

# SHARING SCRIPTURE

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## From Arrogance to Destruction

**For use:** Feb 2. - Feb. 8

**Texts:** Daniel 5; Revelation 17:4-6; Psalm 96:5; Colossians 1:15-17; Romans 1:16-32; Ecclesiastes 8:11; Revelation 14:8

The recent upheaval among Willow Creek Community Church's leadership team, added to the challenges over the past 18 months, is as shocking as it is sad. The church was once regarded as the pinnacle of success in reaching a generation that has moved from a post-modern mindset to the current post-church worldview. Their events attracted pastors and church leaders from around the world who came to learn how to replicate the Willow Creek model in their own communities. The associated, but separate, leadership network continues to provide excellent programs that so far seem to have sidestepped the internal turmoil of the local congregation as it tries to regain its footing.

After news broke in 2018 about the sexual misconduct of its founder, the congregation's elders have struggled to find a new senior pastor. Steve Gillen, the current acting senior pastor, is leaving in March—frustrated over the lack of progress in finding a replacement. This stunning reversal of fortunes is a sobering object lesson for church leaders and community leaders alike. [1]

It's sad to witness the fall of any once-mighty empire or enterprise. What must it have been like for Daniel to read the handwriting on the wall and realize that the vision of the image that he revealed to Nebuchadnezzar was coming to pass? Before his very eyes, the head of gold was morphing into the chest and arms of silver. Our lesson this week attributes the fall of Babylon to arrogance. Certainly, Belshazzar had no regard for the God of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. He failed to learn the lessons his grandfather had experienced.

In all of these cases, the heartbreaking reality is that when leadership fails, innocent people suffer. When church leaders fall, some of their flock experience a crisis of faith as they wrestle with the fallen human nature of men and women they may have held up on an unrealistic pedestal. When Babylon fell, many innocent people who had taken no part in the foolish arrogance of their king died. Leadership is always a sacred responsibility when it involves the well-being of others.

The transition from arrogance to destruction is the ultimate, final wake-up alarm a person can hear. It's more than just a humbling experience that a person can learn from and turn his or her life around. In Belshazzar's case, it was the end of his life as the mighty Babylonian empire fell.

The worst verdict people will ever hear is that they are weighed in the balances and found wanting. That's God's decision, not ours. Our part is being willing to learn the lessons of humility.

~Chuck Burkeen

[1] <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2020/january/hybels-successor-willow-creek-pastor-search-interim-resign.html>

## For Reflection

**Connecting:** Without revealing names, can you identify a situation in your workplace where you saw someone experience a humiliating fall from grace? Did you or someone else attempt to minister to the person during this low period in their life? If so, what was the result?

**Sharing:** Was the fall of Babylon inevitable? Could Belshazzar have changed his destructive course earlier and saved his empire?

1. No—the fall of Babylon was pre-ordained by God and their destruction was out of Belshazzar's hands
2. Yes—if Belshazzar had learned to lead with honesty and integrity, he could have prevented this calamity
3. God's prophecy about Babylon's fall was descriptive, not prescriptive; the prophecy only revealed what God knew would happen
4. If Belshazzar had changed his course, it would only delay the inevitable fall of Babylon
5. If Belshazzar and each successive king had led with Godly humility rather than arrogance, we could still be living in the era of the head of gold
6. Other:

**Applying:** Are you aware of any accountability practices among your church's leadership team? What recommendations would you make to a leadership group to ensure an appropriate atmosphere of accountability and transparency?

**Valuing:** Spend a few minutes taking an honest personal inventory: Is there any area of your life where you are coming dangerously close to irredeemable arrogance? If so, give that situation to God in a prayer of humble repentance.

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