

THEME: Don't Conform

LOOKING BACK

- What was the most important thing you did or heard from the last session?

CONNECT

Stand Out and Be Different

Resources

Bibles, pen, letter size (A4) paper, scissors

Icebreaker Activity - Stand Out

Activity – We're Going to Play a Game – Does Anyone Feel Brave?

In this game, the brave person will repeatedly say "seven" for one minute. At the same time, the rest of the group will repeat "one" and try to make the brave one join them (they are not allowed to touch the person).

If you want to repeat the exercise, use two similar words like "green" and "bean."

Discuss

- Did the group persuade the individual to say "one," or did they drown out the sound of the non-conformer?
- Ask the non-conformer: Did you ever say the wrong word? Did you stop speaking? If so, why?
- Have you ever tried to stand out from the crowd? What did it feel like?

Today, we will look at a passage in Scripture that talks about this.

TRUTH TO KNOW

Faith Focus: We Must Be Transformed By the Bible

Introduction

We want to help you know the Truth and will do our best to tell you what is true, but you don't just need to take our word. You need to read it in the Bible for yourself. So we will open the Bible and read the Truth each time we meet. This week's "Truth to Know" is found in **Romans 12**.

Did you know the Bible tells us to be transformed by the Word of God?

Background to This Bible Passage

In the book of Romans, the apostle Paul wrote a letter to the church in Rome. Paul had not yet visited Rome, so he wanted to introduce himself to the believers there. Paul also outlined many truths about the righteousness of God and His plan to save all people through Christ. In the previous chapters, Romans 9-11, Paul shared how much God loves His chosen people, Israel, and He has a special plan of redemption with them in mind. Paul ends chapter 11 with a song of praise, saying, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments, and His paths beyond tracing out!" Paul begins Romans 12 by saying, "Therefore," meaning now that we know how amazing God's plans of redemption are and how amazing God is, let's talk about how we should live. Paul then gives more details about how believers ought to conduct their lives.

The Unfolding Story - Your Interactive Teaching

Read **Romans 12:2**.

- **Romans 12:2** (ESV) 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." (emphasis added)
- Let's look at this Bible Verse in the NLT: **Romans 12:2** (NLT): "Don't *copy the behavior and customs of this world*, but let God transform you into a new person by *changing the way you think*. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect." (emphasis added) Notice how the NLT refers to the word "conform" (*to copy the behavior and customs of this world*). Which translation do you like better? The ESV or the NLT? Why?
- In today's activity, one person tried to stand out as different. What can help us stand out from the world rather than conforming to it? Read the Bible to keep God's perspective on things.
- According to **Romans 12:2**, how does reading the Bible help us not to conform to the world's ways? The Bible renews our thinking. It shows us what is right and wrong and changes our thinking. Regularly reading the Bible can affect the choices we will make in life.
- Why is it so important for us to be able to know right from wrong in these last days? Jesus is returning, and He said there will be a lot of confusion on the earth in the season that He comes back. Jesus' followers need to recognize when things are wrong and learn to resist the pressure to conform to the world's ways.
- What is a key difference between being conformed and transformed? Being conformed is done by the world, and it impacts who we are and how we think, whereas being transformed is done by God and starts in our mind and affects our actions. Being conformed is going from the outside to the inside, and being transformed is going from the inside to the outside.
- God wants us to know His will and to be able to discern right from wrong. He wants His followers to have their thinking transformed. Hands up if you think you have had your thinking renewed by the Bible before. (*Give them a moment to respond with their hands, then hands down. No comments needed.*)
- We will practice being transformed in our next activity.

Activity Suggestion - Find the Best Match!

Aim: Practice identifying the teachings of Jesus that would help renew our thinking in particular situations. To practice looking into Jesus' teachings (in His message we call the Sermon on the Mount), with a view towards living those teachings as a lifestyle.

Things to Prepare: Prepare papers with either Situations or Scenarios written on them (see last page of these notes).

Activity: Read out each situation and get everyone to select which Bible verses could be used to help renew your thinking.

(For a larger group, you can hand out the situations and scriptures to different people and see if they can find their matching pair.)

Jesus taught some very powerful principles for how to live a lifestyle according to God's will. You will randomly choose (or be given) a piece of paper. This paper will have either a Situation or a Scripture written on it. Read it and think about what a good match for it would be. If it's a Situation, you should search for someone with a good Scripture that would help you not conform to it. If you have a Scripture, search for someone with a suitable Situation for which your Scripture would be most helpful. Once you find your best match, sit down together so we know you are done. Once everyone is done, we will go through all the matches together.

