



# LIVING IN A HOSTILE CITY



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## WHAT'S INSIDE

Ever felt that the city seems to getting a little harder and hostile? Daniel and his mates worked in the government for a hostile foreign nation. They faced years of hardships, with enemies trying to trip them up and ridicule God. We have much to learn about how they stood up under that pressure and gave glory to God as a result.

## STUDIES

Success

Future security

Politics and powerplays

Leadership and humility

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## HOW TO USE THESE STUDIES



These studies are short modules to help workers think more deeply about different areas of your workplace witness. They are designed to be used in Evangelistic Prayer Teams (EPTs), but can also be used in any small group setting.

**When you think about your work, what (or who) do you feel will give you success?**

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All things are given  
All success is given by God.

In Daniel chapter 1 the nation of Israel has been taken captive by the Babylonians and the young Israelites are being enrolled in the Babylonian graduate indoctrination program. And it looks like Nebuchadnezzar is the one who gives success, health and prosperity. But God gives success...

### From the Bible

And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into Nebuchadnezzar's hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. **Daniel 1:2**

Now God had caused the official to show favour and compassion to Daniel

**Daniel 1:9**

To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.

**Daniel 1:17**

Who gives success?

## Key Truths

1. God is the giver. He gave Israel into the hands of Babylon according to his plan. That is why Nebuchnezzar is successful, because God gave Israel into his hands.
2. God is the giver. It is he who creates the circumstances in which we rise or fall. He makes the official look on Daniel and his mates with favour.
3. God is the giver. Daniel and his mates have their gifts, skills and learning only because God gave it to them.

## Application

Respond to this statement: If you think your company ultimately gives success then there are *no limits* to the lengths you'll go to keep your company happy with you.

If we grasp deeply that God is *the* giver how should this impact how we conduct ourselves at work when there is pressure to conform, in a bad way, to the company? Or when there is an opportunity to 'stand up' as a Christian?

*God is the giver and so our confidence in life rests in him not in our success in life. But if our confidence comes from our self-made success we no longer recognise that God is the true great giver of success.*

## Prayer

Pray for each other's hearts – that we would acknowledge God as the source of our success in life.

Pray that you would seek God's success in your work.



**What are the things you depend on for your future security?**

**What do you notice others depending on?**

**What influences how you feel about the future?**

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All human kingdoms will end, all human powers will be overthrown. But God's kingdom will exist forever and no power can overthrow it.

Nebuchadnezzar has a dream that frightens him profoundly. It is the dream of four human kingdoms being destroyed by God's kingdom. Our reading today is God's interpretation of the dream given through Daniel.

### From the Bible

"This was the dream, and now we will interpret it to the king. <sup>37</sup> Your Majesty, you are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; <sup>38</sup> in your hands he has placed all mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds in the sky. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. [...]

<sup>44</sup> In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. <sup>45</sup> This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands – a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy."

<sup>46</sup> Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell prostrate before Daniel and paid him honour and ordered that an offering and incense be presented to him. <sup>47</sup> The king said to Daniel, "Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery." The king answered and said to Daniel, "Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery."

**Daniel 2:36-38 & 44-47**

What does the interpretation reveal about God's power?

## Key Truths

1. Any kingdom or company or city only exists and only has a future because God gives it. (v37)
2. God has set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed and will never be left to another people. It is the kingdom of Jesus. Jesus has defeated death, is unconquerable and will rule forever and so those under Jesus' rule, Christians, have an assured and secure future.
3. God's kingdom under Jesus does not depend on any human power, not even ours. It is made by 'no human hands.' (45)
4. Jesus' rule and authority overcomes any and every power structure in our world. (44)

## Application

Are there things that stop you from trusting God as the one who determines the future, including your future?

How should this shape our response to people that seem to threaten our security or future?

How should this shape our response to circumstances that seem to threaten our security or future?

*God is the one who gives us our ultimate security, our future rests completely in him. This means we can live for him knowing our future is secure in him.*

## Prayer

Pray for a deep reliance upon God who controls our future.

