What God Does With Pride (Daniel 4)

Series: Living for God | Living in Babylon

Nov 8, 2026 | Dave Geldart | Tru Community Church

BIG IDEA: God loves us too much to let pride finish us without a fight.

1. **[1] INTRODUCTION (I WAS WRONG)**
    a. Think about the last time a powerful person said something humble.
        i. Not a polished apology. Not "mistakes were made."
        ii. I mean somebody at the very top, in their own words, telling the whole country: I was wrong about who I thought I was.
        iii. [PAUSE… Let them actually search for one.]
        iv. I can't think of one either.
    b. Which is why Daniel 4 is so special!
    c. We've spent three weeks watching Babylon try to take things from God's people.
        i. Their names, their identity, their diet.
        ii. [2] In Daniel 4, we get to see what God does with Nebuchadnezzar's pride
    d. And remember what this man has already seen.
        i. He watched God explain his dream.
        ii. He watched three men come out of a fire without even the smell of smoke on them.
        iii. He was so rattled that he said, out loud, in public, "Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego."
        iv. And then he went right on being Nebuchadnezzar.
    e. Seeing God's power and submitting to God's authority are two very different things.
        i. You can be dazzled by God for years and never once bow.
    f. Chapter 4 is what happens when God stops letting him watch from the sidelines.
    g. And it's an odd chapter, because it isn't just written about the king. It's written BY him.
        i. It's a letter to the whole empire, every nation, every language.
        ii. Here's how it opens.
        iii. [3] Daniel 4:1-3 "King Nebuchadnezzar,
        To the nations and peoples of every language, who live in all the earth:
        May you prosper greatly!
        It is my pleasure to tell you about the signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me. How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders!
        His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation."

h. He gives us the ending first:
    i. The most powerful man alive, writing to everybody he rules, and the first thing he wants them to know is what God did to him.
i. So here is the question I'd like you to carry with you this morning.
    i. What does God do with a person who gets so impressed with what they've built that they forget who gave them the ability to build it?

2. THE PROBLEM: THE VIEW FROM THE ROOF

a. I want to be fair to Nebuchadnezzar, because this story is easy to read as a cartoon.
    i. Arrogant king gets what's coming. Next.
b. But he was good at this.
    i. Babylon under him was one of the wonders of the ancient world.
    ii. Tradition credits him with the Hanging Gardens, a lush green paradise in a dry, flat country.
    iii. He built massive walls and grand avenues.
    iv. The markets were full, and people ate.
c. Hear me on this, because some of you build things for a living.
    i. God never says the building is the problem.
    ii. He doesn't tell this man to tear down a garden or apologize for a skyline.
    iii. Whatever you've built, whether it's a business, a family, a farm, a career, or a name in this town, God isn't sending you a bill for it.
d. So where does it go wrong? On the palace roof.
e. [4] [Daniel 4:28-30] "All this happened to King Nebuchadnezzar. Twelve months later, as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, he said, 'Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?'"
    i. [PAUSE. Let the I's hang in the air.]
f. I have built. My mighty power. My majesty.
    i. Notice there's nothing false in that sentence. Babylon was great.
    ii. It's just that every credit line on it reads the same: me.
g. Pride isn't thinking highly of yourself.
    i. Pride is changing the credit line
    ii. Pride makes me the center, the source, and the measure of my own life.
    iii. It receives gifts all day long and never looks up to see whose hand was holding them out.
h. And this is old. It goes back to a garden.

i. [5] Genesis 3:5, the serpent's pitch to Adam and Eve:
ii. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."
iii. You decide. You're the source.
iv. The tree in the king's dream, so tall it touches the sky, may well be echoing those trees in Eden.

i. Babylon still talks this way.
i. Whispering in your ear: "Look at the great me I have built."
ii. Our culture says you are what you've accomplished,
1. What's the first question anyone asks you? WHAT DO YOU DO?

j. [PERSONAL STORY: From time to time, I've noticed a sermon that landed well, people gave me great feedback.
i. And the prop to my ego felt really great.
ii. So much so that I'd start to look for it....
1. Like this was now the measure of success, rather than pointing people back to Jesus.]

k. Now, some of you are thinking, I'm not that guy.
i. I don't struggle with pride. I don't stand on a roof admiring my own skyline.
ii. Quite the opposite. I lie awake at 3 a.m. convinced I'm the problem.
1. That's actually the way I lean as well!

l. Let me be careful here as I share something with you.
i. Anxiety and self-hatred aren't the same thing as pride.
ii. But listen to the question underneath both: Who gets to decide what I'm worth?
1. Pride says, "Look how great I am."
2. The voice at 3 a.m. says, "Look how worthless I am."
3. Opposite verdicts. Same courtroom.
4. In both of them, I'm the passing judgement on my own worth.
5. [PAUSE] Hold onto that. We're coming back to it.

m. Because Nebuchadnezzar is about to find out he was never the judge.
i. And the way God teaches him is one of the strangest, most severe, and most loving things in the Old Testament.

