

## SERIES: UNSHAKABLE HOPE IN A SHAKEN WORLD

## PART 7: THE LESSON OF TEACHABILITY

You will find in your bulletin this morning's teaching notes. Today is the last teaching in our series UNSHAKABLE HOPE IN A SHAKEN WORLD. We have been looking at the Prophet Daniel's life, who lived about 2500 years ago. At fifteen years of age, he was taken as a prisoner of war to the Babylonian Empire along with about 25% of the Jewish nation.

I don't have time to review all of what's happened in Daniel's life, but we're in chapter 5 today. King Nebuchadnezzar, who was the most famous Babylonian king, is now dead. One of his crowning achievements was the hanging gardens of Babylon. He reigned for 45 years. And now a man named Belshazzar is the king. Belshazzar was a horrific leader. He was a party boy. He was a spoiled royal brat. His favorite thing to do was to drink alcohol and party with his friends. The two biggest enemies at that time of Babylon were the Medes and the Persians. They joined together, Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Great, and they came to besiege this great walled city of Babylon. Babylon was known to be one of the safest cities in the known world. The Euphrates River ran through it. It had walls 50 to 80 feet in depth. It looked impenetrable. Please follow along as I read the first 5 verses of Daniel to set the context for today as we look at Daniel's life and the kings' lives he served and learn a few lessons about the importance of being teachable. **"Many years later King Belshazzar gave a feast for 1,000 of his nobles, and he drank wine with them. 2 While Belshazzar was drinking the wine, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver cups that his predecessor, Nebuchadnezzar, had taken from the temple in Jerusalem. He wanted to drink from them with his nobles, his wives, and his concubines. 3 So they brought these gold cups taken from the Temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his nobles, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. 4 While they drank from them they praised their idols made of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. 5 Suddenly, they saw the fingers of a human hand writing on the plaster wall of the king's palace near the lamp stand. The king himself saw the hand as it wrote, 6 and his face turned pale with fright. His knees**

**knocked together in fear and his legs gave way beneath him.”**

First we see the irreverence and contempt that Belshazzar demonstrates by taking gold and silver cups from the temple in Jerusalem. If you read this text carefully you notice that the author mentioned that the cups were no ordinary cups. But they had been made holy by their use in God’s Temple, and they were only to be used as worship to the God of the Bible. Belshazzar’s lack of reverence is a warning of the dire consequences. Even Nebuchadnezzar knew better than to use these cups. Belshazzar did not learn from the leaders before him. Belshazzar combines idolatry to his own shame. He uses God’s holy goblets to toast the lifeless idols of his own religion. Tremper Longman writes, **“He spits in God’s eye, as it were, and then he goes over to a statue that he himself has created and expects that lifeless hunk to protect him from what is to come.”**

In the midst of their drunken party, all of a sudden they see the fingers of a human hand writing words on the plaster wall. The early readers would surely understand that this is the hand of God. Belshazzar, as a polytheist--meaning he worshiped many gods--most likely would have seen the hand as controlled by any of a number of different divinities. He suspects that the mysterious handwriting has a message that intends calamity toward him. His reaction is shock and utter fright. Longman writes, **“He is in extreme distress, perhaps even implying by the last clause that he has lost control of his most basic bodily functions, which has undermined his posture of composure.”** This helps set the context so we can learn how to become a learner like Daniel.

## **I. Make a commitment to never stop learning**

To allow God to use us to advance His mission and purposes in the earth through our lives, it is imperative that you and I make a commitment to never stop learning. Back in Daniel 1:20, the Bible says, **“Whenever the king consulted them in any matter requiring wisdom and balanced judgment, he found them ten times more capable than any of the magicians and enchanters in his entire kingdom.”** What is amazing, church, is that Daniel and his three friends were most likely employed in Nebuchadnezzar’s court at

