

DANIEL

DETERMINING TO GO GOD'S WAY – SPIRITUAL LIVING IN A SECULAR WORLD

Session 4 – Chapter 4

God Reigns

7. A new Nebuchadnezzar came out of this experience. Instead of himself, he gives God glory. Do you think he was simply forced into humility by God, or was there a genuine change of attitude? Explain.
8. Read Romans 5:20. How does this passage apply to the king's story? How is this conversion story similar to other stories you have read or known?
9. What does that hard lesson teach you about how God works in our lives to bring us to spiritual maturity and Christlikeness?

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REFLECTION – GOING FORWARD

- Think of **ONE or TWO** things that you have learned that you'd like to work on in the coming week.
 - *You can list these things on page one of your study binder titled Going Forward.*
Remember that this is all about QUALITY, not QUANTITY. It's better to work on one specific area of life and do it well than to work on many and do poorly (or to be so overwhelmed that you simply don't try).
- Think about the things in your life that have humbled you most. How did pride play in those stories? Take a moment to look closely at your current life circumstances. Are there any areas where pride tends to take over? Pray daily for God to humble you in those areas where you tend to be prideful. Invite the wise counsel of friends to weigh in on this area of your life as you attempt to hear God speak to you.
 - *You can list these things on page two of your study binder titled Application under Session Four.*
- Invite God to work on your mind and heart in those areas you've previously noted. Be honest about your desires and fears, consider writing them down.

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LEARNING THE HARD WAY – GROUP DISCUSSION

Look for ways to put into practice the things you wrote down on page 1. Talk with other group members about your ideas and commit to being accountable to one another.

During the coming week, ask the Holy Spirit to continue to reveal truth to you from what you've read and studied.

**Where we have been so far...

**This is all about pride...

(1-3) Nebuchadnezzar begins his letter to his vast kingdom with the Good News!

- What a drastic change from any decree or message that might have been given by the King up unto this point.
- Can you imagine receiving this letter or being read this letter and hearing these first few lines first knowing the author, knowing where this letter had come from?
- What a powerful testimony, you would know just as we do that this is going to be different than anything before this point.

(4-18) yet another dream agitating the king.

- You would imagine that Nebuchadnezzar by this point and this many years later would have bypassed the others and went directly to Daniel, but it would appear that Daniel is kept apart from the rest though he is the master of the magicians.
- I think it makes the point that Daniel is set apart, these other "wise men" were futile, God gives true understanding and wisdom and Daniel was submitted to Him.
- The lesson of this dream is important and one Neb needed to learn: **(vv 17)** God saw the pride in Neb's heart and was prepared to deal with it. The king could issue decrees but it was the decrees from the throne of heaven that ruled events on earth **Ps. 103:19**

(19-26) The interpretation

- Daniel is troubled by this dream, he cares about Nebuchadnezzar.
- He prepares the king for bad news, **"My lord, may the dream concern those who hate you, and its interpretation concern your enemies!"**
- Neb is the tree
- God will not allow us mere mortals to take credit for His work.
- Wiersbe ~ "We are but creatures, and God is the Creator; we are only subjects, but He is the King of Kings. When men and women refuse to submit themselves to God as creatures made in His image, they are in grave danger of descending to the level of animals. It's worth noting that God used animals when he wanted to describe the great empires of history (Dan. 7), and that the last great world dictator is called the "beast." Men and women are made in the image of God, but when they leave God out of their lives and resist His will, they can descend to the level of animals."
- Acts 9:5** Saul is compared to a stubborn ox.

(27) The king is encouraged

- Daniel's advice was not tailored in a way that would please Nebuchadnezzar, there is a therefore in his message to the king.

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- Daniel was calling for repentance and put his faith in the Most High God.

(28-33) Learns the hard way, humbled / humiliated.

