

THE WRITING ON THE WALL

Thrive

Daniel 5 // Craig Smith

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Craig // Good morning. Welcome to Mission Hills. So glad you are here for week number five for our journey through the Book of Daniel. Preparing for this particular message has been convicting for me this week. My prayer is that God uses it for a similar way in your life. Why don't you go ahead and grab a Bible and make your way to Daniel chapter 5? We are going to see a story today that honestly, even if you don't know much about Daniel, you probably know -- you have at least one point of connection to this story, because this is a story we get a phrase that we use in the modern world. That phrase is "the handwriting's on the wall," or "the writing's on the wall." Have you ever heard that phrase used?

Yeah, it basically means, hey, the end is inevitable. We are going to see where that phrase came from today as we find a king who received announcement the end of his reign was inevitable. Chapter 5:1 says this, King Belshazzar gave a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles and drank wine with them. First thing is that if you have been following along with us through Daniel, you may realize, this is a different king. Up to this point we dealt with Nebuchadnezzar. He was the king who conquered Israel, brought Daniel and his friends back as basically as slaves into his palace, but suddenly, he's kind out of the scene. We have a new king. His name is Belshazzar. Best guess from historical information, Belshazzar was a grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. He was a grandson by way of marriage between Nebuchadnezzar's daughter to a man named Nabonidus. Nabonidus married Nebuchadnezzar's daughter. They had Belshazzar. Here's why this matters. Nabonidus was actually the king of all of Babylon at this point. He had taken the throne.

Belshazzar, however, had been given a portion of the kingdom. He was allowed to exercise the reign and rule over the Providence of Babylon. Nabonidus, for whatever reason, he ruled the rest of the empire from another place. Part of you are already glazing over. Why do we care? Here's why we care. I think this actually matters. We are going to see Belshazzar do some strange things in the story. I think the best way to understand all of the things that we are going to see in this story is to understand this truth about Belshazzar. Belshazzar is an insecure king. Belshazzar is an insecure king. There are three reasons why that makes perfect sense. First off, his authority wasn't the result of any achievement. Nebuchadnezzar ruled an incredible empire, and he did it by force of will. He did it by power. He seized power. He conquered peoples. Belshazzar hasn't done any of that. He's just inherited it, okay? That's the first sort of root of insecurity for him. His authority wasn't the result of any achievement.

The second root of his insecurity is that his authority was limited. As I said, his dad Nabonidus ruled the whole empire. Belshazzar was just told, you can play with this little area over there. Have fun. It was a limited reign, and then third, his authority was borrowed. His authority was borrowed. He only reigned as a little "k" king in the province of Babylon because his dad had said, I'm going to let you do this, okay? I think all three of those things combined to make Belshazzar an insecure king. When we start from that understanding, a lot of what we are going to see happening in the story makes a whole lot of sense, including the very first thing that happened, which is that he threw a big party, and it was a big party, right?

I mean, he invited a thousand of his nobles. They all had wives. Some of them had multiple wife, so you might be looking at 2 to 4 to 5,000 people coming to this party. That is a big party, right? Now, this language that's being used "he threw a great feast," we find that language multiple times throughout the scriptures talking about big feasts, but what's interesting, typically when we find this idea of a big feast or a big banquet, there is almost always an occasion mentioned. They won a huge battle, so they threw a great feast. They had a very important dignitary come to visit, a V.I.P. came to visit, so they threw a great feast to honor him. There's always an occasion for it. What's the occasion here? There's nothing mentioned.

It's just a big party for the sake of a big party. I think that's important to begin to understand because what's happening is Belshazzar is not celebrating something that has happened, he's trying to make something happen. He's trying to win their approval. He's trying to get them on his side. He's trying to win their support. He's trying to make them -- like him. He set upon this particular approach as a way to do that. See here's the thing, insecure people go to great lengths to convince others to like them. They are driven to make decisions hoping to other people on, not necessarily the best decisions. Not necessarily decisions they would have made otherwise, but insecure people are driven to make other people like them. They go to great lengths to do it. Anybody ever known anybody like that? Like you feel like, you are just trying way too hard. I can't believe you did that. That's crazy. That's so over the top.

