

Nonconformity

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As our young people prepare themselves for the great adventure of adulthood, they invariably find themselves at odds with the expectations of the world. Whether it is high school or college, marriage or a career, a best friend or a professor, the conflict between Christ and Satan manifests itself in ways that should be expected, especially by parents and leaders in the church. Yet, even with this knowledge and experience at their disposal, many young people still make the mistake of seeking the world's approval – often in the form of rebellion against parents and the religious beliefs they were raised to believe.

“And do not be conformed to this world” (Romans 12:2)

Oddly enough, in the Bible it is Christianity that is seen as counterculture, not the alternatives of the world. When our young people think they are “finding themselves” by striking out on their own and rejecting Christianity, they are actually enslaving themselves to sin and the flesh (Romans 6:20-23). True counterculture is achieved by rejecting the notion that satisfaction and purpose are found in putting stock in this present age:

- *“Those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace” (Romans 8:5f).*
- *“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:20).*
- *“Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on the earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:2f).*
- *“I am the Lord your God, who has separated you from all other people” (Leviticus 20:24).*
- *“Love not the world, nor the things in the world... For the world passes away, and the lust thereof; but he who does the will of God abides forever” (1 John 2:15-17).*

Remember Your Heroes

It is important to remain aware of other young people who have managed to stay true to God, in spite of enormous societal pressures. You are not alone, and when you are faced with difficult situations and your faith is tested, you are in very good company.

- By the age of 17 Joseph was an independent, spiritual young man who did the right thing regardless of the consequences (Genesis 37:2).
- Daniel took a definite stand for God and His truth even though he was a young man, maybe even still in his teens (Daniel 1:8).
- Timothy was selected by Paul to help him spread the gospel when Timothy was probably still in his teens as well (Acts 16:1ff).
- Hezekiah was a godly and wise king at the age of 25 (2 Chronicles 29:2f).

- Josiah began to seriously seek God and change the Jewish nation for the better when he was 16 years old (2 Chronicles 34:1-3).

The Ultimate Nonconformity? Faith.

When we consider the variety of individuals mentioned in Hebrews 11:1ff, something very striking comes to mind. All of these people were asked by God to break conventions, erase stereotypes, and go beyond the realm of what the world expects. Abraham left a life of comfort for a better country. Moses rejected the pleasantness of Pharaoh's court. Rahab and her family. Samuel. David. Enoch. Noah. All of these great individuals refused to conform to the world around them, and achieved more than all of their forgettable contemporaries. It was all by faith in God.