » Be healthy enough to get actively involved in ministry.
- » Help build a school in India.
- » Volunteer to coach a kids' softball team.
- » Go on a missions trip with my church.

4

It's possible that it will take you more than a couple of minutes to identify your big dream. That's okay. It can be a matter for prayer during the coming week. If you don't have an answer for question 3 right now, you can share with the group some of the things you're thinking about. A small dream is a step in the right direction. Do you have a small dream? What goes through your mind when you consider this question of a dream, when you try to picture yourself fit and healthy? Is it hard for you to picture yourself fit enough to do something significant for God? Does the question make you feel hopeful or unhelpful? Why?

5

What movement do you enjoy? Walking? Swimming? Basketball? Dancing? Mountain climbing? Skateboarding? Racquetball? Trampoline jumping? Skipping rope? If you can't think of something you currently enjoy, what activity could you explore?

“All glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.”

Ephesians 3:20 (NLT)

6

What goes through your mind when you think about scheduling regular exercise throughout the week? What would help you overcome the barriers to doing that? (For example, could you schedule movement for two or five or ten minutes here and there during the day?)

7

Revisit the subject of relying on God. For what issue related to fitness do you most need to rely on God?

==== **What I Want** ====

to Remember

Complete this activity on your own.

- » Briefly review the video outline and any notes you took. Review also any notes from the discussion.
- » In the space below, write down the most significant thing you gained from this session – from the video or the discussion. You can share it with the group if you wish.

BETTER TOGETHER

Now that you've talked about some great ideas, let's get practical—and put what you're learning into action. The Daniel Plan centers around five essential areas of health. In this study you're exploring Fitness, so you can begin by identifying one or two steps you can take to incorporate more movement into your life. Then check out the Food Tip of the Week and the Fitness Move of the Week for some fresh ideas to enrich your journey toward health in those areas. There are also many tips and tools on the danielplan.com website so you can keep growing in all of the Essentials while doing this study. Use or adapt whatever is helpful to you!



FITNESS

Next Steps

Here are a few suggested activities to help you move forward in becoming Daniel Strong. Check one or two boxes next to the options you'd like to try this week—choose what works for you.

- If you didn't identify and write down your big dream during the group meeting, take time this week to do that. Close your eyes and let yourself dream of what you would do to honor God if you were as fit as you could be. Picture yourself fit and doing that. Write your dream on a card or piece of paper.
- Post your big dream somewhere you will see it every day. Reread it and let it motivate you. What is the first small step you need to take to head toward that dream?
- Find a buddy who will go for walks or to the gym with you. Schedule time to work out together at least once a week for the next few weeks. If you don't have an exercise buddy but want one, what is one small step you can take to find one?
- Start a quest for physical activities you enjoy. Page 172 of *The Daniel Plan* book has a list of ideas. Don't hesitate to go after activities you enjoyed as a child. Get a hula hoop, a jump rope, a mini trampoline, or a pair of roller blades or skates. Or play worship music and dance up a storm!
- Visit a gym and ask an employee to explain their classes to you. For example, what is Zumba? What level of class are you looking for—something for a beginner or something more advanced? Listen for

class ideas that sound like fun to you. Even better: visit a gym where a friend of yours belongs and see if you would enjoy doing a class together.

- Try one of The Daniel Plan DVD fitness resources. *The Daniel Plan in Action* DVD contains four 35-minute workouts. *The Daniel Plan in Action: Accelerated* DVD contains six 35-minute and two 45-minute workouts. They are faith-infused and come with a complementary nutrition guide. You can do the workouts on your own or in a group. Ask your church to host a group! For details, see <http://store.danielplan.com/fitness-program/>.
- Sit down with your calendar and find time in your schedule for exercise. Can you schedule ten minutes of brisk walking each day? Can you schedule fifteen minutes twice a day? Be creative, and put exercise into your calendar as an appointment.
- Do the Fitness Move of the Week at least three times this week.
- Memorize one verse related to Fitness. See the memory verses in the Appendix. You can even recite or meditate on your memory verse while doing the Fitness Move of the Week!



Food Tip *of the Week*



You may have heard the term *superfoods* – nutrient-dense foods that pack extra nutritional punch into every package. Superfoods can be found in fruits and vegetables, seafood like salmon, nuts, seeds, even green tea and dark chocolate. Including superfoods in your diet supports healthy eating and gives you the strength to follow the Fitness Essential principles. This week's food tip shows you how to make a delicious parfait that's full of superfoods. Just click the Food Tip of the Week on your video screen (3 minutes), scan the QR code, or go to danielplan.com/foodtip.



Fitness Move *of the Week*



This week's move is great for burning calories: cross-country skiing with no snow! Just click the Fitness Move of the Week on your video screen (1 minute), use the QR code, or go to danielplan.com/fitnessmove.



Praying Together

Because everything we do in our journey toward health depends on God's power, we end each meeting with prayer and encourage group members to pray for each other during the week.

“If you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.”

Luke 11:13 (NLT)

This week, ask God for power from the Holy Spirit to take a step forward on your journey toward fitness. Each person can offer a one- or two-sentence prayer completing this sentence: “Father, please fill me with your Holy Spirit so that I can _____.”

Have someone close with this prayer:

Thank you, Lord, that you give your Holy Spirit for guidance and strength to those who ask. Please fill us with your Spirit so that we can identify movement we enjoy and practice it regularly throughout the week. Please help us overcome our habits of not moving. Please show us what we would be like if we were fit and healthy, and what we could do to honor God if we were like that. Please open our eyes to your big dream for each of us. Please strengthen us with courage and perseverance. Thank you that you are always with us. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.



