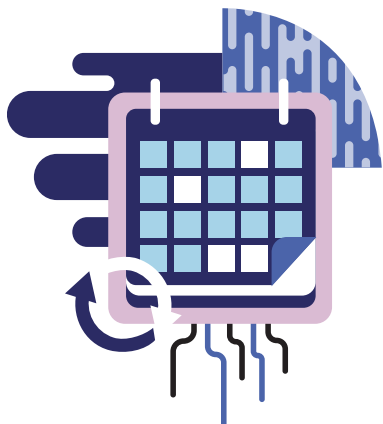


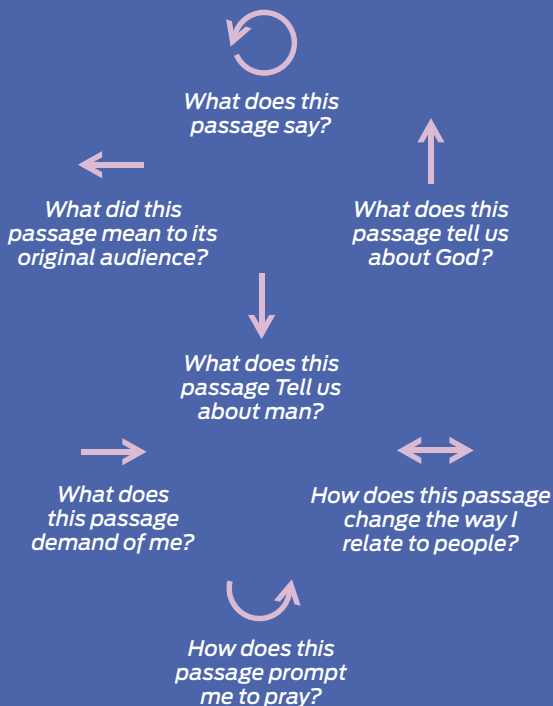
Daily Devotions



Day 1

Daniel 4:1-27

The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Despite his observation of God's repeated glory and power, Nebuchadnezzar's pride continued to blind him to the authority of his Maker. Though he gave lip service to the unrivaled strength of Yahweh, Babylon's king saw himself as omnipotent and ultimate. To him, the strength of his kingdom was from the work of his own hands. Thus, God again came to Nebuchadnezzar in a dream, but this time with a warning of his impending humility. Daniel not only interpreted the vision, but also pleaded unsuccessfully with his leader to repent.

Unfortunately, we often fall victim to the sin of self-reliance as well. Though every good and perfect gift in our lives is from above (James 3:17), we dangerously live as if we are the source of the blessings we enjoy. In order to appreciate the grace of Christ fully, however, God desires that we walk in faith and humility. Failing to do so blinds us to the authority God has over our lives while also creating the illusion that we chart our destiny. Because Jesus submitted to the will of the heavenly Father, we must seek to do the same. Unless we humble ourselves, God's greatest blessings in our lives can actually become stumbling blocks that foster sinful arrogance.

In what ways are we capable of mishandling God's blessings in our lives?

Daniel 4:28-30

How do you respond to bad news? Despite God's revealed intention to humble Nebuchadnezzar like an animal, Babylon's king continued to boast in his strength. In his mind, the strength of the kingdom was a testimony to his power and majesty. Though he claimed the Hebrews worshiped the Most High God, the wayward king lived as if he was above all others. Tragically, it is not difficult to see ourselves falling into the same destructive pattern.

Though we say that Christianity is not about us, we sometimes live to the contrary. We may nod our heads in agreement with declarations about the priority of God's kingdom, yet we might also reduce the kingdom to whatever makes us happy or fulfilled. Knowing that God's glory takes precedence over our own does not prohibit us from magnifying ourselves at the expense of our Savior. Like Babylon's ancient king, our hearts gravitate toward what we perceive to be testimonies of our strength. In our efforts to be like God, we sometimes recklessly compete with Him.

What are some ways you have looked to your own strength and alleged achievements instead of Christ?

Daniel 4:31-33

Grace takes many forms and is not always immediately recognizable. Yet, what sometimes appears to be God's harsh judgment often turns out to be one of His blessings in disguise. Driven from the throne to the field in order to eat like cattle, Nebuchadnezzar endured the harshest of circumstances from the hand of God. The goal of this plight, however, was to rescue the king from himself. Because the only remedy for pride is humility, the Lord was actively wooing His subject to repentance. We should expect no less today.

Because life is no more than a vapor (Jas. 4:14), we should often remember that the temporary inconveniences we dislike so much are intended to humble us. In fact, we can rejoice knowing that God compassionately interrupts our temporal lives in order to reward us eternally. Rather than get upset with Him for every problem we face, we should first look for ways to humble ourselves before the Lord instead. What we mistakenly perceive as His absence in our lives is often the greatest evidence of His activity.

What inconveniences has God used in your life to humble and sanctify you?

Daniel

4:34-37

Nebuchadnezzar's journey comes full circle in these verses. After enduring a time of great distress, the king was able to see reality much more clearly. By recognizing God's supreme sovereignty over his life, Nebuchadnezzar was now able to appreciate his achievements as gifts from the Lord rather than evidence of his equality with the Most High God. Because he yielded to God's chastening hand, the former pagan felt compelled to Yahweh.

For us, abandoning the subtle deceptions of pride can be just as painful. Though God will not likely force us to the ground like an animal, He will strip us of any stumbling blocks that prevent our total dependence upon Him. In His providence, God is willing to hurt us in order to help us. Praise readily falling from our lips is a good indicator that we, like Nebuchadnezzar, finally realize how undeserving we are of the good gifts in our lives.

What season or event in your life has led you to praise the Lord more deliberately than before?

Daniel

5:1-31

Our lives would be much easier if we could learn from the mistakes of others without repeating them. Yet, the sins of the past, in this case pride, seem to rear their ugly realities in every generation. After King Nebuchadnezzar's reign in Babylon ended, Belshazzar began to rule. Despite knowledge of his predecessor's costly arrogance, this new king also refused to walk with humility (Dan. 5:22-23). As a result, God stripped the kingdom from Belshazzar in dramatic fashion, proving that He would not be mocked. The same is true today.

The Bible repeatedly warns that God will not share His glory with anyone. Wisdom beckons us to avoid great heartache by not following in the devastating examples of how pride destroys us. Are our modern idolatries any less significant than Belshazzar's? Do we expect our disregard for God's commands to go unnoticed? As difficult as humbling ourselves before the Lord might be, facing the His judgment for pride is much more painful.

How have you learned from the sins of others? In what ways have you failed to do so?