

Facilitator Notes for "Knowing God by Name"  
Lesson 5 – EL ELYON – Most High God – Daniel 4

PLEASE DON'T READ THESE NOTES UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR LESSON.

## Questions

**Background** - The *Book of Daniel* relates the experiences and visions of a Jewish captive, **Daniel**, taken from Judah to Babylon as a young man. Daniel was trained to be an administrator in **King Nebuchadnezzar's** vast empire and for over 60 years, he remained influential in the government of the **Babylonian Empire**, as well as the **Persian Empire** that followed it. The main theme of the *Book of Daniel* is God's **absolute sovereignty** over all the kingdoms of the earth and over history itself. **Nothing** and **no one** is outside of God's control. Through Daniel's life experiences and his prophecies about future world events, we see that God is truly in control of all things.

**Nebuchadnezzar**, mighty king of the Babylonian Empire captured Jerusalem in 586 B.C., destroyed the temple and carried the people of Judah into captivity to Babylon. He was a proud and arrogant king who conducted many building projects, including temples, fortifications and the "Hanging Gardens of Babylon," one of the *seven ancient wonders of the world*. **Daniel 4** records a public decree that King Nebuchadnezzar wrote toward the end of his life **after** he had an incredible encounter with *El Elyon – Most High God*.

Read **Daniel 4:1-18**. Underline any occurrence of **Most High**.

1. To whom is Nebuchadnezzar writing his decree and what is his purpose (4:1-3)?

**Nebuchadnezzar is writing to all the people of the world – every race and nation and language. His purpose was to give glory to God by telling everyone what God had done in his life.**

♥ Nebuchadnezzar is going to share his "God Story." Why do we share with others what God has done for us? Who benefits from this? What "God Story" could you share?

2. Nebuchadnezzar's vision or dream has two parts. Record the important details of each part.

**4:10-12**

He saw a large and strong tree growing in the middle of his land; all the earth could see it. Leaves beautiful, fruit abundant – food for all. Animals lived under it; birds in it and from it every creature was fed.

**4:13-16**

In the dream, a messenger came down from heaven, calling out, "Cut down the tree, strip the branches, cut off its fruit, let the animals flee and the birds leave. Leave the stump and roots in the ground, bound with iron and bronze. Let "him" be drenched with dew of heaven and let him live like an animal in the fields. He shall have the mind of an animal instead of a human."

♥ Who gave Nebuchadnezzar this dream and for what purpose (4:17)? **God gave him the dream so that the whole world would understand that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world and gives them to anyone he chooses – even to the lowliest of humans. Why is this important information for everyone to know? This truth about the Most High is still true today – even though we think we are in control or are making the decisions. What does this information mean to you personally?**

♥ Why do you think God chose to communicate with Nebuchadnezzar through a dream rather than by some other means, such as a prophet? **Dreams cannot be manipulated or controlled by the dreamer. Dreams can be completely controlled by God. Dreams are also "stories; they are always narratives and as such they affect our emotions and are more easily remembered. They usually have a stronger impact than just words or a spoken message. What does this reveal about God? God speaking to someone in a dream that he gives them shows God's utter control and power over all things. This is something that no person can do.**

♥ From beginning to end, the Bible is full of stories of God communicating to people through dreams and visions. Can God speak to people today through dreams and visions? Does he? Why or why not? **God can and will speak any way he chooses but the question is, "Are we listening?" If we aren't paying attention to our dreams or do not know how to interpret them (dreams are highly symbolic**

and are not to be taken "literally"), then we will not hear God speaking to us this way. (Note: If you have a dream that reoccurs regularly, you might want to pay attention to it. You can pray and ask God if he is trying to speak something to you – or you can talk it over with someone and ask for their prayers and insights.)

Read **Daniel 4:19-27**. Underline any occurrence of *Most High*.

