

LESSON ESSENTIALS

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND WORLDVIEW

LESSON 5: BE SEPARATE FROM THE WORLD

As we live out our lives in this world, we must remember that we ought not to conform to the ways of the world but to align ourselves to the will of God. After all, we know that no one can serve two masters wholly and diligently.

Being different is not necessarily a negative thing. In fact the Bible tells us that God wants us to be different. He wants us to set our lives apart for Him. When we do that, we see that there are wonderful blessings from God our Father. Let us read further into the lesson to learn why and how to be set apart for God.

In this lesson we will see what it means to be separate from the world and why it is so important for us as believers in Christ.

REFLECT

“The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.”

1 John 2:17

Even in the Old Testament we see that God picked the Israelites to be set apart from the others. He wanted them to stand out amongst the scores of other nations. They were His chosen ones.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were not like their peers. They were rulers and overseers in Babylon and, unlike their neighbours, believed that there was one God, and only He should be worshipped. These young men had been taken from their homeland and brought into a strange place where people believed new and different things. Perhaps you can relate to them? Perhaps you can imagine the pressure they faced to worship idols like everyone else, or to abandon their beliefs in order to fit in with the society they were living in? The Bible records the heroic story of these young men. When faced with a threat of death, they still would not bow down to any idol, and refused to worship any god but the one true God. You can read it for yourself in Daniel 3 in the Bible. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are an incredible example to us of what it means to live lives set apart for God.

If we want to represent the God we serve, we need to make sure that we have a strong foundation in Him. We must not sway because of a gentle breeze from the ways of this world. Romans 12:2 says “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” This evidently tells us that the way of the world and the will of God are definitely not one and the same. As inhabitants of this world, we will obviously be drawn towards its ways, but we must make a conscious effort to be radical and be different for Christ.

God has always worked in this fashion. Even in the Old Testament we see that God picked the Israelites to be set apart from the others. He wanted them to stand out amongst the scores of other nations. They were His chosen ones. They were not permitted to marry outsiders because He wanted them to be pure and to be a light in the darkness. His plan for them was to be a perfect, holy, and unadulterated group, not mixed up with unholy, imperfect, and adulterated ways. Matthew 9:16-17 is yet another instance where the Bible points out that we must not mix things that are not alike – such as living a sinful life and living a holy life.

Why do we need to set our lives apart for Him? It is because He wants to use us for His glory. He has plans for us that require us to be wholly His. “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money,” says Matthew 6:24. Yes, it is true: if we try to serve two masters, we will end up serving neither properly. In order to be successful in the world and to do what is expected of us we will have to break the

laws of God. We must intentionally choose to serve God instead of following the ways of the world. It is undoubtedly not an easy task to be in this world and yet to not be of it. Remembering to avoid two things might help us and make it a little easier for us to be set apart. Firstly, of course, we must keep away from things that are sinful. Secondly, from Psalm 119:37 we read that we are to turn away from worthless things and instead gain life through His ways. We are told to turn away from worthless things simply because they can distract us from our focus on God which will bring us true joy.

The stories of the courageous young men in the book of Daniel show us how Daniel dared to be different and dared to stand alone, and how Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego chose a holy life over a one of sinful obedience to the world. Being different and being separated will also mean facing ridicule and being unpopular. Fear not, for it is as temporary as our lives here. God promises to accept, defend, and protect those who choose Him and who dare to be different. Being different from the world is not easy and has a temporary price to pay. However, God reveals that we will be a part of His great glory when we choose to be separate from the world and follow Him.

IN REVIEW

- We must try our best to live in the world and yet not be a part of this world. We must not conform to the ways of the world, rather we must be transformed and abide by the will of God.
- From time immemorial, God has illustrated the imbalance of mixing unlike items. We ought to be pure, spotless, and holy for the Glory of God.
- We cannot serve two masters as we will always hate one and love the other. We must consciously choose to serve God and not the world.
- Two guidelines to help us to be in the world and yet not be a part of it are to avoid sinful and worthless things lest they take up more of our energy and time than God.

Being different from the world is not easy and has a temporary price to pay. However, God reveals that we will be a part of His great glory when we choose to be separate from the world and follow Him.

HAVE YOUR SAY

- Are you trying to serve two masters? Do you think it is possible to do so wholly and diligently?

- In what way can you make sure that you set your life apart for the Glory of God?

- Name two practical ways in which you can avoid sinful and worthless things in your life? How will this help you serve God better?

- Recall a time when you dared to be different like Daniel? How did you feel?

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