

Radical Intervention



Week Four

inTro



Read This Week's Passage:
Daniel 4

As you read and meditate over Daniel 4, think about what can we learn about Nebuchadnezzar's conversion story and the biblical injunctions to not rush to judge.

PRIDE

Pride is touted as a positive virtue in the secular world, as long as it presented in a socially acceptable and palatable manner. Even in the Christian community, some sins are looked upon with disdain but the subtle nature of pride in one's own heart gets a pass. Of course, there is plain arrogance that we abhor. The irony is that we abhor it the more because of the vestiges of pride that we have in our own hearts. We hate the characteristics in others that we ourselves fully possess.

The story of Nebuchadnezzar's public humiliation and fall from pride is a warning especially to those living in the end of time. Pride is a characteristic that we are to ask God to expunge from our lives. Pride will be the downfall of Christian living just before Jesus comes. Of the eight stories in Daniel, this story reveals the characteristic that we are to avoid as the prophecies of Daniel are being fulfilled.



inScribe

Write out Daniel 4 from the translation of your choice. If you're pressed for time, write out Daniel 4:19–27. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, outline, or mind map the chapter.



Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

Circle repeated words/phrases/ideas

Underline words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you

Draw **Arrows** to connect words/phrases to other associated or related words/phrases

What special insights do your marks seem overall to point to?

Memorize your favorite verse in Daniel 4. Write it out multiple times to help with memorization.

Have you ever had an experience where you felt that God had humbled you? How did you feel?

How does Nebuchadnezzar's experience shed light on that experience?

CURING PRIDE

Daniel chapter 4 is the only chapter that is not written by Daniel. Instead, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon writes his personal testimony. Here Nebuchadnezzar is given another dream; this time he remembers it. The dream as interpreted by Daniel is a warning for Nebuchadnezzar to humble himself or he will become a beast for seven years. For a time, the king heeds the warning but old habits are hard to break. While Nebuchadnezzar is in the midst of his egotistical boast, a voice comes from heaven and the king is stricken with insanity. For seven years, the greatest king on earth is reduced to an animal. Humbled, the king acknowledges the God of heaven and is converted. This is the last reference that we hear about Nebuchadnezzar in the Bible.

This was a radical intervention by God. It took being seven years as a beast to bring Nebuchadnezzar to his senses. The pride of Nebuchadnezzar had to be broken before he could feel his need for God. As C. S. Lewis stated, "it was through pride that the devil became the devil" and is "the complete anti-God state of mind." Augustine stated, "It was pride that changed angels into devils; it is humility that makes men as angels." The drastic nature God's intervention to rid Nebuchadnezzar reveals how deep-seated pride is.

Sin is typically viewed in terms of categories from the heinous sins of the serial killer to the white lie. Pride would not typically make it to a person's top ten list of sins. Yet on God's list, pride is number one. Proverbs 6:16–19 says "These six things the Lord hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren."

On God's top seven list of sins, pride ranks higher than murder. Nebuchadnezzar's testimony echoes down to the end of time as a warning to God's people of the sin of pride and God's dramatic intervention to cure a proud monarch of pride.

A DEEPER LOOK INTO CHAPTER 4

What condition did Nebuchadnezzar have for seven years?

“Today psychiatrists have diagnosed Nebuchadnezzar’s behavior as a variant of paranoia and schizophrenia...The patient imagines that he had been transformed into a wolf (lycanthropy, an ox (boanthropy), or another animal (dog, leopard, snake, crocodile), and behaves as such down to the most intimate details. A 49-year old woman was convince her head was that of a wolf complete with snout and fangs. And when she opened her mouth to speak, she would hear herself growl and howl like a beast.” (Jacques Doukhan, *Secrets of Daniel*, p. 70)

“The proud king’s hair grew long and matted like the ruffled feathers of a buzzard, and his nails resembled the tailings of a bird of prey. Wide-eyed and gibbering, he plucked grass, and stuffing it into his mouth, munched it like an ox.” (Leslie Hardinge, *Jesus is My Judge*, p. 58)

How do we reconcile God’s loving nature with His making Nebuchadnezzar a beast for seven years?

Seven years as a beast seems hard. Some have false circulated that God does not discipline, and that God does not kill. It is a false view that reduces love to mere sentimentalism and enabling. If we define love from Scripture rather than from popular culture, we see a picture of God’s love that is the perfect blend of justice and mercy from the vantage point of eternity.

The story of Nebuchadnezzar reveals God’s eternal perspective of saving the king for eternity and weighing the temporary discomfort of being an animal for seven years. From the eternal perspective, seven years of being a beast was the most loving thing that God could do. As C. S. Lewis stated, “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain.” (C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, p. 91). This is not to say that every uncomfortable thing, trial, or calamity is God trying to get our attention; there is an enemy of souls that must be factored in. However, we cannot miss the point of Daniel 3 that God’s first and primary goal for your life is saving you for eternity; everything else is secondary. God is willing to allow temporary discomfort if that will bring us to decide eternal salvation with Him.

