



Week 5 **LEADER** Discussion Questions

Week of 5/21/23

Text: Daniel 5

As a reminder, the *Winsome Living* series will wrap up next week and discussion questions will not be written over the summer.

Icebreaker: Who do you reach out to when you need wisdom or guidance in life? Daniel once again proves to be a guy others turn to for help. He's uniquely gifted for his situation, but are there people in our lives who consistently play this kind of role for us when we need help?

1. Read verses 1-12. What do you notice in these verses that's similar to other events we've seen so far in the book of Daniel?

This is basic, but once again the Babylonian King is perplexed by a vision that he can't understand. We saw it in chapters 2 and 4 as well. Again, the Babylonian wise men are unable to help but Daniel's God-given abilities make him stand out from the others. We've also read about the belief that Daniel has "the spirit of the holy gods" in him, which shows that there's an acknowledgment of a special divine presence even if it doesn't fully acknowledge the work of the one true God.

Application: Verses 3-4 tell us that sacred objects from the Jerusalem temple were used irreverently for Belshazzar's party and common things (gold, silver, bronze, etc.) were made sacred. Can you think of examples where our culture tries to do this too—profaning what's sacred and making sacred what's common?

There's a lot to this question. One might think of how the cross went from being "profane" in its use in the Roman Empire to sacred because of Jesus's crucifixion; however, it is not unusual to see the cross used irreverently (it brings good luck or protection as I wear it on my body) rather than as sacred symbol. The rainbow—a sign of God's promise to Noah and humanity following the judgment of the Flood—has been (ironically) commandeered by our culture to represent perverse sexual freedoms (the sacred has been profaned). In the opposite direction, the value of self-determined identity in sexual terms has become sacred.

2. Read verses 13-16. Daniel had a reputation among the unbelievers of Babylon for being able to do what others could not because "the spirit of the holy gods" was in him. What have we seen "that Daniel" (v. 13) do in past weeks to give credit to God for what has happened?

We've seen, for example, that Daniel was quick to tell Nebuchadnezzar that no one but God could tell him his dream and interpret it in chapter 2. Daniel was also clear in chapter 4 that the vision Nebuchadnezzar saw was God's decree and not his. Daniel makes clear that God is the one who is revealing what's about to happen.

Application: It's easy to want to take personal credit for abilities God has given us. How can we help others see that our gifts are evidence of God's greatness rather than our own?

Building Christ-centered communities of people fully devoted to loving God and loving others.

3. Read verses 17-23. Are you surprised that Belshazzar hasn't learned to be humble and hasn't honored God after all Nebuchadnezzar learned?

It can be easy to think that the next generation will automatically know and accept the lessons that have already been learned. Instead, each new generation has to be taught and each generation has to decide whether to accept the lessons they hear.

Application: Do you find this true to life, where one generation either isn't aware of or doesn't embrace the lessons of the previous generation? What can we learn from this as we think about the younger generations of our day?

4. Daniel's interpretation comes in verses 24-28. What can we be reminded of here about how God relates to kings and kingdoms?

There should be echoes of chapter 2 here as we think of how God determines the rule and reign of earthly kings. All are temporary, as the only enduring kingdom is the Kingdom of God. God is the righteous judge who knows the actions and attitudes of every person. As we saw in chapter 4 and again in chapter 5 verse 21, "the Most High God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will."

Application: Think about world events today. Do you find it easy or difficult to trust in God's sovereignty over the affairs of our world? Explain your answer.

5. Verse 29 records yet another promotion or public honor for Daniel yet verse 17 shows that Daniel wasn't seeking it. Do you think it matters that Daniel wasn't pursuing public recognition and self-promotion? Why?

This is a bit hypothetical, but we can see how Daniel could have tried to leverage these opportunities to make a name for himself or build a brand as "the wisest of the wise men." It's not hard to imagine how his actions might have been very different if he was motivated by prestige and self-glory.

Application: Do you think Daniel's attitude in this chapter could be an example to us of what it means to be winsome? Is it possible to be both winsome and self-promoting?