3. THE TEXT: A GIANT MIRROR

a. God used a statue once, in a dream, and the king answered by building his own.
i. Now a tree.

ii. Every time, God holds up a mirror the size of a building

b. Here's the tree.
   i. [6] Daniel 4:10-12- "These are the visions I saw while lying in my bed: I looked, and there before me stood a tree in the middle of the land. Its height was enormous. The tree grew large and strong and its top touched the sky; it was visible to the ends of the earth. Its leaves were beautiful, its fruit abundant, and on it was food for all. Under it the wild animals found shelter, and the birds nested in its branches; from it every creature was fed."
   ii. Echoes here of both Eden and the Tower of Babel.
   iii. God isn't mocking this tree.
      1. He's describing the king's life's work, and he's describing it kindly.

c. Then an angel comes down from heaven, and the order is:
   i. [7] cut it down. (v.14)
   ii. Strip it. Scatter the fruit.
   iii. [Daniel 4:15] "But let the stump and its roots, bound with iron and bronze, remain in the ground, in the grass of the field."
   iv. Cut down, yes. Uprooted, no.
   v. Somebody is guarding the roots.
      1. Whatever the iron and bronze mean, God is not ending this man.
      2. He's saving something for later.

d. And the point of the whole thing is in verse 17.
   i. [8] [Daniel 4:17b] "...so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes…"

e. Now Daniel has to explain it.
   i. He's been in this man's court for decades by now, and he does not want to.
   ii. [9] Daniel 4:19 - "Then Daniel (also called Belteshazzar) …answered, 'My lord, if only the dream applied to your enemies and its meaning to your adversaries!'"
   iii. That man loves the king. And genuinely desires his good!
      1. He’s been following Jeremiah’s command to seek the good of his neighbors in Babylon!
   iv. And after the hard word, he adds this.
   v. [10] [Daniel 4:27] "Therefore, Your Majesty, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue."
   vi. Daniel doesn't say, "Feel humbler."

1. He says do right, and be kind to people at the bottom.
2. Humility that doesn't change how you treat anyone is just a mood.

f. The king gets a year of warning. Then the roof, and the sentence wasn't finished:
   i. [11] Daniel 4:31-33 -- "Even as the words were on his lips, a voice came from heaven, 'This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you. You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like an ox. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes.'
   [12] Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from people and ate grass like the ox. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird."
g. Seven times. Most likely seven years.
   i. There's a rare condition called boanthropy, where a person believes he's an ox and lives like one.
      1. And these fits tend to come in waves.
      2. Some days the fog lifts. Then it closes again.
      3. Certainly could fit what we're seeing here.
   ii. Whatever it was, it lasted...Seven years.
      1. How many mornings did a clear head come back to him?
      2. How many times did he come up out of the fog and have a choice?
      3. Look up, or look down.
h. [13] Romans 1:21-22 describes well this trap when we fail to look up:
   "For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools."
   i. Their thinking became futile.
      1. Turning away from God doesn't turn the lights on. It dims them.
   ii. Sometimes resistance to God isn't about the evidence.
      1. Nebuchadnezzar had all the evidence of God anybody could ask for.
i. [14] Daniel 4:34-35 -- "At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever.
   His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he

pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: 'What have you done?'"

j. He didn't get his right mind back and then decide to look up.
    i. He looked up and that's how he got his mind back!
    ii. The New Testament word for repentance, metanoia, means a change of mind, and here it's almost literal.
    iii. A lifestyle of repentance actually brings us deep sanity

