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You know how you dream dreams and they are vivid and filled with activity, but then you wake up and you can remember the emotion, or a piece of it, but cannot remember the entire dream.

Or perhaps you are one who struggles to go to sleep and you think of the problems in the world, or all of your problems, or anybody's problems for that matter! You lay there—for an hour or two—until you get a little drowsy, and your thoughts become jumbled and don't make sense, and *finally* you fall asleep. But you don't remember much the next day.

That happened to King Nebuchadnezzar.

If your spouse or a friend came to you and told you they had dreams and the dreams really bothered them but they can't exactly remember the dreams, and they wanted you to tell them the dreams; you would look at them and say,

"You're crazy!" "You need to go on vacation; you need to take a chill pill; you need to relax!"

So King Nebuchadnezzar, although successful in war, was crazy. He thought far too much of himself! His power had gone to his head.

A politician named Baron Acton, who lived in 19th century Britain, said,

"Absolute power corrupts absolutely."

His full quote is: "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men."

A French politician named Lamartine had a softer approach. He pointed out that it didn't matter whether the person was a monarch or commoner, that: "absolute power corrupts the best natures."

In other words, too much power is a problem.

In 2012, the Smithsonian did a study on why power corrupts. Their study determined that the misuse of power is related to a lack of "moral identity." Those who had a sense of moral identity tended to look at the effects of their decisions on the community, not just themselves. Thus power is not as likely to corrupt them.

In sum, the study found that power itself doesn't corrupt; it heightens pre-existing ethical tendencies. If you do not have moral grounding, power corrupts. That reminds me of what Abraham Lincoln said: "Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power."¹

¹ <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/why-power-corrupts-37165345/>, accessed September 13, 2017.

A king has absolute power. But this topic is about more than kings. Bosses are in positions of power, as are fathers and mothers and even grandfathers and grandmothers. You might even have a friend who wields power over you, or an in-law, or others. This lesson is a study in power.

Proverbs says, “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.” (16:18) Power often creates pride.

So Nebuchadnezzar’s power has corrupted him because when he insisted someone tell him his dream but heard, “nobody on the face of the earth can tell you what you dreamed,” he flew into a rage and called for his entire counsel to be executed.

It would be like killing the Cabinet in our government. Wielding your power just because you have it, or because you are upset, is folly. Nebuchadnezzar may have gotten his way, but he would have hurt himself and his entire nation had he succeeded in carrying out the executions.

Take Pilate as an example. Before Jesus’ trial, Pilate’s wife had warned him not to condemn Jesus. (Mt 27:19) Pilate knew that the crowd calling for his crucifixion had no real case against Jesus. But he turned to him and said, “I have the power to free you or crucify you.” (Jn 19:4-16)

Power made Pilate take Jesus’ life thoughtlessly. Absolute power corrupts absolutely.

But real power, God’s power, saved Jesus’ life by raising him from the dead. Human power NEVER thwarts God.

Think about your own power in relation to others. Do you control it? Or does it control you?

Well the king’s advisers didn’t believe any power could intervene: “Only the gods can tell you your dream, and they do not live here among people” (Dan 2:11).

They did not know the true God. They didn’t know that Israel’s God had defeated the Egyptian Pharaoh, and dried up the Red Sea and settled the Promised Land. They had no faith that God is near and listens to prayers, and that human power never thwarts God.

How hard it must be to live thinking that God might know the answer, but God is not with me.

In reality, God’s power is unequalled on earth. And, God’s use of power is totally the opposite of how this king uses power.

Daniel believed this because when he heard what was happening, he went into action. He intervened. He said, “Wait, I will seek God’s help.”

If you are subject to someone’s unreasonable use of power, you have options too!

Daniel intervened, asked for time, and then asked companions to PRAY like this:

Ask for mercy
Ask for the answer

Ask that God save us!

Immediately, I mean IMMEDIATELY, the mystery was revealed and Daniel praised God because:

- God has more wisdom and power than anyone, bar none
- God is in charge of who is elected
- God gives wisdom to those who seek it
- God willingly reveals things humans cannot know
- God knows everything, even what is in the darkness
- God's way is always light

When you pray about something, trust that the answer will come. So "Praise the LORD, and forget not all his benefits" (Ps 103:2).

How much do you thank God when an answer is given? Or do you say in your head, "It doesn't matter if I pray because God is far off;" or "God does not care about me;" or "my problem is too small;" or "I am too sinful."

If such words come to mind, resist that voice. It is from the devil. Resist it and Satan will flee.

So the truth is actually this: God is not far off; God does care about you; your problem is not too small, and you are not too sinful to be heard. In fact God's power is huge and you can lean on Him.

It's folly to not turn to God in prayer about anything; that is shifting from your power to God's power.

This week a friend who lives in Houston called. Since the hurricane, she has a renewed sense of what is really important. She said, "I've been pondering what to pray about. I've decided that every word that comes should be a prayer."

That means think about God's presence with you. A monk named Brother Lawrence calls that "practicing the presence of God." In fact, he wrote a book about that. It's very famous. We have the book in our library.

Practicing the presence of God is a spiritual discipline. How many of you, after last week's sermon, picked out a spiritual discipline to work on? Let's recall what they are:

- Keep the Ten Commandments
- If single, keep yourself sexually pure (1Tim 5:22)
- Don't get drunk (Eph 5:18)
- Pray (Mat 6:9)
- Fast (Mat 6:17)
- Read the Bible (Ps 119:11)

The fact that Daniel and his three friends practiced the spiritual discipline of prayer, and then Daniel trusted the vision that God gave, saved their lives.

We may not have such a dramatic crisis as Daniel and his friends, but it is being faithful in the little problems of life that will prepare you for the big ones. The king was foolish and almost lost all that had been given him for help. But God, in His mercy, stepped in—even for a king who did not have a clue about who God is. God stepped in—not as a controlling, power mongering puppet master, but as a loving, generous God who gives blessings and hope when we most need them.

Isn't God worthy to be praised?

Do you have a problem? Get busy! Draw close to God. Develop one spiritual discipline that you believe will help you the most at this time.

AMEN