3. What was going to happen to Nebuchadnezzar and why (4:24-26)?

He would be driven away from people and live with wild animals; he will eat grass like cattle and be drenched with the dew until 7 "times" passed. Then he will be humbled, acknowledging that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and give them to anyone he wishes. The stump in the dream meant that Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom would be restored when he finally acknowledges that "heaven" rules.

- ♥ What do you think was God's motivation in giving Nebuchadnezzar this dream? God cared enough and loved enough to want Nebuchadnezzar to change. God humbles us, but it is not for his benefit, but ours. What heart change did God desire in Nebuchadnezzar? Why was this important for Nebuchadnezzar? For us?
- ♥ What are some reasons why God warned Nebuchadnezzar ahead of time of what would happen to him (4:27)? Daniel clearly saw the dream as a warning and something that could be prevented if Nebuchadnezzar would repent of his own free will before the tragedy took place. He pleads with the king to change his ways. What does this reveal about God? God wants what is best for us. Repentance is for us and our good. Have you ever received a "warning" or "wake-up call" from God? Did you heed it? What happened?
- ♥ What "tree" of yours has been cut down to size? Was God behind it or something else? What resulted?

Read **Daniel 4:28-33**. Underline any occurrence of *Most High*.

4. What, specifically, was Nebuchadnezzar's sin and why was it wrong (4:30)?

His sin was pride and he was taking credit for his kingdom's power and glory. Pride is arrogant self-exaltation. It does not acknowledge God as Creator and King over all he has created, seeing everything as a gift and blessing from God. Pride takes the credit that belongs to God and God alone. Pride says, "I did it; I deserve it; I don't need God." Pride does not recognize that we could do nothing or be nothing if God didn't give us life itself. Every good thing we experience is a gift from God (James 1:17).

- ♥ Why does God require that we acknowledge him as Most High God with power and authority over everything and everyone? Basically, because it's the TRUTH and to live any other way is a lie and this will blind us to our need of God and drive us away from God. God is love and love, by it's very nature is other-centered and pride is self-centered. Is this acknowledgement for God or for us? How so?
- ♥ How does one actually acknowledge that God is Most High with power and authority over everything and everyone? We acknowledge who God is by our actions and our attitudes. Words are important, but not if they aren't matched with actions. Are words enough? Why or why not? How can we *live* this acknowledgement?
- ♥ What describes you more – *self-reliant* or *God-reliant*? On what do you base your conclusion?
- ♥ Identify who or what is *Most High* in your life. What do you think about, dream about, desire? On what do you spend most of your time? How do you acknowledge God with what he has given you?

Read **Daniel 4:34-37**. Underline any occurrence of *Most High* or *King of heaven*.

5. Describe Nebuchadnezzar's heart change. What specific *attitude adjustments* do you see?

He raised his eyes toward heave (finally looked up); he praised and worshipped the Most High and honored the One who lives forever. He acknowledges that people are nothing when compared to God. God has all power to do whatever wants with the angles of heaven and the

people of earth. No one can stop or challenge God. Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges that God is the Creator and he is God's creation. He realizes that everything he has is from God.