4. THE CORE TRUTH: YOU'RE TOO LOVED TO BE LEFT IN PRIDE

a. Here is the center of the whole chapter:
    i. [15] God loves us too much to let pride finish us without a fight.
b. He will humble this man for seven years
    i. -- give him chance after chance after chance to turn and repent --
    ii. rather than lose him forever.
    iii. It's a rescue, and it comes in a terrible form.
c. At root, pride is an attempt to live in a world where that isn't true,
    i. At root, pride is an attempt to live as if nothing is above me and no one is coming after me.
    ii. That fantasy can only be kept up by a kind of madness,
        1. and God lets the king live out the literal version.
d. So what does God's discipline do?
    i. It exposes the lie.
    ii. It strips away the illusion that I'm holding my life together by my own power.
    iii. It calls me back.
    iv. And the goal was never humiliation.
        1. Remember the stump, guarded and waiting.
        2. God's ultimately trying to rescue.
e. And here's what I'd say to the one who lies awake at 3 a.m.
    i. If I'm not God, then I'm not the judge.
    ii. The verdict I keep handing down on myself, the one that says I'm worthless, was never mine to hand down either.
    iii. The good news of this chapter is that the true King of heaven is trustworthy, and he's the only one with the right to say what I'm worth.
        1. And he's already said it.
        2. He said it with a cross. We'll get there before we're done here.

f. Nebuchadnezzar learned that in a field. The question is where you'll learn it.

5. [16] APPLICATION: LIFTING OUR EYES

a. So what do we do with a king in a field? I have 4 next steps:

b. [17] First: NAME YOUR ROOF

i. Everybody has a roof.

1. It's the place you stand to look over what you've built and feel the glow.
2. For some of us it's the business. The bank account.
3. For some, the kids' résumés.
4. For some, it's being the one everybody calls.
5. For some of us in ministry, it's a full room on Sunday.

ii. Finish the sentence: "Look at the great _____ I have built."

1. Whatever goes in that blank, that's your roof.
2. [Give them ten silent seconds.]

iii. [18] Then Give it back.

1. Paul asks the Corinthians a question that belongs on every refrigerator:
2. [1 Corinthians 4:7] "For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?"
3. Make the list of all the things you have:
    a. Your abilities, your health, the people, the opportunities, the home you were born into.
    b. Give God the credit and thank Him for each one by name,
        i. in private first.
        ii. Then out loud, where it fits.
4. "God opened that door" instead of "I earned that."
    a. That's easy to say in church. Try it at work on Monday.

c. [19] Second: HEED THE WARNING

i. You ever had that experience: Annual Physical.

1. You're sitting in the office waiting for the doc to come in, give you your results.
2. And it dawns on you that 12 months ago, they'd told you you had to lose 30 pounds, lay off sugar, and begin working out regularly if you wanted to avoid diabetes.
3. And you promptly forgot about that 11.99 months ago.

4. What's that thing someone already warned you about, and you've done nothing with?

ii. God gave Neb a year of warning through Daniel.

iii. God usually reaches us the same way: a friend, a spouse, a conscience

iv. And remember what Daniel asked for. Do what's right. Be kind to the oppressed.

v. So ask who is on the receiving end of your influence.

1. Employees. Kids. The person who can do absolutely nothing for you.
2. How are they doing?
3. If my humility hasn't changed how I treat people, I haven't repented. I've just had a feeling.

d. [20] Third: BELIEVE THE TRUTH

i. You are not self-made, and you are not worthless.

1. You are made in God's image and you depend on him.

ii. Humility isn't thinking less of yourself.

1. It's seeing yourself truthfully, in light of who He is. Who He says you are (and aren't).
2. You can receive your limits without shame, your gifts without boasting, and his love without earning it.

iii. And if the 3 a.m. voice is loud, and it won't quiet down, talk to somebody.

1. A counselor. A doctor. A pastor.
2. That's wisdom. It isn't failing at faith.

e. [21] Fourth: STAY FOR THE LONG HAUL

i. Daniel served this man for decades.

1. He watched him build a golden statue. He watched him rage.
2. And he kept telling him the truth anyway, and he never gave up on him.
3. Then one day a king writes his testimony to the whole world.

ii. [PERSONAL STORY: My story is full of people who invested in me, prayed for me, waited on me for years.

1. My parents. My youth minister. Old pastors and friends.
2. And as I've become a pastor, I've seen firsthand how hard it can be to pour faithfully into someone you care deeply about, only to watch them walk away over and over.
3. And sometimes, by God's grace, some eventually come back share their testimony -- and it's really sweet!]

iii. Who are you patiently, faithfully showing up for?

1. A family member? A coworker. A neighbor? A disciple…
2. Somebody who has watched God's power for years and still hasn't bowed.
3. **[Write one name on your handout.]**
4. Don't give up on them, in person or in prayer.
5. Our small steps of faithfulness can ripple far beyond what we could imagine.