the age of 17. Daniel is now 80 years old. 63 years and five kings later Daniel is called upon again. Please hear me. What has he been doing for 63 years? He made a commitment to His God to never stop learning. He was a worshipper of the living God which inclined him to continue to learn, grow, mature, and develop so he could contribute to God's Kingdom as much as possible. Proverbs 23:12 says, "**Commit yourself to instruction; listen carefully to words of knowledge.**" Have you made this commitment to God and to yourself? Did you know that your education doesn't end once you graduate? I've actually heard people say, "I'm glad I've finished my education so now I can start my career." I always want to say, "Friend, you're never going to finish your education. The rest of your life, you're to be in education mode. There are lots of things God wants to teach you that you have not learned yet." Learning is not a stage of life; learning is your life. Learning, if you are a Christ follower, is to be your lifestyle. God wants you to learn something every day. What new skill are you working on right now that you didn't have last year? What new skill next year are you going to work on that you don't have today? Will you be any different next year? Next month? Are you getting better? Are you getting stronger? Will you know more? Are you going to be wiser? Lifelong learning is actually the key to being a leader. All leaders are learners. The moment you stop learning, you stop leading. Regardless of your role in life, you're a leader, because a leader is simply an influencer. You are to influence people in all 7 areas of **SERFVIP**. This acronym stands for the 7 key areas of your life: your **Spiritual, Emotional, Relational, Financial, Vocational, Intellectual, and your Physical**. Why are we not to stop learning? The Bible says when you keep learning it will bring you success, profit and health. Ecclesiastes 10:10 "**Using a dull ax requires great strength, so sharpen the blade. That's the value of wisdom; it helps you succeed.**" In other words, God is saying to us in this verse and through Daniel's life that trying to do anything without the necessary skills or tools is like chopping wood with a dull ax. If your tool is dull, you should sharpen it to do a better job. Similarly, if you lack skills, you should sharpen them through training and practice. Sharpening the blade means recognizing where a problem exists, acquiring or honing the skills or tools to do the job better, and then going and doing it. Church, in this year of hope we're to find out the areas of our lives where our ax is dull, and sharpen our skills so we can be more effective for God's work. Notice this

verse doesn't say anything about prayer or desire. You can pray all you want and have all the desire you want, but if you don't have the skills necessary, you're not going to be as successful as you could be. I know a lot of people who have a deep desire to be a success and the desire to grow, but they're not willing to learn the skills necessary to do so--to go back to school or to read a book, listen to an audio book, go to a seminar, or ask someone to mentor them in an area of need. Skill, the Bible says, brings success. Proverbs 19:8 says, **"To acquire wisdom is to love oneself; people who cherish understanding will prosper."** I have learned this over the years. Humility asks questions. Pride says, "I don't need to ask questions," or "I don't want to because I'll look dumb." But here's the thing, loved ones, there are no dumb questions. The dumb thing is not to ask questions. Proverbs 20:5 says, **"Though good advice lies deep within the heart, a person with understanding will draw it out."** Daniel was a man of deep understanding. How do you draw out the wisdom that lies deep in another person? You ask them questions. I always have two questions in the back of my mind when I am talking to someone. The first is, **"How can I help this person? How can I serve this person? Is there anything I can do to assist this person?"** Why? Because Jesus put me and you here to serve, not to be served. The 2<sup>nd</sup> question is, **"What do they know that I don't know?"** I ask my questions, and then pay attention to what they're saying. Sometimes when I am talking to someone I can tell they already have a conversation going in their head, and they're not listening to me. If you're going to ask someone so you can learn from them, then pay attention. God says through Daniel's life and God's word to make a commitment to never stop learning.

## II. Learn the lessons of the prior generations

Follow along as I read Daniel 5:10-12: **"But when the queen mother heard what was happening, she hurried to the banquet hall. She said to Belshazzar, 'Long live the king! Don't be so pale and frightened. 11 There is a man in your kingdom who has with him the spirit of the holy gods. During Nebuchadnezzar's reign, this man was found to have insight, understanding, and wisdom like that of the gods. Your predecessor, the king--your predecessor King Nebuchadnezzar--made him chief over all**

**the magicians, enchanters, astrologers, and fortune-tellers of Babylon. 12 This man Daniel, whom the king named Belshazzar, has exceptional ability and is filled with divine knowledge and understanding. He can interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve difficult problems. Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means.’”** This is a major lesson from this biblical story. This is the mistake Belshazzar made, and it cost him his life and his kingdom. The sad thing is that he could have learned the lessons that would have prevented his kingdom from being overthrown. His predecessor Nebuchadnezzar had made these mistakes. But the difference between these two kings, with Belshazzar being the lesser of the two men, is that in his arrogance he refused to humble himself. Even though Nebuchadnezzar was incredibly arrogant when God confronted him he did repent, but not Belshazzar. He didn't listen. He didn't learn from the past and as a result he lost it all. Please hear me. God is shouting to us today, CVCHURCH, **“Learn the lessons from the past generations.”**

