

A Heathen King's Testimony (Dan 4)

A Small Group Outline

1. **Praise** (*Purpose: To worship God*)
 - What are you thankful for this week? (*let the group's secretary write these down in an A4 hardcover or some notebook*)
 - Song Service
 - Sing a few songs of praise to God
2. **Pray** (*Purpose: To carry each others' burdens and to seek the Lord*)
 - What challenges did you have this week? (*write these down in an A4 hardcover or some notebook*)
 - Go into a season of prayer
3. **Review** (*Purpose: To learn accountability*)
 - Tell us how it went with what you promised to do in last week's meeting? (*e.g. Who did your share you faith with this past week? Who did you minister to? How did actioning your I WILL STATEMENT go?*)
 - *Where people have failed to fulfil what they said they would, do not be harsh with them but gently encourage them to try again in the coming week. Give them more support by phoning or joining them in the week.*
4. **Give** (*Purpose: To be good stewards of our monies*)
 - Our best option in the lockdown is to return tithes and offerings electronically. Ensure you get the bank details from your treasurer. Don't forget to complete an envelope and to send the breakdown to him/her.
5. **Discover** (*Purpose: To learn to listen to God, and be obedient to His Word*)
 - **Notes for the facilitator**
 - For further insights read *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 514-521
 - The tree represents king Nebuchadnezzar. There is a one to one correspondence, and the that time elements in this chapter also have a one to one correspondence, i.e. 7 times = 7 literal years. In Dan 7 however, one beast stands for an entire nation (something small stands for something big), so the time elements there also stands for something bigger (i.e. one day = one year)
 - Some reasons why nations fall: Prov 14:34; 16:12; 20:28; Ps 33:12
 - Notice the progression in Nebuchadnezzar's beliefs: In Dan 2, he said the Daniel's god was the God of gods (2:47), i.e. He was not the only god, but the **greatest** of the gods. In Dan 3 Jehovah was still not Nebuchadnezzar's God, but the 'God of Shadrack, Meshach and Abednego'. Other gods were still allowed to be worshipped in his decree of 3:28-29, but people could not 'speak against' the Hebrew boys' God. In Dan 4 however, we see the king praising God for what He has **personally** done for him (vs 2, 34)
 - Just as a beast does not acknowledge God's sovereignty, so Nebuchadnezzar had been unmindful of God, His mercies, and His accountability to Him.
 - This prophecy was conditional on obedience (vs 27) and the judgement could have been averted if the king changed his ways.
 - When Nebuchadnezzar **looked up** to God, he came to his senses again (4:34)
 - Those who exalt themselves will be humbled and those who humble themselves will be exalted (see Matt 23:12. Compare Lucifer who desired to ascend above God, and how he was brought down [Isa 14:12-15] to Jesus who humbled Himself, and was then exalted [Phil 2:5-11])



- It is interesting that the sane Nebuchadnezzar praised God for humbling him (Dan 4:34-37). He recognised God's love and justice through this trial.
- *Read Dan 4 as a group. Preferably let one person read it. Let everyone then put down their Bibles and get the group to reconstruct the passage in their own words. This teaches the group to be careful in quotation Scripture correctly and to use it as the basis of their discussions.*
 - **Discussion Questions** *(use only a few) The notes in italics after some of the questions below are for the facilitator, and not to be read out to the group.*
 - What is the power of a personal testimony (cf. Rev 12:11)? Why is this so important in our Christian experience?
 - Why do you think God again distinguished and separated Daniel from the rest of the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners? (vss 7-8, 18)?
 - Why did God not just leave Nebuchadnezzar in his contentment and prosperity (vs 4), but instead gave him an unsettling dream of future judgement?
 - What was the purpose of the king's seven year discipline (see vs 25, 27)?
 - Is there a lesson in the fact that what Nebuchadnezzar treasured so much, viz., his mind that he prided for its judgement and wisdom, was the very thing that God removed?
 - How do you know from the story that the judgement of Nebuchadnezzar was conditional? What do you think is the purpose of conditional prophecy? *(Remember Jonah and Nineveh)*
 - The heart of Nebuchadnezzar must have surely been stirred when he heard the interpretation of the dream. But over time the conviction wore off. Why is it so important to act on truth and conviction, and not to leave it for a future day?
 - What stands out to you about Daniel's boldness to confront the most powerful king with his sins, with a possibility of being killed? Is there a lesson in this for us?
 - What are the dangers of pride (vs 30)?
 - Why do you think God did not immediately execute his judgement, but instead waited 12 months to do so?
- **Application Questions** *(select a few depending on your time. One has to be the I WILL STATEMENT)*
 - Share your personal testimony of how God came into your life and transformed it? It does not have to be spectacular! Just share how God become a reality in your experience *(If you don't have an experience as yet, you can pass on this question, or possibly share an isolated incident of how God came through for you)*
 - Do you have a story of how reaping the consequences of a wrong action has caused you to grow into a better person?
 - Is there something you would like to do this week to imitate our humble Saviour Jesus Christ (as opposed to the proud and arrogant Nebuchadnezzar)? Share some practical suggestions of humbly serving others.
 - I WILL STATEMENT: Formulate an I will statement in response to what you have discovered in the Word. Let the group's secretary also record these in an A4 notebook. Ensure that everyone gets a chance to give their I WILL STATEMENT. You have to be specific. E.g. "I would like to share my testimony with at least 2 people this week, and will be praying for God to lead me to them".

6. Share *(Purpose: To be witnesses of our faith)*

- Do you have anyone you could share today's lesson with this week? *Be specific.*

7. Closing prayer