6. CONCLUSION: LOOK UP

a. Today we've seen two wildly different sentences come from one man:
   i. On the roof: "I have built."
   ii. In the field: "He does as he pleases."
b. And at the end of his own letter:
   i. [22] Daniel 4:37 -- "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble."
c. Same man. Same city. Same skyline.
   i. What moved was his eyes.
   ii. And behind it all, the God of the universe who wouldn't quit on him.
d. So whose greatness are you living for?
   i. Are you building your own kingdom, or are you living under the King of heaven?
e. Stop taking ownership of what belongs to him.
   i. Stop building your identity on what you can accomplish.
   ii. Stop writing your name on what is his
   iii. And stop letting your own verdict, the proud one or the crushing one, have the last word.
   iv. Look up.
f. Because God is able to humble the proud.
   i. But the story doesn't end with a king in a field.
   ii. It ends with a king on his knees, then back on his throne, greater than before.
   iii. But Nebuchadnezzar isn't the king this chapter is really pointing to.
g. Nebuchadnezzar was driven to the field.
   i. Someone else walked there on purpose.
   ii. Here's one person in history who could stand on any roof, look out over everything, and say "I built this," and be telling the whole truth.

iii. [23] Colossians 1 [16] For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.

iv. He didn't need a roof. He never lost track of who he was. And he came down anyway.

v. [24] Philippians 2:5b-8 -- "…have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:
Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross!"

h. Nebuchadnezzar was humbled for his pride.

i. Jesus was humbled for ours.

ii. Driven out. Stripped. Cut down.

iii. And then the part Nebuchadnezzar's story could only point to:

iv. [25] Philippians 2:9-11 "Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

v. Every knee. Even a king's. Nebuchadnezzar on his knees was a preview.

vi. So when I talk about humility, I don't mean thinking less of yourself. I mean looking at him.

i. [26] Here's what God does with pride.

i. He doesn't just take us low to keep us there.

ii. King Jesus went lowest of all so he could bring us up with him.

iii. He takes the lie of pride away from us and gives us back ourselves.

7. PRAYER: Father, you are God, and we aren't.

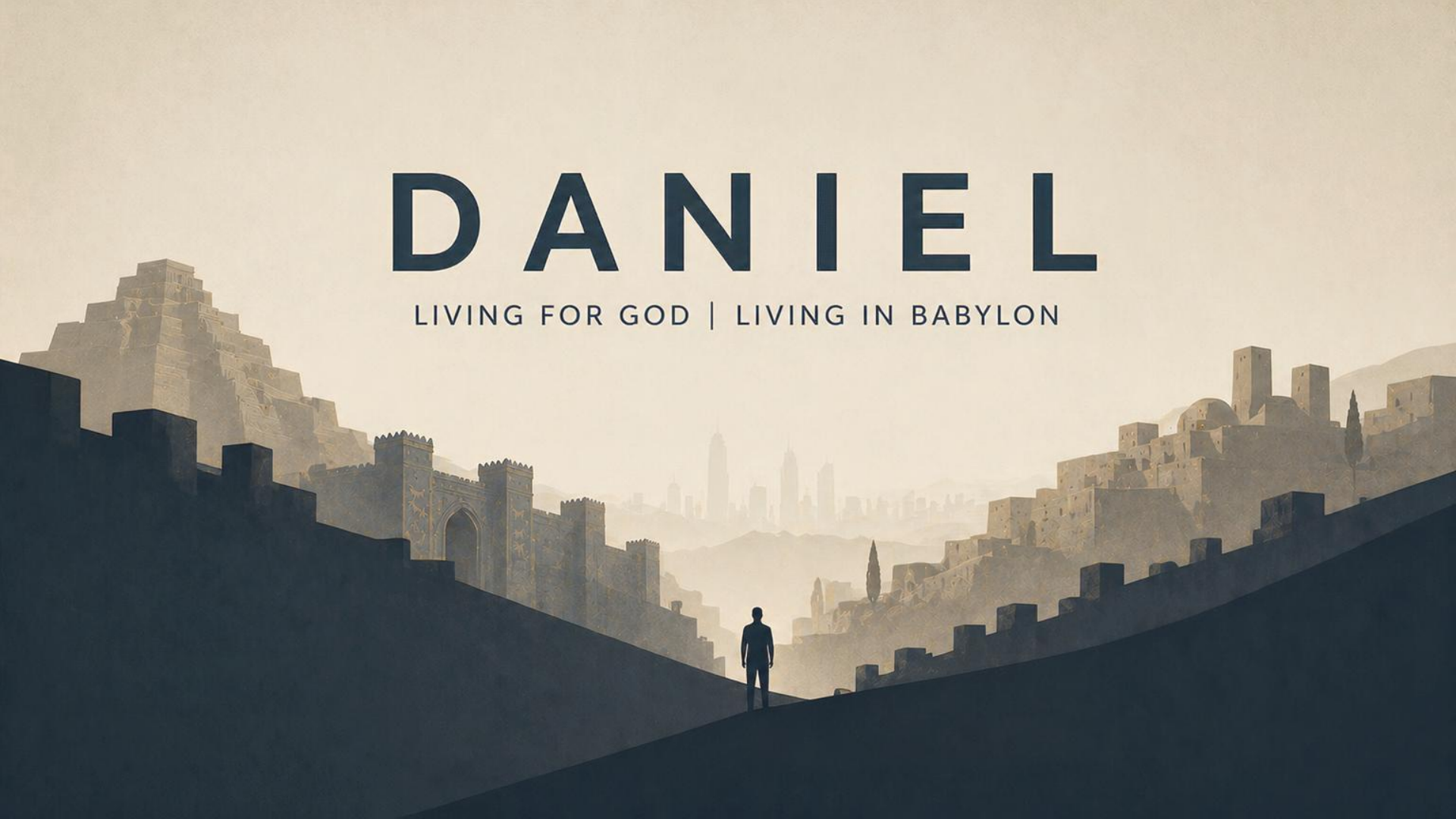
a. Thank you for that. Thank you for sending a King who came down on purpose.

