

# Outline

## Pain vs. Pill - Daniel 4

We are allergic to pain in the world we live in. We hate pain. **As a matter of fact, we will do anything within our power to escape the world of pain and the hurt that it causes us. However, here's a question for you – Does pain have purpose in your world and in your life? Is all pain a bad thing?**

The answer to question #1 is Yes and to question #2 a resounding “No.” **God does not really go out of His way to allow you to escape pain and live a pain-free life. God not only allows pain but uses pain to help mold and mature all of us into the men and women that He knows we can be!**

Ever started an exercise program? Was it painful? You bet. Ever worked with a personal trainer? Were they nice and pain-free? No way. But they were good. And you loved them for how they eventually made you feel.

The same is true for pain in our physical and personal lives. Pain is not a bad thing and it comes in many forms. Some of it is **physical pain** like the pain of a broken leg or a heart attack. Pain like that teaches us that it might be foolish to play football in the street where cars seem to mindlessly drive without looking for the guy making the great touchdown catch. The heart attack has allowed many a recipient to change their lives to much healthier living. Then there is the **emotional pain** of humiliating circumstances like getting fired or rejected by a lover or friend. This pain is by far much more painful and goes so much deeper than physical pain for it extends itself into the very depths of our psyche and emotion and causes us to really do some soul searching. Finally, there is **spiritual pain**, which finds its source in the dry times of our lives and sucks the joy out of our lives leaving us desperately searching for a God that does not seem to be there, or human relationship that just does not seem fulfilling anymore, or a sense of purpose in our life that astonishingly and without answer ceased to exist for us. That is the most injurious pain, as it reaches down into the very depths of our souls.

**One thing is for certain – we will all experience pain.** God will use pain to mold our lives into something different than we ever thought possible for our lives if we choose to let Him. Let me illustrate this by the life of the King of Babylon found in the book Daniel in the Old Testament of the Bible we have been reading this month – Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel is a book found in the Old Testament and contains the life story of a kid named Daniel who was kidnapped by the King of Babylon (modern day Iraq and Iran). This King and his armies destroyed Daniel's home country and took him captive. Throughout the first three exciting chapters of the book of Daniel, we have seen great lessons in living a Good life in the lives of Daniel and his three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. As we have looked at them, we have studied the possibility of what it means to stop living “Nice,” and to start living “Good.” Nice is often smile deep and insincere and fake, while living according to belief and conviction will often cause us to be in painful times of tough choices that go against the crowd, cause us to stand alone in our beliefs, and live lonely as the rest of society flows the other way. And the chief guy that has caused Good Guy Daniel tons of Grief –the King of Nice, Nebuchadnezzar. He has demanded that Daniel and his three friends stop thinking for themselves and just get in line with Babylonian thought. He has become angry when they refused to worship his gods and threatened to kill them on more than one occasion when they disagreed. He has demanded to be pacified and treated with thoughtless pandering by sycophants who pretend that they like the life he demands they live, only to be challenged by four guys who really know what they believe in life and believe what they know. And as we come to chapter four, these lessons on Good have rubbed off on old King Neb. Look what he is saying in a proclamation as chapter four of Daniel begins:

King Nebuchadnezzar,  
To the peoples, nations and men of every language, who live in all the world:

May you prosper greatly! It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous 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. Daniel 4:1-3 NIV

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Notice the impact of a GOOD LIFE! Choose to live a good life from the inside out and you will, in time, impact everyone around you for the better. King Nebuchadnezzar has been worn down by the influence of these guys who have lived out what they knew to be right and good in the face of political pressure, peer pressure, and panic pressure to do otherwise. Read their impact in the first three chapters of Daniel.

It is now in chapter four that we find that God begins now to concentrate on King Nebuchadnezzar. The king is making a transition from being a politically correct nice guy living according to his and society's whims and desires without even thinking about its rightness or goodness, to a Good Man who begins to live by belief. And it is in this chapter that we find God's primary method for turning politically correct, panicky, peer pressured nice guys into good guys – [The Power of Pain to influence Change!](#) And Nebuchadnezzar is here recounting a lesson he has learned through pain.

