

November 14, 2022

## PrayerCast

As you enter this time of reflection and prayer, slow your thoughts and work to stop the world around you. The Word teaches us to “Take every thought captive”. So, take those racing thoughts and set them aside. Lay them down. You will be able to pick up your thoughts again soon. But in this time, in these moments of right NOW, belong only to your Father. Turn your mind toward Him, encounter your God and center yourself in His peace.

*(Pause for a moment to breathe and center yourself in His peace)*

We are currently moving through a sermon series based in the book of Daniel that focuses on paying attention to the movements of God in Daniel’s life and in scripture, equipping us to better see how God still moves in our lives today. We have also been focusing on BLESS 217. BLESS is an acronym, that gives us simple ways to bless those around us, in our community. They stand for:

- Begin with Prayer. Pray for the people in your life and the places that you’re in.
- Listen. Listen to and discover the needs of others and the places where God is at work.
- Eat. Share meals and spend time with the people in your life.
- Serve. Respond to the needs of others and help them in practical and impactful ways.
- Story. Share the story of Jesus and what He is doing in your life with others.

These next few weeks, we are focusing on Listening. Let’s contemplate this further as we move to our scripture for the day. Daniel chapter 3 is the famous story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

*(Pause for a moment and reflect)*

<sup>8</sup> At this time some astrologers<sup>b</sup> came forward and denounced the Jews. <sup>9</sup> They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “May the king live forever! <sup>10</sup> Your Majesty has issued a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music must fall down and worship the image of gold, <sup>11</sup> and that whoever does not fall down and worship will be thrown into a blazing furnace. <sup>12</sup> But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up.”

<sup>13</sup> Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, <sup>14</sup> and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? <sup>15</sup> Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?”

<sup>16</sup> 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<sup>d</sup> 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.”

*(Pause for a moment and reflect)*

Let's read that last portion again but in the Message version.

**16-18** Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered King Nebuchadnezzar, "Your threat means nothing to us. If you throw us in the fire, the God we serve can rescue us from your roaring furnace and anything else you might cook up, O king. But even if he doesn't, it wouldn't make a bit of difference, O king. We still wouldn't serve your gods or worship the gold statue you set up." (Message Version)

Where does this type of confidence come from?

*(Pause for a moment and reflect)*

Where does this type of confidence come from? It comes from orienting our lives around seeking the presence of God. Something these men in an exiled land far from home would have had to fight for. I don't know about you, but whenever I've traveled or lived overseas or in a different cultural context my brain and body have to work extra hard to keep up with the new environment. Paying extra attention and putting all my mental energy into the pursuit of navigating a normal day. It requires a reorientation of focus. These three men had to work extra hard simply to preserve their customs, practices, faith, and to even merely survive in this foreign environment. **They had to build their lives around paying attention to God.**

So, when the king asks, "Who is the king who can rescue you from my power?!" They could answer with boldness and confidence. Confidence not in the guaranteed outcome of their rescue – but in God. Period. "Do what you will to our bodies, but we will not worship your idols. For our God alone is worthy of our devotion."

Do you have confidence in God that is so bold?

*(Pause for a moment and reflect)*

The reality for most of us is not as dire as this life and death situation. But, what would this type of boldness rooted in the confidence in the goodness and beauty of God look like in our daily lives and in our interactions with our unbelieving friends?

Maybe we would boldly pray for those we know need the love and life of Jesus in their lives.

Maybe we would boldly step out of our normal routine and comfort zone to meet new people who are different from us.

Maybe we would be bold enough to throw out the lies of perfection and lack and the temptation toward performance and invite someone to share a meal in our home even if our house is dirty, our kids are picky, and we eat off paper plates.

Maybe we would be bold enough to push aside the fear and step into hard conversations with those we love but disagree with.

Maybe we would have the courage to share how we see God moving in our right now life – even if we don't fully understand or have all the answers.

Maybe we would have the courage to serve those right around us in a way they desperately need that will cost us something.

*(Pause for a moment and reflect)*

When we orient our days around paying attention to the movements of God, when we regularly pause to reflect on His presence with us – noticing both the big and the small ways He provides, cares, comforts, and protects us, we realize nothing else is worthy of our worship and devotion. We can walk with the grace and confidence that says, “Even if not, He is still good.”

As we listen and devote ourselves to the presence of God with us, we are better suited to listen to and pay attention to those around us. As Brian stated so perfectly in a recent sermon, “Listening to God can change the way we see what’s happening around us.”

*(Pause for a moment and reflect)*

So, as we shift our focus to listening in our BLESS 217 journey, let us first quiet our minds and bodies and train them to listen for the movements of God in our everyday life. A helpful and simple practice to implement on a regular basis is this:

On a piece of paper or mentally write out the numbers

5, 4, 3, 2, and 1.

Next to the 5 write or notice five things you can see in your immediate surroundings.

Next to the 4 write or notice four things you can hear.

Next to the 3 write or notice three things you can feel.

Next to the 2 write or notice two things you can smell.

Next to the 1 write or notice one thing you can taste.

Breathe deeply and thank God for these things and for His presence with you in this moment. Ground yourself in His goodness and beauty.

*“Jesus, we pause now in this moment and give all devotion to you. Open our eyes, open our ears, open our hands to receive the gift of your presence. May we see, hear, feel, and experience your beauty and your goodness in such a way that grows boldness and confidence. Deepen our trust and dependance on you so that in all ways we are open to listen to the lives and needs of those whom you’ve placed in our path to love.” Amen*