



**Text:** Daniel 2

**Icebreaker:** What's one of the highest-pressure situations you've faced? How did you respond to it?

**1.** As you read verses 1-11, what can you notice about the culture Daniel and his companions are now living in that was different from their home Jewish culture?

We see hints of a culture where subconscious experiences (dreams) hold great value. Other literature from the ancient world backs up that the Babylonians of this day viewed dreams as having power to reveal threats to the government. Nebuchadnezzar's reaction of calling all the sages in verse 2 suggests that this is a culture that believes in a supernatural that is different from the monotheism (one God) of God's people. These are people who practice magic and other mystical practices for help. Normally, the king would reveal the dream and then his mystical advisers would offer an interpretation. They're out of their league here, though, since Nebuchadnezzar appears to have forgotten the details of the dream (v. 3)!

*Application:* What current American cultural beliefs, values, or practices would you say pose a challenge to Christian faithfulness today?

Please don't use this as an invitation to bash the culture, but there are ways we should thoughtfully scrutinize our own experience of life in 21<sup>st</sup> century America and how it squares (or not) with the way of Christ.

**2.** How would you contrast Nebuchadnezzar's and Daniel's first response to crisis in this chapter?

Nebuchadnezzar turns first to his human mystical advisers and then abruptly threatens their lives. Daniel, in contrast, appears to calmly ("with prudence and discretion" in v. 14) seek more information, confidently asks Nebuchadnezzar for time, enlists the help of his three Jewish companions, and then pleads for "mercy from the God of heaven." Daniel's response could be described as one of faith, in contrast to Nebuchadnezzar's response of panic and threats.

*Application:* What can we learn from Daniel's response in verses 14-18 about how to respond when we face troubling circumstances?

**3.** Why do you think Daniel goes to his friends in verse 17 rather than keep the matter to himself?

Maybe this is too easy, but it's good to point out that Daniel seems to value the prayers of faith offered by his friends. His motivation could also include the simple fact that their lives were also endangered. Daniel surely felt the urgency of the moment, which could

have inspired him to not take the time to tell his companions, but Daniel is operating with great confidence in God's provision.

*Application:* Are you the kind of person who finds it easy to let others know about difficulties you're facing so they can pray for you and help you? What role has Christian community had in difficulties you've faced?

4. From verse 19 and on, how does Daniel respond both to God and to Nebuchadnezzar once "the mystery was revealed to Daniel?"

Daniel privately praises God in verses 19-23 and then publicly declares to Nebuchadnezzar in verses 25-30 that God has revealed the dream and its interpretation.

*Application:* Have you ever felt tempted to take credit for something God did in your life? What opportunity do we miss out on when we forget to give God the credit he deserves?

5. Nebuchadnezzar's dream was a vivid depiction of the fate of different kingdoms. From verses 44-45, in what ways is God's kingdom unlike any other?

God's kingdom is unique in that it originates "outside" of the kingdoms of this world. It's not a part of the impressive-looking statue but is something else entirely. Also, as a stone set against an imposing looking image of "mighty and exceeding brightness" (v. 31), perhaps we could say that its appearance—at least initially—is about as unimpressive as a mustard seed...but that grows into something far more impressive (see Matt. 13:31). It's a kingdom that is stronger than any other, as it destroys the impressive-looking-but-delicate/unstable kingdoms of this world. We should also see that this is a kingdom that is permanent or everlasting and fills the whole earth rather than part of it (v. 35).

*Application:* How should this explanation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream impact the way we think about the future?