

**“Idol: Culture”*****Daniel 1:1-8*****Introduction**

When athletic teams play at home, they know that there are extra odds in their favor. The extra boost of fan participation, applause, encouragement and recognition in their home stadium gives them the home-field advantage. In the past, Judeo-Christian ethics penetrated most facets of American culture, which gave Christians a home-field advantage when encountering the world. That semblance of advantage has dramatically waned as the culture has sought to infiltrate Christian values. For many, culture has become an idol.

The consequence of making an idol of the culture is that Christians today have been desensitized to (and even adopted) the images and definitions of the culture. In doing so, we look to man for truth rather than God – the ultimate source of truth. This is called humanism. Dr. Evans mentioned that the permeation of humanism and secularism in the culture has resulted in creating a part-time saint mentality among our brothers and sisters in Christ. However, God wants us to choose our actions according to His will and affect the culture for Him rather than the reverse.

Pastor Evans recounted from the text how Daniel and his friends (who had been recruited for the court of the Babylonian king), refused to let the culture dictate who they should worship. They were resolute in choosing to worship only God. From the onset, King Nebuchadnezzar attempted to engulf the young men into Babylonian culture by changing their names, teaching them the language and customs and encouraging them to overindulge in food and wine. We see God honoring the young men’s faithfulness: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were left unscathed from Nebuchadnezzar’s fiery furnace after they refused to bow down to the king as if he were God; and when King Darius’ officials found Daniel guilty of making a petition to anyone but the king, Daniel was thrown into the lion’s den. But God favored Daniel who emerged from the den unharmed. Because of their faithfulness to God and not the culture, all four men survived and continued to serve the Lord for the rest of their lives.

**Getting Started**

Appreciating and valuing cultural contributions to society is different from worshipping them as an idol. The culture becomes an idol when we treat something other than God as if it were God. Review Daniel 1:1-8. Identify examples in Scripture of cultural idols.

**Let’s Get Personal**

1. Have you ever had to choose between your faith and the secular world around you? What did that decision cost you?
2. Daniel was fortunate to have friends who stood with him in his decision to honor the One, true God. Think about the people you spend the most time with. Will they stand with you when you are forced to choose between the culture and God? Do you have the kind of relationship where any of you could speak the truth in love if a cultural idol emerges?
3. During celebrations that acknowledge your worldly achievements and accomplishments, how have you remained humble?

**Take the Next Step**

1. Celebrity worship is one manifestation of the idol of culture. It can occur in the entertainment industry, the political arena and even in our churches. Think of the individuals who fit in these categories who you have supported in the past. Have you ever supported someone because of the material things they possess, the monetary riches they are known for, or simply because they are popular with a certain group you admire?
  2. Read Exodus 34:15. Say a prayer of repentance to God and ask for forgiveness from the ways you have idolized culture.
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**Renew Your Mind**

*“But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king’s choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself.”*

*Daniel 1:8*

**Join the Conversation**

Have a question for Pastor Evans as it relates to the Sunday sermon on idols? Submit your questions at [OCBFChurch.org/WednesdayNights](http://OCBFChurch.org/WednesdayNights).

