

The Writing on the Wall

Matt VanCleave

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REVIEW LAST WEEK'S NEXT STEPS

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

- I will read Daniel 6 and reflect on the way King Darius fails and finds triumph in this story.
- I will reflect on who I listen to in my day to day life, and reflect on if those voices are bringing me
- closer to God or further away from God.
- I will spend time in prayer this week, listening to what God reveals as I sit with Him.
- I will reach out to a friend or to members in my small group to see how I can be praying for them this week.

THIS WEEK'S SERMON RECAP

Are you a Strategic Avoider? Maybe if you don't think about it, read about it, talk about it, or look at it... it will go away (whatever "it" is)! After all, if you acknowledged it, "it" might force you to change, "it" might force you to do something you don't want to do.

King Belshazzar in the Book of Daniel tried this approach in regards to looking at the plain truth of his life. In Daniel chapter 5 the King ignores the writing on the wall, and his strategic avoidance strategy ultimately leads to his death.

At times, we ignore promptings from God. We ignore moments for spiritual formation. And while we may not have visible writing on the wall some of us habitually ignore what God has placed in front of us. Strategic avoidance can leave us feeling anxious, disconnected or distant. But God wants us to find wholeness and purpose as we look for Him.

This week we are learning, and being challenged by King Belshazzar so that our faith and life can be resilient.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The book of Daniel is in many ways a book about the failures of different kings. We have seen both Nebuchadnezzar and Darius fail, and this week we are exploring the story of King Belshazzar. Why do you think these kings have failed over and over again?

2. Let's get to know King Belshazzar! Read together Daniel 5:1-4. What verb is repeated in these verses? What does this teach you about King Darius?

3. Belshazzar is distracting himself with wine and parties. If you had to think of three distractions that fill your calendar what would they be? What keeps you distracted from God?

4. Belshazzar is at the party, and out of nowhere a hand appears and begins writing a warning message on the wall. What do you think Belshazzar must have felt when he saw this? How has God used 'wake up calls' in your life?

5. Belshazzar runs to find Daniel so that Daniel can interpret what has been written. Now you must remember that Belshazzar has, as Matt notes, "trashed Daniel's career, forgotten Daniel's people, and blasphemed Daniel's God," but now he needs Daniel. God has a purpose for us, and at times God calls us to serve people that we may find challenging. How does this aspect of the story challenge you and your faith?

6. Read out loud Daniel 5:22, what Daniel told Belshazzar. Daniel told Belshazzar that he knew all of his faults but refused to humble himself which led to this writing on the wall. How does our own ego or distractions blind us to our own

faults? How can we lean into God and the Spirit to be formed so that we do not fall into the same trap as Belshazzar?

7. Why is radical honesty and knowing ourselves so difficult?

8. Belshazzar has been weighed, and been found wanting. That night, he dies alienated from God. What does Belshazzar's ending teach you about God?

9. What part of this story challenges you in your faith?

10. At the end of the sermon Matt asks, "if it turns out this day would be your last, is there anything that you need to take care of?" So, do you have something that God has written on the wall of your heart that you want to work on this week?

NEXT STEPS FOR THIS WEEK (COMMIT TO GROW)

- I will examine my life to learn where I avoid the truth.

- I will take care of any unfinished business in my life.
- I will forgive someone who has hurt me.
- I will ask for forgiveness from someone I've hurt.
- I will address a sin I've been struggling with for a long time.
- I will give/serve in the way I feel God is calling me to.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

- Daniel 5

Spiritual Practice of the Week

- Confession: King Belshazzar missed his first opportunity to turn from pride and to turn towards God. The writing on the wall was visible, it could not have been more clear, and yet Belshazzar missed an opportunity to confess and turn 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)
