

## Lesson 3

September 20, 2020

# A Changed Heart

## FOCUS THOUGHT

We must seek to avoid pride because God honors humility.

## FOCUS VERSE

### Daniel 4:37

Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.

## LESSON TEXT

### Daniel 4:28-37

28 All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar.

29 At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon.

30 The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?

31 While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee.

32 And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

33 The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.

34 And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation:

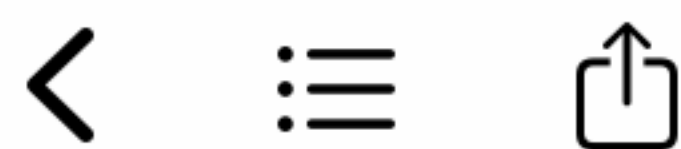
35 And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?

36 At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me.

37 Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.







# CULTURE CONNECTION

## LIFE AND LEADERS

It was a most unusual move. Corporations typically look through their corner office windshield to hire the best and brightest to sit in the CEO's seat. They rarely look in their rear-view mirror to find a leader who used to lead and ask him to lead again. But Apple did just that in 1996. Steve Jobs founded the tech giant we know as Apple. If you have any electronic device that starts with a lowercase *i*, Steve Jobs' visionary fingerprints are all over it.

But business was not always booming at Apple. After some complaints and conflicts, the board of Apple sided with their CEO—whom Steve Jobs recruited—and removed Jobs from the Macintosh division. In a speech he made at Stanford University twenty years later, he remarked, "I was out—and very publicly out . . . . What had been the focus of my entire adult life was gone, and it was devastating. . . . I was a very public failure" (Joel Siegel, "When Steve Jobs Got Fired by Apple," [abcnews.go.com](http://abcnews.go.com)).

But in 1996, a struggling Apple acquired Jobs' next tech startup and returned him to his CEO seat one year later. From that seat, Steve Jobs steered Apple to the iPod to the iPhone to the iPad. Long before Apple rose and fell and rose again, Babylon faced a similar power struggle. God had ousted Nebuchadnezzar due to his pride, but when he repented and realized God was in charge, not him, God restored his sanity and mental faculties. When Babylon went looking for their next king, they found their previous king, and set the crown back on his head. Life has a way of making leaders better leaders, even if leaders need to take time to learn more by leading less.

## OUTLINE

### I. NEBUCHADNEZZAR HAD A SECOND DREAM

- A. A Tall Tree Was Cut Down
- B. A Man's Heart into a Beast's Heart
- C. God Has the Power to Change the Hearts of Men

### II. DANIEL INTERPRETED THE KING'S DREAM

- A. The Tree Represented the King
- B. His Enemies Would Drive Him from His Kingdom
- C. Nebuchadnezzar Must Find Humility and Let God Change His Heart
- D. We Must Let God Change Our Hearts

### III. THE DREAM CAME TO PASS

- A. Nebuchadnezzar Became Proudful
- B. His Kingdom Was Taken from Him
- C. God-Given Dreams Will Come to Pass

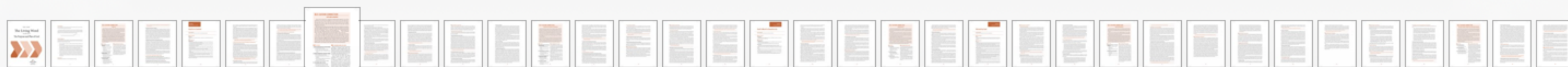
### IV. NEBUCHADNEZZAR TURNED TO GOD IN THE END

- A. He Honored God and Remained Humble
- B. God Brings Down the Proudful
- C. God Honors the Humble

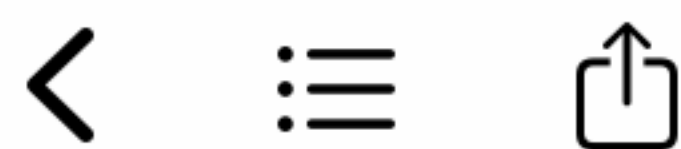
## CONTEMPLATING THE TOPIC

William stood alone in the hall as his classmates participated in mandatory prayer before class. When William's mother, Madalyn Murray O'Hair, realized the scenario, she filed suit against the school system because of her stance against God. This dispute and subsequent lawsuit eventually reached the United States Supreme Court.

In his book *My Life without God*, William J. Murray revealed that after having been manipulated by his mother for many years, followed by a devastating life of alcoholism, he finally found freedom and healing at the age of thirty-three. He took a stand in direct opposition to his mother's cause, announcing he was indeed a believer in God. William Murray established the non-profit organization Religious Freedom Coalition, based in Washington, D.C., which advocates the defense and preservation of America's Christian heritage and monitors Christian persecution in other countries ([www.religiousfreedomcoalition.org](http://www.religiousfreedomcoalition.org)).







