

## The Danger of Non-Conformists

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by Wayne Goff

There is an element of people in society who love to bend and break the rules. They consider themselves to be free and unrestricted, and they hate and despise anyone who tries to put limits or restraints upon them. They truly believe that their lifestyle is the envy of the rest of the world, and view conformists as “sheep” — mindless followers of the Rule Makers.

Well, mark me down as one of the “**sheep**” then because I always felt extremely comfortable in school, in sports, and in society as a rule keeper. Sometimes that would get me in trouble because others viewed me as “the teacher’s pet,” or “the coach’s favorite,” or “the fellow easy to get along with.” But I didn’t really care because I believed, as a lifetime church attender, that we are here to follow the rules — especially God’s rules. The Ten Commandments do not seem overly restrictive to me — the first four teach us to love, respect and honor God, and the last six teach us how to get along with others — honor your parents, don’t murder, don’t commit adultery, don’t steal, don’t bear false witness, and don’t covet (Ex. 20). For the life of me, I cannot see the problem with these.

To make things even better, the New Testament is full of hope and promise for the rule breakers — Christ’s blood forgives the sin for which we are truly sorry and repent (1 John 2:1-2). Even the most ardent rule follower will fall short of God’s rules and need moral and Divine help (Romans 3:23). And the lifelong “non-conformist” who sees the error of his way can come to God and find peace, joy and love!

Dear reader, please do not misunderstand me. Being a rule follower is not all ease and glory! **There is the ever present danger of following the wrong Rule Makers!** Jesus warned: *“Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into the ditch”* (Matthew 15:13-14). You see, some believe they can make up their own rules religiously, be good, and have others follow them. But Jesus said that this was not true. So if you fancy yourself to be a rule follower, and a good person, realize that you must always be careful not to follow the wrong leader! Just being sincere religiously will not keep you safe. Saul of Tarsus learned this lesson the hard way, as an ardent ruler follower, when he said later: *“Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth”* (Acts 26:9). He followed the wrong rules, set up by some of the most religious scholars, and got lost along the way. Fortunately, he got a second chance from the very Jesus he once persecuted.

**The danger of being a non-conformist** is that of “cutting off your nose to spite your face.” The anger, bitterness and resentment of “being made to do something” can lead one down the path of self-destruction. The ideology of the non-conformist is that he knows what is best for himself, and he certainly doesn’t need anyone to tell him otherwise! The truth of the matter is that it is not in man to direct his own steps (Jeremiah 10:23). The truth is that often our choices to improve ourselves are the results of self-deception. Satan convinced Eve that she would be better off if she ate of the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:4-5). To this day there are those Eve-imitators who truly believe that they can *“do evil that good may come”* (Romans 3:8), as they tout the doctrine of “the end justifies the means”!

Consider a brief list of some famous non-conformists and the results of their lives: Vincent Van Gogh, James Dean, Marilyn Monroe, Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, Amy Winehouse, Kurt Cobain. These intelligent, talented souls lived tortured lives, often contemplating life’s serious questions, and self-medicating to ease the mental pain and anguish of seemingly purposeless lives. *“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death* (Proverbs 14:12). The solution which is so often rejected by the non-conformist is to learn to conform to the Plan of their Maker. Put on the *“new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him”* (Colossians 3:10).

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