

CONFORMED OR TRANSFORMED?

A number of years ago, psychologist Solomon Asch conducted a series of experiments seeking to measure the power of conformity in groups. In a classroom setting, he showed a group of participants four vertical lines of varying lengths and asked a series of questions: Which line is longer? Which lines are the same in length? etc. All but one of the participants was a "confederate" (people who knew the true aims of the experiment). The "real" participant was clueless as to the real intention of the experiment. As the questions were asked the participants responded out loud. The "real" participant was always placed last or next to the last. At first, everyone answered the questions in the same way, giving the answer that was obviously correct. But after a few rounds of questions, all of the confederates began to give the same incorrect answers. Asch wanted to know if the real participant would change his answer and conform to the group even though their answer was obviously incorrect. The results were sobering. The real participant conformed to the majority 37% of the time, giving an answer that was obviously wrong. And, 75% conformed at least once.

Asch's conformity experiments gave scientific validation for what most of us have known all along. It is hard to stand alone against the crowd. Social pressure can cause a person to say he believes something that is obviously incorrect.

Jesus calls his followers to be salt and light in the world (Matthew 5:13-16). But the only way our lives will impact our culture is when we are able and willing to resist conformity and stand up for what is true.

I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one (John 17:15).

Therefore come out from them and be separate (II Cor. 6:17).

The world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever (I John 2:17).

Don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? (James 4:4).

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind (Romans 12:2).

One final point. Asch discovered that when just one of his "confederates" voiced a different opinion than the group, then the "real" participant was much more likely to resist the urge to conform and speak the truth himself. All it took was one voice of truth in a room of lies to turn the tide.

Friend, are you conformed or transformed? Dare to be different. Let the aroma of Christ set you apart from the crowd and mark you as qualitatively different... distinctively His! The power of one witness for truth can change history!

Pastor Stan