## »» SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

Some people are deemed beyond redemption because of their anti-God actions or worldly appearance. In spite of our presumptions, God has a way of showing us that no matter the outward manifestation of rejection toward God, He still loves and draws everyone to Himself. It is hard to imagine those who are antagonistic toward the things of God standing in the presence of God with hands raised, worshiping the Savior they formerly mocked. However, the biblical account of Nebuchadnezzar is a great reminder that God can take the hardened heart of the most unlikely person and soften it toward Him.

### I. NEBUCHADNEZZAR HAD A SECOND DREAM

Nebuchadnezzar was familiar with dreams sent from God. His first recorded dream was an opportunity for God to bring Daniel to the forefront and interpret God's intention for Babylon and succeeding Gentile powers. (See Daniel 2.) After this second harrowing, frightful dream, King Nebuchadnezzar called all his wise men together in order to reveal the interpretation. In Daniel 4:6–7, Nebuchadnezzar shared the dream with magicians, astrologers, enchanters (witches), and diviners (fortune tellers), expecting them to interpret his dream. However, he was looking for answers in the wrong places. These were unbelievers in the one true God and unable to provide answers for the king. Finally, Daniel was called. He was the only one able to interpret the dream. Although Daniel was a captive in a foreign land, God put him in the right place at the right time. Because Daniel was able to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's first dream, he was aware that Daniel had a connection with the spirit world. It is hard to understand why he did not call Daniel first; nevertheless, after all his searching, God's servant was the one with whom Nebuchadnezzar found answers and the true interpretation of his dream.

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» *Have you ever had a dream that you knew was from God? How did you know?*

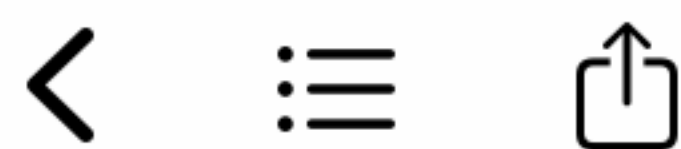
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#### A. A Tall Tree Was Cut Down

Nebuchadnezzar explained his dream to Daniel. He saw a very large tree growing healthy and lush in the middle of the earth. It reached high into the sky and provided a place for birds to build their nests. It sheltered animals on the ground from the beating sun, and the ripe fruit from the branches provided food for all the living creatures. Then a messenger appeared from Heaven and declared that the tree was to be cut down and all the leaves and vegetation were to be stripped and scattered, no longer providing sustenance. The stump and roots were to be left in the ground and bound with a chain to the earth, but the rest of the tree was destroyed. Then he saw the stump become like a wild beast—wet with dew on its back—running in a pack with the wild animals for seven periods of time. At the end of his dream the purpose was revealed: "In order that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men" (Daniel 4:17, NKJV).





**B. A Man's Heart into a Beast's Heart**

It was about a year later that Nebuchadnezzar, while strolling through his palace, became puffed up with pride as he thought what a mighty, amazing man he had become, having built such an incredible kingdom in Babylon. His kingdom was rich, powerful, and had become a resource for other countries that were in need. However, his pride became his downfall. His words are recorded in Daniel 4: "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:30, NKJV).

Immediately the prophecy from the dream came to pass, and Nebuchadnezzar was driven from his palace to live among the beasts in the field for a period of seven times. Some scholars suggest seven times infers seven years, while others say it refers to seven seasons. Whatever length of time, God chose to allow this to happen. It was enough to change the hardened, prideful heart of the king into a humble tender heart for God.

**C. God Has the Power to Change the Hearts of Men**

We should never underestimate the wisdom of God. He knows what it takes to change the heart of an individual. It is in the nature of humanity—because of sin—to be prideful and self-indulgent. Only God can bring us to face our failures, confess our sin, and seek His salvation. A change of mind begins with a change of heart, and God's grace leads us to repentance and change.

**II. DANIEL INTERPRETED THE KING'S DREAM**

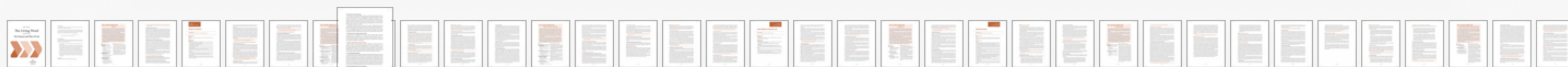
Without question Nebuchadnezzar woke up troubled and confused about this dream. He knew it meant something significant but could not interpret it on his own. After looking for answers and finding none, he eventually learned the true interpretation from Daniel. At first when Daniel heard the dream, he was afraid to tell the king because of the personal inference to Nebuchadnezzar. The king assured him of personal safety and requested him to reveal the meaning of the dream.

