



# Understanding Who's in Charge

Matt VanCleave  
January 15, 2023

## REVIEW LAST WEEK'S NEXT STEPS

What, if any, next step did you commit to last week, how did it go?

- ☐ I resolve to honor God and live by my deepest values.
- ☐ I refuse to live as a victim of circumstances beyond my control.
- ☐ I will decide to take initiative and not complain.
- ☐ I will take initiative and get connected in community.
- ☐ I will remember God is at work in the midst of suffering.

## THIS WEEK'S SERMON RECAP

In 'Not God: A History of Alcoholics Anonymous', Ernest Kurtz writes, "Fundamental to the recovery process is that healing and sanity begin with a single realization that I am not God. I'm not in control of my universe. I often cannot even control myself. I violate my own values. I want to do one thing, and then I do something else." Failure to understand that you are not God can destroy your spiritual life. Failure to surrender and accept our true identity in Christ has eternal consequences. This week we are looking at a man, a King, who discovered this very painful lesson.

But it's not all doom and gloom, because while the King suffered, his counterpart Daniel flourished. In their stories we will see who is in charge and what implications that has for our lives. Join us this week as we continue our time in the book of Daniel.



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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Ernest Kurtz wrote, 'Fundamental to the recovery process is that healing and sanity begin with a single realization that I am not God. I'm not in control of my universe. I often cannot even control myself. I violate my own values. I want to do one thing, and then I do something else.' Why do you think those in A.A. begin their recovery process with this understanding? What does this teach you about humans and the way we think?
2. Matt opens the discussion with an understanding of the 'I Am God' illusion. What do you think he means by this? When have you seen someone act in the 'I Am God' illusion? When have you acted in the 'I Am God' illusion?
3. What does the impact of the 'I Am God' illusion have on your mental health? How does the 'I Am Illusion' impact your relationship with others?
4. Daniel 2 begins with King Nebuchadnezzar's impactful dream. The King was stuck in a dream pattern, a thought pattern, that caused him fear. Have you ever been caught in a thought pattern or dream pattern that caused you distress? Does a sense of control and how you think and process ever cause you distress or anxiety?
5. King Neb went to trusted officials and experts to help him interpret a dream, but none of them could. He was so frustrated that he decided to put all these faulty leaders to death. Have you ever felt abandoned or misunderstood by those around you? How did/does it make you feel when you are seemingly isolated or misunderstood by those in your community?



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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

6. Daniel and his community had been taken from their home, alienated from their people, and forced to live in a totally new land with totally different customs. Then, they heard that the King who forced all of these changes was going mad because of this unanswered dream. Rather than carry a 'he had it coming' attitude, they prayed for the King. Read out loud Daniel 2:14-19, what does this reveal about Daniel? How would you have responded in this situation?

7. After Daniel interprets the dream the King is overwhelmed with appreciation. Daniel could have asked for anything, yet Matt points out that Daniel 'doesn't promote himself,' and instead directs the King's favor to promote his friends while also taking on new responsibilities. Matt concludes with this idea that when we recognize that we are not God, we are not consumed by promotions or praise. How does Daniel's position in this moment shape the way you think about your identity? How does this posture challenge you?

8. Matt discusses two implications that come from this chapter in Daniel. The first is that **when I'm clear that I'm not God and that I'm lost apart from God, I will devote myself, I will take all kinds of risks, and I will pay all kinds of prices — I will devote myself to helping people meet God.** Break this sentence down in your group. How do you become clear that you are not God in your life? What does it mean to devote yourself to God? What does it mean to take risks for God? Are you willing to pay any price because you know who is in charge?

9. The second implication is that **if God is God and I'm not God, I can stop worrying. I'm invited to stop worrying.** Do you find this implication challenging? How does holding on to worry keep you far from God? How does working through worry help you draw near to God? If you aren't a worry person, how does helping others with their worry reflect an area of service?

10. Part of resilience in the book of Daniel is understanding who is in charge. How does this challenge you this week?



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## NEXT STEPS FOR THIS WEEK (COMMIT TO GROW)

- ☐ I will view frustrating situations as an opportunity for me to be patient.
- ☐ I will be patient in frustrating situations because it's crucial to the formation of my character.
- ☐ I will not obsess over image management or self-promotion.
- ☐ I will devote my life to helping people meet God.
- ☐ I will be bold in sharing my faith.
- ☐ I will use worry as a prompt to pray and give it to God.
- ☐ I will worship God in the middle of my story, when I don't know how things will end.

## SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

- Daniel 2

## Spiritual Practice of the Week

- ☐ Surrender: the act of surrendering involves us embracing the holiness of God while also drawing away from what tempts us. To practice surrendering this week, pray over what you are holding on to and write a list of one thing you can actively try to surrender each day. As you work through your list, spend time in prayer reflecting on the difficulties and joys of surrendering.

## Prayer Request(s)

- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