

PAGANISM – PART 2

Zechariah 10:2 ... “For the idols speak delusion; the diviners envision lies, and tell false dreams; they comfort in vain. Therefore the people wend their way like sheep; they are in trouble because there is no shepherd.”

We continue our two-part series about the influence of paganism on Christians. Pagan beliefs can be difficult to detect when you are surrounded by, or grow up with them. IPs often interweave their traditional pagan beliefs with Christianity in the name of preserving culture, mostly out of ignorance. And we are not just talking about tribal groups, such as Tbolis and Blaans. Most every Filipino comes from some corner of the country where indigenous pagan beliefs were practiced. We would like to be able to tell a new convert: “Now that you are a follower of Jesus, you can still practice all of your old activities, ceremonies and rituals without concern.” However, that may not be truthful. God does not entertain compromise or the mix of other beliefs with Christianity.

As a Christian you have a responsibility to learn about the meaning of the practices of your tribe or people group. Before you were saved, it did not matter. But now that you are a follower of Christ, you should identify the practices of your old beliefs that still linger in your heart and mind, in your songs and dances, in the patterns of the cloth your tribe makes, in the stories you tell your children, and in your beliefs. When you identify conflicts between Biblical faith and pagan beliefs, ask God to help you manage the transition and remove those conflicts so you can grow in the grace of God without conflict. The Holy Spirit is capable and willing to warn you when you are about to drift into a practice that does not honor God, but he will only do so if you allow him and if you listen to him.

How can you identify with your own culture or people, without compromising your faith in God? This can be challenging, especially if your people group is associated with other gods and spirits. You might find that certain events, family activities, and friends simply create too much tension between your faith and theirs'. One of the roles of the Holy Spirit is to guide us along a path that leads to righteousness and away from other religious practices.

How can you know if some practices of your tribe or people group are pagan (meaning, contrary to Biblical teaching)? Our verse from Zechariah is the clue: idols lie and mislead us, fortune tellers lie, spirit (anti-God) dreams and prophecies are false. Everything about pagan beliefs is dishonest, misleading and false, plus they are contrary to the Word of God. We have the Bible and the Holy Spirit to lead us along the path of righteousness. If you ignore them, your faith will not grow and your relationship with Christ will be broken. Plus, you will not suffer sadness for giving up an old pagan practice, because Christ will replace that with his personal touch on your life. You are giving up nothing!

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