

Outline

Purposefully Authentic vs. Palpably Inauthentic

Daniel 5 introduces one of the least savory people of the Bible, a guy by the name of Belshazzar. Belshazzar is a “user” who loves to surround himself with “brown nosers” who will tell him what an awesome guy he is, because he has the power, the money, the prestige, and the image that “Nice” people lust after for themselves. Though they do not really let it be known, I am pretty sure that none of Belshazzar’s “Nice” friends really like him, but they have to do things his way because for some unknown reason and unwritten rule, he gets to call the shots and say what is important, what is fashionable, what is right, and what is good. These types of people get to call the shots usually because they have a lot of money or they are in a power position in people’s lives. It is of some benefit to be “nice” to them, because they have the means whereby to bless the lives of those of us around them or they have the ability and the power to make our lives miserable. So, these people get to call the shots and so many of the rest of us bow to their pleasure and whim whether we like them or agree with them or think what they are doing or espousing is right. [We often do not live by the principle of “good,” but rather coast by the principle of “nice.”](#) And in the case of the guy I want to look at today, Belshazzar is in control and **if one is going to get anywhere in life, then one is going to have to be “Nice” and live according to his whims and tastes.**

Just to catch up any of you that this might be your first day, we have been exploring what it is to live according to the principle of what is good rather than according to the platitudes of being nice. Nice, we have been saying is often only smile deep, while Good goes deep into the heart. Truly the only way to live authentically and be real and good is to live by the conviction of knowing what you believe and believing what you know so that you stand firmly planted on a foundation of good rather than being swayed by the winds of peer pressure or panicky fear. We must establish ourselves firmly on a foundation of truth and refuse to live our lives by whim. And we have been introduced to four guys who did just that in the book of Daniel in the Old Testament: Daniel, Shadrach, Meschach, and Abednego. I will not review their stories, but I challenge you to read the exciting first six chapters of Daniel and learn how to live Good by their example.

Today we find our “Good Man” Daniel right back in the center of the controversy in which Good people who do not waver in their belief systems find themselves. The son of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon we have read about earlier in Daniel, has come to the throne. As I taught earlier in this series, Nebuchadnezzar had to learn some tough lessons in God’s College of Good. He was an egomaniac and a bully and quite self-serving till God brought pain into his life and he learned what Good was all about. Well, Neb’s son, Belshazzar learned his father’s negative lessons well, which brings us to a quick side note: You are passing your “nice” wounds onto your children. You want a good look at what they will be like as an adult – take a very close look at the problems and challenges that you struggle with presently – there is your answer. You are training your children consciously and subconsciously in how to be an adult. You must do something that obviously Nebuchadnezzar did not do well. You must identify the character wounds in your own life and seek to heal them through discipline, counseling, LIFE Groups, and prayer. Then you must identify how you are passing those wounds onto your children, apologize for them, help them recognize these wounds in their own lives, and then seek to assist them in overcoming those wounds. What are those wounds that you see in your own life and that you are beginning (if you are really honest about it) to see in your children’s lives: anger, jealousy, lust, resentment, substance abuse, trust issues...? Begin, unlike Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, going after those and doing whatever it takes to seek the healing for yourself and your children. Back to our story:

[King Belshazzar gave a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles and drank wine with them. While Belshazzar was drinking his wine, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them. As they drank the wine, they praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone. Daniel 5:1-4 NIV](#)

The context of this story is that Belshazzar is riotously partying and that this party is out of control and wild – an orgy one might say. The party degrades even further into a scene where the king chooses to

March 22, 2009

mock God by expressing disdain for Israel's God by using the sacred cups from its Temple to toast to the Babylonian gods, as if to say – your God is nothing. It is in the midst of this that the party goes weird:

Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lamp stand in the royal palace. The king watched the hand as it wrote. His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way. Daniel 5:5,6 NIV

Now you just have to wonder what is going through Belshazzar's mind at this point. I see him looking inside his wine goblet looking for a foreign substance as if someone slipped him a Mickey. He's got to be looking around to see if everyone else sees this. I mean, for goodness sakes, out of nowhere a disembodied hand appears and is writing stuff on the walls – sounds like something right out of Cheech and Chong of the '70's or a scene from of the modern teenage angst shows. This is a really weird scene going on here – and Belshazzar is so afraid the Bible says his knees were literally knocking and he fainted dead away. Imagine how you would have felt. And he is not the only one who is terrified:

Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or tell the king what it meant. So King Belshazzar became even more terrified and his face grew more pale. His nobles were baffled. Daniel 5:8,9 NIV

Enter Daniel, the hero Good Guy from the book with the same name.

So Daniel was brought before the king, and the king said to him, "I have heard that the spirit of the gods is in you and that you have insight, intelligence and outstanding wisdom. Now I have heard that you are able to give interpretations and to solve difficult problems. If you can read this writing and tell me what it means, you will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around your neck, and you will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom." Daniel 5:13-16 NIV

That is where we find our boy Daniel. Daniel is brought into the presence of Belshazzar when God chooses to do something really not "Nice." He has interrupted the revelry to teach a lesson. How dare He? At this point, **Daniel has a pretty serious dilemma. He can choose to lie and keep the party spirit and spirits flowing or he can choose to be the only person who will tell Belshazzar the truth.** The risk? Banishment from the Kingdom of Cool, imprisonment in the Dungeon of Dork, Death of a reputation, position, or even life.