I won't ask you, have you ever done that? Because we all have, right? I wish I could say that I see this as a thing from the distance, I see people

do this, but I absolutely see this. I mean just a couple of weeks ago I was at a pastor's conference, a small group of pastors down in Phoenix. I met a pastor that I thought, I like this guy. I wonder if we could be friends. Then I felt like I was back in third grade. I was like, how do I do this? Do I send him a note? Do you want to be friends, check yes or no. It was awkward. Does he like me back? What the heck. Then one afternoon we were sitting at dinner and this guy was sitting next to me. He leaned over and he said, hey, next time I come to town, you going to let me take you out for a cigar? I was like, I don't know what to do -- because I don't want to smoke a cigar. Like I know there are two kinds of people in the room right now. Some of you are like, a pastor smoking a cigar, that's horrible. Some of you are like a pastor smoking a cigar? That's awesome. I don't think any of those things, I just don't want to do it.

Like I don't want to set things on fire and inhale the smoke and hold it on purpose. I don't want to do that. I'm not interested in that -- but I sat there going, maybe. In my mind I was like, could I do that without throwing up? How would I pull that off? You see what's happening there, I'm sort of -- I feel this push to do something that I really don't want to do because I want him to like me. I recognize that's a sign of insecurity. Yeah, I was feeling insecure in that moment. Insecure people go to great lengths to get other people to like them, and that's what he's done. He's trying to get people to give him their approval. Then he goes further. 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, and so they brought in the gold goblets that had been taken from the Temple of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them. As they drank the wine, they praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone.

Some of you are shaking your heads. Yeah, I mean this is incredibly disrespectful. Nebuchadnezzar never did this. As arrogant as Nebuchadnezzar was, and we have clearly seen that he was an arrogant man, he never did this. There's no indication that he did anything with the stuff that he took from the Temple of Jerusalem other than bring it to his home. He certainly didn't turn it into party ware. But at a certain point in this festival that he's thrown to get people to like him, Belshazzar kind of looks around and thinks, I got to kick it up a notch. I got to do something else, and so he's like, I got it. Bring those cups out. What he's doing, he's expressing disdain for the God of Israel, and he's trying to pump himself up, right? Like, hey, even my grandfather was not willing to go this far, but I totally am because that's who I am, right? You understand what's happening, something really common to insecure people, insecure people try to purchase credibility at other people's expense.

They try to puff themselves up by tearing others down. They try to make themselves look better by making someone else look weaker and ineffectual, right? Anybody ever know anybody like that? You have never done it, though, right? Never found yourself in that place where you feel threatened, or you feel the only way you can get ahead is to cut somebody else down, to tear them down, to tear their work or their ministry or whatever it is apart? Honestly, if you have ever seen political ads, let's keep it kind of neutral, okay? Political ads, you see it constantly, right? And most of the political ads that we see, unfortunately, it's basically just attack. This person did this. This person did this. Aren't they terrible for doing this and this. You are like, okay, wait a minute. What do you stand for? What's important to you? What's your platform? We don't get to see because they are trying to build themselves up. They are trying to purchase credibility at somebody else's expense.

That's a sign of insecurity, and it drives Belshazzar to this incredibly disrespectful place as he's trying to pump himself up, and suddenly, as they are doing it, 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. He was so frightened that his legs became weak, and his knees were knocking. In other words, he got what? He got scared. He was terrified. The N.I.V. rendered it into a standard English phrase because when we say someone is really scared their knees were knocking -- I don't know why we say that because it turns out that's really hard to do, like if you try to make your knees knock, it's actually really difficult, but that's our phrase, right? This person is so scared they are falling apart. The literal Hebrew is something like, his bowels were loosened.

I really appreciate the fact that they have neatened it up for us a little bit, but the point is, he's absolutely terrified. It's interesting, it's an over the top expression like why is he so scared? You might be like, a hand did just appear and is writing on the wall. That's scary, granted. Maybe that's all that's going on, but it's so over the top that I'm left wondering if there is not something deeper going on. I mean everybody should have been scared, but what we are told is that Belshazzar is absolutely undone with fear, and what's interesting is that at this point, and as we are going to see in a moment, nobody knows what the words say. Nobody knows what the message means, and yet he seems to have taken the message and gone, oh no! Oh, no! Why? Because insecure people are driven by fear. Insecure people are driven by fear. They have a tendency to read everything through that lens of fear. They read everything with oh no, I'm going to be exposed. Oh no, it's going to come out that I'm not all that, that I'm not what people thought I was.

