

Small Leader Guide: Daniel 4 – Pride Before the Fall

Before Group

Pray for your group:

- For soft hearts toward conviction about pride.
- For anyone far from God or running from Him.
- For courage to repent and respond, not just discuss.

Prep options:

Read Daniel 4 ahead of time (ideally Daniel 2–7).

- Choose 1–2 questions from each section you **must** get to; you won't use them all.
- Have a Bible ready for people to read aloud (especially Daniel 4:27, 34–35).

Leader Tips (Before Group)

Clarify your win: Aim less for “good conversation,” more for:

- People honestly identifying pride, and
- At least one concrete next step of obedience.
- Pray by name: Go through your roster and pray briefly for each person before group.
- Expect resistance: Pride naturally resists exposure. Decide beforehand to be patient, not pushy.



Warm Up

Opening Prayer

- Ask someone (not just you) to open in prayer, specifically:
 - That God would expose hidden pride.
 - That He would remind everyone of His past faithfulness.
 - That He would draw anyone who doesn't know Christ.

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Leader Tip:

- If your group is quiet, you can offer: “If no one minds, I’ll open us up,” and pray briefly but honestly.

Icebreaker

Share a time when you accomplished something significant. How did you respond—did you give credit to yourself, others, or God?”

Leader Tips:

- Go first and be a little vulnerable (e.g., a time you took too much credit).
- Affirm all kinds of “accomplishments” (school, parenting, recovering from surgery, etc.), not just career wins.
- Keep this moving so you have time for the text.

Transition:

“Daniel 4 shows us what happens when success sits on a cracked foundation—and how God’s mercy meets us even there.”



Know It

Big Ideas to Highlight

You can weave these into the discussion rather than “teaching” them all at once.

- The Danger of Pride
 - “Success without humility becomes very dangerous.”
 - “Talent without surrender is destructive.”
 - “Influence without God is idolatry.”
 - Pride shifts us from dependence on God to dependence on self.

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- God’s Sovereignty Over All Authority**
 - All human power and position is temporary and delegated.
 - God humbles the proud and exalts the humble.
 - Even Nebuchadnezzar’s insanity and restoration were under God’s control.
- The Power of Repentance
 - No one is too far gone (if Nebuchadnezzar can be reached, anyone can).
 - God prefers repentance to destruction.
 - We don’t have to wait for a collapse before we surrender.
- Faithful in the Mundane
 - Daniel’s 70+ years are mostly “ordinary faithfulness.
 - God delights in consistent obedience, not just dramatic moments.
 - Everyday tasks can be worship.

Leader Tips:

- When someone hits on one of these big ideas, name it: That’s exactly what the sermon meant by...
- Don’t feel pressure to cover every point; focus on what your group seems to need most.

Discussion Questions

You won’t get to all of these. Pick the ones most fitting for your group.

Understanding the Text

- Chiastic Structure
 - Knowing that Daniel 4 sits at the center of a literary structure (2–7), what does that suggest God is emphasizing in this book—especially about pride and His sovereignty?”

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Leader Tip:

If chiastic structure confuses people, keep it simple: “The middle is the main idea; God wants us to really see how He humbles kings.”

- Nebuchadnezzar’s Testimony
 - Read Daniel 4:1–3; 34–35.
 - Why is it significant that we get a first-person testimony from a pagan king about God’s greatness? What does that reveal about God’s mercy and His heart for the nations?
- The Dream & The Delay
 - Why do you think Nebuchadnezzar went to the other wise men first, even though he knew Daniel could interpret the dream?”
 - Draw possible answers: wanting a softer answer, fear of bad news, habit/tradition.
- The Warning (v. 27)
 - Read Daniel 4:27.
 - How would you summarize Daniel’s advice in your own words? What strikes you more: ‘separate yourself from your sins’ or ‘showing mercy to the needy’—and why?

Leader Tips:

- Ask open questions (avoid yes/no).
- After someone answers, follow with, “Can you say more?” or “Anyone see it differently?”
- If someone dominates, thank them, then say, “Let’s hear from a few others too.”

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Share It

Personal Reflection

- Spiritual Amnesia
 - Nebuchadnezzar had seen God do miracles but still forgot. When have you experienced ‘spiritual amnesia’—forgetting what God has already done? What tends to trigger that in your life?
- Delayed Repentance
 - Nebuchadnezzar had a full year between Daniel’s warning and his fall. Is there an area where you sense God has been calling you to change or repent, but you’ve been putting it off? What makes it hard to respond?

Leader Tip:

Normalize the struggle: “Most of us have at least one area like that. Share as much as you’re comfortable with.”

- Hidden Pride in Religious Activity
 - The sermon warned that we can look very Christian—know verses, serve, sing loud—while pride lives inside. What are some subtle ways pride can hide behind religious or ‘good’ activity?

Leader Tips:

- Be the first to admit a personal example of delayed repentance or hidden pride.
- If the group gets quiet, offer: “I’ll go first...” and share a concrete, non-shocking example.
- Avoid pressing for details that people don’t want to share; respect boundaries.

Foundation Check

- Using the water tower image: how would you describe your current spiritual foundation? Where do you see strength? Where might some ‘cracks’ be forming?”

