

**Read Daniel 3:1-18**

1. What are some of the idols that our secular culture worships? What about in the church?

*This is a conversation starter to warm up the discussion. Examples of cultural idols are materialism, health and beauty, consumerism, political correctness, personal liberty and freedom, etc. Examples of ecclesial idols are doctrinal purity, orthodoxy, correct behaviour and speech, puritanism, pharisaicalism, social justice, progressive/conservative theology, etc.*

2. An idol demands more than it delivers. What are the promises of the cultural and ecclesial idols that were mentioned earlier? What are the costs, pressures, and demands of these idols from their worshippers?

*Both cultural and ecclesial idols promise a utopia on earth where justice, peace, harmony, equity, love, etc. abound for all humanity. These are what everyone desires. But they demand from us more at the cost of our own peace, health, justice, harmony, love, lives, etc. Idols divide people and nations more than unite. They destroy friendships and communities rather than build them up. They are voracious and insatiable and those who worship them will be eaten alive by their idols. And there is pressure among peers, inside our own hearts and heads in our personal expectations, around the culture, inside a church community, to conform, to bow down, to pay up, and to bear the cost of our idols.*

3. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow down to the image but were themselves invested, engaged, and involved in the larger Babylonian culture. How do we as Christians engage, invest, and get involved in our secular culture without committing the sin of idolatry?

*Irenic and thoughtful engagement with the culture will take deep reflection, study, discipline, virtue, intention, and accountability in our families and communities. We must be rightly and humbly ambitious in our individual callings and vocation, to tread the high courts or the slums of our world to make Jesus known in our homes, workplaces, neighbourhoods, and industries. We must be wary that we are not sucked in by the world's offer of power, wealth, prestige, influence, stocks, comfort and convenience which will eventually compete against our devotion to Jesus Christ. Rather, having these things can be used for the good and benefit of our neighbours, and to make known the glory and power of Jesus.*

4. As Christians, we can cherish and promote the goodness and the values that idols and images represent without worshipping them or making them to be ultimate. How can we remain singularly devoted to Jesus Christ amidst the

diversity of goods, ideals, and virtues in our world?

*Practically, we should make time in our daily routine to be immersed in the wisdom, the truth, the counsel, the stories, and the incredibly transcendent realm of the God of Israel and the Father of Jesus Christ in the Bible. Or else, our minds, schedules, calendars, affections, habits, and disciplines will slowly become aligned to the larger culture's liturgy, virtues, seasons, and lifestyle. The changing cultural atmosphere and climate will make the instruments God has given to each of us go off-tune or off-key. We must always tune ourselves to the right biblical key, to the tune and the beat of the Holy Spirit everyday. We must especially be vigilant in our spiritual and biblical disciplines, and engage in them with others rather than alone.*