- God is longsuffering with sinners
- Yet when it's time for Him to act He doesn't delay.
- God will have His name glorified throughout the kingdom and this is how it will get done.
- As a note: The king looks out over a truly vast and amazing empire. He has been attributed to the creation of the Hanging Gardens one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world and the Ishtar Gate which is no gate like the one into your backyard. It has been reconstructed and lives in Germany. He looked out and saw spectacular sights through an arrogant eye.
- Another interesting note: Much information is available about his life and reign. There are about 500 tablets dated during his 43 year reign. There are roughly 30 buildings and inscriptions named in his honor. He is mentioned in the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Kings. He is also cited by Josephus and Eusebius, plus numerous other Greek historians. Many bricks excavated in this region contain his name, larger ones usually contain something of religious significance.
- But of the years between 582 and 575 BC there is no activity recorded and Greek historian Abydenus wrote in 268 BC that he had been possessed by some god and immediately disappeared. Not to mention Lycanthropy and boanthropy being a real thing.

(34-37) The King's deliverance

- He lifts his eyes to God in faith and submission Ps. 123:1
- He praised the Lord
- He acknowledges the sovereignty of God; Nebuchadnezzar is truly free.
- The commitment transformed him from living like a beast to living like a man and did not diminish his manhood.
- Finally Neb gives a joyful witness to everyone. When God isn't permitted to rule, He overrules.

Matthew 23:12 - And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

- Nebuchadnezzar learns a hard lesson as God interrupts his life to break him and show him that He alone is the Most High and rules in the kingdom of men.
- God is patient but when we choose to ignore His loving warnings or the signs that lead back to Him we will face the consequences.
- 2 Peter 3:9 – The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.**
- You see the Lord knows all of our actions and our futures IS 64:4. Nebuchadnezzar had change coming, the Lord knew there was a humility there that wasn't present in say, Pharaoh. The Lord permitted Pharaoh's heart to be hardened, just as He would have permitted that outcome here in the case of Nebuchadnezzar, but the king does not harden his own heart. He struggles, he goes back and forth, he gets bits and pieces but he doesn't harden his heart to God.
- It's important to note that Nebuchadnezzar disregards the interpretation, neglects the friendly advice, because in 12 months he is still submitted to his arrogance and pride.

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- This is a repeat of prior circumstances: Nebuchadnezzar is troubled, seeks counsel, receives it, and disregards it.
- Regardless of the amount of time, Nebuchadnezzar's empire would end. However he was given an opportunity to absorb this interpretation and advice seriously and given time to change his ways.
- In 12 prosperous months he disregards what Daniel had told him. Yet after 7 years of insanity, boanthropy /clinical lycanthropy, a complete delusion and loss of rationality, living amongst the wild beasts, he remembers it well, word for word as his understanding comes back to him. **Dan 4:34**
- His own pride forbid him from seeing the work of the Lord in those 12 months, but in his humility he could clearly see.
- Illustration of the shepherd and the lamb.
- Arrogance and pride are blinding to the will of God, He cannot use us when we are prideful. In Nebuchadnezzar's complete brokenness and humility he is able to experience the will of God.
- He reveals Himself throughout the book to correct him and point him in the right direction.
- When we are living in sin, far from the Lord, He will patiently and lovingly try to correct us in several ways:
- Let's look at how the Lord lovingly and patiently tries to correct Nebuchadnezzar.

One way is...

His Word by teaching:

- **2 Timothy 3:16 says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for CORRECTION, for instruction in righteousness..."**
- If we take a look at **2:27** of Daniel we will see that Daniel uses a knowledge of Scripture and a historical proof in speaking with the king.
- The Seed of his conversion is being planted:
- **2:27 Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, "the secret which the king has demanded, the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king."**
 - Daniel knows the truth of Scripture... straight out of the Lord's mouth:
 - **Deuteronomy 18:10-12, "There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord, and because of these abominations the Lord your God drives them out before you.**
 - Remember Daniel is already armed with the dream and its interpretation by 2:27.
 - Daniel knew this wouldn't work, because he knows the Lord and His commandments.
- Daniel confidently knew what would as he is speaking to the king in verse 28.
- **2:28, "But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets."**
 - **Genesis 40:8**, you know the story: Potiphar throws Joseph in prison and there Joseph finds favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison, because the Lord was with him there also.

