

# Daniel 4 – He who would be great must humble himself.

- God’s pursuit of Nebby continues
- God opposes the proud, but exalts the humble.
- A humble heart acknowledges God

**The most essential trait if you want to become great is to be truly humble.**

**Recap Chp 3** Two weeks ago Kirk shared about the amazing miracle in Daniel chapter 3, how God saved 3 brave men from the fiery wrath of King Nebuchadnezzar when they refused to bow down or worship anyone besides the one true God. These men boldly stood for God, trusted in God regardless of the outcome in this life – remember what they said?

*Dan 3:17-18 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. **But even if he does not**, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”*

I have always loved that response of trust in the face of uncertainty to the point of death. In the end, Nebuchadnezzar proclaimed “no other god can save in this way”.

Now in Chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar writes a letter to the whole world telling of another experience with the living God. I’ve asked Krysti to come up and read the first half of chapter 4 for us this morning.

## ***The Dream and Interpretation***

Nebuchadnezzar writes a letter – tells of a dream of a great tree which is later cut down. Again, Daniel is called upon to interpret the dream. This great tree represents King Neb as a great benefactor of the world, providing food and shelter for all who come near to his kingdom. But God sends a messenger to chop down the tree, scatter the fruit and the animals along with the message:

*Dan 4:17 ‘The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of people.’*

Daniel interprets the dream – it is about God humbling Neb. for 7 years. Again, note how Daniel is apologetic to have to deliver this news to Neb. He isn’t gloating or exalting over the impending downfall of the King. He says “My lord (lower case), if only the dream applied to your enemies and its meaning to your adversaries!”

So Daniel prophesies that Neb will be driven from away and be a literal “wild man” for 7 years. Living in the wild, eating grass like a cow, until you “*acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over all*

kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes.” But his kingdom will be restored “when you acknowledge that Heaven rules.”

### **Daniel closes with a call to repent.**

*Dan 4:27 “King Nebuchadnezzar, please accept my advice. Stop sinning and do what is right. Break from your wicked past and be merciful to the poor. Perhaps then you will continue to prosper.’*

### **But he doesn’t listen. Nebuchadnezzar doesn’t heed the warning, he remains prideful.**

*Dan 4:28 – 32 “But all these things did happen to King Nebuchadnezzar. Twelve months later he was taking a walk on the flat roof of the royal palace in Babylon. [It seems that taking a walk on your roof often leads to sin.] As he looked out across the city, he said, ‘Look at this great city of Babylon! By **my own mighty power, I have built this beautiful city** as my royal residence to display my majestic splendor.’*

*“While these words were still in his mouth, a voice called down from heaven, ‘O King Nebuchadnezzar, this message is for you! You are no longer ruler of this kingdom. You will be driven from human society. You will live in the fields with the wild animals, and you will eat grass like a cow. Seven periods of time will pass while you live this way, until you learn that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world and gives them to anyone he chooses.’*

So he goes mad for 7 years. Lives in the wild with his hair growing long, his fingernails becoming like claws, eating grass like a cow. Until he repents and worships God.

### **Neb acknowledges reality, repents and is restored.**

*Dan 4: 34“After this time had passed, I, Nebuchadnezzar, looked up to heaven. My sanity returned, and I praised and worshiped the Most High and honored the one who lives forever.*

*His rule is everlasting, and his kingdom is eternal. 35 All the people of the earth are nothing compared to him. He does as he pleases among the angels of heaven and among the people of the earth.*

*No one can stop him or say to him, ‘What do you mean by doing these things?’*

*36 “When my sanity returned to me, so did my honor and glory and kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored as head of my kingdom, with even greater honor than before. 37 “Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and glorify and honor the King of heaven. All his acts are just and true, and he is able to humble the proud.”*

Look at what he acknowledges about God:

- His rule is everlasting, and his kingdom is eternal.

- All the people of the earth are nothing compared to him.
- He does as he pleases among the angels of heaven and among the people of the earth.
- No one can stop him or say to him, ‘What do you mean by doing these things?’

This is the last we hear from Nebuchadnezzar in the book of Daniel. Will we see Neb in heaven? I’m not sure, but maybe.

### ***What can we learn from the king’s humiliation?***

*James 4:6 reminds us that “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.”*

Now, let me answer a common objection here. Does God oppose the proud because he’s too proud? Does God require our worship because he’s an egomaniac?

Not at all. God needs nothing from us, yet He created mankind to share in a relationship with him. So why does he do these things? Why did he require Nebuchadnezzar to acknowledge the true God of heaven? It was to align him with reality.

When we humble ourselves before God, we acknowledge reality.

- He is the creator and sustainer of all things
- He is the ruler and judge over all people
- His power is unlimited, where ours is so small
- His kingdom is eternal; what we build on earth on our own won’t last.
- His way is perfect and full of wisdom

Being humble puts us in line with reality of who God is and who we are.

### ***What is humility?***

Humility is a much-maligned trait often thought of as weakness or low self-esteem, but it is nothing of the sort. Humility is about having a proper estimation of oneself in accordance with God’s word.

*Rom 12:3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.*

Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking properly of yourself. Quoting C.S. Lewis, “Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less.”