Daniel finds himself in a very similar place we can find ourselves in at times. **We are tempted toward living opposite of our belief system and contrary to what we know is right, because we are afraid to speak the truth to someone that can cause us harm, whether it is the harm of death or the harm of embarrassment or the harm of rejection or the harm of lost benefits. We are Conflict Avoiders.** We hide behind a **mask of falsehood** that says we just don't like conflict and fail to speak the truth to those we know are doing wrong, are bullying, and are hurting themselves and their loved ones. So we enable their hurting and painful lifestyles by living fake lives before them. In a very "nice" excuse, we allow people to go on in destructive habits with us or with others because we hypocritically say we don't like "confrontation." Nice people avoid confrontation and leave it to people who like it. Who likes confrontation? Yet conflict is often necessary to be a good friend or to stand up to injustice. Good people risk it and enter conflict in love and truth. That is what Daniel chooses to do:

Then Daniel answered the king, "You may keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else. Nevertheless, I will read the writing for the king and tell him what it means." Daniel 5:17 NIV

Daniel knows the truth of the handwriting on the wall is not a pretty truth. The text shares that the truth of the writing is this: God has found Belshazzar lacking in respect and character and He is going to allow the Nation of Persia to overtake Belshazzar's kingdom - Not exactly what the King wanted to hear – I am sure the tempting thought to avoid conflict or polish the truth had to have crossed Daniel's mind. What would it matter? Who would be hurt? Plus, there were riches and power on the line that Belshazzar was

March 22, 2009

offering Daniel. There was the possibility that Belshazzar would not like the news and have Daniel killed or at least rejected and ridiculed. The nice thing to do would be to make everyone feel good, avoid the conflict, take the money and run. It was going to happen anyway, why bother with the inevitable and why not profit in the meantime? This was none of Daniel's business anyway. And who likes conflict? Except that God had Daniel here to deliver this message. Daniel was God's man and the right thing, the good thing to do was to obey the fleeting voice in Daniel's mind, which was the voice of God.

So often, in the place of speaking the truth to others in love, we assuage our souls with a kind of **"Fake Truth-telling"** - **gossiping to others behind their back**. We seek out others who will commiserate with us in our **"concern"** for them and for the people that they are hurting by agreeing together that this behavior is bad and that "someone" should do something about it! However, no one does and the problem persists until somebody gets hurt. And all the while, the fleeting voice of God in our hearts urges us to speak the truth. Too often we disobey that voice, but we cannot make it go away. So we have to tell it some way and we cop out and tell everyone else but the one whom God has told us to confront with the truth. They become the object of everyone's truth telling but not the receiver of that truth. In the end we all lose. The truth comes out in a roundabout way and all respect is lost, for the Good thing was not done in the first place.

We must learn that it is not "Nice" to avoid conflict; it is simply **Cowardice**. It is not "Nice" to smile at someone who is failing and correct them behind their back; it is sin. **It is not "Nice" to avoid the Truth because we are afraid that it might hurt someone or our relationship with them; it is Dishonesty.**

Relationships are tough. Friendships take work. And the best relationships are those relationships with whom we share everything: the good, the bad, and the ugly. Good relationships are relationships where we seek to encourage and find the best and speak it in each other's lives on a daily basis. This is a **Good** discipline. Too often we say what we like about people and compliment them repeatedly in our mind. I know I do. Make it a habit to speak every positive thought you have in your mind. **Let people know the Good you think about them. Don't leave the positive in the furnace of the mind.** That way when you have to speak a tough truth or enter into a conflict with someone, you will have a large deposit of good stored up in the bank of your relationship. If the only time someone hears from you is when you are mad at them or disagree with them, you are in the process of destroying that relationship for you have no good will stored up to cushion the blow of tough truth.

Good relationships also require a willingness to speak the tough truths to each other. Good people do not leave the hurt feelings unrevealed. They do not allow disrespect to reign unchecked. Offense is not overlooked. Don't hide behind the truth that you hate conflict. All people hate conflict, but **Good people are willing to enter into the chaos of conflict to preserve the relationship.** Good people would rather not have a relationship if it means that it cannot be an authentic relationship. Nice avoids conflict while Good enters it lovingly and with prayer. Use this principle as a guide as you seek authentic relationships:

Each of you must put off falsehood and **speak truthfully to his neighbor**, for we are all members of one body. **In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down** while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold... Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but **only what is helpful for building others** up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. Ephesians 4:25-29 NIV

Good Truth Telling:

1. Always Tell the Truth in your relationships.
 2. Do not let an angry disrespectful spirit guide your truth telling – rule your emotions.
 3. Enter conflict in a timely manner.
- Make it your goal to build up the other person, not tear them down.

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. **Get rid of all bitterness**, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. **Be kind** and

March 22, 2009

compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Ephesians 4:30-32 NIV

Good Relationship Building

1. Pray for each other.
 2. Seek out the sources of your wound.
 3. Live in respect with all relationships.
- Be willing to forgive always.

The amazing thing we learn when we choose, like Daniel, to speak the truth in love and damn the consequences, they, like Belshazzar, respect us for our stand and our relationship is rewarded. Belshazzar responded by rewarding Daniel with all that he said he would reward him. He celebrated the authenticity of Daniel and his willingness to speak the truth and enter conflict in love. "Nice" People are full of BS. **Good People learn how to speak the truth and live authentically in love in their relationships!**

March 22, 2009