I'm going to be exposed as a fraud. It's the oh no, oh no, people are going to come into my house and see that I'm not that good of a mom. They are going to see the quality of my work and realize I'm not that good at it, I shouldn't have gotten this position. I'm a fraud in some way. If you have ever felt anything like that, you understand that insecurity drives this fear, and we want to keep ourselves hidden so that nobody reveals that we are not everything that we have presented to the world. Nabonidus seems to be driven by fear. He's reading everything through this lens of fear. And the king summoned the enchanter, the astrologers and the diviners, and he said to the wise men of Babylon, whoever reads this writing and tells me what it means will be clothed in purple, and have a gold chain placed around his neck, and he'll be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom. Couple of things here, the first, you might wonder why he wants two things. He wants two things. He wants them to read it, and he wants them to interpret it, right?

You might wonder why both of those things are there. Why would you have trouble reading it? Did the hand have bad handwriting? What's the problem? And the answer is that it's written in Aramaic, and in Aramaic originally you didn't write vowels, you just wrote the consonants, and in context it was pretty easy to tell what the vowels were and understood what the words were and what the meaning was, but in English it would look like this. That's just consonants, right? Now, chances are because of the context, you can read it. What does it say? "For God so loved the world." So you are automatically putting the vowels in because you can tell what it is, but imagine if you will for a moment that only that word in the letter was there, if you only saw L-V-D, you couldn't know what it was. You couldn't read it because it could be loved, but it could also be -- lived, and you just don't know. And the four words are appearing out of context. It's not a sentence. It's just four clear words. And so the question is, which words are these? And I need somebody to read this for me, and I need somebody to tell me what this means. I need both of these things.

Second thing I want to point out here, though, and it's honestly the far more important thing is I want you to pay attention to what he offers if somebody can do that. He offers three things. He says, I'll clothe them in purple. It's a sign of royal privilege because purple was the color of royalty. In Babylon, you were forbidden to wear purple unless someone who was royal had given you permission to, so it's a sign of approval. He says, I'll put a gold chain around your neck. Another sign of privilege from the kings. Then he says, and I'll make you the third highest ruler in the whole kingdom, which is an interesting thing to promise, right? The third highest? Why the third highest? Because Belshazzar is only the second. He can't give the second because that's his position. His father, Nabonidus is number one. He's number two, so the best he has to offer is number three, so again the author is helping us to understand, yeah, there are roots of insecurity going on here.

But honestly, what he offers for what he asks, is kind of over the top, isn't it? Just read this, interpret it, and I will do these incredible things for you. Why? Because you understand what he's saying? I need some help, but don't get it wrong. I don't need that much help because look who I am. I am still in the position to do this, and this and this. I still have the position to offer all of these things. That's who I am. Yeah, I need a little bit of help right here, but don't let my request for help make you think that I am somehow less than I actually am. What he's doing is reminding everybody of his position. An insecure person works hard to remind others of his or her position. They just do. Have you ever known anybody that they insisted on particular titles, or being treated in certain ways because they want to constantly remind everyone, this is who I am. People who dress in particular ways or drove certain kinds of cars or lived in particular neighborhoods because they wanted to make sure everybody understood, this is my position.

Some of you heard me last year, I talked at one point about an experience I had when I was in the Middle East -- not the Middle East, the Midwest is actually what I wanted. I was in the Midwest. I was there to do a wedding for a friend of mine that I disciplined all through high school and college. I was going to do music at the wedding. I came in, and I met the pastor who was going to do the wedding. I was introduced as pastor Tom. I was introduced as Craig. Nothing was said about what I do or anything. It was all fine, but as I was standing there talking to Tom, I said to him, hey, how long have you been here, Tom? He looked at me, and he lifted his finger, which has never happened to me in my entire life. He looked at me and he goes, it's Pastor Tom. I know. I was like, sorry. I'm the reverend doctor -- which I didn't say. Have you ever had the experience like after something, like that's what I should have said? I'm going to write that down and the next time --