### **How do we identify pride?**

So let’s talk a moment about the opposite of humility, which is arrogance or misplaced pride. Arrogance distorts our view of ourselves, making us out to be more than we really are in our own estimation. We live in very arrogant times. Technology and wealth makes us feel powerful. Media and advertising convince us that we are all deserving of royal treatment. But it is an illusion. Jesus said

*Luke 14:11 For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*

Jesus tells us that humbling ourselves **is an active process**, something that we need to take care to do. Becoming arrogant happens gradually, and must be guarded against. Arrogance deadens the conscience. It must be guarded against with true humility and true compassion. Let's start by turning away from pride.

Steve Gallagher<sup>1</sup> details 7 manifestations or expressions of arrogance. Perhaps you will be able to relate to one or more of these.

1. **A haughty spirit** – Do you often think you are better than others? Smarter, harder working, more talented. The more highly we think of ourselves, the farther we distance ourselves from God. Remember that the Lord will not endure a haughty spirit.

*Ps 138:6 Though the LORD is great, he cares for the humble, but he keeps his distance from the proud.*

2. **Self-protective pride** – Are you defensive or easily offended? Do you put up walls to keep from being hurt? This type of self-isolation is a form of pride and self-reliance because you are trusting in yourself and not trusting in God to use even your hurts for the good.

*James 4:6 God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.*

I know I've done this. But we need to put our trust in God's grace rather than our own defenses. This means loving your neighbor even when they've been rude to you. Forgiving your spouse after they've hurt you, again. Trust yourself to God.

3. **Unapproachable pride** – Do you hate to be corrected? Or do you welcome the input of others? We must view correction as beneficial rather than an attack. Mother Teresa suggested that you should be thankful for a rebuke, even when it is wrong.

*Prov 9:8 ... rebuke a wise man and he will love you.*

4. **Know-It-All pride** – Are you gifted, knowledgeable, able to do anything? Do you feel like it is easier to do things yourself rather than ask someone else? The danger here is you begin to discredit others and think they have nothing to teach you. Humility builds a team even when you don't think you need others.

*1 Cor 8:1 Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.*

5. **Self-Exalting pride** – Do you like to be the center of attention? Being noticed? Getting lots of likes on your social media posts? Is it important for you to know that people love you? You need to learn to quietly work for the Lord and let him do the promoting.

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<sup>1</sup> Pure Life Ministries

*Prov 27:2 Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; someone else, and not your own lips.*

6. **Unsubmissive pride** – Do you think you could do better if you were in charge? Do you always question authority? Do you think you should only hear from God directly and not from man? We need to remind ourselves that God has placed those who are in authority over us and submit to them.

*Heb 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.*

7. **Spiritual Pride** – Are you poor in spirit, or holier than thou? Do you see yourself as spiritual compared to the carnality around you? This kind of pride is very sneaky and it trips up many well-intentioned believers.

*Rom 12:3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.*

Ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart and reveal any pride you may need to deal with.

The reality is that we are given so much that we had nothing to do with. For example, the skills you have, your intelligence, and your ability to solve problems or make money; these are gifts from God. We often take credit for things are really gifts we've been given.

The technology you use, someone developed that. The math and physics that the technologist used, someone else figured that out. Ultimately, the orderly nature of the world we live in, which obeys laws of math and physics came from the mind of God. At best, we come along and make use of the gifts he has provided. Even the fact that we were born at this time and not another. **So many ways that we really must recognize that we have been given far more than we've earned.**

If you are sensing the conviction of the Holy Spirit regarding any area of pride in your heart, be quick to repent and ask the Lord to show you the way out of it.

### ***Humble Yourself***

To humble ourselves, let us recognize God's call to be servants.

*Mark 9:33 They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the road?" 34 But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.*

35 Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, **“Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.”**

I know that I have a long way to go in this department. Again, I need to align myself to reality. Jesus has shown us the way. When Jesus washed the disciples feet before he was betrayed, he said this:

*John 13:13 “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. 16 Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17 Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.*

But Jesus didn’t stop there right? He didn’t just do the foot washing lesson and then fly back to heaven. No, he continued to show them **and us** the full extent of his love.

*Php 2:5-11*

*Your attitude should be same as that of Christ Jesus:*

*Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but he made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*

*And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!*

*Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

I love the fact that God didn’t just tell us how to live, he showed us. By becoming a servant, he took on the lowest place possible. Being humiliated before the world on the cross so that you and I could be lifted up. Last week we celebrated the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. A real event in history. The GREATEST event in history. Jesus did for us what we could not do for ourselves.

## **Summary**

Do you want to be great? You’ve got to be humble. We talked about two kings today.

Nebuchadnezzar, who had to go mad before he humbled himself. And Jesus, who willingly submitted his body to death on the cross so that we could be forgiven. And because of that he is now exalted.

Perhaps you have been in a hard season of life. Maybe you feel pressed and crushed by life. **God may be working humility in your life.** Breaking up hard ground in your heart. Pruning away dead wood. Pressing you to reveal what is in your heart.

We're going to play a song on the video. If you wish to come forward for prayer during this time, or even to humble yourself and pray, please come down. Let us be willing to become servants of the most high God, so we can all be great in his kingdom.