

CURRICULUM SERIES

THREE WEEKS

Transform

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UNDERSTAND IT

This curriculum is a three-week series designed around Romans 12:2: “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” (NIV)

This series is conversational and is best suited for small- or medium-sized groups of junior high and high school students.

THE CENTRAL TRUTH OF EACH WEEK

WEEK 1: DON'T CONFORM

Our decision not to conform gives us the freedom and the opportunity to live as the people God created us to be and to grab hold of our identity in Christ.

WEEK 2: BE TRANSFORMED

God is not after self-improvement—God is after new life. The transformation we are called to is not an outward transformation but an inward transformation of the heart, mind, and spirit.

WEEK 3: GET RENEWED

We renew and refresh our minds by investing in our relationships with God. Through time spent with Scripture, in prayer, and in action, our minds become focused in ways that help us hear the voice of God over all the other voices in our world.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Don't Conform

UNDERSTAND IT

THIS WEEK'S CENTRAL TRUTH

Our decision not to conform gives us the freedom and the opportunity to live as the people God created us to be—it allows us to grab hold of an identity in Christ.

KEY VERSES

- Romans 12:2
- 1 Peter 1:14-16
- Romans 8:29
- Romans 13:14
- Ephesians 5:1-2
- Philippians 2:5

PREP

Before your group meets, gather the supplies you need for the activities in the INTRODUCE IT and STUDY IT sections.

INTRODUCE IT

ACTIVITY: SKITTLE QUESTIONS ICEBREAKER

SUPPLIES

A fun-sized bag of Skittles for each student

INSTRUCTIONS

Give each student a bag of Skittles. Everyone can eat their Skittles, but they need to save two for the activity. Each color represents a different question or action. Go around the circle and have each student say their name and answer the question or do the action that corresponds with the colors they have left.

- Green—Where are you from?
- Red—What is the most recent part of the Bible you've read or heard?
- Orange—Sing part of your favorite TV show theme song.
- Purple—What is your favorite subject in school and why?
- Yellow—Share one crazy fact about yourself.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE . . .

Our theme verse for this week is Romans 12:2: "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (NIV).

We'll break this verse down into three chunks: don't conform, be transformed, and get renewed. Today we're going to start with don't conform.

STUDY IT

SAY SOMETHING LIKE . . .

In the first part of our theme verse, we see that God is calling us not to conform to the patterns of this world. In order to figure out how not to conform, we need to be aware of what it means to conform.

Merriam-Webster defines conform as "to be similar to or the same as something," "to obey or agree with something," or "to do what other people do: to behave in a way that is accepted by most people."¹

ASK

In your own words, what does it mean to conform?

SAY SOMETHING LIKE . . .

In the Message version of this verse, the first part states, "Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking."

So we can say that conforming is being similar to or the same as something, doing what other people do, behaving in a way that is accepted by most people, and fitting into our culture without even thinking about it.

When God tells us, "Do not conform to the patterns of this world," God is saying not to do what other people do, not to behave in a way that is accepted by most people, and not to fit into our culture without thinking about it. In other words, God calls us to live differently than those around us. God calls us to stand out and to be set apart.

The Greek word for conform used in Romans 12:2 loosely translates to "fashion yourselves." "Do not 'fashion yourselves' to the pattern of this world." The problem with fashioning ourselves to anything is that it requires zero internal change—it just makes us look like something we're not.

ACTIVITY: PEER PRESSURE IN A BOTTLE

SUPPLIES

An empty water bottle with a deflated balloon inside

DO THIS

Ask for a student volunteer who thinks they're capable of blowing up a balloon. Give the student the bottle and tell the student to blow hard into the balloon so it will inflate. No matter how hard the student blows, the balloon will not inflate inside the bottle.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE . . .

This represents the pressure we often feel to conform and act or be a certain way.

¹<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/conform>

Let's say the balloon represents a person and the bottle is peer pressure. No matter how hard the person tries, when that person gives in to the pressures of the world and conforms to its patterns, that person will not grow into who God intended. It will stifle and choke that person. It will prevent spiritual growth.

DO THIS

Remove the balloon from the bottle and have your volunteer blow it up.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE . . .

When we decide to free ourselves from the pressures to conform and when we decide it isn't important to please others who want to force us to live and believe a certain way, we become free to grow and thrive and become what God intended.

Rachel Held Evans said it this way, "We must remain faithful to the gospel and to God's Word in the face of this pressure or else risk losing our identity. We can't just give in to the world because of pressure to be cool."

Our decision not to conform gives us the freedom and the opportunity to live as the person God created us to be—to grab hold of our identity in Christ. When we do this, then we'll be able to see what really living is like. Choosing to live according to the patterns of this world robs us of the ability to really tap into the joy and blessing of living as Christ's followers.

CONNECT IT

Break your students up into small groups.

ASK

- *Where do you feel the most pressure to conform?*
- *What are some challenges you face in not conforming?*
- *When in your life has it been the most difficult to go against what everyone else around you is doing in order to take a stand for living the way God wants you to live?*

ASK

If we shouldn't conform to the patterns of this world, then what (or who) should we conform to?

READ

- 1 Peter 1:14-16
- Romans 8:29
- Romans 13:14
- Ephesians 5:1-2
- Philippians 2:5

ASK

- *According to these Scriptures, who are we called to conform to?*
- *What does it look like to conform to Jesus?*
- *How would someone live if that person was conforming to Jesus rather than conforming to the patterns of the world?*

LIVE IT

SAY SOMETHING LIKE . . .

All parts of our lives and characters should be in the process of becoming conformed—both inwardly and outwardly—to God’s standards. This doesn’t mean we won’t feel pulled back into our old ways, but we are encouraged in 1 Peter to be like God, holy in everything we do. This means being totally devoted and dedicated to God, set aside for God’s special purposes, and set apart from the world and sin.

PRAY

God, there are a lot of pressures around us to shape our lives according to what other people think. We open ourselves to you and to the work you’re doing in us to understand those pressures and know how to respond to them. Continue to guide us in big and small ways toward a life that conforms to you alone. We know that’s what we were made for and that it’s the only way we’ll be able to live life to its fullest. Amen.