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- So skipping along, the chief butler and baker have a dream and Joseph notices their sadness,
- **40:8** *And they said to him, "We each have had a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. So Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell them to me, please."*
- Daniel's confidence and strength stems from the Scripture he knows so well and the stories of other Godly men.
- Even if these weren't the exact passages he thought of, they are passages that could arm him for this conversation.
- He wasn't just interested in saving his skin, he was also concerned with edifying and glorifying the Lord and planting this seed.
- God is revealing Himself through His Word.
- **2:47**, we see king Neb getting close, but doesn't make it all the way.
 - **"Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret."**
 - He falls flat, declares who "Daniel's" Lord is, but yet still with a polytheistic mindset.
 - Sounding as if he understands Scripture or at least has heard it before. But...
 - No follow through in his actions or humility as he glorifies Daniel instead of the Most High and then continues in prideful arrogance.
 - At this juncture Nebuchadnezzar is happy to glory because it benefited him, he has prospered therefore he will give some credit and take a little bit of attention off of himself. As we know this isn't true faith, this is a selfish faith based directly on a reward.
 - ✓ THE LORD GAVE DANIEL THE DREAM AND ITS INTERPRETATION. HE DIDN'T JUST DELIVER THIS DREAM AND ITS INTERPRETATION TO THE KING BUT ALSO TAUGHT THE KING OF THE ONE AND ONLY GOD THAT IS ABLE TO REVEAL SECRETS.
 - ✓ THIS TEACHING IMPACTED THE KING BUT AFFECTED NO LASTING CHANGE.
 - ✓ ARE YOU BEING TAUGHT SOMETHING THAT HITS HOME AND IMPACTS YOUR LIFE BUT YOU AREN'T ALLOWING TO AFFECT CHANGE OR FULLY SINK IN? ARE YOU RESISTING GODLY INFLUENCE IN AN AREA OF YOUR LIFE?

His Word by preaching:

- Let's turn the page to Daniel 3
- **3:17** The young men say, **"If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king."**
- They exhibit such a strong faith and confidence in the Lord.
- They are a living example of His Word working in their life.
- Drawing this true faith and confidence from Scripture and from Godly examples in their life.
 - Psalm 27:1-2, **"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of who shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell."**
 - **1 Samuel 17:33-37**, How about that story David gives to Saul, the confidence David exudes because of the work of the Lord in his life already.

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- These three men had been ripped from their homes, held captive in a foreign land and made to be educated in principles far from their upbringing.
- But look how the Lord has blessed them in this secular empire.
- ***Psalm 62:2 “He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved.”***
- ***Psalm 115:3 “But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases.”*** God is “able” to deliver them.
- Regardless of if they die in that furnace or not, their soul will be preserved.
- ***Psalms 121:7 “The LORD shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul.”***
- Scripture is evidenced in their confidence, strength, and faith in the Lord. As they continue...
- ***3:18 “But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”***
 - They are faithful to the Lord even unto death.
 - They are preaching and delivering a powerful testimony fueled by their love of the Lord.
 - You can relate verse 18 to:
 - ***Exodus 20:3-5 Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them:***
 - ***Leviticus 19:4 Turn ye not unto idols, nor make to yourselves molten gods: I am the LORD your God.***
- ***3:28-29*** in the king's blessing of the Lord, he refers to Him impersonally as, “their own God”, “the God of...”, in other words the Lord of the three young men, not his.
 - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are “God's servants” but not King Nebuchadnezzar.
 - He hasn't fully realized that the Most High rules in the kingdom of all men, that includes him, but you see his arrogance is not allowing that to penetrate, because he believes he is the creator of his own kingdom and not counted among them men within it.
 - ✓ YOU WOULD THINK BY HIS REACTION TO DANIEL IN THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER THAT A CHANGE COULD BE SEEN IN HIS ATTITUDE TOWARD “THEIR GOD”, BUT PRIDE HAS CONSUMED HIM AND BLINDED HIM FROM SEEING THE LORD LOVINGLY CORRECT HIM, EVEN WHEN THE LORD WAS RIGHT IN FRONT OF HIM.
 - ✓ SOMETIMES IT TAKES US A FEW LOOKS TO SEE WHAT'S IN FRONT OF US, THESE THREE DELIVERED A POWERFUL TESTIMONY, ONE NEBUCHADNEZZAR HAD ALREADY HEARD AND GLORIED IN.
 - ✓ ARE YOU MISSING JESUS STANDING RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOU? LOVINGLY REPEATING A MESSAGE AND TRYING TO GET YOU TO SEE SOMETHING THAT PRIDE IS STILL STANDING IN THE WAY OF?

