



Ice Breaker

What's the best party you've ever been to?

Day 1 — Today's Theme: Get It

The story of King Belshazzar's party in Daniel 5 was once so popular that it inspired a cliché that everyone is familiar with— "the writing was on the wall." However, over the years, most people have forgotten the story behind the cliché, and it has become nothing more than a mere statement of fate, a sort of karma, "You got what was coming for ya."

But this story of King Belshazzar is far more than a story of fate. It's a story of pride, arrogance, and jealousy. It's a story of blasphemy. And above all, it's a story that reminds us that God is always on His throne and while He may be patient with us, there are limits and there will come a time when we will answer for our sins. ¹

Read Daniel 5 and the story of King Belshazzar and the writing on the wall.

1. What items did King Belshazzar have brought to his party for him and his guests to drink from? (vv. 2–4)
2. What suddenly appeared during the king's party? (v. 5)
3. Who did King Belshazzar summon to tell him the meaning of the message on the wall? (vv. 12–13)
4. What was the charge that was brought against King Belshazzar by Daniel? (vv. 22–23)
5. What was the meaning of the words written on the wall? (vv. 25–28)
6. What ended up happening to King Belshazzar? (vv. 30–31)

¹ Adapted from VBC Daniel 5 Small Group Lesson: *The Writing is on the Wall* written by Kevin O'Brien.

Day 2 — Today's Theme: Pride Comes Before the Fall

Read Daniel 5:1–4.

Key Verse:

“Then they brought in the golden vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them” (Daniel 5:3).

King Belshazzar had thrown a huge party with thousands of people in attendance and things were about to get a little out of hand (maybe because of too much wine?). Acting under the influence of alcohol and the allure of being the life of the party, Belshazzar made a poor decision that would prove to cost him greatly and did what no king before him had done.

When Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah in Daniel 1, he took the spoils of the temple and brought them back to Babylon and placed them in the treasury of his own god Shinar, at minimum recognizing that these things belonged to the gods.

But Belshazzar was consumed by his own pride and arrogance and called for these vessels to be brought to the party so that they could eat and drink out of them. Someone with half a head on their shoulders might have cautioned him, “You’re playing with fire, buddy.”

And they took the instruments of worship to God and profaned them in a drunken party, and used them to worship false gods in the place of the one true God. It was this brazen arrogance and pride that would in short notice lead to his own destruction.

We don’t come to a place of blaspheming God in our pride and arrogance overnight. It’s the culmination of a pattern of pride and arrogance that we adopt in the subtle and mundane parts of life. It’s a cancer that takes root and grows and develops into a monster that destroys us. We ought to snuff it out and get rid of it early and often!

7. How would you describe pride?

8. Why is pride such a dangerous attitude and sin?

9. Where do you tend to struggle with pride in your own life?

Day 3 — Today's Theme: Confronted by God

Read Daniel 5:5–12.

Key Verse:

"Immediately the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace" (Daniel 5:5).

God will not be mocked.

We have watched throughout the whole story of Daniel that even though God may seem silent or even defeated from time to time, He never leaves His throne and He's never out of the fight.

Immediately. That's an intense word. Without delay. Without hesitation. Without warning. Immediately. Belshazzar desecrated the vessels of worship from the temple and even began to worship false gods with them and that's where God drew the line. Our God is a jealous and vengeful God. What is rightfully His will belong to Him. He is not to be trifled with.

God had a message for Belshazzar, and it was a message that was going to catch his attention. And the hand began to write on the wall: *"mene mene tekel peres."*

You've probably had an "oh crap" moment at some time in your life. You know, one of those moments where it seems your heart drops into your stomach, your blood pressure rises, you start to sweat a little, you feel like you're going to vomit.

This was Belshazzar's "oh crap" moment. Though his wasn't because he forgot his homework or crossed his parents. His was because somehow he knew he had crossed God, and he knew he was toast.

And suddenly, like the man behind the curtain in *The Wizard of Oz*, this outwardly mighty, prideful, arrogant man was revealed to be the sheepish, floundering coward he really was.

God has a way of revealing our true colors.

10. Belshazzar's fear seems justified and rightly placed. How is this event a reminder for us to have a proper fear of God?

11. There is probably a bit more of Belshazzar in each of us than we'd like to admit. How does the world we live in encourage us to take what is meant for worshiping God and use it for selfish purposes?

Day 4 — Today's Theme: The Writing is on the Wall

Read Daniel 5:13–31.

Key Verse:

“And you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this, but you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven. And the vessels of his house have been brought in before you, and you and your lords, your wives, and your concubines have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know, but the God in whose hand is your breath, and whose are all your ways, you have not honored” (Daniel 5:23).

“Your dad, old King Nebuchadnezzar, was a piece of work, but he finally got it. He was humbled and learned that ‘the Most High God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will.’ But you, Belshazzar, knew all that and yet didn’t humble yourself before the Most High God, but instead doubled down and dishonored Him, blasphemed Him.”

God is showing Belshazzar that He has not been defeated. He is not out of the fight. He is not dead. He is in fact on His throne, from where He rules the kingdom of man. So God displays His sovereignty and preeminence over Belshazzar and the gods of the Babylonians.

I think back to Nebuchadnezzar’s threat to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in Daniel 3:15, “*And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?*” There wasn’t a god in the pantheon of Babylon who could spare Belshazzar from the wrath of God and that very night his reign, his kingdom, his very life came crashing down under the sovereign hand of God.

It’s no wonder Hebrews 10:31 says, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

12. Belshazzar believed God was defeated, dead, or at least powerless, which in his eyes justified all he did. How might God’s seeming silence lead people to think there is no risk in treating Him or His Word with little or no respect at all?

13. God may seem silent, even for long periods of time, but He is neither unaware of nor unconcerned with those who disrespect Him.

How does this encourage you?

How does this cause you to fear and respect God?

How does this affect the way that you interact with other people who dishonor God?