And I would never say that because titles are not that big of a deal to me. It's why I continually tell people, hey, you don't need to call me Pastor Craig. If that's important to you, that's fine, but I'm just Craig, okay? Titles are not a big deal to me. And the thing is, when he did that, my first and immediate thought was what an arrogant person, what a prideful person, but I have since come to understand that it probably wasn't pride so much as it was what? Insecurity. Insecure people work hard to remind others of his or her position. So the king makes sure that as he requests help, nobody loses sight of the fact that I'm still the one in charge. Then all of 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. It's an interesting statement. I don't know if they were baffled about the meaning of the message. More likely in the context, they seem to be baffled by his response. Why on earth is he so upset about this? But you see, that's the fear driving it. His queen, hearing the voice of the king and his nobles, they came into the banquet hall. May the king live forever, she said. Don't be alarmed. Don't look so pale. There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him. In the time of your father he was found to have insight and intelligence and wisdom like that of the gods. Your father, or the word could be translated as your grandfather, King Nebuchadnezzar, appointed him chief of the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners. He did this because Daniel, whom the king called Belteshazzar, was found to have a keen mind and knowledge and understanding and also the ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles and solve difficult problems. Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means.

It's an interesting conversation happening here because it seems on the surface the queen has to tell Belshazzar about Daniel because doesn't know who he is, right? But that's very hard to understand. Early in the Book of Daniel, we have seen that at a certain point, Nebuchadnezzar, elevated Daniel to be the ruler of the province of Babylon, the capitol city in the surrounding lands, the very same province where Belshazzar is now ruling. How on earth is it possible that Belshazzar has no idea about his immediate predecessor in this role? That would be like Trump going, George W. Bush? Nope. Doesn't ring a bell. Never heard -- don't know what you are talking about. Like, there's no way. I think what's happening here is the queen is not so much telling him about somebody that he doesn't know as reminding him about somebody he's tried very, very hard to avoid. Belshazzar has pushed Daniel out. He's brought in a whole other group of astrologers and diviners. He's trying to push Daniel out. We see why, don't we? Do you see what the queen says about him?

Look how gifted he is. He has a keen mind. He has knowledge. He has understanding. He has the ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles

and solve difficult problems. He's good. He's really good at this. He's really gifted at this. Man, that's scary for an insecure person, right? You see insecure people perceive other's abilities as a threat. Insecure people perceive other's abilities as a threat, and so they work hard to distance themselves from those. Have you ever found yourself in a position where somebody was working hard to push you out, and your immediate thought is like, what's the deal? I bring a lot to this thing, whatever it happens to be, whether it's a neighborhood association or a business or a church or a bible study or something. I bring a lot to this. I don't know why they are trying to push me out. I'm good at this. God's gifted me -- yeah, maybe there's an insecurity issue going on there. Have you ever felt the need to do the same thing yourself?

I'm here's a powerful -- painful, but a powerful question. How do I feel about people who are good -- no, no, no. How do I feel about people that are better than me at the thing that I'm good at? How do I feel about people that are better than me at the thing that I'm good at? That can be a powerful question for ferreting out security. I was in Atlanta a couple of weeks ago. I had a chance to hear Andy Stanley preach. Andy Stanley is the pastor of North Point. He's the son of Charles Stanley, if you know that name. I heard him speak, and I was blown away. Unbelievably gifted communicator. In fact, we left, and I said to my executive team, I know God gifted me as a communicator, but he and I are not playing in the same ballpark. I said honestly, I'm not even sure we are playing the same game. He's so gifted, and actually, I had a moment of like -- joy, because I realized something had changed in my heart because I realized ten years ago I would have walked out jealous, and in envious and insecure and oh my gosh, I'm not any good, and I didn't have that, so it's nice, occasionally, to realize the Holy Spirit is accomplishing in me everything that he's promised. There's been growth.

I walked out and my primary thought was, I'm so glad he's working for the Kingdom. I'm so glad God's using him and his gift to accomplish things for God's glory. I was genuinely happy about that. Now, if you said to me, hey, we think we should bring Andy Stanley in for guest speaking, I would be like, I don't know that we need to do that. I don't know that I want to follow him the next week, so I'm not saying I'm all the way there, but when you realize I am in a place, or I have been in a place where the way I feel about somebody who is better than me at what I'm good at is not good, I don't feel good about that, that's a sign that insecurity is an issue there.