**A. The Tree Represented the King**

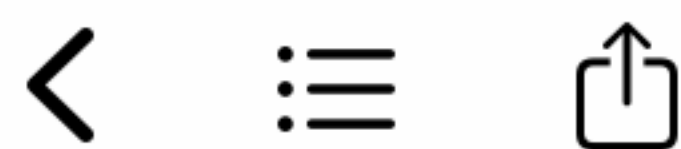
Daniel expressed to the king how he wished the dream referred to the king's enemies and to those who hated him. Unfortunately for the king, the true interpretation revealed that the tree represented the king himself. He would be great and powerful for a time but would eventually be reduced to nothing. He would be driven into the fields with the animals and have the mind of a beast for a period of time. The stump of the tree and the roots in the earth were a sign that Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom would be restored to him after he acknowledged it was God who ruled his kingdom. Daniel beseeched the king to repent and humble himself before God so that this would not come upon him.

**B. His Enemies Would Drive Him from His Kingdom**

The interpretation further revealed how Nebuchadnezzar would be driven from his palace by his enemies. He may have had to run for his life, or may have been driven out because of an altered mind, thinking more like a beast than a man. Whatever







the case, the prophecy was fulfilled, and his enemies forced him from his throne to wander the fields like an animal.

### **C. Nebuchadnezzar Must Find Humility and Let God Change His Heart**

Nebuchadnezzar had a dream in Daniel 2 that no one could interpret. Daniel not only interpreted that dream, but God allowed him to discern the dream the king could not remember. It was an amazing feat that none of the astrologers, fortunetellers, or enchanters could achieve. In this act God was reaching for the heart of Nebuchadnezzar. He was giving him dreams, performing miracles, and tugging on his heart. We may not see the potential of Nebuchadnezzar, but God saw something in this heathen king that kept Him from giving up on him.

Again God's power was evident when Nebuchadnezzar observed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego coming out of a fiery furnace unscathed (Daniel 3:27). Nebuchadnezzar seemed to understand who the living God was, but he reverted to his false gods (Daniel 3:28).

Our lesson text records this ultimate test that appears to have been successful. In Nebuchadnezzar's own words, the account of what transpired is accurate and noteworthy. Nebuchadnezzar finally acknowledged the power of the true living God after he recovered from the sentence declared in his dream.

### **D. We Must Let God Change Our Hearts**

God is merciful and loving toward us: "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jeremiah 31:3). He will draw us unto Him because of His everlasting love. He does not give up easily, but we must be willing to allow that change to happen. As God draws near to us, things begin to change. The things we used to do that are displeasing to Him no longer entice us. We must lay them down and let them go as we submit to the process of change. Our desires, appetites, and longings will begin to lean toward Him as our hearts begin to soften.

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» *How can we allow God to check our hearts?*

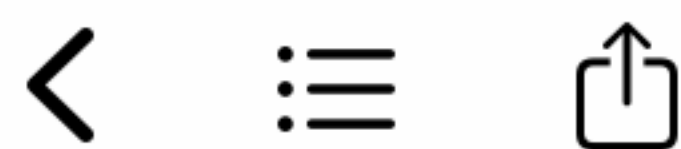
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## **III. THE DREAM CAME TO PASS**

God continually reached for Nebuchadnezzar before he was finally willing to change. In the previous chapters, we see how God used His people to help the king see the error of his ways. God was trying to turn Nebuchadnezzar's heart away from false gods, idols, and pagan worship toward the one true living God. None of Nebuchadnezzar's gods could hear or answer prayer; none could deliver as God had delivered the three Hebrew men from the fiery furnace; none could save, heal, or deliver because these gods did not really exist.







### A. Nebuchadnezzar Became Prideful

Unfortunately Nebuchadnezzar's heart was full of pride. He took credit when it was not earned. What he did not fully realize was that all he had been given was from God. His kingdom was flourishing because of the blessings of God. He was responsible for destroying Jerusalem, killing thousands of Jews, and taking the strongest and best captives back to Babylon.

Times were challenging for the children of God, but He had not forsaken them. In this strange land, God was taking care of His children. It is possible that Nebuchadnezzar actually reaped blessings in his kingdom because God's children were present, and it had nothing to do with his superior leadership or insightful direction. There is no doubt that this evil king suffered from pride—it was always about him and never about God. Nebuchadnezzar had a hard time acknowledging God's part in his success.