As chapter four unfolds, King Nebuchadnezzar takes us back seven years in his life to a day when he was having a dream that really scared him. This is the second dream that we find that freaks out Nebuchadnezzar in this short book of Daniel. I would say either that God really knows how to speak to us in our dreams or ol' King Neb really needs to lay off the anchovies on late night pizza and stop washing it down with so many Heinekens. Anyway, he has had a dream about a giant tree in the center of the world filled with leaves and fruit and everyone (people and animals) in the world find shelter under that tree and eat their fill from the abundant fruit of that tree. And right in the middle of this really tranquil and joyful scene where everyone is having a great time and everyone is getting along and all needs and desires are being met and everything is going right – BAM – the scene changes and an angel flies down from heaven! Cool! That fits a nice dream. Angels fit in – maybe it will play a harp and we will get to float on some pink clouds and some spotted elephants and pretty daisies will fly by and the 'Shrooms will take us to the ninth level of Nirvana and someone will pass the pipe around again – NOT! Like a bad trip, Nebuchadnezzar's dream takes a hard right turn. The angel, instead of pulling out a harp, pulls out a chain saw and chops the bountiful and beautiful tree down scattering all the animals and shooing the people away leaving a stump in the ground belted with a strap of iron and bronze like a big giant handcuff. No lie. That is the dream. No wonder Nebuchadnezzar is freaked out. But the dream does not stop there. The angel turns to make an announcement to the dreamer:

[Let him be soaked in heaven's dew and take his meals with the animals that graze. Let him lose his mind and get an animal's mind in exchange. And let this go on for seven seasons. The angels announce this decree, so that everyone living will know that the High God rules human kingdoms. He arranges kingdom affairs however he wishes, and makes leaders out of losers. Daniel 4:15-17 TM](#)

And then the King turns Daniel, our hero and the man for whom the Book of Daniel is named, to interpret the dream for him. At first Daniel, who had been renamed Belteshazzar in Babylon, was upset. The thoughts that came swarming into his mind terrified him. If you read earlier in the book, the last time someone could not interpret a dream for the King, heads started to roll. And this dream is a 'doozy' with a tough message.

[This, O king, also refers to you. It means that the High God has sentenced my master the king: You will be driven away from human company and live with the wild animals. You will graze on grass like an ox. You will be soaked in heaven's dew. This will go on for seven seasons, and you will learn that the High God rules over human kingdoms and that he arranges all kingdom affairs. Daniel 4:25 TM](#)

And it came true:

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All this happened to King Nebuchadnezzar. Just twelve months later, he was walking on the balcony of the royal palace in Babylon and boasted, "Look at this, Babylon the great! And I built it all by myself, a royal palace adequate to display my honor and glory!" The words were no sooner out of his mouth than a voice out of heaven spoke, "This is the verdict on you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your kingdom is taken from you. You will be driven out of human company and live with the wild animals. You will eat grass like an ox. The sentence is for seven seasons, enough time to learn that the High God rules human kingdoms and puts whomever he wishes in charge." It happened at once. Nebuchadnezzar was driven out of human company, ate grass like an ox, and was soaked in heaven's dew. His hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a hawk. Daniel 4:28-33 TM

God allows pain into our lives. He does not prevent it from coming upon us nor does he see it as a negative thing in the way that we so often see it as a negative thing. **Pain is the great Creator of Good in our life.** But only if we allow it a place in our lives. You see, God was right in the middle of molding an evil king into a Good King. God desired to turn an egomaniac into a God-maniac, one who realized that God is the one who controls all destiny and all life. To do that, God chose to allow pain to become Nebuchadnezzar's teacher. And He does the same thing in all of our lives. We have only to look at the examples of Job in the Old Testament, God's conversation with Cain killing Abel, His treatment of the pain of David's sin with Bathsheba, God's allowing the persecution of Paul the Apostle of the New Testament, and even God's refusal to take the cup of suffering away from Jesus in the garden the night before His crucifixion to know that God does not prevent pain. God allows it and even, as in this case of Nebuchadnezzar – causes it. Pain has purpose and most often it is to drive the NICE right out of us and to place the GOOD deeper into our hearts.

### **Pain only has purpose in our lives if we choose to do three things with it.**

Accept It!

