

Church-Counterculture 9  
Recapturing Examples I

Text: Daniel 1:1-7; Ro.12:2

Ro.12:2 "Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you." (The Message Bible)

The previous message emphasized the importance of recapturing and refreshing by repetitiously highlighting the activity of God exemplified in Psalm 78. It strengthens us to deal with culture and helps offer counterculture solutions.

- Culture—the beliefs, customs, practices, and social behavior of a particular nation or people.
- Counterculture—a culture whose values and norms of behavior differ from those of mainstream society, sometimes diametrically opposed to mainstream.

This message introduces focus on the example and encouragement about culture and counterculture viewed through four Israelites youths.

- Context: Outstanding Israelite youths, their country conquered had been carried into Babylonian captivity. They were purposefully prepared for three years to be used in the court of Nebuchadnezzar (i.e., the enemy king).  
*There seems to be lack of awareness the devil through worldly culture has the same intention for us.*
1. They were to be taught the literature and language of the Chaldeans—Dan. 1:4.
    - a. Writings on subjects from a culture perspective.
    - b. Communicate with the same meaning and terms.
  2. They were to be given the best food the world's culture had to offer—Dan.1:5.
    - a. Royal food of the king—symbolic of dependence upon king Nebuchadnezzar.
    - b. Many scholars suggest eating that food in that situation would be an endorsement to paganism.
    - c. Sharing a meal from the king's table represented sharing the king's culture values.
  3. They were given other names (the practice was an expression of sovereign control over others).
    - (Daniel Chapter 1 Bible Study Lesson: Stranded in Babylon (jesusplusnothing.com))
    - a. Daniel—"God is my Judge." His name was changed to "Belteshazzar." This name... in Chaldee, 'The treasure of Bel,' or 'The depository of the secrets (or treasure) of Bel' (*which is another name for Baal*).
    - b. Hananiah—"The LORD has been gracious to me," or 'He to whom the LORD is gracious.' This name was changed into Shadrach, ... 'The inspiration of the sun;' 'God the author of evil, be propitious to us;' 'Let God preserve us from evil.'
    - c. Mishael—"He who comes from God." They called him Meshach, ... "He who belongs to the goddess Sheshach," a celebrated deity of the Babylonians, mentioned by Jeremiah 25:26.
    - d. Azariah—"The LORD is my Helper," they changed into Abednego, ... 'the servant of Nego,' who was one of their divinities; by which they meant either the sun, or the morning star; whether Jupiter or Venus" (*Adam Clarke's Commentary*).
      - In each case, the name of enemies' god was substituted for the name of the true and living God Jehovah.
      - The enemy and the world desire to impose their dominion and authority over us by renaming us after the gods of this world.