

Small Group Guide:

Daniel 5 - The Writing on the Wall



Warm Up

Icebreaker Question: Have you ever driven a car without power steering? What was that experience like? How does this relate to trying to navigate life without God's power?



Know It

Sermon Summary

This week we studied Daniel 5, which contrasts King Nebuchadnezzar's humility and restoration with King Belshazzar's pride and judgment. Belshazzar hardened his heart against God despite knowing his grandfather's testimony. During a feast where he desecrated the holy vessels from God's temple, God wrote a message of judgment on the wall. That very night, Belshazzar's kingdom fell to the Medes and Persians, and he lost his life. The sermon reminds us that we all fall short of God's righteousness, but Jesus balances the scales for us when we surrender to Him.

Key Scripture References

- Daniel 5 (entire chapter)
- Daniel 4 (for context on Nebuchadnezzar)

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Text

1. What were the main differences between how Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar responded to God's power and authority?
2. Why was Belshazzar's use of the temple vessels so significant? What did this act represent about his heart toward God?
3. What did the writing on the wall mean? (Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parsin) Why do you think God chose to communicate this way?

Personal Reflection

4. Pastor Chris said, "Many of us like to identify with the heroes of Scripture, but honestly, we identify more with the villains." Do you agree? Why or why not?

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5. What does "spiritual amnesia" look like in your own life? When have you forgotten what God has done for you?
6. Belshazzar relied on pragmatism—his walls, supplies, and defenses—rather than God. What are the "walls" or defenses you're tempted to trust in instead of God?

Going Deeper

7. The sermon mentioned that "God's strength is made perfect in our weakness." Share a time when you experienced this truth in your life.
8. What does it mean to be "weighed on the scales and found deficient"? How does Jesus balance the scales for us?
9. Pastor Chris identified two categories: those who have repented and looked to heaven like Nebuchadnezzar, and those living by their own will like Belshazzar. Which category do you identify with? Is there a third option?

Application

10. What areas of your life are you still trying to control rather than surrendering to God?
11. How can we guard against hardening our hearts toward God, especially when life seems to be going well?
12. What practical steps can you take this week to remember God's faithfulness and avoid "spiritual amnesia"?

Key Takeaways

1. **Pride leads to judgment; humility leads to restoration.** Nebuchadnezzar was humbled and restored; Belshazzar hardened his heart and faced immediate judgment.
2. **We cannot balance the scales on our own.** No amount of good works, church attendance, or charity can make us righteous before God—only Jesus can.
3. **Spiritual amnesia is dangerous.** We must intentionally remember what God has done in our lives to avoid falling into pride and self-reliance.
4. **Pragmatism is not faith.** Trusting in our own resources, abilities, or circumstances instead of God is a form of idolatry.
5. **God's grace meets us at our weakest point.** Like power steering, God's strength enables us to do what we could never accomplish on our own.

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6. **Timely repentance matters.** God's mercy is available, but hardening our hearts can lead to missing the opportunity for repentance.



Live It

Practical Applications

This Week:

- **Daily Remembrance:** Each day this week, write down one thing God has done in your life that you're grateful for. Share these with the group next week.
- **Surrender Audit:** Identify one area where you're relying on your own strength rather than God's. Pray specifically about surrendering this area to Him.
- **Scripture Memory:** Memorize the interpretation of the writing on the wall as a reminder of God's sovereignty and judgment.

This Month:

- **Share Your Testimony:** Like Nebuchadnezzar's testimony influenced (or should have influenced) Belshazzar, share your testimony with someone who needs to hear about God's redemption.
- **Remove Idols:** Identify one "pragmatic wall" you're trusting in (career, finances, relationships, health) and take practical steps to shift your trust to God.

Ongoing:

- **Accountability:** Find an accountability partner in the group who can ask you regularly: "Are you walking in humility or pride? Are you surrendered to God or living by your own will?"



Share It

Closing Reflection

Read together: "God's mercy is dependent on timely repentance, and a hard heart will meet God's judgment."

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Final Question: If tonight were your last night, like it was Belshazzar's, would you be ready to meet God? What needs to change?



Prayer

Closing Prayer

Pray for:

- Hearts that remain soft and surrendered to God
- Wisdom to recognize areas of pride and self-reliance
- Courage to repent and look to heaven like Nebuchadnezzar
- Gratitude for Jesus, who balances the scales on our behalf
- Protection against spiritual amnesia
- Those in the group who may need to surrender their lives to Christ for the first time

For Next Week

Next week we'll study Daniel 6 and the famous account of Daniel in the lion's den. Read Daniel 6 before your next meeting and consider: What does faithfulness to God look like when it costs you everything?