

Daniel 2:1-23
November 1, 2015

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: How do you know when you're praying boldly? [Let students struggle with this.]

I'll share what litmus test I use, and I certainly invite your inputs as well. For me, I am praying **boldly** when I know that I cannot control the outcome. There can be no iota of my flesh involved in bringing about the result I'm looking for. Whatever bold prayer I have before the Lord can **ONLY** happen if HE chooses to make it happen. The second element for me to trust that nothing is impossible with God. If I really believe that, then my prayers should reflect that. In fact, there are times I wonder if I have not because I've asked not. I wonder how many of my prayers have been anemic because I wasn't asking much of God.

Transition: Boldness in prayer assumes a strong faith in the God we serve. It assumes that we have a God who cares about every detail of our lives. It assumes that God still does miracles today. I don't know how you would rate your own level of faith, but no matter where you are, you and I always have room to grow! In Hebrews we're reminded that "Without faith, it's impossible to please God." *All of us CAN strengthen our faith in God BY following Daniel's **EXAMPLES** of faith when he was facing what appeared to be an impossible circumstance.* Let's look for these EXAMPLES as we go through today's chapter.

BOOK (NIV 1984): [Read Dan 2:1-13]

V.1:

- In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his mind was troubled and he could not sleep. (When Nebuchadnezzar first came to Jerusalem to conquer, he was not yet king; he was acting for his father, Nabopolassar, back in Babylon. This accounts for the seeming contradiction between the three years of training for Daniel in 1:5 and the "second year" of the king's reign in 2:1)

V.2:

- So the king summoned the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers to tell him what he had dreamed. When they came in and stood before the king,

V.3:

- he said to them, "I have had a dream that troubles me and I want to know what it means."

V.4:

- Then the astrologers answered the king in Aramaic, "O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will interpret it."

V.5:

- The king replied to the astrologers, "This is what I have firmly decided: If you do not tell me what my dream was and interpret it, I will have you cut into pieces and your houses turned into piles of rubble.

V.6:

- But if you tell me the dream and explain it, you will receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. So tell me the dream and interpret it for me."

V.7:

- Once more they replied, “Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will interpret it.”

V.8:

- Then the king answered, “I am certain that you are trying to gain time, because you realize that this is what I have firmly decided:

V.9:

- If you do not tell me the dream, there is just one penalty for you. You have conspired to tell me misleading and wicked things, hoping the situation will change. So then, tell me the dream, and I will know that you can interpret it for me.”

V.10:

- The astrologers answered the king, “There is not a man on earth who can do what the king asks! No king, however great and mighty, has ever asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or astrologer.

V.11:

- What the king asks is too difficult. No one can reveal it to the king except the gods, and they do not live among men.”

V.12:

- This made the king so angry and furious that he ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon.

V.13:

- So the decree was issued to put the wise men to death, and men were sent to look for Daniel and his friends to put them to death.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q v.2-3: King Nebuchadnezzar kept having a dream that troubled him to the point he couldn't sleep. So who did he call upon to get help with his dream? [magicians, enchanter, sorcerers, and astrologers]

Q v.5: These folks were most happy to help, but there was one minor problem presented by King Nebuchadnezzar. What was it? [This is what I have firmly decided: If you do not tell me what my dream was and interpret it, I will have you cut into pieces and your houses turned into piles of rubble.]

Observation: King Nebuchadnezzar had unrealistic expectations of the magicians, et al, and then made an irrational decision to put them to death if they couldn't figure out his dream before they could even interpret it!

Q v.7-11: So what was the reaction of the magicians and company? [After again asking for the dream and again getting a heated response from the king, they said, “There is not a man on earth who can do what the king asks! No king, however great and mighty, has ever asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or astrologer. What the king asks is too difficult. No one can reveal it to the king except the gods, and they do not live among men.”]

Q v.12: It's apparent that the magicians and company's response only escalated things with the king. How did the king react after hearing the latest response from them? [This made the king so

angry and furious that he ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon, which included Daniel and his three friends.]

Transition: So things aren't looking up for any of the wise men of Babylon. How unfair to extend the death penalty to ALL the wise men! So let's read the next section to find out what happens. Let's start looking for EXAMPLES of faith from Daniel.

[Read Dan 2:14-23]

V.14:

- When Arioch, the commander of the king's guard, had gone out to put to death the wise men of Babylon, Daniel spoke to him with wisdom and tact.

