

EYES OPEN

This week's chapter was written by the king of Babylon. It is the only chapter in the Bible written by a pagan (or converted pagan). In it, the king endures a crisis that opens his eyes to the sovereignty of God. Have you been through a crisis that God used to help you grow in faith or turn to Him?

The purpose of such a deep question is to help us go deeper in our times of sharing. This particular question parallels the crisis of an evil king. While most of us don't see ourselves in the same category, we all know that a crisis reveals much about us.

STUDY GOD'S WORD

Read Daniel chapter four and consider the following questions:

The outline could look like the following. What is significant that happens in each section?

- The King's declaration -Something serious has changed the king and he wants others to know
- The King's dream The dream reveals the present status of the king – content, peaceful, and proud – the glory is God's but He is taking it for himself.
- The King's humiliation – God disciplines the king that he might realize that God exists, that God is sovereign, and that we all face judgment.
- The King's restoration –Pure grace. This king has directed thousands to be murdered, etc. But God showed him grace upon grace.
- Praise – The king learned that praise and thanksgiving is the proper response to God and his provisions and abilities

How might this chapter of Daniel give encouragement and hope to the Jewish captives still stuck in Babylon? How is this also important to us today?

The captives / refugees are themselves in a time of discipline. The leadership of the nation repeatedly ignored God's call to repentance. Does God still care about them? Is God still on the throne?

The same questions can occur to us today. Often, in times of trouble and hardship, we wonder if God has pulled his hand of blessing from us or if he is able to help us.

What is the root of the king's problem? What will change this in his life?

The root of his problem is our root problem – pride. Our pride leads us to be

- self-directed and ignoring God
- self-conscious and caring more about what others think instead of God
- self-reliant instead of trusting in the Spirit of God
- self-congratulating instead of giving God the glory

The net result is distance from God, stealing God's glory, and facing judgment.

What do we learn about the character of God in this chapter?

This is an amazing narrative that weaves in the character of God. Such as . . .

- God is patient, very patient – years and years of disobedience before judgment
- God is compassionate. He cares about the poor and afflicted, and even cares about an evil king
- God is powerful – able to overcome every kingdom on earth
- God is wise – He has a plan for every person
- God is righteous – His ways are always perfect and expects us to pursue His righteousness
- God is eternal – His kingdom / dominion is without end

DISCUSS TOGETHER

How does knowing the attributes and character of God help eliminate pride and the sins of pride in our lives?

In most cases on earth, the habit of comparison is detrimental. However, when we truly see God, this causes us to fear God, revere God, and humble ourselves before God. This is why we need to have our minds focused on God, who He is and what He has done. (Colossians 3:1-2)

How does pride get expressed in relationships with one another?

Many many ways including . . .

- comparison
- judging
- envy
- insulting and disparaging
- ignoring
- boasting
- seeking attagirls/attaboys
- seeking fame, power, recognition,
- etc.

What are some of the ways that walking with Jesus TOGETHER helps us with our problem of pride?

As we keep Jesus in the center, it keeps the character of God foremost and reminds us regularly of what God has done for us.

Together, we encourage, exhort, teach, and remind one another to seek God and His glory rather than focus on self.

Comparison is often the root of pride. What helps us with the problem of comparison? How has God helped you with some form of pride?

In my own life, I lived out comparison every day. It led me to trust in myself, dislike my limitations / myself, and doubt God's goodness and how I could serve Him.

A few of us were with Chuck Swindoll for lunch, just before we launched out into pastoral ministry.

When asked about what we needed to do, he suggested these six words:

KNOW YOURSELF, LIKE YOURSELF, AND BE YOURSELF.

This became a starting point for me to seek the truth about myself, to stop doubting God's design of myself, and to LEARN to be who God wanted me to be.

The process is over, but God has me on His path.

APPLY IT THIS WEEK

Pride is destructive to our faith, our relationships, and especially our ability to know and love God. Take time this week to focus on the character and attributes of God. (“biblestudytools.com” has a good summary)

PLEASE PRAY

- For middle and high schoolers going to camp soon
- For the Micah House team and students
- For your global partners to be encouraged and empowered

I pray that our King of Heaven will empower and encourage you this week,

Steve