

Life: Confront sin

October 31, 2015

- *The Bible Studies for Life lesson for Nov. 15 focuses on Daniel 5:17-28.*

Elevators can be tricky when riding with a stranger. Do you offer a greeting or just give a nod of acknowledgment? Maybe you shouldn't say anything at all, because many want to be left alone to their thoughts. If you say something, how loud will you need to speak? Some elevators echo, while others seem to swallow sound.

What about sin? When should you confront someone about sin? How should you confront them? Daniel confronted King Belshazzar about his sin, and in so doing, gave an example to follow.

When confronting people with their sin, point to the consequences (Daniel 5:17-21)

The story in Daniel 5 sounds familiar, as similarities with the earlier stories are apparent. Another Babylonian king needs an interpretation of a supernatural message, and only Daniel can give it. Once again, it's bad news for the monarch.

This week's lesson emphasizes the confrontation of sin in someone else's life. In this story, Belshazzar is the king. He was co-regent with his father Nabonidus the last "official" king of Babylon, but Belshazzar reigned alone 10 years while his father was absent. Note the reference in Daniel 5:18 calling Nebuchadnezzar his father simply means his predecessor and not necessarily his direct biological father.

When Daniel came before Belshazzar, the king promised him great rewards for interpreting the writing on the wall. Daniel abruptly refused. Before with Nebuchadnezzar, he gave deference to the monarch. Perhaps he saw

some redeeming value in him. Not so with Belshazzar. He did not show honor to this bombastic and egotistical despot. Daniel refused any reward Belshazzar could give.

Daniel then proceeded to recount for Belshazzar the events in the life of Nebuchadnezzar detailed in Daniel 4. Nebuchadnezzar's pride resulted in judgment, namely being driven mentally unstable to the point of being forced to live in the wild. Eventually, Nebuchadnezzar came to his senses and recognized the most high God who changed the prideful king into a humble leader. His punishment did not end with his demise.

When confronting people with their sin, be specific (Daniel 5:22-23)

At this point in the story, Daniel turns his attention to Belshazzar and his incredible arrogance. Early in the chapter, the details of the king's banquet are given. He threw an extravagant party using the golden goblets from the temple in Jerusalem as drinking utensils. The sanctified goblets not only were used for a common purpose, but also were used to give toasts to the false gods of the Babylonians.

Belshazzar's sin exceeded Nebuchadnezzar's. His profane actions revealed his true character. He cared nothing about the God of Daniel, the one true God. He only was interested in himself and whatever advanced his causes.

How could Daniel have confronted the king concerning his sins in such a direct way? His treatment of the king was bold, even brash, yet Daniel told the truth.

How can we confront those around us concerning their sins? It will take a great deal of wisdom to confront others effectively. There is no mention as to how much time had passed between chapters 4 and 5, but it was a long time. Daniel was older. He was a seasoned prophet and wise man who had walked with the Lord all of his life. We will be able to confront others when we, too, have walked a long time under the grace of Jesus Christ.

When confronting people with their sin, make them aware sin brings judgment (Daniel 5:22-23)

Daniel told the king what he saw on the wall—*mene, mene, tekel, parsin*. These words translate as denominations of money—mina, mina, shekel, half. Daniel’s interpretation of God’s message isn’t a direct translation but a prophetic pronouncement loosely based on the words. Belshazzar would soon face God’s judgment. More than judgment, Belshazzar would soon experience God’s punishment.

John Goldingay in his commentary on Daniel aptly interprets the writing on the wall when he says Belshazzar was “appointed, evaluated and punished.” God appointed the king to a place of power. God evaluated the king, and he came up lacking due to his arrogance revealed in his dismissing God’s work in his life. Finally, God punished the king by taking his royal position, his kingdom and his life.

Dire consequences await those who ignore God’s message of life and salvation. Years ago, sermons on hell abounded, but today hell seems to have lost its heat. Few messages on the subject of hell are preached, and their impact isn’t what it once was.

As followers of Christ, we must follow the command to make disciples of all nations. This will involve pointing out sin in people’s lives. After all, if they don’t have sin, then they don’t need salvation. So, we must continue to help people see sin in their own lives.

Of course, the accusation of hypocrisy comes into play at this point. Like Daniel, our lives must be lived holy to God and honestly before our communities. Daniel never pretended to be perfect, but the king did not question the morality in his lifestyle. He acknowledged the veracity of Daniel’s words by rewarding him for his interpretation of the message on the wall.