- ♥ What was Nebuchadnezzar's problem (4:37)? **Pride** Why is pride so dangerous? Why does God condemn it? From **Proverbs 3:11-12**, what comfort can we take if we are humbled by God? **God disciplines those he loves because he loves them.**
  - ♥ How have you ever taken credit for God's blessings – your education or career, your gifts and abilities, your well-behaved/beautiful children, your spouse or marriage, your material possessions, etc.?
  - ♥ Compared to the rest of the world, we in America live in a land of plenty. How do the good things in your life interfere with letting God be **Most High** in your life?
6. Consider the verses where you underlined **Most High** or **King of heaven** (4:2-3; 17, 24-25, 32, 34-35, 37). From these verses, record all you learned about *El Elyon*. Make note of his *power, actions* and *character*. **His signs and wonders are great and powerful; His kingdom will last forever through all generations; rules over the kingdoms of the earth and gives them to anyone he chooses; he can make events and circumstances happen; he is worthy of praise, honor and glory and he lives forever; his kingdom is eternal and his rule everlasting; all the people of the world are no comparison to him; no one can question his actions or hold back his hand; everything he does is right and all his ways are just; he can humble the one who walks in pride.**
- ♥ How does it make you feel to know that God is sovereign, having complete power and authority over everything and everyone? Is this a comforting thought? Why or why not?
  - ♥ What are the things about *El Elyon* that attract you and for which you are immediately grateful? What are some things about *El Elyon* that give you pause? Why?
  - ♥ What difference does it make that everything *El Elyon* – **Most High God** does *is right and that all his ways are just* (4:37)? What if this were not true of God? **This is a very important truth about God. God is all powerful – nothing and no one has more power than he. This means he can do whatever he desires. This kind of power would be truly frightening if God was not also completely good and fair (just). Because he is not evil or self-serving, we can trust him and what he does – even though we may not always understand. We never have to question God's motives because his motives for what he does are always good, right, pure and just. If this were not the case and if God was capricious, we would live in fear and would not be able to have a trusting, loving relationship with him.**
7. **Pride** is taking credit for what is God's and **humility** is seeing ourselves in right perspective to God and others. Nebuchadnezzar learned first-hand that God will *humble the proud* (4:37), but that is not God's first choice. According to **1 Peter 5:6**, what is God's preference?

We are called to humble ourselves before God – to submit to him and who he is. Humility is seeing ourselves in the right perspective to God. He is the Creator, we are the created. When we humble and submit ourselves to God – he will lift us up or exalt us at the right time for the right reasons. When we humble ourselves before God, we are able to receive and experience all the blessings he has for us.

**Numbers 12:3-8** tells us that Moses was a very humble man before God (more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth) – and because of this, God spoke to him face to face – not in dreams, vision or riddles. Because of Moses' humility before God, he heard God clearly and knew him well.

- ♥ What does **1 Peter 5:6** practically mean? How do you see it working? Why is this a better solution?
- ♥ What does God promise the humble (**Psalms 18:27; 25:9; 149:4; Proverbs 3:34; Isaiah 66:2**)?

Acknowledging God as *sovereign over all*, with all authority and power over everything and everyone can be a **sobering** truth if we have a tendency to be self-reliant or proud. However, it can also be a very **comforting** truth if we are in need of **security, protection, justice**, or are in the midst of **suffering**. Even when things seem to go very wrong, God is in control and nothing will thwart his ultimate plans and purposes. There is no wrong or evil that is more powerful than *El Elyon* – **Most High God**. There is no person or heart he can't change and no circumstance he can't use for his purposes and work for good in your life. **Nothing** is impossible for the **Most High God**. **All things**

are *always* under his control. We may not see where our circumstances are leading or how it will all turn out – but God does! And he promises to keep us *safe* and *secure* in the meantime. We are protected by *Most High God!*

8. Read **Psalm 91:1-4**. What do these verses promise the one who puts their trust in the power of the *Most High*? (**91:1** includes two names for God; *Most High* = *Elyon* and *Almighty* = *Shaddai*.)

We live in the shelter of the Most High and rest in his shadow. God is our refuge (safe haven; place of safety) and with him we are secure and protected. He will protect us from hidden traps and protect us from things that will harm and hurt us. He will shield and shelter us and His faithful promises serve as our armor and our protection.

### **The Message words Psalms 91:1-4 this way:**

You who sit down in the High God's presence, spend the night in Shaddai's shadow, Say this: "GOD, you're my refuge. I trust in you and I'm safe!" That's right—he rescues you from hidden traps, shields you from deadly hazards. His huge outstretched arms protect you— under them you're perfectly safe; his arms fend off all harm.

