

# STUDY GUIDE

## COURAGEOUS FAITH 9.17.2017

(Note: To introduce Daniel 5, consider sending the following 4-minute You Tube link to your group members to watch before the LifeGroup:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9pzQmy5MTos>)

### [set up]

Think back. What was a scary, hair-raising, heart-thumping experience? What made it so scary?

The “hand writing on the wall” is an expression from Daniel 5 that points to any kind of impending disaster that will be difficult to avoid. Tell about a time when you saw “the handwriting on the wall.”

### [digging deeper]

**Read the 31 verses of Daniel 5 as a group.** Ask, “What stood out to you in the passage? What questions does this passage raise? Who do you identify with the most: Daniel, Belshazzar, the guests at the party, the wise men who could not interpret the writing, the hand-writer? Why?”

Look at Rembrandt’s depiction of this biblical event (below) or using this link:

<http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/rembrandt/1630/belshazzar.jpg>

What aspects of the story was Rembrandt seeking to emphasize? What lessons might we learn from his painting as he mediated on this story?

We certainly see Daniel once again display Courageous Faith in Daniel 5. On a large Post-it, write down 4-5 ways that he displays his leadership and his faith.

(Possible answers:

- 1) He’s filled with the Holy Spirit, v. 11a.
- 2) He cultivates wisdom, v. 11b.
- 3) He solves problems, v. 12.
- 4) He displays contentment, v. 17.
- 5) He remembers history, vv. 18-21.
- 6) He speaks prophetically, vv. 22-29.)

What does Daniel’s rejection of flattery and rewards (v. 17) say about the authenticity of Daniel and his message?

What contemporary examples come to mind of people mocking God by demeaning sacred things, as Belshazzar did with temple goblets? Then and now, does it seem God is quick or slow to judge such sacrilegious behavior? Why? How do you feel about that?



Belshazzar does not display courageous faith. It takes courageous faith to acknowledge that we may actually be like Belshazzar in the story. Even if we are saved, we have in us both dignity and depravity. We, too, can be weighed and found wanting.

In the message, we learned that we can all have our little “kingdoms.” Think through the various roles people play in life. Where and how do we “rule” in our various relationships? *(Possible answers: A husband can “rule” in his marriage. A mother can “rule” in her home. A boss can “rule” his crew, her office, his sales force. A leader can “rule” her ministry. A coach or player can “rule” a team. A teenager can “rule” a little group of friends.)*

Belshazzar did not rule with humility. He ruled with a spirit of pride, entitlement, and sensuality. What are signs a person is “ruling” inappropriately? What are signs a person is “ruling” with humility?

Belshazzar was weighed and found wanting and his kingdom was stripped from him and given to another. Have you ever considered that you could be weighed and found wanting? What does that possibility produce in you?

Compare Nebuchadnezzar’s response in Daniel 4:34-37 to Belshazzar’s fate in Daniel 5:18-30. What made the difference? From their contrasting fates, what can we learn about God’s mercy and justice? What are other verses that teach these truths about God?

## **[living it out]**

Create a handout with the five questions listed below with space for your group members to write their thoughts. As you close your time together in the LifeGroup, play some soft instrumental worship music and give your group members time to reflect and write answers to the following questions.

**Where am I pursuing pleasure apart from God?** This question comes from Daniel 5:1-2.

**How have I engaged in flagrant, unholy disobedience?** This question comes from Daniel 5:3.

**What have I made my idol?** This question comes from Daniel 5:4.

**How am I forgetting lessons from the past?** This question comes from Daniel 5:18-22.

**When have I lifted myself up and failed to honor God?** This question comes from Daniel 5:23.

Read the following: “There is evil and depravity in us that nobody knows about and that we don’t like to look at. There is a dark side to us that is more like Belshazzar than Daniel. It takes courageous faith to look at the sin in ourselves. But when we do answer questions like these, it should drive us to our knees in gratitude and worship. Considering who we are and what we’ve done, the fact that we get mercy and grace through the cross of Jesus is astounding. It’s not fair that we’ve been forgiven and given new life in Christ. But in Christ we have been made Beloved Children of God.” Now, ask your group members to worship the Lord as you play (YouTube, CD, or mp3) and sing together one of your favorite worship songs about our forgiveness in Christ.

Close in prayer.