

Living Confidently and Courageously Knowing God is at Work
Message 4 of 6 in the series: "Daniel: Living with Courage and Confidence"

A. King Nebuchadnezzar received a second troubling dream from God, and he called upon Daniel to explain its meaning when none of his other wisemen could do so.

"King Nebuchadnezzar sent this message to the people of every race and nation and language throughout the world: 'Peace and prosperity to you! I want you all to know about the miraculous signs and wonders the Most High God has performed for me. How great are his signs, how powerful his wonders! His kingdom will last forever, his rule through all generations. **I, Nebuchadnezzar, was living in my palace in comfort and prosperity. But one night I had a dream that frightened me; I saw visions that terrified me as I lay in my bed.** So I issued an order calling in all the wise men of Babylon, so they could tell me what my dream meant. **When all the magicians, enchanters, astrologers, and fortune-tellers came in, I told them the dream, but they could not tell me what it meant. At last Daniel came in before me,** and I told him the dream. (He was named Belteshazzar after my god, and the spirit of the holy gods is in him.) I said to him, "Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you and that no mystery is too great for you to solve. Now tell me what my dream means. While I was lying in my bed, this is what I dreamed. I saw a large tree in the middle of the earth. The tree grew very tall and strong, reaching high into the heavens for all the world to see. It had fresh green leaves, and it was loaded with fruit for all to eat. Wild animals lived in its shade, and birds nested in its branches. All the world was fed from this tree. Then as I lay there dreaming, I saw a messenger, a holy one, coming down from heaven. The messenger shouted, 'Cut down the tree and lop off its branches! Shake off its leaves and scatter its fruit! Chase the wild animals from its shade and the birds from its branches. But leave the stump and the roots in the ground, bound with a band of iron and bronze and surrounded by tender grass. Now let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him live with the wild animals among the plants of the field. For seven periods of time, let him have the mind of a wild animal instead of the mind of a human. For this has been decreed by the messengers; it is commanded by the holy ones, so that everyone may know that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world. He gives them to anyone he chooses—even to the lowliest of people.' Belteshazzar, that was the dream that I, King Nebuchadnezzar, had. Now tell me what it means, for none of the wise men of my kingdom can do so. But you can tell me because the spirit of the holy gods is in you."'"

Daniel 4:1-18 (NLT)

Note: It is significant that Babylon was built where the tower of Babel once stood. Throughout the Bible, Babel/Babylon represents evil, pride, and rebellion against God. "Then they said, 'Come, let's build a great city for ourselves with a tower that reaches into the sky. **This will make us famous and keep us from being scattered all over the world.**'" Genesis 11:4 (NLT)

"A mysterious name was written on her forehead: '**Babylon the Great, Mother of All Prostitutes and Obscenities in the World.**'" Revelation 17:5 (NLT)

B. Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream and advised him to repent.

"Upon hearing this, Daniel (also known as Belteshazzar) was overcome for a time, frightened by the meaning of the dream. Then the king said to him, 'Belteshazzar, don't be alarmed by the dream and what it means.' Belteshazzar replied, 'I wish the events foreshadowed in this dream would happen to your enemies, my lord, and not to you! The tree you saw was growing very tall and strong, reaching high into the heavens for all the world to see. It had fresh green leaves and was loaded with fruit for all to eat. Wild animals lived in its shade, and birds nested in its branches. **That tree, Your Majesty, is you.** For you have grown strong and great; your greatness reaches up to heaven, and your rule to the ends of the earth. Then you saw a messenger, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, "Cut down the tree and destroy it. But leave the stump and the roots in the ground, bound with a band of iron and bronze and surrounded by tender grass. Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven. Let him live with the animals of the field for seven periods of time." This is what the dream means, Your Majesty, and what the Most High has declared will happen to my lord the king. You will be driven from human society, and you will live in the fields with the wild animals. You will eat grass like a cow, and you will be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven periods of time will pass while you live this way, until you learn that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world and gives them to anyone he chooses. But the stump and roots of the tree were left in the ground. This means that you will receive your kingdom back again when you have learned that heaven rules. King Nebuchadnezzar, please accept my advice. **Stop sinning and do what is right.** Break from your wicked past and be merciful to the poor. Perhaps then you will continue to prosper.'" Daniel 4:19-27 (NLT)

Pride = “Undue confidence in and attention to one's own skills, accomplishments, state, possessions, or position.” Holman Bible Dictionary