### B. His Kingdom Was Taken from Him

Because of Nebuchadnezzar's haughty attitude and prideful spirit, God stepped in and caused Nebuchadnezzar's enemies to drive him from his palace. There is much speculation as to who these enemies were. It could have been insubordination in his own kingdom—perhaps he had already shown signs of mental illness and was replaced by the second in command. It is unfortunate that Nebuchadnezzar had many good things taken away from him because of the hardness of his heart.

Pride robs us of the blessings God wants to give us. If we are humble and give Him the glory for every good gift, we will see his hand of favor on our lives: "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (James 4:6).

### C. God-Given Dreams Will Come to Pass

Nebuchadnezzar's dream was not due to a little too much pizza for supper. Instead, God had chosen to deal with him through several dreams. The dreams he received from God each had a message, and they always came to pass. Although Daniel was forced to live in Babylon as a captive, God had a plan for him in that godless land. Eventually Daniel's unwavering walk with God played a part in Nebuchadnezzar's spiritual transformation.

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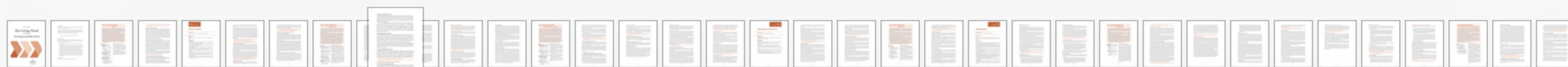
» *What are some of the things pride steals from Christians?*

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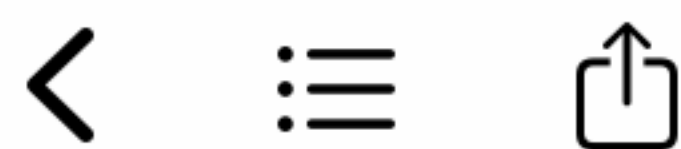
## IV. NEBUCHADNEZZAR TURNED TO GOD IN THE END

### A. He Honored God and Remained Humble

At the beginning of Daniel 4, Nebuchadnezzar gave all glory to God. It seems he had experienced the debasement of God and told the story so others could learn from his mistakes. After giving God the glory, he launched into the story of his dream. He was honest in revealing the condition of his heart at the beginning of this harrowing experience. He admitted that he took all the credit for the great kingdom he built.







Notice at the beginning of his testimony, he often used the words *the gods*. After wandering tragically out of his mind with wild beasts, he finally acknowledged the “King of heaven” to be the one who is worthy of worship: “Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase” (Daniel 4:37). Not only did Nebuchadnezzar acknowledge and honor God Almighty, but he also recognized the fairness of God’s judgment and how He deals with those who walk with a prideful heart.

### **B. God Brings Down the Proud**

God’s Word cautions us to guard against a spirit of pride: “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18). Pride can emerge when we least expect it. The temptation of pride is common among all humanity. It is frequently manifested in this broken, wicked world. Pride is sin. God will not tolerate it. We must fight against the spirit of pride so we can be in communion with God.

Nebuchadnezzar serves as an example of someone who struggled with pride to the point of destruction. Perhaps it was the prayers of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, or other Jews in captivity that sustained Nebuchadnezzar until he finally understood that pride was destroying him. We should learn from his experience; it is better to deal with pride at the first onset than to contend with its consequences.

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» *What are some ways to detect pride in our hearts?*

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### **C. God Honors the Humble**

In Isaiah, God said He would restore the crushed spirit of the humble. We should never stand in defiance when circumstances go awry, shaking our fists at God in accusation. God resists the proud, but He runs to those who are humble, even in adversity. Staying humble before God—even in difficult times—brings a special moving of His reviving power.

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» *How does pride fight against God and His will?*

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## **INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE**

Oh, that we would understand the value of a humble heart. God can work with a spirit of humility. Yet numerous examples in Scripture show how displeasing pride and self-indulgence are to God. At one point, an exasperated Moses accused the children of Israel of having stiff necks (Deuteronomy 31:27). A stubborn, unyielding spirit can be a product of pride. If we are unable to submit to the authority of God’s Word, we should take a closer look inside our hearts and see if pride is the culprit. If pride is the issue, we need to pray and ask God to forgive us and replace our prideful hearts with hearts of humility. God is the only one who can change a heart filled with pride into a loving, humble, obedient heart. If God can take the heart of a vile, wicked king like Nebuchadnezzar and turn it into a humble, thankful, obedient heart, He can do the same for each of us.

