

## WARM-UP

- Recall a time growing up when you felt left out. What happened and how did you respond?
- Would you say that you're easily affected or swayed by people's opinions of you? What makes you say that?
- How would you describe a faithful person? Identify some things you think a faithful person should or should not do.

**WORD** *<sup>5</sup>Immediately the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, opposite the lampstand. And the king saw the hand as it wrote. <sup>6</sup>Then the king's color changed, and his thoughts alarmed him; his limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together. <sup>7</sup>The king called loudly to bring in the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers. The king declared to the wise men of Babylon, "Whoever reads this writing, and shows me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around his neck and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom."* **DANIEL 5:5-7**

(Read also **DANIEL 5:1-4, 8-31**.)

Belshazzar was now the ruler of the Babylonian empire. Like his predecessor, he was powerful and prideful. But unlike Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar did not acknowledge God and change his ways. As a result, Belshazzar's kingdom came to an abrupt end.

The truth is, the God who sets up leaders is also the One who removes them, holds people accountable, and brings justice and peace. He does all these according to His goodness and plan for the redemption of the world. God had given Judah over

to Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian empire, but eventually Babylon was given over to Darius and the Medo-Persian empire. This was not merely because of political or military might. It was ultimately because of God's power and strength.

This is a sad story of the king's pride and judgment, sadder even than the events recorded in Daniel 4. But this is also a story of how Daniel responded to God's sovereign plan. We will look at that today.

## 1 | Service is for the long haul—whether or not it is recognized.

*<sup>13</sup>Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king answered and said to Daniel, "You are that Daniel, one of the exiles of Judah, whom the king my father brought from Judah. <sup>14</sup>I have heard of you that the spirit of the gods is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you."*

### **DANIEL 5:13-14**

The message the king received caused him to panic. This resulted in the queen mother remembering Daniel, a man who had served Nebuchadnezzar and their kingdom. But for some reason, Daniel was no longer part of the inner circle. We can only surmise what had happened and how Daniel had become "a has been." However, even though Daniel had lost his position in the king's court, God gave him an opportunity to be faithful. Daniel had grown old and served three consecutive kingdoms, but was now remembered and called back during the crisis. He had remained faithful, even in obscurity. In Daniel 5:10-12, how did the queen describe Daniel? How sure was she that Daniel could help?

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## Proclaiming God's truth is essential—whether or not it is accepted.

*Then Daniel answered and said before the king, "Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another. Nevertheless, I will read the writing to the king and make known to him the interpretation."* **DANIEL 5:17**

The king needed Daniel's help, and Daniel interpreted the dream. Imagine telling the king that he had *not humbled* his heart and was too proud (Daniel 5:22–23). The king could have had Daniel imprisoned and even executed. But Daniel proclaimed the truth at the risk of his own life. He did so, not knowing how the king would respond. We proclaim God's truth even if people may reject us and His message. Why do you think *gifts* and *rewards* did not motivate Daniel?

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## APPLICATION

- What can you learn from Daniel's life? How will you apply it to yours starting today?
- Compare the responses of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4) and Belshazzar (Daniel 5) to God's rebuke through Daniel. What were the effects on their lives and kingdom? Reflect on the danger of pride and the importance of accountability this week.
- What could be hindering you from proclaiming God's truth? How can you overcome this and to whom can you share your faith with this week?

## PRAYER

- Thank God that He is in control of your life, your nation, and the world. Declare His power over all.
- Pray that you would remain faithful to God and serve as He has called you to, even in difficulty and obscurity.
- Ask God for boldness to proclaim His truth to those around you. Pray they would respond to the truth of the gospel with repentance and faith.



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