b. Show us our roofs. Where pride can so easily mislead us.

c. Teach us to give back what we've been calling ours.

d. And for everyone here who is tired of carrying their own verdict, let them hear yours.

e. Amen.


DANIEL
LIVING FOR GOD | LIVING IN BABYLON

WHAT GOD DOES WITH PRIDE

DANIEL 4



WHAT GOD DOES WITH PRIDE

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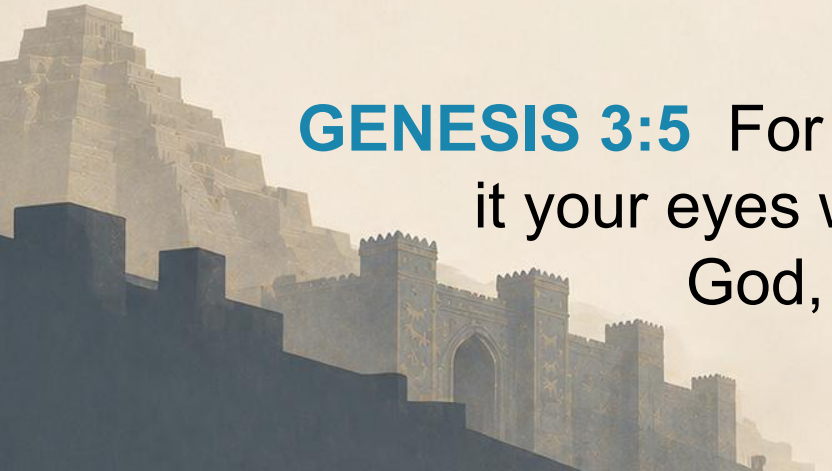
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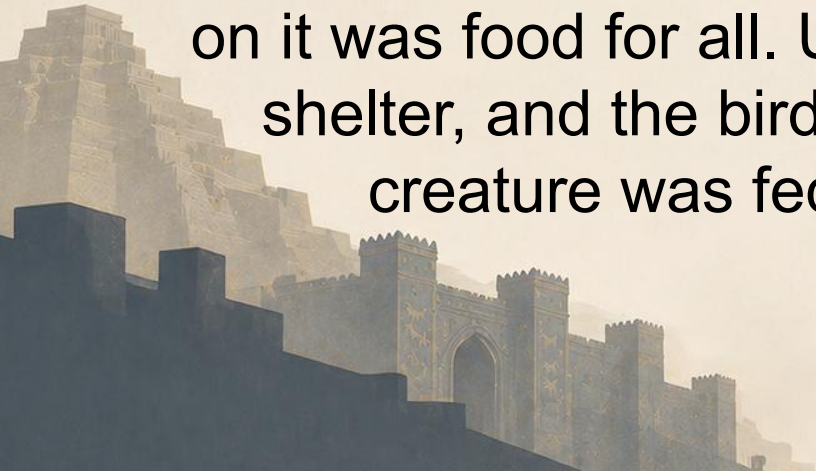
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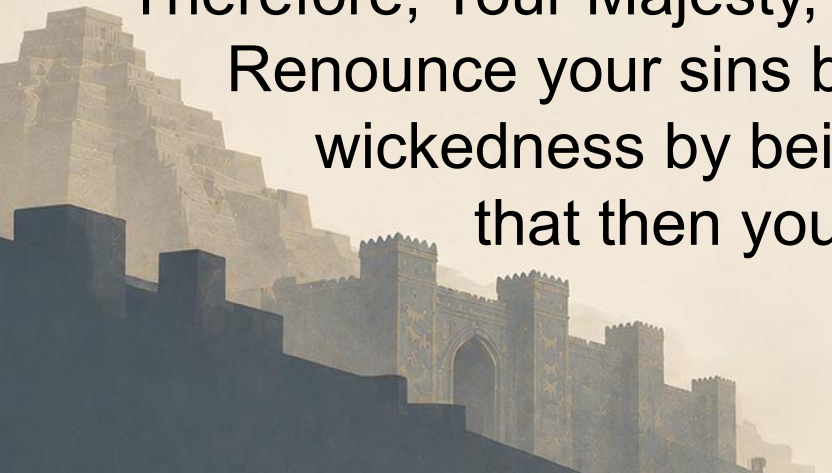
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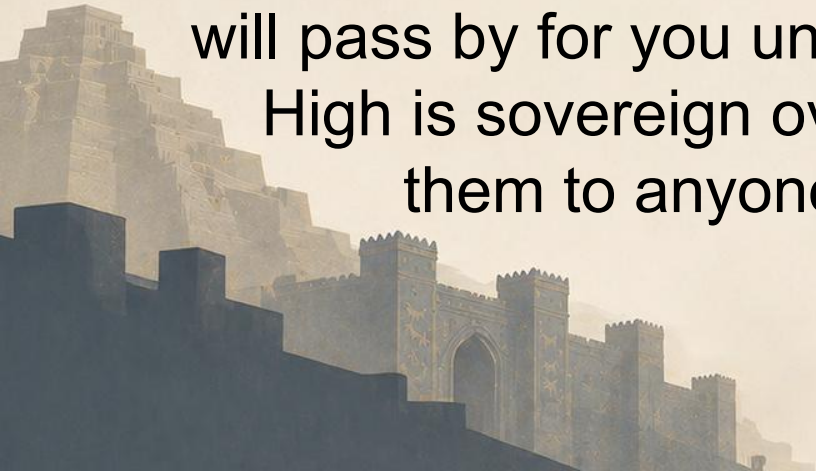
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TOO LOVED TO BE LEFT IN PRIDE

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1. Name your roof. Then give it back.
