



Sermon Series: Authentic Christian Living
To be used with Session 1: Developing Strong Convictions
Sermon Title Possibilities:
Authentic Convictions: Daniel 1:3-13,17-19

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study "Developing Strong Convictions," this sermon reminds believers of how to be in the world but not of the world.

Introduction

At the time of our text, the children of Israel had been carried away into captivity because of compromised and corrupt living. The story reminds us that sin has consequences that we could never imagine. Nonetheless, in this story of captivity, there is a theme of living with godly convictions in the midst of a corrupt culture.

Over the next few weeks, we will learn that Daniel was a man of priorities, prayer, & purity. A close look at the life of Daniel will give us some guidelines on Staying True in a World Far from God.

Our passage encourages us not to Conform to the World Around Us, not to Compromise Like the World Around Us, & not to Cut-off from the World around us.

1. Don't Conform to the World Around Us (v. 3-7).

King Nebuchadnezzar had taken the best and the brightest of Israel and sought to use them for himself. He wanted to feed them with his food, lace them with his language, brainwash them with his ways, and employ them for his purposes. He wanted to change their names so he could change their nature. Instead of them living in a way that honored Jehovah as King, he wanted them to live in a way that honored him as king.

This passage reminds us that the Enemy wants to put the world around us inside of us. The Apostle Paul warns us against allowing this to happen when he says in Romans 12:1-2 ¹ "Therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual worship." ² Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God." It's imperative that we don't allow the world to shape and mold us into the ways and worldview of the culture. Be careful not to think, talk, and act like the culture around us.

2. Don't Compromise Like the World Around Us (v. 8-13).

I like that phrase in verse eight “Daniel determined that he would not defile himself with the king’s food or with the wine he drank.” Here, Daniel displays his faith by determining his faithfulness. He exposes his convictions by evading compromise. He does not do what the people around him are doing—even in a captivity situation.

Daniel’s model challenges us to avoid compromising in spite the prevalence of what’s going on in the world around us. Scripture tells us to honor God in word and deed (Col. 3:16-17), to maintain our bodies as the temple of God (Rom. 6:18-20), and to allow His Word to fashion our ways (Ps. 37:23-25; 119:105). Don’t allow the lifestyle of those around you to determine your lifestyle.

3. Don’t Cut-off from the World Around Us (v. 17-19).

We see in these three verses that Daniel served where he was situated. He functioned for wherever he found himself. In other words, his circumstances did not circumvent his walk with God. As a result, the none-God-followers could see his excellent spirit, his noble character, & his spiritual giftedness.

This is what Christ meant when He told His disciples—and us—that we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world, and that we should let our lives shine so that lost people could see our good works and glorify the Father which is in heaven (Matt. 5:15-16). We can’t evangelize those in the darkness if we evade the darkness. We have to be in the world, but not of the world—while trying to be a witness to the world.

Conclusion

You engage in “Authentic Christian Living” when you don’t conform to, don’t compromise like, and don’t cut-off from the world around you. Determine in your heart today, to be in the world but not of the world. Determine to exemplify Christ-centered living and not the self-centered living that the world embodies and encourages.

Author Bio

Reginald D. Taylor is a graduate of Crichton College, Union University, Capital Seminary, and is currently pursuing the Ph.D. degree at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is the senior Pastor of The Rock Church in Southaven, MS, and Assistant Professor/Director of Urban Theological Studies at MCUTS @ Union University in Memphis. He and his wife Dr. Tarra R. Taylor has one son—Reginald D. Taylor II—and three grandchildren Micah, Yara, and Aviyah.