Belshazzar refused to learn from Daniel's past influence. Longman observes that a closer reading of the text reveals a condescending attitude by Belshazzar toward this man who played such a significant role in Nebuchadnezzar's life, a role concerning which he is fully aware of. What is it from your own parents, siblings and grandparents do you need to learn? What are the generational sins that have been passed down your own generational lines that you can go, “I want to emulate those attitudes, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, and I want to make sure I stay away from these behaviors.” If you have alcoholism, drug addiction, sex addiction, anger, hostility, physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual abuse in your family, let me tell you, if you don't figure out what drove them, you're going to be in the dark of how those attitudes and behaviors drive and motivate you. One of the most glaring dysfunctions that I grew up with was our attitude towards food. I learned that sugar and salt are an easy way to make food taste the way I want it to. At a very young age I learned that 8 teaspoons of sugar made an 8 ounce glass of tea more palatable than say 1. At an early age I got myself into health problems because of the way I thought about food and ate. Also, I have dealt with a deep-seated sense of shame and powerlessness that came from my family. Then I would be made fun of and ridiculed for how this family dynamic and process shaped and

formed my family. It has taken a lot of talking with others, counsel, reading of books, and going to seminars, and getting my masters in marriage and family to turn things around. I have had to learn from the lessons of past generations the good, the bad and the ugly. It is foolish not to learn from the past and model those who have good habits and learn from the negative things you grew up with. One of the most important lessons you and I can ever learn is to learn how to forgive in such a deep way so that you don't destroy your life with resentment, anger, bitterness, narrow mindedness, arrogance, pride, blaming others for your own issues. We must learn lessons from the prior generation. Model their successes and learn from their failures.

### III. Maintain a humble attitude that honors God

Loved friends, maintain throughout the entirety of your life a humble attitude that honors, values and respects God. The Bible teaches us that humility and teachability go hand in hand. Someone who is arrogant and proud will not be open to other people's input, and they are not teachable. The Bible says the more humble you are the less you'll stumble. Proverbs 16:18 in the Aramaic in plain English says, "**Disgrace is before ruin and pride of spirit leads to misfortune.**" The NLT says, "**Pride goes before destruction, and haughtiness before a fall.**" Humility begins by simply realizing you're not God. If you ever get under stress repeat this three times: **God is God, and I'm not. God is God, and I'm not. God is God, and I'm not.** When you come to the realization that you are not God--the universe does not revolve around you, then you can turn to Him more quickly, and ask Him to intervene in your life. This is humility. Proverbs 15:33 says, "**Fear (reverence) of the Lord teaches wisdom; humility precedes honor.**" You want to start out with a lifelong goal of being wise. Get to know God better every day by reading through our bookmark with us every day. Pray. Journal. Get into a small group. Engage in our Life Development process, and you will simply become, day-by-day, a wiser person if you respond to God's truth and love Him and love others. You will be wiser in relationships. You'll be wiser in the way you manage your money. You'll be wiser in handling conflict. You'll be wiser in diffusing problems. One of the first steps of humility God wants you to take--once you repent of your sins and confess Jesus Christ as your Lord, Savior and

Leader--is to get water baptized. The Bible says that baptism is your public identification with Jesus Christ. You say to Jesus and to the local church that you have decided to follow Jesus. Romans 6:4 says you're identifying with Jesus in His life, death, burial, and resurrection. Galatians 3:27 says, "**And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes.**" In humility we identify with Christ's burial and resurrection, and we put Him on so He becomes the clothes we wear. James 4:6 says, "As the Scriptures say, '**God opposes the proud but favors the humble.**'"

#### IV. Put into practice what I have already learned

Daniel seemed to respect Nebuchadnezzar more than he did Belshazzar simply because Nebuchadnezzar demonstrated that he could repent, and God restored him to his sanity and to his kingdom. But not so for Belshazzar. In verse 14 the king says, "I have heard that you have the spirit of the gods." He is not saying that he believes that Daniel did all that history recorded of him. Vs. 16 "I am told you can give interpretations." He tells Daniel, "If you can read these mysterious words on the wall, I will give you purple robes of royal honor, and you will have a gold chain placed around your neck. You will become the third highest ruler in the kingdom." I love Daniel's response. Please follow along as I read from Daniel 5:17-31 "**Daniel answered the king, 'Keep your gifts or give them to someone else, but I will tell you what the writing means. 18 Your Majesty, the Most High God gave sovereignty, majesty, glory, and honor to your predecessor, Nebuchadnezzar. 19 He made him so great the people of all races and nations and languages trembled before him in fear. He killed those he wanted to kill and spared those he wanted to spare. He honored those he wanted to honor and disgraced those he wanted to disgrace. 20 But when his heart and mind were puffed up with arrogance, he was brought down from his royal throne and stripped of his glory. 21 He was driven from human society. He was given the mind of a wild animal, and he lived among the wild donkeys. He ate grass like a cow, and he was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he learned that the Most High God rules over the kingdoms of the world and appoints anyone He desires to rule over them. 22 You are his successor,**