So Daniel was brought before the king, and the king said to him, are you Daniel, one of the exiles my father the king brought from Judah? It's an interesting way to begin the conversation. The queen tells him about the guy. He says go get the guy. And they bring the guy, and they say here's the guy, and he says, are you the guy? He knows he's the guy. He's putting him in his place. He's like, I don't know, I heard that you were a big deal at one point or something, gosh, I don't know. I can't quite place your face. He's putting him in his place. He says, are you one of the exiles, one of the prisoners of war that my grandfather brought from Judah? You see what he's doing? He's reminding him of his place because that's what insecure people do. They work hard to remind others about their place. I have heard, and you can almost feel and hear the snarkiness, can't you? I have heard, I feel like somebody told me at some point, I don't know, maybe the spirit of the gods is in you, and you have insight and intelligence and outstanding wisdom. The wise men and enchanters were brought before me to read this writing and tell me what it mean, but they couldn't explain it. Now I have heard that you are able to give interpretations and to solve difficult problems.

If you can -- if you can -- if you can read this writing, tell me what it means, you will be clothed in purple, you will have a gold chain placed around your neck, and you will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom. He keeps coming back to it, right? Yeah, yeah, I need a little bit of help with this little problem, but don't forget who I am. I don't need that much help. Got to make sure that, that gets communicated. 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.

Whoa. That's bold, right? King-- I need a little bit of help, tiny little issue -- maybe I have heard -- but here's what I will do, so you know who I am, and Daniel goes, yeah, just keep it. Not impressed. Don't need it, which is real saying, I'm not impressed by you. By basically despising the gifts, he's disrespecting the king. He is. He's not impressed by him. But I'll interpret it. I'll do what you want. Before I do, I would like to tell you a story. It's a story that I feel like you might have heard at some point in your life. Your Majesty, the Most High God gave your grandfather Nebuchadnezzar sovereignty and greatness and glory and splendor. Because of the high position he gave him, all of the nations and peoples of every language dreaded and feared him. Those the king wanted to put to death, he put to death. Those he wanted to spare, he spared. Those he wanted to promote, he promoted, and those he wanted to humble, he humbled. But when his heart became arrogant and hardened with pride, he was deposed from the royal throne and stripped of his glory. He was driven away from people and given the mind of an animal. He lived with the wild donkeys and ate grass like the ox, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until he acknowledged that the Most High God is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and sets over them anyone he wishes.

Remember that story? But you -- but you, Belshazzar his son or grandson, you have not humbled yourself, though you knew all of this. I know you know this story. Instead, you have set yourself up against The Lord of heaven. You had the goblets from his temple brought to you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines drank wine from them. You praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand. But you did not honor the God who holds in His hand your life and all your ways. And therefore, He sent the hand that wrote the inscription. This is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN. I have read them for you. Now I will tell you what they mean. MENE: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end. It's over. TEKEL: You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting. PERES: Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.

I mean the message is pretty simple. He says there are four words, and those four words deliver a verdict and a sentence. He says MENE twice

it said so there is no question. This is not an option. This is not something that might happen. This is a done deal. He says MENE, your days have been numbered. You know, we use this phrase "the writing's on the wall" to say that the end is inevitable? That's what he's saying. Why? TEKEL: Because you have been weighed and found wanting. You didn't learn the lesson that your grandfather had to learn which we saw last week as we worked through that story that God loans us power so that we can do what? So that we can do good for others. You haven't learned that lesson. You have been found wanting in the use of your power. Therefore, PERES. And you might wonder why it switched from PARSIN to PERES? PERES is the present tense form of PARSIN. PARSIN means divided, and what Daniel says, your kingdom is divided. It's happening right now. It's not just something that's going to happen in the distant future. It is not only inevitable, it is imminent. It's taking place right now. Here's the thing, what should Belshazzar have done with Daniel at this point?

