

Small Group – July 26

Read Daniel 4:1-17

1. By this time of Daniel 4, King Nebuchadnezzar had securely established and prospered the Babylonian Empire and was living at ease. What makes us feel secure, prosperous, and at ease as individuals and as a city of Toronto?

*A conversation starter: as Canadians we feel secure in our universal healthcare and feel morally progressive with our liberal democratic values. We feel prosperous with Toronto's multiethnic demographic and global presence; with world-leading research on healthcare and technology; with infrastructure and funding from all levels of government. Many of us in Little T do feel secure, prosperous, and at ease with our lives with so few of us having incredible difficulty getting by.*

2. In his vision, Nebuchadnezzar saw a holy watcher descend from heaven to give sentencing. This affirms a transcendent order governing our universe versus the naturalistic worldview of our secular age. What difference does it make for us Christians to live according to a transcendent order of reality?

*There can be a solid sense of comfort and peace when we acknowledge the transcendent ordering of our universe, knowing that God is fully in control. However, there is no absolute certainty and perfect understanding on our part to comprehend God's will and purposes in our lives and in the larger perspective. And so, even as Christians, we are still called to walk by faith to trust in God's sovereign guidance even as we experience fear, uncertainty, doubt, and even disillusionment and disappointment.*

3. The heavenly decree to disestablish Nebuchadnezzar was given to the end that the world may know that God is sovereign over all the kingdoms of earth. How do we as Christians live out our faith in God's sovereignty while engulfed by our present worldly and cultural powers?

*We must keep our Christian integrity and moral allegiance to God's commands where it is clear and explicit in Scripture. We like Daniel's friends do not bow down even under threat of our own welfare and lives. But where there are grey areas in our culture and world, we employ reason and wisdom to navigate the complexities of our current social and political issues while remaining in relationship and dialogue with others, especially with those we disagree. It is because we believe in God's sovereignty and power to fulfill His good purposes that we can become deeply engaged (even entangled) with our world's affairs, believing that God is always at work in and through us to enact His purposes and will in all aspects of our society.*

4. As Nebuchadnezzar bore witness to God's sovereignty, how can we bear witness today in Jesus Christ's sovereignty over our lives and all the affairs of

our world?

*We demonstrate in our families, streets, workplaces, and places where we have relationships our embodying and living up to and according to the values that Jesus and the Apostles have bestowed to us to keep and obey. The sum of it is for us to pursue a daily disposition out of love for God and love for neighbours without demanding the same behaviour from others, judging and evaluating others based on how well they love, or feeling self-righteous whenever we do. But a life out of love for God and neighbour is not self-evident or self-explanatory as many of us live decent and nice lives. We should go above and beyond to articulate why we do and say what we do and say: to engage others in conversation, inviting others to consider the claims of Jesus Christ, listening, participating in the life of Toronto, praying, considering, and then challenging the erroneous, the idolatrous, the unjust and evil of our city, to form and maintain relationships with those with whom we disagree, and to not burden ourselves with the fates and transformation of others because God alone can deal with those things.*