

"Dealing With Peer Pressure"

Text - Exodus 23:2

Introduction : Peer Pressure affects ALL of us. Societal/Vocational/Educational/etc. Often old problems are given new names. Peer pressure is a term not used in the Bible. However the idea of peer pressure is clearly seen there. Peer comes from the Latin *par* which means "equal." One's peers are one's equals, friends and associates.

According to a recent survey of 337 teenagers, 90 percent experienced peer pressure and 80 percent admitted giving in to peer pressure at least weekly, even if it meant doing something they knew was wrong.

Peer pressure is another way of referring to the problem of *evil associates* or *the wrong crowd* or *bad friends*. Paul wrote, **1 Corinthians 15:33** "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners."

The devil knows that peer pressure is one of the most effective ways souls can be led to sin. Remember, Adam was led astray through Eve's peer pressure. Peer pressure led Abraham to tell a half-truth on two occasions (Gen. 17:11-20; 20:2-5). Isaac spoke in a similar way and with less basis when he sought to deceive for fear of peer pressure (Gen. 26:7).

Peer pressure led Israel into idolatry and associated sins over and over. Because of such a great danger, God wanted his people to be separate in diet, dress, life and religion. Marriage with unbelieving inhabitants was wisely forbidden by God. Solomon, the wisest man in his time, disregarded this and married many foreign women. In his old age he succumbed to peer pressure (1 Kgs. 11:1-13). So peer pressure is not just a problem of the young.

Peer pressure was involved when Israel came to Samuel and said, "Make for us a king to judge us like all the nations" (1 Sam. 8:5). The prophets had to deal with this problem all during the existence of Israel and Judah.

One of the most sordid examples of peer pressure is told in 2 Samuel 13. David's son Amnon felt such lust for his half-sister Tamar that he became sick. He knew it was improper for him to do anything to her. However, Amnon had a friend and relative named Jonadab. He was sinister and crafty. Jonadab suggested a hypocritical and diabolical plan by which Amnon could take advantage of his half-sister. Amnon followed the suggestion. The result was he was not happy, he disgraced and ruined the life of his half-sister, hatred was generated in the family, and finally Tamar's brother Absalom murdered Amnon. David, as a loving father was deeply hurt. All of this because of peer pressure from an evil associate.

Peer pressure can make a wicked person even more wicked. When Ahab became king in Israel he continued "to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat." In other words, they continued to have altars and golden calves at Dan and Bethel. Then

he married princess Jezebel and was influenced to introduce Baal worship in Israel (1 Kgs. 16:30-33). Peer pressure from Jezebel caused him to "provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger" more than all who had been king before him. Herod, to whom John the Baptist preached, was a wicked man but he had respect for John, heard him gladly and did many things in connection with him. He was influenced to have a righteous man murdered because of the influence of his wife, dancing stepdaughter and those who sat with him (Mk. 6:14-27).

We may feel we are so strong that we think peer pressure is no danger to us. Beware! Even one who had been with Jesus for three years, who had healed people, cast out evil spirits, and felt he was so strong nothing could ever turn him aside, succumbed to peer pressure and denied Jesus three times and with an oath and cursing. You can read of Peter's fall in Matt. 26. We must take heed lest we fall (1 Cor. 10:12).

Why fight it?

- For Your Testimonies sake
- For Your Saviour
- For Your Usefulness to Him

Remember that the Majority is not always right

Be willing to stand up for what the Bible says

Expect your convictions to be tested

Trust God to work everything out

Mark 15:1-15

The crowd doesn't always ask for the right thing - v. 8

The crowd doesn't always listen to the right people - v. 11

The crowd doesn't always inspire the right decision - v. 15

**"Christian Young People Are Not Supposed To Fit In;
They Are Supposed To Stand Out!"**

- * Peer pressure can be very powerful at times.
- * Most of us would not like to admit how many times we have buckled underneath it.
- * We like to think of ourselves as independent thinkers, un-persuaded by what others think of us.
- * Sometimes it's people and/or their opinions of us that influence what we do and how we live.
- * Peer pressure can be both positive and negative.
- * Negative example -
Humor - Divorce vs. Murder

A nice, calm, respectable lady went into the pharmacy, walked up to the pharmacist, looked straight into his eyes, and said, "I would like to buy some cyanide."

The pharmacist asked, "Why in the world do you need cyanide?"

The lady replied, "I need it to poison my husband."

The pharmacist's eyes got big and he exclaimed, "I can't give you cyanide to kill your husband. That's against the law! I will lose my license! They'll throw both of us in jail! All kinds of bad things will happen. Absolutely not! You CANNOT have any cyanide!"

The lady reached into her purse and pulled out a picture of her husband at a fancy restaurant, having dinner with none other than the pharmacist's wife.

The pharmacist looked at the picture, surprised, and replied, "Well now, that's different. You didn't tell me you had a prescription."

Reporter interviewing a 104-year-old woman: "What is the best thing about being 104?" "No peer pressure."

The Truth About Peer Pressure

(1) It impacts everyone.

Proverbs 13:20

(2) It's both good and bad.

I Corinthians 15:33 Hebrews 10:24-25

(3) Like attracts like.

Amos 3:3

(4) Different levels of friendship create different levels of impact.

Matthew 11:18-19 & I Corinthians 5:9-13 Mark 3:13-19

Ways to Handle Peer Pressure

- Walk away from a bad/dangerous situation
 - Make the decision for yourself as to what you do
 - Think ahead about the outcome of your actions --- can you live with the consequences?
 - Avoid those people who might lead you to do things you don't want to do
 - Hang with friends who have the same values
 - Find friends who have a good reputation
 - Identify those negative behaviors that peer pressure might lead you to try:
 - Drugs
 - Smoking
 - Drinking
 - Sex
 - Stealing
 - Talk to your parents about limits (especially if they haven't initiated it)
 - Determine whom you are willing to hurt or lose (peer pressure always puts you in the middle)
 - Use others to help fight peer pressure, but don't completely rely on others
 - Spend time with many different people/groups; not just one group of friends
 - Set your lifetime goals and stay focused
 - Realize that everything you do in life impacts the future
 - When dating, spend time in groups rather than as a couple
 - Choose a best friend with the same Christian values and beliefs as you
 - Don't compare yourself to others --- you never win!
 - Remember that Christ died for you and that you are special
 - Being "cool" is being yourself!
 - Recall fads and peer pressure from years past to realize how foolish they can sometimes be
 - Identify that peer pressure seems to be a friend at first, but turns into a bitter enemy
 - Use humor to say "no"
 - Be honest and say that although your friendship with someone is important, you don't feel comfortable
 - Blame your parents! "My mom/dad wouldn't be happy if I did that!"
 - Say "I promised I'd never do that, and I want to be true to my word."
 - Say "Sorry, I've got to go now" and leave immediately
 - Simply and firmly say "No"
 - Realize that others will pressure you to act, but you alone live with the consequences.
- If possible, have a cell phone with you to call a loved one in cases of emergency!