V.15:

- He asked the king's officer, "Why did the king issue such a harsh decree?" Arioch then explained the matter to Daniel.

V.16:

- **At this, Daniel went in to the king and asked for time, so that he might interpret the dream for him.**

V.17:

- Then Daniel returned to his house and explained the matter to his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.

V.18:

- **He urged them to plead for mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that he and his friends might not be executed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.**

V.19:

- During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then **Daniel praised the God of heaven**

V.20:

- and said: "**Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his.**

V.21:

- **He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning.**

V.22:

- **He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him.**

V.23:

- **I thank AND praise you, O God of my fathers: You have given me wisdom and power, you have made known to me what we asked of you, you have made known to us the dream of the king."**

Process Observations/Questions:

Q v.14-15: When Arioch, the commander of the king's guard, found Daniel to put him and the other wise men to death, how did Daniel choose to handle it? [With wisdom and tact, he asked the king's officer, "Why did the king issue such a "harsh" decree?" – now that's tact!]

Q v.16: What did Daniel request once he heard why they were to be put to death? [Time with the king so that he might interpret the dream.]

Q v.17-18: After Daniel spoke with the king, what did he do next? [Explained what was going on to his friends. He urged them to plead for mercy from the God of heaven concerning this “mystery” to avoid execution.]

Q v.19: How does God show up once the four of them rushed the throne of grace? [God revealed to Daniel the king’s dream in a vision along with the interpretation!]

Q: Before we look at Daniel’s amazing response to God, let’s tag some EXAMPLES of Daniel’s faith. What do you see so far? [v.16 – Daniel had **confidence** in a God who would help him interpret a dream. V.18 – Daniel **believed in the power of prayer** and **called upon his God-fearing friends to pray with him for mercy and revelation.**]

Q v.20-22: As we look at EXAMPLES of Daniel’s faith, I want you to notice what he already knew about the mighty God we serve as he began to praise Him. Daniel had faith in our God who has the following qualities. What are they?

- God’s name is worthy to be praised forever and ever.
- All wisdom and power belong to God.
- God is sovereign – he sets up kings and deposes them
- God gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning (Read Prov. 3:32 and Ps. 25:14 to see why Daniel was given this privilege)
- God reveals deep and hidden things; He knows what lies in darkness
- Light dwells with God

Q v.23: What does Daniel thank and praise God for? [God gave him wisdom and power. He made known to Daniel what he asked of the Lord, specifically the dream of the king.]

LOOK:

Q: What is your “next step” to emulate Daniel and exercise great faith in God? How would your great faith in the Lord translate in your prayer life? Are you in the middle of a difficult circumstance that appears hopeless?

Here’s a possible trigger you can use that will prompt you to exercise great faith with boldness: whatever situation you’re in that seems impossible, let that be your INVITATION to pray with a holy boldness, believing that God wants to show up in a mighty way. And as you go through a difficult circumstance, have **confidence** that God is with you. Remember, He is pleased when we exercise great faith in Him.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (Da 2)*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

This chapter is the outline of world history. An understanding of this chapter, and chapter 7, will assist you in your study of Revelation and other Bible prophecies. Note the chart in the Introductory Notes to Daniel.

I. Daniel's Peril (2:1–13)

When Nebuchadnezzar first came to Jerusalem to conquer, he was not yet king; he was acting for his father, Nabopolassar, back in Babylon. This accounts for the seeming contradiction between the three years of training for Daniel in 1:5 and the “second year” of the king’s reign in 2:1. Once again archaeology has proved the Bible true. The king was concerned about his future (see v. 29) and whether or not his kingdom would last. God gave him a dream describing the future, but he could not understand it. In fact, he forgot it! Christians have the Holy Spirit to teach and remind them (John 14:26). The “fake” magicians and wise men were really on the spot, for the king wanted not only an interpretation of the dream, but also a description of it! Any man could “invent” an interpretation, but it was impossible for them to describe a dream they had never seen. They tried to “stall for time” (v. 8), hoping the king would “change his mind” (v. 9). Instead, the king ordered all the wise men to be slain, and that included Daniel and his three friends. Satan is a murderer (John 8:44); he would certainly have been happy to see Daniel killed.