The Lord reveals Himself in Prayer:

- ***Daniel 2***, Daniel asks Nebuchadnezzar for time.

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- Now recall, Nebuchadnezzar draws a line in the sand and is unwilling to give time to the fakes in **2:8**, he had lost trust in his usual team.
- Daniel goes into the king and asks for time to seek the Lord, to wait on Him in prayer, Nebuchadnezzar grants his request.
- WOW! What a contrast, you see Daniel was consistently exhibiting Godly character in everything he did.
- His character, consistency, and friendship held some weight with Nebuchadnezzar.
- In **1:20** the king found Daniel and the three young men 10 times better than all the fakers in his court.
- Daniel puts together a prayer team and they wait on the Lord and they hear from Him.
 - **2:46** The King gives the glory and adoration to the wrong person.
 - **2:47**, Nebuchadnezzar comes close. This sign could have been it, the power of this revelation should have convinced Nebuchadnezzar that the one true God is the revealer of secrets, the one who answers prayers, LOOK NO FURTHER.
 - He could've humbled himself and moved to write the letter right away, but he didn't.
 - ✓ HE SAW THE POWER OF PRAYER TO THE ONE TRUE GOD IN THE GODLY EXAMPLE OF DANIEL YET ARROGANCE AND PRIDE STOOD IN THE WAY OF HIM FULLY RECEIVING THIS LOVING CORRECTION FROM GOD.
 - ✓ THIS WAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO FALL ON HIS FACE PROSTRATE AND DECLARE GOD AS THE MOST HIGH AS HE EVENTUALLY WILL AFTER THE LORD BREAKS HIM.
 - ✓ IS THE LORD SPEAKING TO YOU IN PRAYER ABOUT SOMETHING YOU WON'T LET GO OF? MAYBE A CHANGE OR DIRECTION HE WANTS FROM YOU AS YOU TRY TO WAIT FOR THE ANSWER YOU WANT TO HEAR?

The Lord lovingly corrects us through people:

- In all of these examples we've discussed:
- **Chapter 1** the communion between Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel and his friends.
- **Chapter 2** in the prayer and revelation of the dream by Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar.
- **Chapter 3** in the defiance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and the resulting praise Neb gives.
 - In all of these events the Lord was using people to deliver loving warnings.
 - Nebuchadnezzar shows us in **4:9,18** that the Spirit of the Holy God works in Daniel, but yet he doesn't submit to Him until the Lord has to break him.

(Q3) If Daniel had already interpreted a dream successfully for the king, why do you think he was so scared to share this interpretation?

How did he go about preparing the king for the bad news?