What should happen to Daniel? He should die. He absolutely should. Look what he's done. He has publicly rebuked the king. He has called the king arrogant. He's used that word. He's called the king arrogant. He's called the king ignorant. He's told him a story as though he were a small child, and then said, and yeah, yeah, you knew all of this, so he's called him ignorant, and he's called him a fool because you didn't learn the lesson, and he's publicly declared that his kingdom is about to come to an end. Everything about that demand that Daniel die, but look what happens next. Then at Belshazzar's command, Daniel was clothed in purple, a gold chain was placed around his neck, and he was proclaimed the third highest ruler in the kingdom. What? I mean, Daniel virtually dared him to do that, right? He said your grandfather killed anyone he wanted killed. He's basically like, come at me. I'm going to give you every reason to do it, and what does Belshazzar do? He's like, no, I'm going to clothe you in purple, put a gold chain around your neck and get you into the position of the third highest ruler of the kingdom. What? Apparently, Belshazzar is a man of incredible integrity, right? No? He's probably finding himself in a dilemma.

He wants to kill Daniel, but he made this promise in front of all of these people, and he doesn't know what to do now. At the end of the day what wins out is what usually wins out for insecure people is that insecure people are driven by what others think of them. That's what makes the decision. I wrestle with this every day. People come to me and say our church should be doing this. Our church should not be doing this. We need to do this different. We should think about doing this. There is a part of me that goes, maybe I need to do that? I need to do that. And the thing is, they are not necessarily things that I go, that's what God's calling me to. That's our sense of vision and the next step. It's a temptation to be driven by, I want those people to be happy with me. I want those people to be onboard with me. I want them to like me. There is a tremendous temptation to make decisions based on what others think, but if we live that way, what happens is we go off mission. We don't obey the leading of the Holy Spirit. We don't obey the vision God has placed in our hearts. We don't take advantage of the opportunities that God's calling us to because we're driven by what others think rather than what God is calling us to.

That is a tremendous danger of insecurity. Then that very night, Belshazzar king of the Babylonians was slain and Darius, the Mede took over the kingdom at the age of 62. It happened that very day. It was not only inevitable, it was in fact imminent, and here again we see this theme that we have seen throughout the Book of Daniel. God rebukes arrogance, and he rewards humility. Which says that, of course, what we have to do is we have to reject arrogance, and we have to pursue humility, right? But what we find in this story is something that rocked my world this week because what I began to see in the story was a lesson that God was teaching about what it actually looks like to pursue humility. Because I was given a new understanding of arrogance. See in my mind, arrogance is pride, right? Arrogance is pride. It's thinking as we said last week as we looked at Nebuchadnezzar, a man full of pride, that arrogance means thinking, I'm all that and a bag of chips, right?

That makes sense. Arrogance and pride. They are synonyms. They are the same thing, but I find myself struggling here because it's very clear that Belshazzar is an arrogant man. Daniel uses that word, and yet, insecurity seems to leap off the page through every step in the story, and I found myself saying, God, did I miss it? Like, am I reading insecurity into this? Am I imposing that on your word rather than seeing it? I'm not infallible. Maybe I'm doing that. Maybe I'm misinterpreting this, but gosh, the insecurity just seems to leap off the page over and over and over again, but I don't get it. How can you be insecure and arrogant, and I had this lightbulb moment where I think the Holy Spirit showed me something, and it's this. Pride isn't arrogance. It might lead to it, but pride is not arrogance itself because arrogance isn't just thinking I'm all that and a bag of chips. Arrogance isn't just thinking I'm all that. Here's the thing, arrogance is the obsession with self. You hear me? That's what arrogance is. It's the obsession with self. It's the obsession that says it's really all about me. Everything is through the lens of me. Every decision is filtered through the way it impacts me, and the way people think about me, and it's all about me.

And yes, pride is absolutely one way to get to that place of self-obsession, but there's another, honestly more common way for people to get to that same obsession with self. What is it? It's insecurity. Insecurity will lead you to an obsession with self every bit as certainly as pride will. There's two different prides. There's two different roads that leads to self-obsession, pride and insecurity. Pride says, I'm so good, and it's all about me. Insecurity says, I'm no good, but that sense of insecurity makes it all about me too, and it drives everything, and the reality is, God doesn't want us thinking I'm so good, and He doesn't want us thinking I'm no good. He doesn't really want us thinking about ourselves at all because the more we think about ourselves, the more we spend time thinking about ourselves, the less time we spend on mission. You understand that God made you for a purpose. God has a plan for you. In some sense, it's a big overarching plan. You were made as the image of God.