- ♥ Where does your security lie? What, in your life, makes you feel secure? What if it were all stripped away? Would God be enough for you? Why or why not?
- ♥ If God were not in control, who or what could be? What difference would this make in your life?

9. Read **Psalm 91:9-11, 14-16**. We are given many promises if we make the *Most High* our dwelling or refuge. Which of these promises do you find particularly comforting? Why?

Answers will vary:

No evil will conquer you; no plague will come near your dwelling.

For he orders his angels to protect you wherever you go; they will hold you with their hands to keep you from injury and harm. God will rescue those who love him. He will protect those who trust in his name. When we call on him, he will answer; he will be with us in trouble. He will rescue us and honor us. He will satisfy us with a long life and give us his salvation."

- ♥ Our life can be filled with problems – financial insecurity, ill health, a difficult job, a troubled marriage, rebellious or unbelieving children – to name a few. What troubles and worries do you have? What does it mean for you that God has power and authority over all things and all people?
- ♥ Consider the affairs of our country and our world. What troubles you? What potential danger do you see? What comfort do you take in knowing that *El Elyon – Most High God* is in control?

**Optional:** The life story of Joseph, found in Genesis, is an example of God being in control, even in adverse circumstances. Joseph was kidnapped by his brothers, beaten, left for dead and sold into slavery. Then he was unjustly accused and imprisoned for years, separated from home and family. Yet, it all this, God was in control and working. Read **Genesis 39:2-4, 21-23; 45:1-9; 50:18-21**. How did the *Most High God* work in Joseph's life even when things were going "wrong"? How does this encourage you? Do you really believe that *El Elyon* is in control?

- ♥ Is there anything in your life that holds a higher place than the *Most High God*? Ask him how you can make him "Most High" in your heart as he is *Most High* in heaven and on earth.

## ♥ Heart Therapy

In the new Testament, Jesus is called the **Son of the Most High (Luke 1:32)** and the Holy Spirit is called the **power of the Most High (Luke 1:35)** – and we can be **children of the Most High!**

Read **Luke 6:27-36**.

- ♥ What is the motivation for this kind of "risky" behavior toward those who don't treat you well (**6:35-36**)?
- ♥ What could "go wrong" if you followed Jesus' commands in these verses?
- ♥ When has God treated *you* this way? How does this motivate you in your treatment of others?
- ♥ What have you learned in this lesson about *El Elyon – Most High God*, the One who has power and authority over everything and everyone, that can help you engage in this "risky" behavior?
- ♥ What value do you put on being a child of the *Most High*, acting just like your Father?

BELOW IS THE SUPPLEMENTARY SCRIPTURE FOR THIS LESSON THAT CAN BE PRINTED OUT FOR SMALL GROUP TIME.

**Proverbs 3:11-12** My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline and do not resent his rebuke, **12** because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.

**1Peter 5:6** Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

**Psalms 18:27** You save the humble but bring low those whose eyes are haughty.

**Psalms 25:9** He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.

**Psalms 149:4** For the LORD takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with salvation.

**Proverbs 3:34** He mocks proud mockers but gives grace to the humble.

**Isaiah 66:2** Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?" declares the LORD. "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.

**Psalms 91:1-4** He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. **2** I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." **3** Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. **4** He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

**9-11** If you make the Most High your dwelling— even the LORD, who is my refuge— **10** then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. **11** For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways;

**14-16** "Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. **15** He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. **16** With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation."

**Genesis 39:2-4** The LORD was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. **3** When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did, **4** Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned.

**21-23** the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. **22** So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there. **23** The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.

**Genesis 45:1-9** Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, "Have everyone leave my presence!" So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. **2** And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it. **3** Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?" But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence. **4** Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! **5** And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. **6** For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping. **7** But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

**8** "So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt. **9** Now hurry back to my father and say to him, 'This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don't delay.

**Genesis 50:18-21** His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said. **9** But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? **20** You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. **21** So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.