“If we allow our minds to be absorbed by worldly interests, the Lord may give us time by removing from us our idols of gold, of houses, or of fertile lands.” (Ellen White, *My Life Today*, p. 18.)



inTerpret

After looking at your scribed and annotated text, what special insights do your marks overall seem to point to?



What questions emerge after studying this passage? What parts are difficult?

What other principles and conclusions do you find?

How might God be shouting in your life?



What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Proverbs 8:13

Proverbs 11:2

Proverbs 13:10

Proverbs 16:18, 19

Proverbs 18:12

Jeremiah 9:23

Isaiah 14:12–14

Ezekiel 28:11–16

James 4:6, 10

Philippians 2:3

What other verses/promises come to mind in connection with Daniel 4?

Review your memorized verse from Daniel 4.

WHATEVER IT TAKES

God dramatic intervention to save Nebuchadnezzar for eternity reveals the heart of God and His desire to save to the uttermost. In terms of salvation, one of the most radical prayers that one can pray is: “*Lord, whatever it takes, save me.*” It took seven years as a beast for Nebuchadnezzar to come to his senses. This is a radical prayer that gives God the permission to intervene in your life.

Our sense of dependence upon God is the most helpless yet invincible place that we can be as a Christian. Sometimes, the worst thing that ever happened to us is the best thing that has ever happened to us.

On July 30, 1967, Joni Eareckson Tada dove into a shallow spot of Chesapeake Bay, breaking her neck between the fourth and fifth cervical vertebrae. She became a quadriplegic being paralyzed from the shoulders down. Her entire adult life she has been confined to a wheel chair. In her book she states, “In a way I wish I could take to heaven my old, tattered Everest and Jennings wheelchair. I would point to the empty seat and say, ‘Lord, for decades I was paralyzed in this chair’ ...At that point, with my strong and glorified body, I might sit in it, rub the armrests with my hands, look up at Jesus, and add, ‘The weaker I felt in this chair, the harder I leaned on You.’” (Joni Eareckson Tada, *Heaven Your Real Home*, p. 184)

Salvation from an eternal perspective gives our present trials a different perspective especially if those hardships lead us to a greater dependence on God.



inVite

Where do you see Jesus in Daniel 4?

←
What is He saying to you through these texts?

How do you see Jesus differently or see Him again?

Prayer: How do you respond to seeing Jesus in this way?



Review the memory verse.
How does it apply to your
life this week?

After this week's study
of the chapter, what are
personal applications you are
convicted of in your life?

What are practical applications
you must make in your public and
social life?

FROM PROUD KING TO HUMBLE CHILD OF GOD

In a moment the reason that God had given him was taken away; the judgment that the king thought perfect, the wisdom on which he prided himself, was removed, and the once mighty ruler was a maniac. His hand could no longer sway the scepter. The messages of warning had been unheeded; now, stripped of the power his Creator had given him, and driven from men, Nebuchadnezzar "did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.

For seven years Nebuchadnezzar was an astonishment to all his subjects; for seven years he was humbled before all the world. Then his reason was restored and, looking up in humility to the God of heaven, he recognized the divine hand in his chastisement. In a public proclamation he acknowledged his guilt and the great mercy of God in his restoration. "At the end of the days," he said, "I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored Him that liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou? "At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honor and brightness returned unto me; and my counselors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me."

The once proud monarch had become a humble child of God; the tyrannical, overbearing ruler, a wise and compassionate king. He who had defied and blasphemed the God of heaven, now acknowledged the power of the Most High and earnestly sought to promote the fear of Jehovah and the happiness of his subjects. Under the rebuke of Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords, Nebuchadnezzar had learned at last the lesson which all rulers need to learn—that true greatness consists in true goodness. He acknowledged Jehovah as the living God, saying, "I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment: and those that walk in pride He is able to abase.

God's purpose that the greatest kingdom in the world should show forth His praise was now fulfilled. This public proclamation, in which Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged the mercy and goodness and authority of God, was the last act of his life recorded in sacred history. (*Prophets and Kings* by E. G. White, pp. 520–521)

Life is tenuous, and what we're doing now could be our final act. How do you like to be recorded in God's book and in the memory of those around you? What can you learn from the King's experience?



Share insights from this week's memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.



When was a time in your life that God got your attention? Did you perceive it at the time as a good thing or bad thing?

What is the relationship between love and discipline?

Can parents do something in the best interest of a child that can be perceived as unloving from the vantage point of the child?

What are some things that parents do from a long-term perspective in the child's best interests?

Why do you think that God ranks pride number one on His list of deadly sins in Proverbs 6:16–19?

Why is it hard to feel our need and dependence on God?

What are things that we can do to feel our need of God more?

As you move forward with God, what you desire for Him to accomplish in your life at the end of your Journey?