WOW: Word Of the Week

Conformity

February 11, 2026

#2 in a brief "radical discipleship" series.
#1, maturity, strive toward completeness, the goal, discipleship fully realized.
This week, conformity. Next week, #3, nonconformity. Two WOWs that belong together.

Romans 8:29, "conformed to the image of his Son." Image—a future WOW? Looking at possible synonyms, this is Christlikeness (a word John Stott suggests in his little work, *The Radical Disciple)*.

Conformity is us, but it is not all us. Conformity is possible as present reality because of God's action on our behalf. Conformity looks back, it also looks forward. Conformity reminds me of Philippians 2: Jesus in nature (morphe) God, taking on human nature (form). In the human likeness (homoioma) and the human condition (schema). Jesus took human nature so that we humans could share in the divine nature—that's the way Peter describes it (2 Peter 1:4).

We are called to be like him. What does that mean? We may not grasp it in its entirety now, but we shall see, we shall be like him when he is revealed (1 John 3:1-4).

Think with me about this word conformity in the context of discipleship.

Conformity means we take on the shape of Jesus. Remember the old experiment? What happens if you grow a vegetable in a bottle? It takes on the shape of the bottle. Philippians 2 suggests three aspects of conformity.

Our nature is remade in Christ, this is what we are on the inside. We cannot do this, but we can refuse to let God do it. I read an article this week, "Mad After 40 Years." It was based on the story of a 40th high school class reunion. Get the picture, adults almost 60 years old! One student expressed regret for past misbehavior and mischief, often directed at a certain classmate. The classmate refused the apology. We can refuse God's work in our lives.

Second, our likeness also conforms, this is what we are on the outside, this is what people see, likeness, appearance. Likeness is how we behave, our actions. It is aligning our life and logic, belief and behavior. It is intentional on our part, hard work. It requires effort.

Third, our outward circumstances are intentionally adjusted. We no longer run with the same old crowd. We avoid evil companions. We control what enters our thinking. To use Paul's word, the scheme of our lives is changed.

Conformity can be hard. John makes it easy. We may not get it totally right now, but the eventual outcome, the eventual goal is that we will be like him. Being like him is a lot easier if we have been with him. Spend time with him. An amazing biblical text is in Acts 4:13, the Jewish leaders perceived that Peter and John had been with Jesus. They had spent three years with him. Disciples – like the Master. They had listened, learned, their lives were changed little by little. They thought like he thought, they taught what he taught.

A process—here is the goal. Inside, outside, all around us!