



# Molded Through Suffering

Matt VanCleave  
February 12, 2023

## REVIEW LAST WEEK'S NEXT STEPS

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

- I will find a Daniel in my life who will tell me the hard truth.
- I will ask a trusted friend to help me see my blindspots.
- I will look for interruptions as opportunities to serve God.
- I will renounce my sins.
- I will do what is right.
- I will be kind to the poor.
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## THIS WEEK'S SERMON RECAP

In Daniel 4 God is very clear about how the pride of King Nebuchadnezzar is leading him to folly. God gives him a very vivid dream describing his impending downfall, and He gives the King a man who can explain the dream, Daniel. Through the dream and through Daniel, God says, "Come, let us reason together" but Nebuchadnezzar says, "No. Not today. Not me."

So God has to go to plan B, which involves much more drastic and painful measures. Nebuchadnezzar is going to have to walk in the shoes of the weak, poor, uneducated, unattractive, unconnected, and despised until he begins to learn something about compassion and wisdom

King Nebuchadnezzar suffers, and yet he is molded through the experience of the pain of Plan B. This week we explore more in the book of Daniel and as we reflect on the ways that God guides and shapes our lives just as he did for the characters in chapter 4.



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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Last week we learned how God is opposed to pride. How did this understanding shape your week last week? Did you find it challenging to work on pride in your life?
2. Matt notes that to battle King Nebuchadnezzar's pride, God uses two devices. The first is that God tries to reason with the King. God gives the King a very obvious set of actions in a dream, and then gives the King a person who can interpret the dream, Daniel. What does this teach you about God? What does it teach you about human nature?
3. God plants the seed in King Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and then God waits. Read together Daniel 4:28-30. How long does God wait? Why do you think God gives King Nebuchadnezzar so long? What does this teach you about God and God's process of reasoning?
4. Reasoning doesn't work, and so God moves to Plan B, a plan of pain. Has God ever used a painful circumstance or an uneasy conscience to steer you back to Him? Tell a story of a time you experienced this.
5. Matt notes, 'When God wants to reason with you, when God comes in gentleness with that still, small voice, don't ignore him. It's foolishness to ignore God. It just is.' What does this statement make you think and feel as you hear it? What makes it difficult to listen to God's voice when we find it prompting us to do something or change something?



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6. Pressure and pain, that is Plan B for King Nebuchadnezzar. Read together Daniel 4: 31-33. Why do you think God crafted King Nebuchadnezzar's Plan B in this way?
  
7. Throughout the Bible we see this imagery of a potter and clay, God being the potter shaping each of us as the clay. What do you think of this metaphor? How do you see this metaphor in this story of King Nebuchadnezzar? What does this metaphor mean for you life?
  
8. Discipline, and being shaped, is not always pleasant. But just as a potter would never leave an air bubble in a clay pot so does God often work in our lives to smooth out some of the areas that need refining. Do you struggle with the idea that our God at times uses pain and suffering to help us grow? What does it mean to be molded by suffering?
  
9. Read Daniel 4: 34. How does the ending of King Nebuchadnezzar's story give you hope for your story?
  
10. We each find ourselves in different places in our faith journey. What part of King Nebuchadnezzar's story do you find yourself in today? How can the group help you in your walk with God this week?



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

- I will stop ignoring what God is clearly speaking to me.
- I will stop blowing off people who are trying to tell me the truth.
- I will come clean, get help and turn my life around.
- I will be obedient to God and stop ignoring him.
- I will trust that God is molding me through the suffering and pain.

## SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

- Isaiah 43:26
- Daniel 4:17-37
- Psalm 32:8-9
- Jeremiah 18:1-6
- Hebrews 12:5-7
- Matthew 20:27

## Spiritual Practice of the Week

- Confession: King Nebuchadnezzar missed his first opportunity to turn from pride and to turn towards God. His confession came after experiencing the pain and suffering of God's plan B. We, like King Nebuchadnezzar, may have an area in our life that we need to confess to God. In our confession we can surrender what is holding us away from God, and step towards healing and wholeness. So, this week, search in your heart and mind and find something that God wants to mold and reshape.

## Prayer Request(s)

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