

10/29/06

FOLLOW THE LEADER

Pastor Appreciation Sunday

Opening Story ... The Thunder Storm
Connected History Brief ... Chairman of the Board

Remember the game you played as a child ... it seems to span the generations. Why?
We will always need leaders.

Text: [Daniel 4](#)

This message boils down to two simple points ... **Leadership** and **humility** and their reciprocal qualities as they relate to leaders and constituents.

Since this Pastor Appreciation Sunday it is easy to think of these only in terms of Pastor and congregants but we must include God in the equation. For his inclusion changes everything!

First let me remind you of the words of God as they were related to [Isaiah chapter 57: 15](#) "The high and lofty one ... I refresh the humble and give new courage to those with repentant hearts."

We are going to examine the life of one of God's Supermen, a young man named Daniel and how his life became intertwined with the Emperor of the world around 590 B.C.

Nebuchadnezzar the ruler of Babylon was an absolute despot. There were no challenges to his authority, no system of checks and balances ... He did as he pleased, his word was law.

Every other leader after him was inferior in this manner.

Nebuchadnezzar was an enlightened despot. Although he conquered he did not destroy unless he was forced to. Additionally he would take as tribute from conquered nations the brightest and strongest young to Babylon and put them to work for his kingdom.

This is what happened to Daniel and his three Hebrew companions ... Sadrack, Meshack and Inedbednigo.

Israel/Judah had gone through generations of rebellion against God ... After years of warnings, God allowed them to be conquered. Daniel's life was one of subordinate leadership.

Try to picture yourself being removed as a prisoner from home and family forced to live in a foreign culture to learn a new language and serve a foreign power who incidentally destroyed your home and family.

Yet this was all part of God's plan ... His ways are not our ways

Lets Change gears

Lets go to the end of the story and work from back to front.

Read chapter Daniel Chapter 4

This was not his first dream from God it was the final stroke that changed his life.

I can identify with this King not because of his greatness but his downfall and personal trial.

✱Personal experience

Jennifer and I were pasturing a church with a congregation of about 120 people at it's height, while still teaching full time, doing graduate studies raising a family and putting an addition on our home.

After 8 years and a series of complicated events I found myself at the end of my endurance. I was physically, emotionally and mentally exhausted... full blown burn out mode.

I went through a period of about 7 years of quiet desperation. Several of those years I battled clinical depression.

Driven from the Pastorate I barely managed to hold on to my job as a teacher. I suffered from a form of agoraphobia ... fear of being around people

I began to withdraw from everything including my own family, wife and children. Meals at diner were difficult to sit through I lost the ability to be a father to my children or a husband to my wife.

I felt like a caged animal wanting to run away but not knowing where to go. I could not focus long enough to read a book, watch television or complete a simple project. The days were endless and the nights sleepless.

I felt isolated and removed from reality, numb dead.

This was not for a day a week or a month but for a period that stretched over approximately seven years. And with all that I struggled I never faced what King Nebuchadnezzar did. He went from the Penthouse to the dog house in a day. From monarch to mammal for 7 years, a complete and total breakdown.

While still going through this experience my wife and I flew to Virginia Beach for a Pastor's conference, a gift from my mother and sister.

The place was beautiful but all I could think of was... how was I going to escape. Once there the agoraphobia was getting the best of me I told my wife we had to go back.

Jennifer who had been so strong up to this point could not deal with this and walked away leaving me alone in the beautiful area with a beautiful fireplace. I collapsed into a chair feeling more alone than I had ever experienced. At that moment a man and his wife

who were walking by stopped suddenly. He looked at me and with the authority of God said God has a plan for your life!

God would speak in so many amazing ways to us during that visit. Perhaps one of the most amazing was a visit with the regular Chaplain of the facility. God had given him the gift of discernment to see within and prophesy what God was going to do.

As we met privately he shared these words with me ... As I was thinking of you and praying for you God showed me a tree that had been cut down but the root was still alive, and the tree is beginning to grow again.

I had been reduced ... humbled during those years but God had a plan ... that He continues to unfold in my life.

After 7 years the greatest most powerful Despot the world has ever known (God's Estimation not Mine) was restored to sanity and his throne.

Only now a man humbled and born again ... no longer was the absolute ruler he once had been ... he now bowed before the true ruler of this world and universe the Living God.

Reread [Daniel 4:34 – 37](#)

For seven years his mind was gone a tortured soul unable to care for even himself never mind his kingdom.

Who was the caretaker for the degraded king during those years? He could not have survived on grass for seven years. Someone had to see to his survival.

I believe it was Daniel himself who God had allowed to be carried off from home a prisoner ...to now care for the King God himself had imprisoned.

God has appointed us pastors ... leaders

They are not just here by choice, but by compulsion they are in a sense the prisoners of Jesus Christ ... for they have submitted their lives to his will.

They often suffer and experience confusion, loneliness, isolation and frustration.

But they are here because the Lord has placed them here ... like Daniel God has a plan for their lives, some of which they are yet to discover. It is interwoven with yours and mine.

God is calling for humility on the part of our leaders and on the part of this family of believers.

He wants submission from them to him for us and submission from us to him for them.

When we yield our lives to him only good things happen.

Singing praises of worship ...humility

Keith Green song ... When I hear the Praises Start

Call for Pastors and congregation to prayer.