

Secure Leadership - Daniel Study - Chapter 1

Background

Imagine, if one day, while living in the United States, things drastically changed. Other nations have become more powerful and compete for control of our ground. A king from a foreign land defeats us and takes many captives back to his land. When this happens, our national pride is destroyed, our Pledge of Allegiance is mocked, and our belief in the God who established our nation is shaken. Christ would be mocked and considered weak in comparison to the new gods who now rule. Those who are not taken are left to make it on their own which creates severe poverty and confusion. People are treated brutally and many become slaves to the new rulers. The only ones that survive the poverty and brutality are the best and brightest young people from our nation. The king puts them into strict training to engrave the new culture on their hearts. These youths would learn mythology, astrology, sciences, arts, mathematics and worship all from a pagan perspective. They would be forced to learn according to the new rule. I pray this never happens, but this is the context of the book of Daniel.

In 605 B.C., King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon laid siege upon and defeated Jerusalem. Daniel and his three friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah were taken captive and forced to make a five hundred mile trip to Babylon. Meanwhile, the Babylonians continued to destroy their home land, and in 586 B.C., Jerusalem along with the Temple, was burnt to the ground. Put yourself in their shoes. They were taken from their land, families and everything that brought them security. Eventually, they would be commanded to bow and worship the gods of Babylon.

What do you think is going through the minds of everyone in Israel? Would this draw you closer to God or make you doubt His existence? Would you be prepared to stand for the God you grew up believing in?

God's Judgment and Grace

All this took place because of God's judgment. God was patient for hundreds of years while the Israelites turned their backs on Him. God repeatedly sent prophets to call the people back to a relationship with Him, but without success. God was taking back the land He gave them and giving it to pagan rulers. Punishment for disobedience is bad for everyone, even the One providing the discipline. Fortunately, God's love prevails even in discipline. In the midst of dark days, the prophets who predicted the judgment also declared God's commitment to His people and that one day they would be restored. The way I see it, is that Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah were God's agents of grace to His people during the captivity. God used these four men to declare His power to the nations of Babylon and Persia and to protect His people during foreign rule. The most powerful men on earth of their day – Nebuchadnezzar, Darius and Cyrus – were all impacted by the testimonies of these men, who boldly put their

lives in the hands of God. God was watching over His people even in the midst of disciplining them.

How has God graciously dealt with you even in the midst of your bad choices or rebellion?

The Israelites were supposed to give birth to the nations, but no baby was found. Read Isaiah 26:18. The exile was used to do what Israel refused to do on its own: give spiritual birth to the world by testifying about God.

Have you neglected telling others about Christ? If so, why?

Daniel is the model of a secure leader. Let's take a look at the characteristics of a secure leader and contrast them with those of an insecure leader.

Secure Leaders:

- Fully trust God for provisions, progress, promotion and protection.
- Are concerned with pleasing God and doing the right thing.
- Are not in a rush, but are concerned about character and doing things well.
- Do not feel the need to promote or protect themselves.
- Trust God with the process and knows that He is in control of their life.
- Know that God has put them right where they should be and trust that His timing is perfect.
- Trust that God will take care of their needs and look to meet the needs of others.

Insecure Leaders:

- Lead out of worry and ambition.
- Are always looking around the corner; they are skeptical.
- Feel the need to promote themselves.
- Are impatient and not willing to wait on God for His advancement.
- Are driven by ambition to cut corners, hurt people and only look out for number one.

Believe me, you can be Christian and struggle with insecure leadership. I have seen insecure ministry leaders, pastors and missionaries. And, in the dog-eat-dog world of sports, the secure leader is a true rarity.

When have you exhibited qualities of secure and insecure leadership? How did it turn out?

Secure leaders have the qualities we see in Daniel. Daniel was a leader for more than 60 years. He learned to lead in a foreign culture and even when his religious beliefs weren't popular. **He learned to lead by demonstrating qualities like resolve, risk, faith, humility, courage, faithfulness and integrity.** All these qualities were gained from obedience, surrender and prayer. Let's embark on the study of Daniel, and pray that Daniel's qualities will be lived out in our lives.

TALKING POINTS: SECURE LEADERSHIP

Main thought:

Secure leaders are people who fully trust God for their provisions, progress, promotion and protection.

Key Scripture verse:

Jeremiah 29:1-14; Proverbs 3:5,6; Isaiah 26:12

Discussion questions:

1. Discuss how leaders trust God for their provisions, progress, promotion and protection.
2. Discuss the cultural challenges to our faith. What are they, and how can we stand for Christ?

COACH'S TESTIMONY: SECURE LEADERSHIP

Tony Bennett, Head Basketball Coach at Washington State University

Tony Bennett is an example of what a Coach who is secure in Christ will do. His decision to honor the Sabbath could have backfired, but he was willing to do the right thing no matter the consequences.

Bennett, who accepted Christ in eighth grade during an FCA Camp in Colorado, and his team are throwing college basketball on its ear, and not just during games. After a particularly poor Saturday practice earlier in the preseason, Bennett's players arrived at the gym the next day, fully expecting to be chewed out and run mercilessly. Instead, Bennett gathered his team and said, "I don't want to practice today. We showed a lot of weaknesses yesterday, but I want to honor the Sabbath as much as I can this year. Today, I want you to spend time with family and honor the Sabbath." His players were stunned.

"Me and [senior forward] Rob Cowgill were looking at each other going, 'Coach is the man!'" said junior forward Daven Harmeling, a Christian. "How many other coaches do that?"

As a result of Bennett's godly example, remarkable things are happening on campus. Rochestie, another believer, is giving up his scholarship next year to an incoming freshman to keep the program rolling. Senior forward Robbie Cowgill moved back into a campus dorm from an off-campus apartment to be a positive role model for freshmen. And last season, two players, two team managers and an assistant coach all accepted Christ.

"It all starts at the top," Harmeling said. "When you have a guy with that much faith and character, it rubs off on you."

Bennett has taken the windfall from last year in stride. Bennett's prayers, Alsager said, focus not on his success but on the well-being of his wife, his two young children and his players.

"When you have a relationship with the Lord," Bennett said, "there's a peace and perspective you have. The world didn't give it, and the world can't take it away. Your relationship with the Lord and with your friends, that's what matters."

Bible Reference:

Jeremiah 29



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