

Whose Image Are You Being Conformed To?

When I was a young man (late teens and early 20s) and before I became a believer, I used to hang around guys who loved cars—especially powerful cars.

Since I was an automotive technician and loved to improve a car's performance, it was comfortable for me to hang around "gearheads." I used to modify my engine, transmission and differential to get the maximum performance out of my daily driving machine.

The more I hung out with these guys, the more of a "gearhead" and "hot rodder" I became. We talked the talk and walked the walk. I expanded my skills in power and performance so much that I took my personal performance machine (1965 Plymouth) to the drag strip and began racing it when I was about 21 years old. It was now my love, my passion to race my street driver each Saturday night.

But soon that was not good enough, I had to have a serious race car, one that was only built for the racetrack. So, I spent all the money I could afford and all the spare time I had in building a "superstock" drag race car. I now became more of a gearhead than ever before.

Racing was now my life, my idol. It was my religion at that time in my life. You see, when I spent my time and gave my heart to being with gearheads, I was conformed into a gearhead.

"For those whom He foreknew, He predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers" (Rom 8:29).

So, here is how it works: The ones you spend time with, the

ones you are influenced by, these are the ones you will become like. If you associate with those who drink, you will most likely start drinking. If they are smokers, you will most likely start smoking. If they are immoral people, you will most likely end up being immoral yourself. If they have a certain religion, you will most likely take on that religion.

You will take on the image of those whom you associate with and those who influence you. You already know this; that is why, as parents, you are so concerned with whom your children associate with because of what they might be conformed into.

“Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company corrupts good morals’” (1 Cor. 15:33).

This is the very reason why God warned the Israelites to not intermarry with the nations who had idols, or they would be carried away to worship the same idols. This very thing happened to Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived. When Solomon was old, his many foreign wives turned his heart away to other gods. The associations we have are critical as to what we become and what we believe and the image we are conformed into.

The only image we should be conformed into is the image of Jesus Christ. Today we have thousands of denominations all claiming to be of Christ (Christian). Each one is different in spirit, practice and doctrine.

The problem is that if you start going to Brand X denomination, you will start being conformed into the image of Brand X. But if you leave the Brand X denomination and start going to “brand Y” denomination, you will begin to lose the Brand X image and start taking on the Brand Y image. And, of course, if you leave the Brand Y denomination (or no denomination) and start attending the Brand Z denomination, you will begin to take on more of the Brand Z denomination image and start losing the images of the other brands.

When I came to the Lord at 32 years of age (1979), I gave up my gearhead image/idol, my immorality idol and every sin I could think of. I turned to the Lord with all my heart and began to attend a Brand A church.

But I didn't conform very well to it because I had questions and concerns. So, I took my family and moved to a Brand B denomination. There I was given a different gospel and was offered different doctrines. I raised more questions and had more concerns about not being able to accept the image that was being presented to me.

So, I tried Brand C, Brand X, Brand Y, Brand Z and so on over the next three years. Each one had a different spirit and a different gospel, so I left the denominational world and took my family home so I could do everything in my power to find and be conformed into the image of Jesus Christ through much study and prayer.

"Watch yourselves, so that you do not forget the covenant of the Lord your God, which He made with you, and make yourself a graven image or the likeness of anything as the Lord your God has forbidden you. For the Lord your God is a consuming fire. He is a jealous God. (Deut. 4:23-24).

Men have made many graven images of Jesus to suit their own desires. That is why we have many denominations with many different gospels and many different spirits. So, what are you being conformed into?

Jesus is not a Brand A, B, C, X, Y or Z. Jesus is the exact representation of His Father. He is the image of the one and only true God. We are to be conformed into his image and only His image. No other image will be able to enter into heaven.

Are you being conformed into the image of Jesus, or are you being conformed into one of the other "brands"? {eo}

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