

## Courageously and Confidently Speaking Truth

Message 5 of 6 in the series: "Daniel: Living with Courage and Confidence"

### A. Even though Babylon was surrounded by troops from the Medes and Persians, King Belshazzar decided to throw a feast for his nobles.

"Many years later King Belshazzar gave a great feast for 1,000 of his nobles, and he drank wine with them. While Belshazzar was drinking the wine, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver cups that his predecessor, Nebuchadnezzar, had taken from the Temple in Jerusalem. He wanted to drink from them with his nobles, his wives, and his concubines. So **they brought these gold cups taken from the Temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his nobles, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. While they drank from them they praised their idols made of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.** Suddenly, they saw the fingers of a human hand writing on the plaster wall of the king's palace, near the lampstand. The king himself saw the hand as it wrote, and his face turned pale with fright. His knees knocked together in fear and his legs gave way beneath him. The king shouted for the enchanters, astrologers, and fortune-tellers to be brought before him. He said to these wise men of Babylon, '**Whoever can read this writing and tell me what it means** will be dressed in purple robes of royal honor and will have a gold chain placed around his neck. He **will become the third highest ruler in the kingdom!**' But when all the king's wise men had come in, none of them could read the writing or tell him what it meant. So the king grew even more alarmed, and his face turned pale. His nobles, too, were shaken. But when the queen mother heard what was happening, she hurried to the banquet hall. She said to Belshazzar, 'Long live the king! Don't be so pale and frightened. There is a man in your kingdom who has within him the spirit of the holy gods. During Nebuchadnezzar's reign, **this man was found to have insight, understanding, and wisdom like that of the gods.** Your predecessor, the king—your predecessor King Nebuchadnezzar—made him chief over all the magicians, enchanters, astrologers, and fortune-tellers of Babylon. This man Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar, has exceptional ability and is filled with divine knowledge and understanding. He can interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve difficult problems. **Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means.**' So Daniel was brought in before the king. The king asked him, 'Are you Daniel, one of the exiles brought from Judah by my predecessor, King Nebuchadnezzar? I have heard that you have the spirit of the gods within you and that you are filled with insight, understanding, and wisdom. My wise men and enchanters have tried to read the words on the wall and tell me their meaning, but they cannot do it. I am told that you can give interpretations and solve difficult problems. If you can read these words and tell me their meaning, you will be clothed in purple robes of royal honor, and you will have a gold chain placed around your neck. You will become the third highest ruler in the kingdom.'"

Daniel 5:1-16 (NLT)

*Note:* Archaeological finds (the Cylinder of Nabonidus) and numerous ancient documents confirm that Belshazzar was serving as coregent with his father, Nabonidus, when Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians in 539 BC. Belshazzar could only offer the third highest place in the kingdom as a reward because Nabonidus held first place in the kingdom and Belshazzar held the second.

**IMPORTANT!** God had permitted Nebuchadnezzar to take some of the sacred objects from the temple in Jerusalem because God's people had stubbornly refused to faithfully worship Him. "**These things happened because of the Lord's anger against the people of Jerusalem and Judah, until he finally banished them from his presence and sent them into exile.**" 2 Kings 24:20 (NLT)

**IMPORTANT!** Daniel lived such an exemplary life that he was the first person the pagan queen mother recommended when Belshazzar needed spiritual guidance. "**Live such good lives among the pagans** that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us." 1 Peter 2:12 (NIV)

### B. Daniel confidently and courageously rebuked Belshazzar for pridefully using sacred cups from the Temple in Jerusalem to worship his idols even though he knew all about how God had humbled Nebuchadnezzar.