WARNING! Pride is serious sin because it turns us against God and each other. If left unchecked, it will lead to destruction. “Pride goes before destruction, and haughtiness before a fall.” Proverbs 16:18 (NLT)

“**God opposes the proud** but gives grace to the humble.’ So, humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor.” 1 Peter 5:5b-6 (NLT)

VERY, VERY IMPORTANT! When God makes it clear to us that we’re being prideful and going the wrong way, we need to repent. “Do you think that I like to see wicked people die? says the Sovereign Lord. Of course not! I want them to turn from their wicked ways and live.” Ezekiel 18:23 (NLT)

C. Nebuchadnezzar didn’t take Daniel’s advice and suffered the consequences.

“But all these things did happen to King Nebuchadnezzar. **Twelve months later** he was taking a walk on the flat roof of the royal palace in Babylon. As he looked out across the city, he said, ‘Look at this great city of Babylon! **By my own mighty power, I have built this beautiful city as my royal residence to display my majestic splendor.**’ While these words were still in his mouth, a voice called down from heaven, ‘O King Nebuchadnezzar, this message is for you! You are no longer ruler of this kingdom. You will be driven from human society. You will live in the fields with the wild animals, and you will eat grass like a cow. Seven periods of time will pass while you live this way, **until you learn that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world and gives them to anyone he chooses.**’ That same hour the judgment was fulfilled, and Nebuchadnezzar was driven from human society. He ate grass like a cow, and he was drenched with the dew of heaven. He lived this way until his hair was as long as eagles’ feathers and his nails were like birds’ claws.” Daniel 4:28-33 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! We must never forget that everything we have comes from the Lord. “Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery... You may say to yourself, ‘**My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.**’ **But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth...**”

Deuteronomy 8:12-14 & 17-18a (NIV)

“**What do you have that God hasn’t given you?** And if everything you have is from God, why boast as though it were not a gift?” 1 Corinthians 4:7b (NLT)

D. Seven years later, Nebuchadnezzar regained his sanity, and he praised and worshiped the Lord.

“After this time had passed, I, Nebuchadnezzar, looked up to heaven. **My sanity returned, and I praised and worshiped the Most High and honored the one who lives forever.** His rule is everlasting, and his kingdom is eternal. All the people of the earth are nothing compared to him. He does as he pleases among the angels of heaven and among the people of the earth. No one can stop him or say to him, ‘What do you mean by doing these things?’ When my sanity returned to me, so did my honor and glory and kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored as head of my kingdom, with even greater honor than before. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and glorify and honor the King of heaven. **All his acts are just and true, and he is able to humble the proud.**” Daniel 4:34-37 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! We can take great comfort in knowing that God is working in the lives of pagan leaders and notorious sinners all over the world in ways we can’t even imagine. That’s why Paul urged us pray for them. “I urge you, first of all, to **pray for all people.** Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them. **Pray this way for kings and all who are in authority** so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity. This is good and pleases God our Savior, who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth.” 1 Timothy 2:1-4 (NLT)

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Connect Group Discussion Questions:

Read Daniel 4, and then discuss the following questions:

1. Does it surprise you that God revealed Himself in miraculous ways on multiple occasions to King Nebuchadnezzar? (Daniel 2:46-47, Daniel 3:28, Daniel 4:27, Ezekiel 18:23)

2. Why is pride such a serious sin in God's eyes? (Proverbs 16:18, 1 Peter 5:5-6, Isaiah 14:12-14)
3. Read Deuteronomy 8:11-18 & 1 Corinthians 4:7. Describe a time in your life when God blessed you richly. How did you thank Him? Was it really necessary for Moses to warn the people of Israel not to forget God after they experienced His blessings?
4. In 1 Timothy 2:1-4, Paul urges us to pray for all people in authority. How should we pray for Vladimir Putin, the president of Russia; or Xi Jinping, the general secretary of the Chinese communist party? How might the world change if God changed their hearts like he changed the heart of Nebuchadnezzar?
5. Discuss the following CS Lewis quotes on pride:

“According to Christian teachers, the essential vice, the utmost evil, is Pride. Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness, and all that, are mere flea bites in comparison: it was through Pride that the devil became the devil: Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind.”

“A proud man is always looking down on things and people; and, of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you.”

“For pride is spiritual cancer: it eats up the very possibility of love, or contentment, or even common sense.”