



## Living for God in an Ungodly Culture

Part 7

**Ice Breaker:** Do you love or hate History? What are the periods of time that your group finds most interesting?

**Please read together:** Daniel 5:1-4

*Pastor Jason took us through a brief history lesson to bring us up to speed on the time between King Nebuchadnezzar and King Belshazzar. How fascinating that there is evidence on the Cylinders of Nabonidus showing the biblical accuracy of the existence of King Belshazzar. The IVP Bible Background Commentary tells us that the Persians had taken the city of Opis a few days before this banquet occurred. "It is likely that Babylon has received word of these events and that Belshazzar knows that the Persian Army is on the march toward Babylon.....Belshazzar and his administration are well aware that the empire hangs by a thread and that the next several days will be of utmost significance."*

### **When Living for God in an Ungodly Culture:**

1. There will be events and situations of deliberate mockery and blaspheme of God.

*This story is a description of an act of defiance toward God. Regarding the sacred vessels, the IVP commentary tells us that, "The fact that these had not been melted down suggests that they had been preserved because of their sacred character." It is possible that the vessels were being used as a remembrance of the "power" of the Babylonian gods that gave them the ability to conquer the Jewish kingdoms. This act of defiance toward God could have been a way of reveling in past victories to pump them up for the battle they knew was coming from the Persians.*

#### **Discuss:**

- Have you experienced deliberate mockery of God? If so, discuss with your group what transpired.

2. God is the One responsible for defending His own Name.

**Read:** Daniel 5:5-16

*As we mentioned above, "By drinking from the vessels the Babylonians were recalling the defeat of Yahweh." In battle, casualty counts were made by cutting off the right hand of all the dead. But, when this hand appears on the wall and writes a message, it is not lifeless, it is "quite animated and has a message to give." Imagine the effect it must have had on Belshazzar. The bible says that his legs went weak and his knees were knocking!!! I imagine that his life may have flashed before his eyes. This is the power of God on display. He is letting Belshazzar know that enough is enough. He defends Himself by revealing Himself to Belshazzar in a life changing way.*

**Discuss:**

- Do you think Belshazzar was recalling times when God had given him a chance to repent?
- Do you find yourself wanting to defend God sometimes?
- What do you think the difference is between defending GOD, and defending your FAITH?

3. Your godly life will attract those in need of God.

**Reread:** Daniel 5:13-17

*Once again, Daniel is brought to the king to interpret another mystery for the Babylonian kingdom. Culture, (his normal ways of doing things), was not able to provide the answers the king needed. Today, when someone needs something and culture doesn't offer it, the Holy Spirit will reveal to them to reach out to those who live differently than the culture.*

**Discuss:**

- In what ways do you live distinctly from those around you?
- In what ways might you need to live more distinctly from those around you?
- What are specific things that you can work on, change immediately, heal from, or begin to do to help you be more distinct from this culture we live in?

*If we talk, act and fear just like the world around us, then they are not going to know who they can come to when culture fails them. They need us to show them where to go to get "fixed" (healed, changed, mended) because it's where we go when we're broken, too.*

4. You will be faced with the temptation to sellout your character and God's calling for an opportunity.

**Read:** Galatians 1:10, Daniel 5:18-31, Jeremiah 27:4-7

*It is interesting to note that in Daniel 5:23, the elements that Daniel lists as materials that Belshazzar had brought to him, were the same ones that Nebuchadnezzar had seen in his dream of the statue. (Ok, now I am nerding out on History). 😊*

**Discuss:**

- When you see moments (like this) connecting stories and history, what do you think?
- Talk about how Jeremiah called this moment out a HUNDRED years before it happened.

*Daniel was offered great wealth and position, AGAIN. He had the right perspective. He didn't sell out or water down the interpretation of the writing. He told the truth and did not take the opportunity to promote himself. Let us learn from Daniel: Our role is to remain true to God and serve people from that position.*

**Reflect:**

- Are you a person who makes decisions based on what people think or on what God thinks?
- Put some of your temptations in context:
  - What would happen if you were to give in?
  - What would happen if you stand strong?

*Pastor Jason put this in perspective for me when he said, "What good is a promotion if the company is bankrupt? What good is lifetime achievement award if you are dead?" Daniel knew that all the accolades in the world would not prevent the fall of Babylon. It wasn't about him and his position in Babylon, rather this was about his faithfulness to the ONE true God.*

5. God is the only one who holds the authority to pass final judgment, not you.

**Read:** John 12:47-48, Luke 9:52-56

**Discuss:**

- Think of a time where someone around you disrespected God. How did you respond...internally? Externally?
- Have you (I know I have!) had times where you've been a James and John? Talk about it with your group if you'd like.
- How do we offer the gospel to all who come into our lives?

**Pray together:**

*Father, we want to be courageous and keep You in proper perspective as Daniel did. Help us to see when we take up an offense for You. Help us to know how to articulate what we believe without getting defensive. Please help us to walk with integrity. Give us hunger for Your Word and help us to have compassion on the culture around us. Help us to respond with Your grace and most of all, Your wisdom. Fill our mouths with Your words so that we can speak life to everyone around us. Help us to walk in a deeper understanding of Your greatness and Your kindness. Let us be different so that people know where to run when culture fails them. We lean into You! In the Name of Jesus, Amen.*