

Daniel Four

# Building Societies



## WARMUP

As Daniel and the exiles left their land for Babylon, Jeremiah prophesied. Daniel undoubtedly kept these words in mind throughout his life.

*But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. (Jeremiah 29:7 ESV)*

Before you read the chapter, spend a few minutes thinking, talking to a friend or journaling about the connection between seeking “the welfare of the city” and sharing the Good News with people.

## EXPLORE THE SCRIPTURES

Read chapter four regarding Nebuchadnezzar’s second dream and Daniel’s interpretation. Pay attention to how Daniel’s heart responds.

### Discuss: Daniel’s World

1. Jeremiah commanded the exiles to seek the peace and prosperity of the city and to pray to the Lord for it. Daniel did just that. In all he did, he added *ethical goodness* to Babylon—he made it a better place. He served with excellence and integrity—while worshipping and relying on the Lord God. As a result, Daniel not only modeled a good life, he also helped make life better. What about this call to “seek the welfare” of the world around us is surprising? Encouraging? Puzzling?
2. Look again at Daniel’s response to Nebuchadnezzar’s second dream. This dream indicated that the king would be cut off from his kingdom for seven years. Here is part of Daniel’s response:

*Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was dismayed for a while, and his thoughts alarmed him. The king answered and said, “Belteshazzar, let not the dream or the interpretation alarm you.” Belteshazzar answered and said, “My lord, may the dream be for*

*those who hate you and its interpretation for your enemies!” (Daniel 4:19 ESV)*

*“Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you: break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity.” (Daniel 4:27 ESV)*

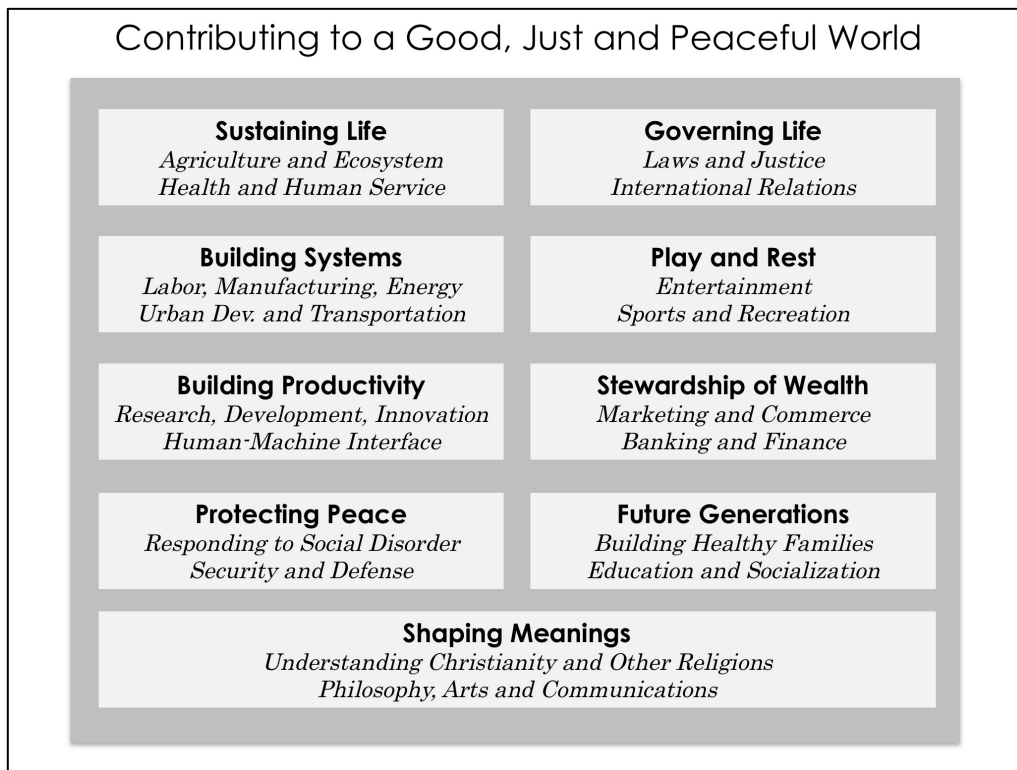
Do you think Daniel was being sincere in his concern for this foreign king? Why or why not?