II. Daniel's Prayer and Praise (2:14–23)

We must admire the courage of Daniel, for he faced the chief executioner boldly, and even went right in to see the king. “The righteous are bold as a lion” (Prov. 28:1). God overruled in these conversations (Prov. 21:1), and the king gave Daniel time, even though he had refused to give the other wise men time. Daniel and his three friends knew what to do; they spent the next hours in fervent prayer to God. “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God” (James 1:5). “Ask, and it shall be given you” (Matt. 7:7). And God revealed the dream and its meaning to Daniel in the hours of the night. Read Prov. 3:32 and Ps. 25:14 to see why Daniel was given this privilege. Instead of rushing to the king, or boasting of his new wisdom, Daniel paused to praise the Lord. And you will note in vv. 25–30 that Daniel gave all the glory to God; he took none of it for himself. There is no limit to what God will do for the believer who will let God have all the glory.

Pentecost, J. D. (1985). Daniel. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 1, pp. 1332–1334)*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

A. The dream of Nebuchadnezzar (chap. 2)

1. THE DREAM of the king (2:1–16)

a. *The dream (2:1–3)*

2:1. Soon after Nebuchadnezzar's accession to the throne, he was plagued with a recurring dream. Since Daniel recalled and interpreted only a single dream (cf. vv. 24–26), the use of the plural here (**dreams**) seems to indicate a recurrence of the same dream. This dream evidently was perceived by **Nebuchadnezzar** as having great significance, for he **was troubled** (cf. v. 3) by the dream and so agitated that he was unable to **sleep**.

2:2–3. **The king summoned** the wise men of his realm. They professed to be able to foretell the future by one means or another (cf. comments on 1:17). If the method used by one failed to produce the desired result, hopefully the method employed by another would reveal the dream's significance. They were called collectively to exercise their enchantments in order to give the king an interpretation that would placate him. **The king** challenged the wise men, saying, **I want to know what it means**.

b. *The desperation of the wise men (2:4–11)*

2:4. Evidently the request to interpret a dream (v. 3) had been made of the wise men on other occasions for they were not surprised. (As stated under "Languages" in the *Introduction*, 1:1–2:4a is in Heb., and beginning with the words **O king** in verse 4b the language is **Aramaic** through 7:28.) The wise men confidently asserted that when **the king** revealed **the dream** to them, they would **interpret it** to him. They were confident that with their collective wisdom, they could satisfy the king with an interpretation.

2:5–6. Though **the king** may have made such a demand on the wise men previously and been satisfied with their answers, he evidently had never asked them to interpret a dream that he discerned had such significance. So he decided to test them. If they could predict the future by interpreting dreams, they should be able to reconstruct the past and *recall* the king's **dream**. So he refused to share his dream with them. This does not mean he had forgotten it. Had he done so, the wise men, to save themselves from death, could easily have fabricated a dream and then interpreted it. The king reasoned that if they could not recall the past, their predictions concerning the future could not be trusted.

The king promised **rewards** and **honor** for the wise men's recalling and interpreting **the dream**. **But** he put them under a death penalty (they would be **cut into pieces**) and their **houses** would be burned to **rubble** if they proved to be false prognosticators who could not recall **the dream**.

2:7–9. Again the wise men (cf. v. 4) asked that **the king** share **the dream** with them, promising then to **interpret it**. **The king** complained that they were stalling for **time**. He again referred to the **penalty** (cf. v. 5) for failure to tell him **the dream**. He felt that the only way he could trust their interpretation of the future was by having them first recall his dream. Otherwise he would conclude that they were conspiring **to tell him misleading and wicked things**. Also Nebuchadnezzar may have become impatient with the wise men who were presumably older than he as he had inherited them from his father. Another reason for the test may have been that he was suspicious of their claims to wisdom.

2:10–11. To defend themselves, the wise men asserted that **the king** was making an unreasonable request, one never asked by any other potentate. They attested that the future belongs to **the gods**, not to **men**. Interestingly this was an admission that they had deceived **the king** in their past interpretations, a startling revelation from those held in high esteem in the court.

c. *The decree of the king (2:12–13)*

2:12–13. After the wise men revealed that they were unable to satisfy the king's demands, **the king was angry and furious** (cf. 3:13, 19). He issued an order for **the execution of all the wise men of Babylon**. **The decree** was not only for those currently serving the king's court, but on all who professed to be able to reveal the future. Since **Daniel and his three friends** were classified as **wise men**, the judgment also fell on them.

d. *The declaration of Daniel (2:14–16)*

2:14–16. What had transpired in the royal court was unknown to **Daniel**. Perhaps he had refused to answer the king's summons (v. 2) to avoid contact with the pagan leaders. When word came that he was under a death sentence, he tactfully asked **Arioch, the commander of the king's guard**, for the reason. **Arioch ... explained** the incident that had exposed the wise men's deception of **the king**.

