

## **Put to Death What Is Earthly in You**

In my previous article, we looked at the fact that King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had the names of Daniel and his three friends changed as a part of his plan to assimilate them into the pagan, Babylonian culture. In this article, I want to make some practical application for our lives from what we've seen in my previous articles on Daniel 1 thus far.

### **SEPARATION**

Separation from the things of God can take place when Christian young boys and girls go off to attend elementary through high school and maybe especially later when they go off to college.

Christian parents may be limited or completely removed from much of their daily encouragement to their children. This is a challenge that all Christians must face.

Some Christian parents face this issue by choosing to homeschool, where their child is obviously still in the home and being instructed in the ways of our faith. Others will send their children to a reputable Christian school, where the curriculum is intentionally taught from a Christian world and life view. Still others have a level of confidence in the local public schools; their intent will be to monitor their child's overall education — including keeping abreast of their homework — while also being aware of local school board decisions and actions.

There are a number of ways to school our children, but no matter which way we choose, Christians must seek, by the grace of God, to keep this potential physical, mental, spiritual and emotional separation from negatively affecting our children. We can't pass that responsibility off to others.

We know that in Daniel's life, the separation that he experienced is analogous to separation from the home and the church. We don't want to miss how indispensable this knowledge is to the overall health of our children. Parents, we must be an example for our children that shows that we truly believe that the church is as important for our Christian lives as the scriptures teach that it is (e.g., Matthew 16:18). As our children get older and go off to college or get a job, they will need to rely on a rock-solid foundation that's been laid for them in the home and in the church. Satan's world system is designed as a means of separation, and he's often been very successful when Christian children are away from the life and teaching of their home and their local church.

### **ASSIMILATION**

Even though cultural assimilation can happen in the school systems as well as among peers, sadly, cultural assimilation often happens by means of the culture coming into our homes and our churches.

The home must be a loving, caring place which allows our children to be properly taught — in age-appropriate ways — about certain things that they may face anytime they're away from us. In our homes, parents may monitor which programs are appropriate for

our children to watch as well as the amount of time spent for television, cell phones and electronic video games. Parents will, obviously, do this in different ways, but we must be aware of what our children are being potentially exposed to!

We're all well aware of the subtle — and not so subtle — shows that are made available by means of streaming, etc., on our television screens. A smart phone can be a good thing but can also be a doorway into the darkness that's all around us. Parents, we don't want to be either too busy or simply oblivious to what our children are facing, and therefore, by means of acting as if no problems exist, we can open wide the door to cultural compromise and assimilation. We also want to be aware of our children's friends. It can be a good thing, in age-appropriate ways, for our children to have non-Christian friends, but parents who know their children best should also be aware of how vulnerable each child may be to negative peer influence.

The church has a responsibility for what she teaches and the example she sets — both the leaders as well as every member of the church. Our teaching materials at every level of our Christian education must align with our beliefs. From the pulpit to the lectern and even in the pews, we should all set an example of how to live in light of the gospel of God's grace in Jesus Christ. In contrast to this, if our churches are trying to act like the culture in an attempt to gain a hearing from the culture, I would suggest that we're going in the wrong direction. The Church is not the culture and we shouldn't behave as such.

## **CONFUSION**

Don't allow confusion into your own lives, and don't contribute to the confusion of others' lives.

As we saw in my previous article, changing the names of Daniel and his three friends was an attempt to identify these young Hebrew men with the pagan gods of the Babylonian culture. This is somewhat analogous to what's happening in our day with those who want to intentionally identify themselves by their sin.

Some have struggled — and still struggle — with certain sexual sins, but that's a different thing than identifying themselves by their sins. By the grace of God, Christians fight against our sin and daily seek to put it to death. The apostle Paul writes, "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry." (Colossians 3:5)

Lastly, no Christian is without sin, and therefore we should never spend our time looking down on others around us. While we don't compromise scripture, we do pray for and extend love and grace to those who live in ongoing patterns of sin in their lives.

May God help us continue to uphold the teaching of scripture in our own lives, protect our children from cultural assimilation, and continue to graciously shine the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ to those around us.

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