**O Belshazzar, and you knew all this, yet you have not humbled yourself. 23 For you have proudly defied the Lord of heaven and have had these cups from His Temple brought before you. You and your nobles and your wives and concubines have been drinking wine from them while praising gods of silver, gold, bronze, iron, wood, and stone-gods that neither see nor hear nor know anything at all. But you have not honored the God who gives you the breath of life and controls your destiny! 24 So God has sent this hand to write this message. This is the message that was written: Mene, Mene, Tekel, and Parsin. This is what these words mean: Mene means “numbered”--God has numbered the days of your reign and has brought it to an end. 27 Tekel means “weighed”--you have been weighed on the balances and have not measured up. 28 Parsin means “divided”--your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians.’ 29 Then at Belshazzar’s command, Daniel was dressed in purple robes, a gold chain was hung around his neck, and he was proclaimed the third highest ruler in kingdom. 30 That very night Belshazzar, the Babylonian king, was killed. 31 And Darius the Mede took over the kingdom at the age of sixty-two.”** As I close this morning, I feel a very strong urging from God’s Holy Spirit to say to you this morning, (afternoon,) “What is it that you know to be doing, but in your own arrogance, pride, shame, humiliation, or failure you have chosen not to obey what God has taught you. You know to read God’s Word every day, but for whatever reasons you choose not to. You know to pray and to keep in close contact with God, but you have chosen to do other things. If you have been in this church for a while, you know to go to LD 101 and become a member of this church family. If you have become a member, then you know to go to LD 201 where you learn to commit to your own spiritual growth. Once you have done that, you know to go to 301 so that you can learn and identify your God-given shape so you can enter into the ministry of serving and laying down your life for Jesus by laying it down for others. If you have gone to 301 and signed the ministry covenant, then you know to go to LD 401 so you can learn that you have been called to join Jesus in His mission, which is to see as many people respond to His love as possible. I am amazed, loved ones, at how many of us have stopped at LD 201 or 301. There are a good percentage of us who flat out refuse to go to 401. I suspect at the bottom of it all there is past hurt, shame, humiliation, and fear. I

understand that. But God's Word tells us to put into practice what we have learned. If you have been at CVCHURCH for more than 3 months, you have learned a lot. Question is, are you acting on what you know? James 1:22 says, **"But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourself."** You see, this is exactly what King Belshazzar did. For many of us who call CVCHURCH your home church, you know the Bible instructs us to give 10% of what He allows us to have to your church where you receive so much. I am amazed at the people who have come to this church family and have had their lives revolutionized, and they might give some small amount, but they don't obey God's Word about giving 10% to your local church so that your church family can do all that God has called us to do. This is part of what it means to be a member of this fellowship. The word Koinonia is translated fellowship, but it means to participate. To truly have fellowship with each other here, we need to be willing to participate in the full life of this church family. Go through the four bases of our LD. Become a part of a small group. Find your ministry here and serve God by serving others. Contribute financially through your tithe and offering to your church family. This is truly going to be the year of Hope for every one of us who is willing to learn the lessons of teachability. I want to encourage you to invite as many of your family and friends to our 6<sup>th</sup> annual Easter Egg Hunt. We had 1500 last year, and we believe for 1700 this year. Then please join us in praying for who you can bring to one of our three Easter Services next Sunday. We had 557 last year, and we believe for 625 this year. If you would like to be a part of our Parking Team, please contact Scott Alvarez. I could tell you many stories of just how important it is to have a lively, friendly servant-hearted person who truly desires to help you find a parking spot. Last week we had 433 people in just two services. One gal who was in her late 20's found us on Yelp and decided to attend. When she got here she noticed that all of our parking spots were taken. She decided that maybe she would just leave. I can't tell you how many times I believe that has happened. I haven't gotten the full story, but she must have found a parking spot on the street somewhere and decided to come and join us. She said to one of you who befriended her that she liked it, and she will come back. This is how we grow. It's not just having people come, but it's you reaching out to them before, during and after service. It's you serving them and going out of your way to make their time here as comfortable and enjoyable as possible.

Together we can do this. Let's pray, church. "Father God, I know You made me. I know You love me. And I know about You. But I really want to know You personally. I want You to be the Lord of my life. So today, as humble as I can say it, I open my life to You. I want to start the journey of learning, and I want to be a lifelong learner, not just about the world, but about You and about others and about myself. I want to learn more and more about You every day. So I want to take these four statements of growing in wisdom. I want to begin this process today. First I make the commitment to never stop learning, to learn more about You and about Your Word and Your ways. Help me to learn the lessons of the prior generations and to emulate the good and not to repeat their sinful patterns. Help me to maintain a humble attitude that honors You. Give me the power to put into practice what I have learned and continue to learn of Your ways, will and word. So, as best as I know how, I humble myself and I ask You today to accept me into Your family. I want to learn to love You, I want to learn to trust You, I want to learn to understand You, Jesus, what You came to do, and I simply pray this in Your name."