

# Don't Conform

**Introduction.** Having concluded 11 chapters of profound and stirring teaching about what God has given Christians, Paul now charges those Christians with what they need to give God and how they need to live. Romans 12:1-2 sets forth the fundamental obligations we must meet before being prepared to face the challenge of living faithfully in this world, a challenge that our younger ones face in school now.

“Conformed” refers to an outward expression that does not reflect what is within. The word is used of masquerading, or putting on an act, specifically by following a prescribed pattern or scheme. Regrettably, it is not uncommon for Christians to wear the world’s masks. They want to enjoy the world’s entertainment, the world’s fashions, the world’s vocabulary and many of the world’s attitudes — even when those clearly do not conform to the standards of God’s word.

This phrase has been translated as, “Do not let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold.” We are to stop allowing ourselves to be fashioned after this present evil world. It is easy to do this at school, so we will examine four ways in which you need to avoid conforming when you’re there.

## ***I. Don't Conform With Your Language***

- A. Cursing means “to make light of something serious, to bring a serious matter into contempt, to show no respect; evil, wicked, or obscene talk” (Romans 3:14; Ephesians 4:29; 5:4; Colossians 3:8). The Israelites were not to profane (“to wound, defile, or pollute”) the name of the Lord (Exodus 20:7; Leviticus 19:12; cp. 1 Timothy 1:9). Cursing and profanity are products of a dirty mind, but dirty jokes and coarse jesting are also (“corrupt communication” and “foolish talking”).
- B. Virtually every Christian realizes that vulgar speech, curse words, using the Lord’s name in vain, etc., are condemned in the Bible; yet how many saints have been guilty of using “softened” or euphemistic words?
  1. The definition of euphemism is, “The act or an example of substituting a mild, indirect, or vague term for one considered harsh, blunt, or offensive.”
  2. Maybe you use words like “golly,” “gosh,” “gee,” “thank goodness,” “darn,” “heck,” “good heavens,” etc. People who use these words either think nothing about it, or they think they are avoiding foul language.
- C. Along with profanity and euphemisms, one must refrain from other tongue sins.
  1. Slander (Psalm 101:5; Proverbs 10:18).
  2. Talebearing or gossip (Proverbs 11:13; 1 Timothy 5:13).
  3. Whispering and backbiting (Proverbs 16:28; 2 Corinthians 12:20).
- D. There is no excuse for anyone using inappropriate language. Give deep thought to your speech (Matthew 12:36), and bridle your tongue (James 1:26; 3:3-6). The Ephraimites proved their ethnicity by mispronouncing “Shibboleth,” which led to their death (Judges 12:6). Will your speech show you are a Christian?

## ***II. Don't Conform With Your Friends***

- A. Good friends are worth their weight in gold (Proverbs 27:9). However, friends are human and they can influence us for evil.
- B. There are examples of good friends.

1. Andrew brought Peter to Jesus (John 1:40-41) and Philip brought Nathaniel to Jesus (John 1:45).
  2. Ruth refused to leave Naomi and was determined to return to her mother-in-law's homeland (Ruth 1:16-17).
  3. Naaman's servants got him to see his irrational behavior; after their questions he went and dipped in the Jordan River (2 Kings 5:13).
- C. There are examples of bad friends.
1. In 2 Samuel 13:3, Amnon had a friend Jonadab who helped him hatch a plan to rape Tamar.
  2. Job's friends accused him wrongfully and were no help to him in his terrible affliction (Job 6:14-21).
  3. Though he was sorry, Herod "sent and beheaded John" due to the influence of Herodias and her dancing daughter (Matthew 14:6-10).
- D. Do not let your friends influence you into drinking, cursing, smoking, cheating, lying, fornication, etc. (Proverbs 13:20).

### **III. Don't Conform With Your Dress**

- A. Three words in 1 Timothy 2:9-10 dictate how a woman is to dress. Although Paul is giving instruction as to how women should dress in the public assemblies, the principles will apply in other situations and to men as well. If modest apparel is appropriate in worship, it is appropriate everywhere. If what is prohibited in dress is wrong in worship services, how could you show that it is right elsewhere?
1. Proper or modest clothing.
    - a) The word denotes orderliness or neatly arranged. It does not mean "modest" as opposed to immodest, or what excites improper desires, but what is appropriate, suitable, or becoming.
    - b) This means that the appearance of a woman will not be offensive to anyone (cp. 1 Timothy 3:2, "good behavior").
  2. Modestly or shamefacedness.
    - a) The word means a demeanor of respect and reverence toward others (cp. Hebrews 12:28). It is best reflected in a discussion of godly character.
      - (1) Our defenses are lowered because of the abundance of "acceptable" exposure. Therefore, we feel no sense of shame (Jeremiah 8:10-12)!
      - (2) This attitude refrains from going over the limits of modesty, as well as from the dishonor which immodesty would cause.
    - b) Christians even get bogged down in discussions of what is and what is not proper. If you have to ask, it probably is not.
  3. Discreetly or sobriety.
    - a) The word means "sanity, soundness of mind," and in this context it stands basically for perfect self-mastery in the physical appetites. It definitely had a sexual nuance when applied to women.
    - b) Inappropriate attire exposes the body to the view of others. A godly women will think this exposure is disgraceful and disrespectful. When you think of a godly woman, how is she dressed?
- B. According to Peter, when we get the heart right, everything else will fall in place (1 Peter 3:3-4). The Christian should dress as to reflect their minds are occupied

with nobler thoughts (cp. Philippians 4:8), not the proud or alluring display of their bodies to the opposite sex.

- C. When Adam and Eve made themselves “aprons” or loincloths (Genesis 3:7), which is the equivalent of modern swimwear or many of the shorts worn today, it was not enough. God made them “coats” or tunics (v. 21), a long garment that covered the body. Modesty is always fashionable to God!

#### **IV. Don't Conform With Your Faithfulness**

- A. After becoming a Christian, God wants you to be faithful (Matthew 25:21, 23; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, 17; Revelation 17:14). Faithful means “trustworthy, dependable, or reliable.” In other words, it is someone who does not quit, even in the face of problems and trials.
- B. There are several people who were faithful in service to the Lord mentioned in the New Testament.
  - 1. Timothy (1 Corinthians 4:17).
  - 2. Tychicus (Ephesians 6:21).
  - 3. Epaphras (Colossians 1:7).
  - 4. Onesimus (Colossians 4:9).
  - 5. Silvanus (1 Peter 5:12).
  - 6. Antipas (Revelation 2:13).
- C. It will be easy and tempting to let work or extracurricular activities (sports, FFA, 4-H, band, chorus, homework, etc.) become a stumblingblock.
  - 1. Remember that when you violate your conscience by failing to do what you know is right, such as miss services, you sin (James 4:17).
  - 2. Balak cast a stumblingblock before the Israelites and caused them to sin (Revelation 2:14). Activities, which are not wrong in and of themselves, can do the same!

**Conclusion.** Someone once said that if you want to see the world pass by, just get on the interstate and drive the speed limit. This is kind of like being a faithful Christian. If you insist on staying within the limits of God's word, be prepared to be left behind as the world rushes on to destruction.

The alternative to conforming is transforming. The Christian is solely responsible for this transformation, and it can be brought about only by renewing the mind, the inward man, day by day (2 Corinthians 4:16). The outward transformation is effected by an inner change in the mind, and the Spirit's means of accomplishing this is the word (Psalm 119:11; Colossians 1:28). Have backbone. Have principles. Have zeal to glorify your Lord in these four areas (1 Peter 2:12).