- **4:19** we see that Daniel did genuinely care about the king in the way he responds with a pause first as his thoughts troubled him followed by what he says, ***"let the dream concern those that hate you and its interpretation concern your enemies."***

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- **4:22** Daniel declares, *“it is you, O king.”*
- God is using Daniel, a person the King “respects,” “a friend.”
- **4:27** Daniel imparts his own personal biblical advice to try and help the king.
- In other words, repent Nebuchadnezzar and worship the One True God.
 - ✓ GOD REIGNS AND NO ONE IS OUTSIDE OF HIS KNOWLEDGE AND DIRECTION. THE LORD NOT ONLY GOT HIS WILL DONE BUT ALSO SHOWED ENDLESS MERCY TO NEBUCHADNEZZAR.
 - ✓ IN DOING HIS WILL HE ALSO SENT LIVING EXAMPLES OF HIS WORD AND HIS MERCY TO LOVINGLY WARN HIM OF HIS SINFUL PRIDE.
 - ✓ HAS THE LORD PUT SOMEONE IN YOUR LIFE THAT IS SPEAKING TRUTHFUL, GODLY WISDOM THAT YOU AREN'T HEARING BECAUSE OF PRIDE?

Because the Lord can also correct by breaking:

- God's word tells us that God stands against those who are proud.
- If we are proud of our situations, our success, our talents and abilities, our inability to admit weakness, sin in our life, our overall earthly disposition, God may very well take it away so we will be able to see Him as He did with Nebuchadnezzar.
- He may just cut down the forest of pride so we can see Him ahead of us.
- Jas 1:17*** (paraphrased) ***Anything good we have comes from above.***
- Here is something to brag about, if indeed you need to brag about anything:
 - ***Jeremiah 9:24*** ***But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.***
- TODAY, WE STRUGGLE WITH PRIDE JUST AS MUCH AS NEBUCHADNEZZAR DID.
- PRIDE TAKES THE FOCUS OFF OF GOD AND PLACES IT DIRECTLY ON OURSELVES.
- AFTER ALL AT THE CENTER OF PRIDE IS “I”.
- When you try to do it on your own with prideful and arrogant ambition you will be consumed with fear, worry, anxiety, sleeplessness, and more.
- Insanity is defined as a state of mind that prevents normal perception, behavior, or social interaction.
- Let's be honest knowing what you know about the Lord wouldn't that definition aptly apply to a life where we disregard His sovereignty?
- Doesn't that define the mental capacity of Nebuchadnezzar's 7 years in the wilderness?
- We are created to glorify Him, in Him is found peace (not worry, and anxiety, not fear and sleeplessness), in Him is true edification and confidence (not arrogance), and in Him is humility (not pride).

PRIDE HAS NO PLACE IN OUR LIFE OR WITNESS.

ARE YOU MISSING A LOVING CORRECTION FROM HIM RIGHT NOW?

ARE YOU EXPERIENCING A PERIOD OF MERCY AND PATIENCE FROM GOD BECAUSE YOU ARE CURRENTLY HARBORING PRIDE?

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ARE YOU APPLYING "HIS WORD" TO YOUR LIFE SO YOU CAN BE A FAITHFUL WITNESS TO SOMEONE STRUGGLING?

THE RESULT OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S CONVERSION IS AN EVIDENT PRAISE OF GOD, A RECOGNITION OF HIS SOVEREIGN POWER, AND PROVIDING OF A JOYFUL WITNESS. I PRAY THAT THAT WOULD BE ALL OF OUR TESTIMONY AND THAT WE WOULDN'T LEARN THE LESSON THE HARD WAY AND THAT WE WOULD DEPART FROM ANY PUFFED UP PRIDE AND ARROGANCE IN OUR LIVES.

3 POINTS TO HELP US SEE HIS LOVING CORRECTION:

- HIS WORD: TEACHING & PREACHING
- PRAYER
- PEOPLE CLOSE TO US

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GROUP DISCUSSION

Reflect, write, and answer as you feel comfortable

1. How does Daniel's courage in speaking God's truth to the king relate to our responsibility to speak God's Word in our world?
2. What keeps us (like the king) from repenting even when we are clear about our wrongdoing?
3. How do you think Nebuchadnezzar approached his kingdom differently after receiving his second chance?
4. What is it like in your life – do you tend to listen to godly wisdom or learn things the hard way?
Example.