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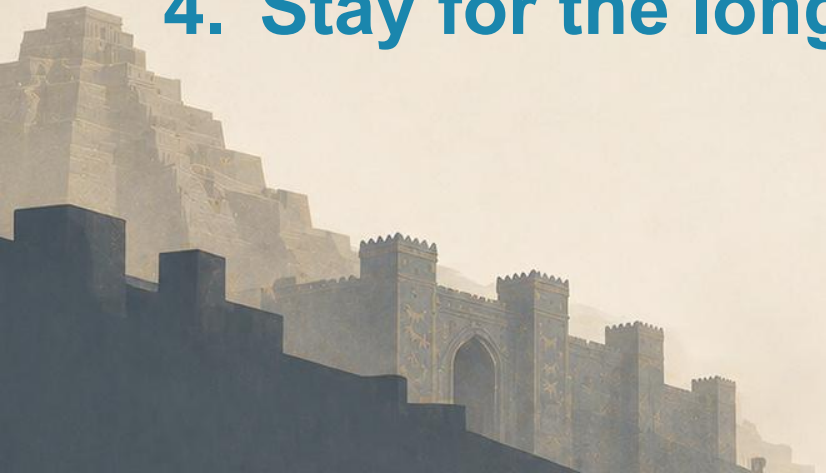
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3. Believe the truth.
4. Stay for the long haul.



LOOK UP

DANIEL 4 [37] Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.



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COLOSSIANS 1 [16] For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.

LOOK UP

PHILIPPIANS 2 5 …have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; 7 rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!



LOOK UP

PHILIPPIANS 2 9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest
place and gave him the name that is above every name,
10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven
and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue
acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the
Father.



WHAT GOD DOES WITH PRIDE

DANIEL 4