Discuss - Renewing Our Minds

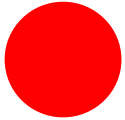
- As we get closer to Jesus' return, we will find ourselves in more situations where we feel tempted to just conform to the world's ways. This activity helped us practice identifying Scripture that will help us to say NO to conforming.
- We act differently when God's Word renews our thinking. We can discern God's will, recognize right from wrong, and make good and God-pleasing choices. We can take a stand against the ways of this world.
- Which one of these situations do you think might be the hardest for you? When you have your answer, raise your hand. We won't share our answers, but just know that all of these can be difficult when most people around you choose the opposite way you've chosen.
- **Matthew 7:13-14** (NIV) gives wisdom for when we get into challenging situations. "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it." What do you think this verse means? The narrow gate, or the least popular way, often leads to abundant life. The verse talks about eternal life that comes from choosing to walk with Jesus. However, it can also give a picture of what it means not to be conformed to the patterns of the world.
- If you choose to stand with God's Word and allow it to transform your thinking, you may find yourself standing alone or with just a few others. Are you willing to take the narrow gate?

READY TO GO

Thinking about how this affects our lives and our response to the signs we see.

Think about what you can do not to conform but to be transformed by the Word of God.

TIME FOR ACTION



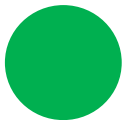
1. "STOP & THINK" Action Point

Take two minutes to think about your life. What situation are you facing where you could use God's Word to transform your thinking?



2. "PAUSE TO PRAY" Action Point

Have a conversation with God about today's lesson. Ask God for a Scripture that will renew your thinking and lead to actions that are good and pleasing to the Lord.



3. "GO & DO" Action Point

Ask God to lead you to a scripture verse or ask someone else to pray for a verse for you. Once you have a verse, read and meditate on it (this means thinking about it and using it to pray to God).

SPRINGBOARD

Discuss what topic you would like to do together next time. After this session, you may wish to follow up next time with one of the following sessions:

- Guard Against Deception
- Stand Firm
- Whose Life Is It Anyway?

DEEPER STUDY

For those who would like to study further the themes raised in this session.

For Study

1. **2 Corinthians 3:18** speaks of being transformed. Whose image are we being transformed into? Have you ever known someone who seems to have a glow of the Lord's glory on their face? How does spending time with God lead to this?
2. **Exodus 34:29-35** recounts an amazing experience that Moses had when he entered the Lord's presence to speak with Him. Compare and contrast some of this experience's details with the transfiguration in **Mark 9:2-4**. As you look at both events, what do you understand about Jesus?

For Memorizing

1. **Matthew 7:13-14** (NIV): "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."
2. **Hebrews 1:3a** (NIV): "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word."

For Observation

1. Our thinking guides our actions. Conforming to the ways of the world can happen more easily than we may realize. Watch [this video](https://youtu.be/X6kWyggROL8) clip of a "social conformity experiment," and ask yourself honestly what you might have done in that situation. (<https://youtu.be/X6kWyggROL8>) What was the young woman in the experiment thinking as she chose to conform? How do you think God feels about people who just conform to the patterns around them? How will you strive to be more intentional about following God's ways rather than being swayed by the world's ways?

For Action

1. Think about the signs of the times and choose one global trend or issue that you find particularly concerning. Find a Bible verse to help you not conform to the pattern of this world.

Before the Next IN:Tribe

1. We have learned about the importance of standing firm in these last days and not conforming to the world's ways but being transformed by allowing God's Word to change our thinking. Before the next IN:Tribe, share what you have learned with at least two others.

Situations and Scriptures Activity Cards

Situations	Scriptures
Your friends are starting to judge the teacher, saying that he/she has done things wrong and isn't a good person.	"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." (Matthew 7:1-2, NIV)
Everyone in your friend group is ignoring a new student at school. The new student has no friends and feels very alone.	"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:14-16, NIV)
Your friend is saying many things to cause you to really worry about a test or assignment.	"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." (Matthew 6:34, NIV)
Someone has been mean to you. Your friends are telling you to get revenge against that person.	"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." (Matthew 5:43-44, NIV)
Your best friend is always talking about how much money their family has. You look at their lives and wish you had more money, too.	"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:19-21, NIV)