

Like Everyone Else?

In the auditorium class that brother Kenny Peden teaches on Sunday morning, we've been studying from the book of **1 Samuel**. In the beginning of the book, Israel is being ruled by judges, a system of government that had God's approval. The judges were to guide Israel using God's words as their guide. However, many of the judges forsook God and did evil in His eyes. Samuel, on the other hand, was not like them. He judged Israel, understanding that God was the true leader of His people. However, when Samuel grew old and appointed his sons Joel and Abijah to succeed him, they refused to follow their father's example. They engaged in **"dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice."** (1 Samuel 8:3)

It is then that Israel asked Samuel to appoint a king to rule them. **"You are old, and your sons do not follow your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have."** (1 Samuel 8:5) They had rejected the uniqueness of God's plan for them as His chosen people and decided they wanted to be like everybody else. Eventually Saul was chosen king, and we all know how his life turned out.

Many of us are like the children of Israel. We refuse to allow God to rule over us as His servants and choose to serve something or someone else. We give up our uniqueness as God's people in order to be "like everyone else" for one reason or another. Maybe we're tired of being good and want some fun in our lives. Maybe we don't like the ridicule we face because we are different. It is because of things in our lives such as these that we change to be like those around us.

There are many verses of scripture that speak to this attitude of "following the crowd" and God's feelings about it. Two come to mind, and neither one of them suggests that it is wise to become like everyone else. First is **Romans 12:2**, where Paul tells us:

"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Don't be so much like the world, CHURCH, that the world can't tell the difference between you and it. You have to go through a change in mindset—choosing to serve God rather than continually pleasing yourselves.

The second is from Peter, who said in **1 Peter 2:9-10**:

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God."

We are unique in this world. We are the people of God, called by the gospel of Jesus Christ to be His own holy, special possession. We can't, CHURCH, give up our uniqueness to be like everyone else.
—Johnny Stephens