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- Faithful in the Mundane
 - Daniel’s life shows just a few big moments and a lot of unseen faithfulness. How does that encourage or challenge you in your current season (parenting, work, retirement, singleness, caregiving, etc.)?”
 - Follow-up: “What is one ordinary responsibility you can intentionally do as worship this week?”
- Praying for the ‘Hopeless’
 - If Nebuchadnezzar can be humbled and reached, no one is beyond God. Who in your life feels spiritually ‘hopeless’ right now? How does this story affect how you pray for them?
- **Looking Up**
 - Read Daniel 4:34.
 - Nebuchadnezzar’s restoration began when he ‘looked up to heaven.’ Practically, what does ‘looking up’ to God look like in your day tomorrow—at work, at home, or in school?

Leader Tips:

- When people name “hopeless” loved ones, pause and say, “Let’s just take that in. That’s heavy,” and plan to pray for them later.
- Watch the time; it’s better to go deep on a few questions than shallow on many.

Scripture Focus / Memory

Read aloud and briefly reflect:

Daniel 4:27

Therefore, may this advice seem good to you: Separate yourself from your sins by doing what is right, and from your injustices by showing mercy to the needy....

Daniel 4:34–35

At the end of those days, I, Nebuchadnezzar, looked up to heaven, and my sanity returned to me. Then I praised the Most High and honored and glorified him who lives forever...

Ask: Which of these verses do you most need to ‘carry’ into this week, and why?

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Leader Tips:

- Don't force memorization; simply encourage it as a helpful practice.
- You can suggest writing a verse on a card or setting it as a phone lock screen.



Live It

This Week's Challenge (Choose One)

Invite each person to choose one and share which they're picking:

- **Pride Inventory** – Take 30 minutes alone with God. Ask Him to reveal where pride is at work. Journal what He shows you.
- **Testimony Writing** – Like Nebuchadnezzar, write out a short testimony of what God has done in your life. Share it with one person this week.
- **Faithful in the Mundane**– Choose one ordinary task and intentionally do it as worship—with excellence and gratitude.
- **Intercessory Prayer** – Make a list of people far from God. Pray daily for them this week, believing that no one is beyond His reach.
- **Foundation Strengthening** – Evaluate your practices (Bible, prayer, worship, community). Choose one area to strengthen this week.

Leader Tips

- Ask, “Which one are you choosing?” so people verbally commit.
- Next week, invite 1–2 volunteers to share briefly what they did and what they learned.

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Prayer

Closing Reflection & Prayer

Silent Reflection: Give 1–2 minutes of quiet:

If God gave you a dream about your life right now, what would your ‘tree’ look like? Strong and rooted? Tall but with cracks in the foundation? Ask Him to show you one area where you need to humble yourself and ‘look up.

Group Prayer Points

Pray through some of these:

- For humility wherever we’ve experienced success or influence.
- For courage to repent quickly when God convicts.
- For faithfulness in the mundane, unseen parts of life.
- For the “hopeless” people named in group—that God would do in them what He did in Nebuchadnezzar.

Leader Tips

- You can either lead a closing prayer or invite 2–3 people to pray short prayers.
- If the group is new or shy, you can say: “I’ll close us in prayer—no pressure for anyone else to pray out loud.”

Leader Notes & Care

- Create a Safe Space
 - Say explicitly: “We’re all dealing with pride on some level. This is a place to be honest, not to impress each other.”
 - Gently redirect if someone starts “fixing” another group member rather than listening.

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- Model Vulnerability
 - Share your own struggles with pride, control, or delayed obedience.
 - Avoid turning the group into your therapy, but let them see that you're in process too.
- Watch for Shame
 - Some will hear “pride” and feel only condemnation.
 - Remind them of God’s mercy to Nebuchadnezzar.
 - Emphasize that conviction is an invitation, not a rejection.
- Care for Those with Prodigals
 - When people share about loved ones far from God:
 - Acknowledge the pain (“That’s really hard; I’m glad you shared it.”).
 - Pray by name for those people.
 - Remind them: “God loves them more than you do and is not done working.”

If Someone Doesn’t Know Christ

- If anyone implies they’ve never really surrendered to Jesus:
 - Briefly restate the gospel:
 - We are sinners who cannot save ourselves.
 - Jesus lived perfectly, died for our sins, and rose again.
 - We are saved by grace through faith—turning from sin and trusting Him as Lord.
 - Offer to talk after group and pray with them about following Christ.

Handling Very Personal Confessions

- If serious issues surface (addiction, abuse, self-harm, etc.):
 - Listen without shock or judgment.
 - Don’t try to solve everything in the moment.
 - Offer to follow up privately and, if needed, connect them with a pastor or counselor.

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- Honor confidentiality, except where safety requires involving church leadership or authorities.

Time Management

- Rough guide:
 - 10–15 min: Opening/Icebreaker
 - 30–40 min: Discussion
 - 10–15 min: Application & Prayer
- If discussion is rich on one question, it's fine to linger and drop others.

After Group

- Follow up during the week with a quick text to someone who shared something vulnerable.
- Pray again for the “hopeless cases” and anyone wrestling with delayed repentance.

Use this guide as a flexible framework. Your main role is to help people see where pride may have cracked their foundation and then gently point them to the God who humbles, restores, and responds to all who “look up” to Him.