

Sometimes it's difficult to do what the Lord asks us to do and resolve to do the right thing at the right time. But let us learn from Daniel and be inspired by his faithfulness. Even in the face of death, Daniel stayed steadfast. From beginning to end, he was about doing what honored his God. Is that the over-arching goal we have set our sights on?

MANGER THINGS

Text: Daniel 5:5-31, Luke 1:39-45

Plain Truth:

_____ yourself, you _____ the world -
_____ yourself, you _____ everything.

1. _____ impacts the world around you and the world _____ you.
2. _____ reveals who you _____ and who you _____ to.
3. _____ yourself - you _____ everything.

One Year Bible Reading

December 3: Daniel 11:2-35, 1 John 3:7-24, Psalm 122:1-9, Proverbs 29:1
December 4: Daniel 11:36-12:13, 1 John 4:1-21, Psalm 123:1-4, Proverbs 29:2-4
December 5: Hosea 1:1-3:5, 1 John 5:1-21, Psalm 124:1-8, Proverbs 29:5-8
December 6: Hosea 4:1-5:15, 2 John 1:1-13, Psalm 125:1-5, Proverbs 29:9-11
December 7: Hosea 6:1-9:17, 3 John 1:1-14, Psalm 126:1-6, Proverbs 29:12-14
December 8: Hosea 10:1-14:9, Jude 1:1-25, Psalm 127:1-5, Proverbs 29:15-17
December 9: Joel 1:1-3:21, Revelation 1:1-20, Psalm 128:1-6, Proverbs 29:18

Life Group Lesson

Week of December 3

As we approach the celebration of the coming of God's Christ into the world, we are reminded that all things serve God's purposes. And there are events on Heaven's calendar that no man, world power, or force of darkness can thwart. God is sovereign and in control. For example, Caesar Augustus called for the census (Luke 2:1) – his idea, or God's? Back up some 400 years, Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar rises to conquer the known world, exiling the people of Judah – his idea, or God's? Nebuchadnezzar would rule for a time, then his son and his son (Jeremiah 27:6-7) before falling to the Medes and Persians. Seventy years later, Cyrus of Persia would rise to power and send the Judean exiles back to their home – his idea, or God's?

On the eve of the fall of the Babylonian empire, Nebuchadnezzar's grandson, Belshazzar, was throwing a party. Belshazzar was probably as co-regent under his father, Nabonidus, who had married one of Nebuchadnezzar's daughters and murdered to take the throne. Although Belshazzar knew of his grandfather's humbling experience with the Most High (see Daniel 4), this young king – second-in-command – refused to humble himself. Instead of fasting and praying for God's mercy as enemy forces invaded his city, Belshazzar was feasting and praising the gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, and wood – drinking wine from sacred objects that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Lord's Temple in Jerusalem! Belshazzar was either unaware or in complete denial that he and his kingdom were about to go down, until he saw the hand-writing on the wall.

Read Daniel 5:5-31

The Plain Truth states – 'Humble yourself, you impact the world. Exalt yourself, you lose everything.' Daniel was an old man by the time Belshazzar called for him to interpret the handwriting. Daniel had lived a life of faithfulness and was unafraid to speak the truth to this young arrogant man, Belshazzar (vv17-28) – "You are his successor, O Belshazzar and you knew all this yet you have not humbled yourself. For you have proudly defied the Lord of heaven and have had these cups from His Temple brought before you...drinking wine from them while praising gods of silver, gold, bronze, iron, wood, and stone...But you have not honored the God who gives you the breath of life and controls your destiny!"

1. 'Humble yourself, you impact the world.' Read Matthew 5:5. In light of the first part or the Plain Truth, how do you interpret this verse from Jesus' sermon on the mount?

If we don't learn to humble ourselves before God, something else will. What is humility? What is humility *not*? How does humility conform us to the image of Christ?

2. 'Exalt yourself, you lose everything.' Certainly, we can think of many examples of this truth, including Belshazzar and the Babylonian empire. What other examples come to mind? (include both great and small, world-scene and personal)

Read Luke 1:38-45

Mary humbles herself before the Lord as the angel Gabriel announces Christ's birth. Soon after Mary becomes pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit she visits her cousin Elizabeth and the baby within her leaps for joy. Main stream media does not usually broadcast stories of God's wonder. But those who follow the Lord know that He is always working behind the scenes in supernatural ways.

3. Think of ways you know God is at work. How would you describe His ways – how He intervenes personally for you – to a friend in need of hope and encouragement?

Obedience blesses the Lord because it proves in tangible ways that we really do honor the One who gives us breath and controls our destiny. Obedience also blesses others. When we do what God asks us to do, we will often see supernatural things occur. And even if we don't, we can know for sure, that somehow God will bless our aligning our will with His. We take a small baby step in His direction, He crosses heaven and earth to meet us at that point of humility.

4. Think about the two stories we have looked at today – one of pride ending in destruction, and one of humility resulting in salvation for the world. What does everyday obedience look like for you?