3. Would you want a foreign king who had enslaved your people to prosper? Explain.

### Discuss: My World

4. Throughout the book of Daniel, he and his friends are praised for their “learning” and “excellence.” How do you view the role of learning and excellence while working for a company not directly committed to Biblical values? What might be the consequences of not being a lifelong learner at work or of doing less than excellent work? Think about the outcomes not only for yourself but also for your company and for the people your company serves.
5. Daniel lived in the world of government administration. Most of us do not. However, as you consider the current political realities of the culture you live in, how would you imagine politicians and government workers fulfilling Jeremiah’s directive (Jeremiah 29:7)? How might you help bring the *ethical goodness* of the Kingdom of God (i.e., the practical, everyday goodness of God’s ways) and the *redemptive message* of Jesus into today’s political culture?

6. Thinking about your own career, in what practical ways might you bring the ethical goodness of God and the redemptive message of Jesus into the world that you live in? What might that look like over a 10 to 20 year period of time? (Use your imagination!)
7. The graphic below describes many of the positive contributions required to keep a modern society functioning healthily. As you think about your own interests, skills and experiences, which of these areas do you think you are the best suited to contribute to?



Is there a function that you are primarily drawn to? Are there one or two other functions that are secondary to you? What about the areas you are not interested in? How do you hope they are fulfilled?

8. How might God use you in bringing His Kingdom power—His goodness and redemptive message—into your workplace and our world?

## Convictions

Convictions are closely tied to commitments. Convictions are strongly held beliefs. They are things we are absolutely *convinced* about. Commitments are often our response to these convictions. For example, if I am convinced I need to eat well, I might make a commitment to eat three balanced meals a day. Other times, we make commitments along the way to developing deeper convictions. While I may not be absolutely convinced eating well is important, I may still make a commitment to eating three good meals a day as a way to grow in a conviction that I am pretty sure is right.

Daniel and his friends, for example, exhibited strong convictions and commitments regarding seeking the “peace and prosperity” (Jeremiah 29:7 NIV) of the city that enslaved them. They were both convinced that God was at work and acted accordingly.

9. List one or two of your convictions or commitments regarding seeking peace and prosperity that you have embraced, acted on or are willing to suffer for in the context of your vocation.

10. What might shake or disrupt these convictions and commitments?  
What might fortify them?

11. One barrier to peace and prosperity is injustice. Are there areas of inequality that God has been bringing to your attention? Are there

convictions or commitments you sense that He may be calling you into?

## PAUSE TO PRAY

Take time alone to pray. Listen to God and tell Him your heart. Ask Him to give you godly convictions as you live as an exile. After, pray together as a group.

## SUGGESTED MEMORY VERSE

*Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper. (Jeremiah 29:7 NIV)*

## IMAGE SELECTION (OPTIONAL)

Find one or two images that represent goodness to you. See the collage at the end of this section or find an image on

<http://www.vibrantfaith.org/visualfaith> or some other website.

Describe your image and why you were drawn to it. How might this image connect with your future over the next 5–10 years? Or does it?

## GOING DEEPER (OPTIONAL)

Watch the movie *Amazing Grace* (1hr 58 min). It depicts the journey of Wilber Wilberforce as he sought to eliminate the slave trade and ultimately slavery in the British Empire. (See [www.amazinggracemovie.com](http://www.amazinggracemovie.com).) After watching, what impacts your heart from the movie? How might this influence your workplace choices?



Daniel Four

Find one or two images that represent goodness to you.



- Describe your image and why you were drawn to it.
- How might this image connect with your future over the next 5–10 years?