

Shine With Humility

When a stray Confederate bullet caused his Union officers to duck for cover, General John Sedgwick scolded them. “Why are you dodging like this? They couldn’t hit an elephant at this distance.” The next bullet, shot from a distance of 2/3 mile, landed with a thud just under the left eye of Sedgwick. He died instantly, the highest ranking Union officer to die in the Civil War.

Better cautious than cocky! *“Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.” Proverbs 16:18.* When you think you have the world by the tail, be careful. Both Hitler and Nixon saw their good fortune reversed in less than a year.

A Pagan King Shares His Greatest Lesson in Four Parts:

1. The Most High God Is _____ (Matchless)

- a. *“It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me.” Daniel 4:2.* Nebuchadnezzar trusted in the God of Israel while the Jewish people doubted. They wondered why God allowed so much evil, just like we do today.
- b. The over-arching theme of Daniel is this: “In spite of present circumstances, an Almighty God is in control and this Almighty God will win the day.” Do you believe this?

2. Truth Is _____ (Priceless)

- a. *“Belteshazzar [Daniel], chief of the magicians, I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you, and no mystery is too difficult for you. Here is my dream; interpret it for me.” Daniel 4:9.* Have there been times when you didn’t want to hear the truth? The king begged Daniel to shoot straight with him.
- b. Have you ever had a hard time telling the truth? Many today refuse to acknowledge the truth that hell is real (Luke 16:23) and that most people are heading in that direction (Matthew 7:13-14). God not only wants you to be saved (II Peter 3:9), He has provided a way through trusting in Christ (John 3:16).

3. Pride Is _____ (Dangerous)

- a. *“Therefore, O king, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue.” Daniel 4:27.* Unlike the king of Nineveh who repented after being warned by God’s prophet (Jonah 3:6), Nebuchadnezzar became proud over his magnificent kingdom!
- b. Immediately after a prideful boast (Daniel 4:33), Nebuchadnezzar was afflicted with mental illness called bo-anthropy (eating grass like cattle) for seven years.

4. Humility Is _____ (Precious)

- a. *“At the end of that time, I Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever.” Daniel 4:34.* Nebuchadnezzar seemed to exercise true, saving faith. *“A broken and contrite spirit, O God, you will not despise.” Psalm 51:17.*
- b. *“God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” James 4:6.* Jesus associated with humble people like the Samaritan woman (John 4) and Zacchaeus, the tax collector (Luke 19). Jesus reserved his harshest words for the Pharisees (Matthew 23), who didn't realize they were the greatest sinners in all of Israel!

We must relearn the biblical principle of resisting pride and embracing humility over and over again. According to Tim Keller (*The Secret of Self-Forgetfulness*), our cultural obsession with self-esteem is wreaking havoc. Neither is it biblical since we are to place our trust not in self, but in God (Proverbs 3:5-6). In fact, both Jesus and Paul taught us to focus on self-denial, not self-esteem (Mark 8:34, II Corinthians 10:17).

Our problem isn't thinking too low of ourselves, but too high! Up until 1950, American culture prized self-denial and warned against self-obsession. Today that has been reversed with devastating consequences. Are you ready to embrace humility?