

The Gospel Project® for Adults

Daily Discipleship Guide ESV, Unit 16, Session 2

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God's Authority Sustains His People

Session in a Sentence: God humbles the proud so that they can recognize His authority and praise Him.

Background Passage: Daniel 4

Years ago I heard a story about three business professionals sharing their definitions of success with each other while eating a meal.

“For me,” said the first man, “being called to the White House for a private meeting with the president would be the ultimate achievement.”

“Not me,” interrupted the second man. “My pinnacle of success would be meeting in the Oval Office with the president and watching him ignore his ringing emergency phone in order to talk to me.”

“You’re both wrong,” exclaimed the third man. “Real success is when you’re meeting with the president in the Oval Office and the phone rings, he answers, and says, ‘It’s for you!’ ”

Though we chuckle over the ego of these men, most of us crave notoriety and acclaim. We secretly long to be the center of the universe. While our self-obsession may seem harmless (at least in our eyes!), this sin makes a relationship with God impossible.

What is the relationship between success and pride?

Group Time

Point 1: Those who walk in pride are blind to God's authority (Dan. 4:29-30).

29 At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, **30** and the king answered and said, “Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?”

Despite voicing praise for the authority of Yahweh (3:28-29), Nebuchadnezzar still idolized himself above all others. Daniel pleaded with Nebuchadnezzar to repent of his pride and avoid the punishment. Yet despite the warning that God would humble him like an animal because of his pride, Nebuchadnezzar continued to strut through Babylon. He saw his kingdom as the work of his hands for the glory of his name alone.

Sin as Selfishness: When we sin, we are acting out of a selfish attitude and mind-set that assumes our action will lead us to more happiness than if we were to obey God. Sin is manifested in our tendency to be “_____” toward self.

Unless we humble ourselves, we will remain oblivious to God's authority and activity around us. In this scenario, we become our own god, even if we say otherwise. Though we all possess the common knowledge of our human frailty, we will smugly put off until tomorrow what the Lord requires of us today—humble faith and worship. Ultimately, our overconfidence regarding the future is the direct result of an exaggerated view of ourselves. Those who esteem themselves dismiss that life is a vapor that appears briefly before vanishing (Jas. 4:14), as if they were somehow the exception to the rule.

In what ways do we take the future for granted, as if it were ours alone to plan?

Voices from Church History

“In God you come up against something which is in every respect immeasurably superior to yourself. Unless you know God as that—and, therefore, know yourself as nothing in comparison—you do not know God at all. As long as you are proud you cannot know God. 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.”¹

–C. S. Lewis (1898-1963)

Point 2: God graciously humbles those who walk in pride (Dan. 4:31-33).

31 While the words were still in the king’s mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, “O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you, 32 and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. And you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.” 33 Immediately the word was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from among men and ate grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair grew as long as eagles’ feathers, and his nails were like birds’ claws.

Our inclination is to read these words as an act of judgment wrought by God’s anger toward Nebuchadnezzar. Though the king was deserving of the harshest plight, the Lord’s resolve to humble him is seen more accurately as an act of compassion. By forcing Nebuchadnezzar to roam the earth like a wild animal, the Lord was wooing him toward repentance. Rather than condemn the king for his arrogance, God graciously reduced him to nothing in order to change his haughty heart and ways.

How do you tend to respond to God’s interruptions in your life?

Anger Irritation Tolerance Humble Receptivity

Our wickedness notwithstanding, the Lord is not eager for us to perish (2 Pet. 3:9). Even more astounding, our heavenly Father is aggressively patient as He actively shows kindness to us (Rom. 2:4). In the end, His efforts to bring us low communicate His passion to lift us high as His own children through faith in Jesus. Our humiliation, brought about by God’s work and our response, will always precede our exaltation.

What are some ways God might humble people to lead them to faith in Jesus Christ?

Point 3: Praise of God replaces pride in those who have been humbled (Dan. 4:34-37).

NEBUCHADNEZZAR / BABYLON	JESUS / KINGDOM OF GOD
Forced subjects to _____ him (Dan. 1)	Became the _____ of all (Phil. 2:7)
Demanded _____ by means of his strength and threat of death (Dan. 3)	_____ Himself before God the Father exalted Him (Phil. 2:8-9)
_____ of his greatness as the king of Babylon (Dan. 4)	Taught the _____ are the greatest in the kingdom of God (Luke 9:48)

34 At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; 35 all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?"

36 At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and splendor returned to me. My counselors and my lords sought me, and I was established in my kingdom, and still more greatness was added to me. 37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble.

After a long time living as an animal, Nebuchadnezzar finally acknowledged God's sovereign authority over his life, and he could not help but praise the God who was so patient with him in his pride. Realizing that Yahweh had unlimited authority, Babylon's once fearless leader now feared the one true, transcendent God over all creation.

God Is Transcendent: God is distinct from and independent of His created world. He is transcendent over us in regards to His _____ and power as well as His goodness and _____. Understanding God's transcendence evokes awe and wonder at His goodness and power.

How has God worked in your life to bring you to faith in Jesus, our humble, sovereign King?

My Mission

Because we have been given life through Christ's humility, we follow His example and walk with humility as we seek to selflessly serve those around us.

- **How do you need to address the pride in your life?**
- **What are some ways your group can serve those around you and make a contribution to God's kingdom?**
- **How do you need to reset your priorities in order to serve others in the name of Christ in an effort to reach them with the gospel?**

Voices from Church History

"No penitent sinner, who now turns to do the works of God, may despair of mercy, however foul his life has formerly been."²
–John Mayer (1583-1664)