"Daniel answered the king, 'Keep your gifts or give them to someone else, but I will tell you what the writing means. Your Majesty, the Most High God gave sovereignty, majesty, glory, and honor to your predecessor, Nebuchadnezzar. He made him so great that people of all races and nations and languages trembled before him in fear. He killed those he wanted to kill and spared those he wanted to spare. He honored those he wanted to honor and disgraced those he wanted to disgrace. But when his heart and mind were puffed up with arrogance, he was brought down from his royal throne and stripped of his glory. He was driven from

human society. He was given the mind of a wild animal, and he lived among the wild donkeys. He ate grass like a cow, and he was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he learned that the Most High God rules over the kingdoms of the world and appoints anyone he desires to rule over them. You are his successor, O Belshazzar, and **you knew all this, yet you have not humbled yourself. For you have proudly defied the Lord of heaven** and have had these cups from his Temple brought before you. You and your nobles and your wives and concubines have been drinking wine from them while praising gods of silver, gold, bronze, iron, wood, and stone—gods that neither see nor hear nor know anything at all. But you have not honored the God who gives you the breath of life and controls your destiny! So God has sent this hand to write this message.” Daniel 5:17-24 (NLT)

**IMPORTANT!** Pride blinds us to our flaws and keeps us from learning from our own mistakes and the mistakes of others. “When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.”

Proverbs 11:2 (NIV)

**IMPORTANT!** Pridefully defying God makes Him our adversary. “**The Lord detests the proud**; they will surely be punished.” Proverbs 16:5 (NLT) “**God opposes the proud** but gives grace to the humble.” James 4:6b (NLT)

**IMPORTANT!** We must not pridefully defy God and use our bodies, which are sacred objects (temples of the Holy Spirit), to commit sexual immorality. “**Don’t you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit**, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.” 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NLT)

“It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of **you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable**, not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God...” 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 (NIV)

### C. God enabled Daniel to confidently and courageously interpret the writing on the wall spelling out Belshazzar’s imminent doom.

“This is the message that was written: Mene, Mene, Tekel, and Parsin. This is what these words mean:

*Mene* means “numbered”—God has numbered the days of your reign and has brought it to an end.

*Tekel* means “weighed”—you have been weighed on the balances and have not measured up.

*Parsin* means “divided”—your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians.’

Then at Belshazzar’s command, Daniel was dressed in purple robes, a gold chain was hung around his neck, and he was proclaimed the third highest ruler in the kingdom. That very night Belshazzar, the Babylonian king, was killed. And Darius the Mede took over the kingdom at the age of sixty-two.”

Daniel 5:25-32 (NLT)

**IMPORTANT!** We are wise to ask God to teach us how to number our days so we use them well. “Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” Psalm 90:12 (NIV)

**IMPORTANT!** Belshazzar was out of time and apparently failed to repent, but we can learn from his bad example. “For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people’s sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So we are Christ’s ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, ‘**Come back to God!**’ For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ. As God’s partners, we beg you not to accept this marvelous gift of God’s kindness and then ignore it. For God says, ‘At just the right time, I heard you. On the day of salvation, I helped you.’ Indeed, **the ‘right time’ is now. Today is the day of salvation.**” 2 Corinthians 5:19-6:2 (NLT)

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### Connect Group Discussion Questions:

Read Daniel 5, and then answer the following questions:

1. What would you say to someone who maintains that the Bible is just a collection of made-up stories and there is no archaeological evidence for the people and places in the Bible? Is this important?
2. Why did God permit Nebuchadnezzar to destroy Jerusalem, raid the temple, and take thousands of Jews like Daniel into exile for 70 years? (2 Kings 24:20, Jeremiah 25:1-14)

3. Do you think it's legitimate to compare Belshazzar's sacrilegious use of sacred cups from the Jerusalem Temple to worship idols and our sinful use of our bodies for sexual immorality? (1 Corinthians 6:15-20, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5) Why? Why not?
4. Why did the Queen Mother tell Bellshazzar to talk to Daniel? Why is it a good thing if our unbelieving friends ask for our insights on spiritual matters? (1 Peter 2:12)
5. Discuss the following statements about pride:  
Pride blinds us to our flaws and keeps us from learning from our own mistakes and the mistakes of others. (Proverbs 11:2)  
Pridefully defying God makes Him our adversary. (James 4:6)
6. What would it look like if we wisely numbered our days? (Psalm 90:12)
7. Spend some time praying as a group for friends and family who are far away from God. Ask God to give you courage and confidence to speak to people about Jesus before it's too late. (2 Corinthians 5:19-6:2)