Daniel boldly approached **the king** with the request that the executions be stayed for a while **so that he might interpret the king's dream**. This took boldness because the king had already accused the wise men of wanting more **time** (v. 8).

Daniel was evidently held in high esteem by the king because he was permitted access to the king's presence and was able to petition the king directly. Though not recorded, Daniel had possibly interpreted dreams previously, though not necessarily for the king. So he was sure he could recall the dream and interpret it.

2. THE DREAM REVEALED TO DANIEL (2:17–23)

a. *The petition (2:17–18)*

2:17–18. In this time of testing **Daniel** was calm. He **returned to his house**, sought out his three **friends**, and together they prayed **for mercy from the God of heaven**. ("God of heaven" is a title used of God six times in Dan.: 2:18–19, 28, 37, 44; 5:23, nine times in Ezra, and four times in Neh. Elsewhere in the OT it occurs only in Gen. 24:3, 7; Ps. 136:26; Jonah 1:9.)

Mercy is God's response to a person's need. Daniel recognized his own inability in the circumstances and turned to God in confidence, expecting the Lord to meet his need.

b. *The revelation (2:19a)*

2:19a. In response to the prayer of the four, the dream **was revealed to Daniel**, evidently that same **night**.

c. *The praise (2:19b–23)*

2:19b–23. **Daniel** responded appropriately by offering praise to **God**. He acknowledged that God is a God of **wisdom**, knowing the end from the beginning, and a God of **power**, for whatever He determines, He can do. Daniel began and concluded His prayer speaking of God's **wisdom and power** (cf. v. 23).

Evidences of His *power* are seen in His control of events (**He changes times and seasons**) and of the destiny of nations (**He sets up kings and deposes them**). Nebuchadnezzar was on the throne because God determined to use him there to fulfill His will.

Evidences of God's *wisdom* are seen in His imparting **wisdom to the wise** (v. 21b) and in His revealing **deep** and dark **things** (v. 22). **Light dwells with** God in the sense that all things are clear to Him though people are surrounded by **darkness**. God knows and can reveal the future. God, not Daniel's insight, gave him **the dream** and its interpretation. Daniel's prayer of praise closed with thanks that **God** had revealed the king's dream to the four who had trusted Him.

Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith (pp. 1269 – 1272). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

2:1 How could Daniel have finished a three-year training program by Nebuchadnezzar's second year if he was captured in the year that Nebuchadnezzar became king (605 B.C.)? During this period the Babylonians used the accession-year dating method whereby the king's first year did not begin until after the new year. Thus, Daniel's first year of captivity corresponded to Nebuchadnezzar's accession year, his second year of captivity to the king's first regnal year, and so forth. Moreover, Daniel did not have to train three full years; according to Hebrew usage a part of a year could be counted as a whole (cp. the "three days" between Jesus' death and resurrection [Jn 2:19–21], which was actually on the third day [1 Co 15:4]).

2:2 In this book, "Chaldeans" may refer to the Babylonian people generally (1:4; 5:30; 9:1) or to a professional group of priests or wise men (2:2, 4, 5, 10; 3:8; 4:7; 5:7, 11). Critics insist that the term was not used in the professional sense until the Hellenistic age when Greek culture spread throughout the region with Alexander's conquests of the fourth century B.C. Yet Herodotus (*Histories* 1.181–83) wrote of the Chaldeans as priests of Bel about 450 B.C., less than a century after Daniel's death. Sorcery (also called "witchcraft," Nah 3:4) was widespread in the ancient world but was severely condemned in the OT (Ex 7:11; 22:18; Dt 18:10; Is 47:9, 12; Jr 27:9; Mal 3:5). The book of Daniel accurately reflects how pervasive astrology, sorcery and other occult practices were in sixth-century Babylon.

2:4 From this point through 7:28 the book was written in Aramaic rather than Hebrew. The term "Chaldeans" may indicate that the would-be dream interpreters spoke to the king in Aramaic, the diplomatic language of the Babylonian and Persian Empires and throughout the region.

2:5 Herodotus, the Greek historian, related a similar instance in which Darius I (about 100 years later) massacred his wise men with the result that the group was almost annihilated (*Histories* 3.79). Examples of houses and temples being made into refuse sites or public toilets as a mark of contempt are also known from ancient times; Jehu did the same to the temple of Baal in Samaria (2 Kg 10:27).