

## A Core Practice: Relinquishment

*The Spirit teaches me to yield my will entirely to the will of the Father.*

—Andrew Murray

Richard Foster in **Prayer** writes that relinquishment “means freedom from the self-sins: self-sufficiency, self-pity, self-absorption, self-abuse, self-aggrandizement, self-castigation, self-deception, self-exaltation, self-depreciation, self-indulgence, self-hatred... It means freedom from the everlasting burden of having to get our own way. It means freedom to care for others to genuinely put their needs first, to give joyfully and freely (p. 54).

### Practice

Using any of the gospels go with Jesus into the Garden. Stay awake and watch. See his sorrowing soul. Let your heart be saddened too. Struggle with him in seeking other options, hoping to avoid the cup. Now, speak his words as your own: “Not my will but yours be done.” Invite the resurrected one to interpret the words into your life, your family, your call.

### A Prayer of Relinquishment

Today, O Lord, I yield myself to you.

May your will be my delight.

May your way have perfect sway in me.

May your love be the pattern of my living.

I surrender to you: my hopes, my dreams, my ambitions.

Do with them what your will, when you will, as you will.

I place into your loving care: my family, my friends, my future.

Care for them with a care that I can never give.

I release into your hands:

my need to control, my craving for status, my fear of obscurity.

Eradicate the evil, purify the good, and establish your kingdom on earth.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.

—Richard Foster

# The Year of Daniel

## Chapter Four

### Chapter Outline

4:1-3	Nebuchadnezzar's Decree to Praise God
4:4-18	Report of the Dream
4:19-27	Interpretation of the Dream
4:28-33	Fulfillment of the Dream
4:34-37	Healing and Doxology

### Memory Verse (Daniel 4:37)

And those who walk in pride, God is able to humble.

### Related Texts

- Unless the Lord builds the house (Psalm 127)
- Not my will, but yours be done (Luke 22:39-46)
- Keep our eyes on Jesus (Hebrews 12:2)
- Humble ourselves (I Peter 5:6)



William Blake, Nebuchadnezzar

## Humiliation or Humility

Once again in chapter four, we are reminded that God is in control. God is sovereign and it is God's choice as to who prospers and when. The chapter opens with Nebuchadnezzar "at home in his palace, contented and prosperous" (4:4). Until the time of his humiliation, he does not understand that God is the source of all that he is and has.

The word translated "contented" in verse 4:4 comes from the Aramaic *seleh* meaning "at rest". In its original form, it conveys a sense of security. For Nebuchadnezzar that sense of security was grounded in wealth and the things of this world. Things he lost through his pride as he became like a wild animal (see 4:23, 31-33). As Christians, we know that the things of this world offer, at best, a false and fleeting sense of security. Yet, like Nebuchadnezzar it is easy to confuse prosperity with the true security that can only be found in God.

Daniel provides us with wise counsel: "Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue" (4:27). But Nebuchadnezzar's pride became his downfall and his judgment unavoidable. As one commentator notes: "A man who thinks he is like a god must become a beast to learn he is only a human being" (Fewell, Circle of Sovereignty, p. 101).

It is important for us to pause here and remember that pride is not a circumstance; it is a state of mind. For us, spiritual pride may well be a greater snare than possessions. How easy it is for humility to turn into pride after a "successful fast" or instance of "sacrificial giving." But, unlike Nebuchadnezzar, we have the model that God provides for us in Christ Jesus "who, being the very nature of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death — even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:5-8).

Kenosis — emptying of self — is at the heart of Jesus' Incarnation and God's call to us as disciple-making leaders. Just as "the Son of God empties himself of prerogative, of divine rights, of status and reputation, in order to be the one whom God uses to fill up creation and creatures with the glory of salvation, so we must empty ourselves that God might use us" (Eugene Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor*, p. 102).

Of what are we being called to empty ourselves? As we seek to heed God's missional call anew, are there things that we need to renounce? If a spiritual audit were to be taken of our actions, would it reflect "kindness to the afflicted"? In the end, who is glorified by our actions? Do we point to God in Christ or do we point back to ourselves?

One final thought. The original word for "renounce" (*peruq*) can be translated "break off sins." It brings to mind the need for pruning. There are times when things don't simply need to be moderated, but broken off... ended. Daniel's advice to Nebuchadnezzar was to "break off" what he was doing by doing what was right. In the words of Isaiah he was to "stop doing wrong, (and) learn to do right" (1:16-17). Simply stopping bad habits is not enough. They must be replaced with good habits. Ephesians 5:18 call us to "be filled with the Spirit."

### Questions for Reflection

1. Read Daniel 4:4. How does our culture define "contented and prosperous"? How would a Christian definition of "success" differ from that of Nebuchadnezzar?
2. What role does pride play in Nebuchadnezzar's understanding of himself? How do you get snared by pride?
3. What did Daniel advise Nebuchadnezzar to do in verse 27? How might Daniel's advice provide direction in your own life and that of your congregation?