You were made to represent God and creation to be His hands and feet to accomplish in the world all of the purposes that He has. That's a big picture mission. The more time you spend thinking about yourself, the less time you are gonna spend on mission. But it's also true on a very small microscale. Every moment of every day the more time we spend obsessed on ourselves; fixated on ourselves, the less time we spend on mission. The Book of Ephesians, I love the way this is said, for we are God's handy work. We are God's handy work created in Christ Jesus to

do good works, to do good things, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Every moment of your day God has a mission for you. God has conversations. God has opportunities, God has things for you to do, and the more time we spend obsessing over the self, the less time we spend on mission. The more time we spend thinking about self, the less time we spend doing what Jesus modeled for us, right?

We say this over and over again, Jesus said I did not come to be served but to what? To serve, to give myself as a ransom for many, which means that he wasn't going, I'm so good. I can't do that. No, he didn't say that. He was willing to humble himself. Nor did he spend any time going, I'm no good because he wasn't thinking about himself at all. He was thinking about you. He was thinking about me. He was thinking about us. He was on mission because he wasn't obsessed with himself. We are called to do the same thing. So here's your big take away. Nebuchadnezzar taught us that we need to set aside pride because it will lead to arrogance, to self-obsession. Belshazzar teaches that we need to set aside insecurity because it will lead to self objection just as inevitably. Here's your big take away. We thrive. We thrive as God's people when we refuse to let insecurity take us off mission. I feel like at this point I need like another 30 minutes. It's not going to happen, but I'm actually thinking maybe there's a series coming this fall when we talk about what it means to overcome insecurity by establishing your identity in your relationship to Jesus, because you have to understand this. Your identity needs to be rooted in the fact that God loves you.

He loves you enough to send His Son to die for you. He loves you enough to pour new life into you that starts now and goes on for all eternity by the resurrection of Jesus. He loves you, and He's equipped you for every good work He's given you in the Spirit that comes into you in the moment you receive Jesus, He's given you everything you need to be everything He's called you to be. That needs to be your identity. That's how we begin to replace insecurity. I need to unpack that, so I think there's probably a series coming where we do that. There's another way to deal with insecurity. It's a little bit easier to get a handle on quickly, so it's just this. We just starve it. We just refuse to let it have power in our lives. And as we refuse to let it take us off mission, it begins to shrivel. I want you to do three things for me. The first thing is this. I want you to identify one big area of security. Find one big area of insecurity, and you may automatically know what it is, or you may need to ask someone what it is. That's a painful thing to do, but it's a necessary part identifying insecurity is a necessary part to arresting its power to take us off mission, so you may need to ask somebody.

Driving home last night my youngest daughter and I were talking about this, and I said what do you feel your big area of insecurity is. She paused and said, I'm not quite sure. What do you think? I said, whoa. Awesome. I have 12 things I have been -- no, not at all, but that was an incredibly humble response to ask that question. You need to ask that question if you are not already aware, but identify one big area of insecurity. The second thing I want you to do is I want you to confess that insecurity. Call it what it is. Identify it to God. Say I see it for what it is. I see its power to take me off mission. Would you forgive me for it? He absolutely will. Say would you begin choking its power? Then the third thing, cooperate with him by doing this, commit to refusing to let that insecurity to take you off mission for 21 days. I say 21 days because psychologists have identified 21 as kind of a significant number. If you can create a habit, if you can do something for 21 days, it becomes a habit for you. You see the insecurity. You see the ways that it's taking you off mission, and the things that God has called you to do. You just go, I see it. I feel the temptation, but I'm not going to give into it. I'm just not going to let it happen. I still feel it, but I'm not going to let it take me off mission. You do that for 21 days, and you are going to find that insecurity loses its hold on you. We thrive when we refuse to let insecurity take us off mission, and you have a mission. God has a purpose and plan for your life. Let's not allow insecurity to keep us from living our mission. Would you pray with me?

Lord, thank you for Your love for us. Thank You that in Your love for us, and in the power of Your Holy Spirit You have given us all that we need to be everything that You have called us to be. Lord, we confess that we don't always feel like that's the case. We feel insecurity in a lot of areas, and that insecurity has tremendous power to take us off mission. Forgive us for that. Help us to identify those things, and simply to refuse to let that insecurity have power in our lives so that we can live on mission, we can bring You glory, and we can do good for others. In Jesus' name, amen.