

Church-Counterculture #10
Recapturing Examples II

Text: Daniel 1:8-21; 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)

“Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity.” (The J.B. Phillips Translation)

The previous message introduced focus on the example and encouragement about culture and counterculture viewed through four Israelites youths.

- 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.
- Context: Outstanding Israelite youths, their country conquered and 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.*

This message expands the focus on the example and encouragement about culture and counterculture viewed through four Israelites youths with four key points.

1. Purpose of heart—v8.
 - a. Purpose—to set something or determine something. The *place* is not as powerful as *purpose*.
 - b. Heart—*leb* in Hebrew—seat of emotions and passions. Deeper than just thoughts but entire inner being.
 - c. Not to defile—stain/pollute with the kings' food—endorse beliefs and ways dishonoring God.
2. God's favor and goodwill/compassion—v9.
 - a. God's influence/caused kindness. God worked within the purpose of Daniel.
 - b. Compassion— is a deep feeling for suffering that is grounded in the understanding which often causes a conscious desire to relieve that suffering.
 - When we purpose to honor God, our enemies can be influenced to bless us—Prov.16:7.
3. Tested by culture—v12-15.
 - a. Confidence honoring God is better than the world's system and ways.
 - b. Ten days represent a complete *cycle*, i.e., Ten Commandments.
 - c. In the natural ten days of vegetables and water should cause weight loss (cp v10 statement).
 - d. Supernatural aid of God when honoring Him—Hebrews youth were healthier and fatter than those fed from the world's system—v15.
 - Doing the will of God makes a difference—cp Ps. 149:4; John 4:31-34.
4. Testimony at the highest level—vv18-20.
 - a. What God has done is not inferior to the world—the king saw the evidence—v19.
 - b. Surpassing quality of character and aptitude in God's way—ten times better-v20.
 - When we choose to practice Christian values rather than simply profess them the world sees that our character and lives are distinctly different. They may be encouraged to explore and engage in relationship with the Lord.

JDF