Far too many of us are allergic to pain in our lives. And modern society has allowed us to pursue many avenues to escape it. Rather than trying to escape the pain of our lives, God would have us embrace the pain of our lives. He has made us very resilient beings who can adapt to so much more than we think we can. However, in modern society, we have chosen to invent so many ways to escape pain, that we have often stumped our very spiritual and emotional maturity. We have illicit means to avoid pain through the stimulants of drugs and alcohol, whether legal or illegal. We have become addicted to modern medicines' and modern drug lords' temptation to throw pain medication at everything and the physical pains that we feel are actually fed by the addictions to Marijuana, Heroin, Crack Cocaine or more legal but just as damaging drugs like Percocet, Vicodin, and other painkillers. We have distraction avoidance through the entertainment of television and stereo. Many of us seek to avoid the pain of emotional hurt by simply jumping from relationship to relationship. When we suck the life out of one relationship and it is no longer useful to us we throw that lifeless relationship away and find another to suck the joy out of. We love to avoid the pain and the great lessons that pain has for us.

But God would have us embrace our pain as useful and necessary to our maturity as humans. God did not let Nebuchadnezzar out of the pain prematurely, nor are there examples in the Bible where God chooses to let people avoid the lesson of pain. He chose to heal some of their pain, and He can still do that, but most often He chooses to teach through the pain rather than allow anyone to avoid it. Even his greatest evangelist – a guy named Paul whom you read about if you read the New Testament.

### **Accept Pain as a Tutor to Maturity!**

To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the

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more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. II Corinthians 12:7-10 NIV

Which brings me to the next thing we must do with pain:

**Pain only has purpose in our lives if we choose to do three things with it.**

**Learn From It!**

We spend so much time trying to avoid it and escape it that we do not hear the voice of God right in the middle of our pain. The best thing to do when you are going through great physical pain or great emotional pain from hurt relationships or embarrassment is to get quiet, get alone, and listen to the voice of God in your Fleeting Thoughts, those positive, piercing thoughts that flash into your mind in the quiet. Stop trying to deaden your world through artificial means, but run to God and be still. He is going to get you through it. Now I am not advocating that we do not use modern medicine to help us with excruciating pain both physical and mental, but I am saying that it should be done carefully and only in limited dosages. Never should we use alcohol, relationships, TV, or other forms of self-medication to deaden the pain. **If you need a glass of wine to steady your nerves, you don't need a glass of wine to steady your nerves.** You need to run to God and seek His voice and His solutions. And no He most likely will not answer your needy NICE self right away. Look at Nebuchadnezzar, it took him seven years to get relief. He went through a seven year depression – a seven year insanity. God does not solve all our pain issues right away. The Pain Lesson is usually one that takes time. But one thing is sure – there is always a lesson in pain. But only if you are open to it and only if you seek it in quiet and from God. And that takes times of solitude. Nebuchadnezzar was alone in his pain for seven years. But the beauty of it – God saw him through it as he submitted to it

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. Daniel 4:34 NIV

This brings us to the last thing we should always do with our pain.

**Pain only has purpose in our lives if we choose to do three things with it.**

**Take Pride In It!**

All of that pain for Nebuchadnezzar was very real and very humbling. God used that pain in the life of Nebuchadnezzar, **like a great spiritual personal trainer, to develop him into a person of the great potential that He saw within him.** God made Nebuchadnezzar even greater than he was through the pain. And look at how Nebuchadnezzar reacted – not with shame – not with hiding – He used his pain and its hurt and it humbling to shout it out to all who also hurt and to give God the glory about the lessons that he learned. Nebuchadnezzar had every reason to just be a NICE guy and go slink off in a corner because of the humiliation of the pain he had suffered. But he had learned from the example of Daniel that it does not pay to be nice. He chose to believe that he was Good and that God was good in his life. Remember this whole chapter four of Daniel started with Nebuchadnezzar's proclamation of what he had just survived over the last seven years and how God had brought him through it! He chose not to escape the pain, but accept it. He chose not to avoid the pain, but learn from it. He chose not to be ashamed of the pain, but to take pride in it! He proclaimed his pain as a badge of honor for others to learn from and identify with him.

As we close the service today with this next song, I want you to really think about the pain in your life. What are doing with the pain in your life? Trying to escape it? Are you cursing it? Are you trying to hide

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it? Will you commit to looking at your pain as a gift from God and choose to

Accept It.

Learn From It.

Take Pride in It.

You can only do so as you commit your pain to God. Will you do so in prayer in this next song?

[Play song.](#)

I will then come back up and offer for Greg Traber, Randy Lacey, and myself to be down front to talk to people about their pain and to offer to help them get professional help in their pain.