Pray for each other's unbelieving friends and colleagues. What is the next step with each one?

**It's easy to live under the illusion of freedom, not noticing the unseen forces that influence our actions. What we think is freedom could really be giving in to these powers. Are there any areas of life where you might be in danger of giving in?**

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There are powerful forces that would seek to influence our actions but trusting in God means resisting them even in the face of death.

### From the Bible

<sup>4</sup> Then the herald loudly proclaimed, "Nations and peoples of every language, this is what you are commanded to do: <sup>5</sup> As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. <sup>6</sup> Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace."

<sup>7</sup> Therefore, as soon as they heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, and all kinds of music, all the nations and peoples of every language fell down and worshiped the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

**Daniel 3:4-7**

The middle managers bow down to the golden image because they are afraid of ol' Neb. He shapes their decisions. He is the CEO who calls the shots and they listen. Now contrast this with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego when Neb threatens them with death if they don't bow down to his golden image.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied to him, "King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. <sup>17</sup> If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver

us from Your Majesty's hand. <sup>18</sup> But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”

**Daniel 3:16-18**

What is the difference between God's power and Nebuchadnezzar's power?

## Key Truths:

1. Our God is perfectly capable of rescuing our heroes out of Neb's hands.
2. "God may choose not to rescue us, but either way, we will not serve your gods." This shows the true issue is not the golden image but choosing between Neb's power and God's power.
3. Idolatry – worship of something other than God – is more subtle and complicated in our hearts than we often think. Idolatry is a powerplay for our hearts.

## Application

So much of our success in the workplace seems to rise and fall on the power of leaders, managers, or colleagues. But that's not the case, God is able to rescue us from any power and any difficulty in this life. If we really trust God is the one who has ultimate power how would that change our lives?

However, in the end, you don't know if God will rescue you from corporate oblivion, from the fiery furnace of unemployment or social rejection. He calls his own shots for his own reasons. But it is always for your good. Consider Paul's words in Romans:

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him...

<sup>31</sup>What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? <sup>33</sup> Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup> Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died-- more than that, who was raised to life-- is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us...

<sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, <sup>39</sup> neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Romans 8:28, 31-34, 38-39**



*If something or someone other than God dictates your decisions or thinking to you then you are not free but in slavery. But if nothing can separate you from the love of God in Jesus, you have the freedom to throw off that slavery.*

## Prayer

Pray that we would resist the temptation to give in to the powerful forces in our day to day world.

Pray for someone who wields power in your life. Why not add them to the list of people that you regularly pray for?

**Where do people think their authority comes from?**

**What do they think contributes most to their rising or falling?**

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IDEA**

Any authority we have is only because God has given it to us. This ought to lead to great humility.

Nebuchadnezzar looks at his kingdom and reflects ‘is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?’ (Daniel 4:29-32). So God strips Neb of his power and makes him live in the wilderness like an animal:

### From the Bible

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 honoured and glorified him who lives forever.

His dominion is an eternal dominion;

his kingdom endures from generation to generation.

<sup>35</sup> All the peoples of the earth

Are regarded as nothing.

He does as he pleases

with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth.

No one can hold back his hand

Or say to him: “What have you done?”

<sup>36</sup> At the same time my sanity was restored, my honour and splendour were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before. <sup>37</sup> Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.”

**Daniel 4:34-37**

What does Nebuchadnezzar learn from his losing his mind?

## Key Truths:

1. Neb discovered God is the ultimate ruler – ‘for God’s dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation’
2. Neb discovered God is free to do what he wants and no one can stop him or hinder him. – ‘none can stay his hand’ (35)
3. Neb discovered that God gives power and leadership and rule. And God can take it away. The right response is worshipping God. (37)

## Application

Are you thankful to God for your position at work?

How do you relate to those who are “lower” than you?

Are you a humble leader? What would others say to this?

*God has placed you in the role you are in so lead humbly, pointing people to him and not yourself.*

## Prayer

Pray for your leadership in whatever role or form you exercise it. Pray for members of your group.

Pray that the way you as Christians exercise leadership points people to Jesus.