

# Overcoming Peer Pressure

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Often old problems are given new names. Peer pressure is a term not used in the Bible. However the idea is clearly 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).

## How to Overcome Peer Pressure

**Parents need to teach an individual accountability to the personal, powerful, all-seeing and all-knowing God and Father.** We cannot be with our children everywhere and all the time. We must instill the idea that there is One who is always with them who sees and knows (Psa. 139:112). It is evident that Joseph had learned this lesson for when he, as a young, unattached man far from home and loved ones, was enticed by a sinful woman and replied, “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Gen. 39:9) Motorists watch their speed when they know the radar is turned on them. We need to realize that God’s radar is on us all the time.

**Each person needs to develop a personal commitment to the loving Savior.** Paul wrote, “For the love of Christ constrains us” (2 Cor. 5:14) and “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20). When Peter denied the Lord, cursed and swore, the thing that overwhelmed him was not that he had rebelled against the Divine law. That which brought him to tears and penitence was a realization that he had hurt the heart of his Savior; he had trampled on his loving heart!

**All must come to realize that sin is more than breaking certain abstract rules.** It actually grieves the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30) who is with and in the child of God. A child will not deliberately choose a course that brings grief to parents that he really loves. The prodigal son was not thinking when he took all and went to live as he pleased in a far country. Later he thought about home, his loving father and how he had grieved him. Sin had no appeal when he thought of the grief he had caused. Through Bible stories in early life, courage must be developed – a courage that will lead one to stand alone if need be. No finer examples can be found than those of Daniel and his friends (Dan. 3,6).

**We must not only root and ground our young people in the fundamentals of faith, we must also see that teaching at home and in Bible classes is directed to the issues they face.** They have a lot of peer pressure to smoke, drink, abuse drugs, lie, cheat, dance, fornicate, be immodest, proud and greedy. We live in perilous

times. Young people must be led to see men are “lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its powers. And from such people turn away!” (2 Tim. 3:1-5)

**Parents must be aware of the friends of their children.** Help them to associate with those who will aid them to live better. Be willing to open your home to the friends of your children. In this way you will have some knowledge of your children’s friends and control over their activities.

Newspapers, magazine articles or TV programs can suggest specific things young people must be warned against. The wise man warned his son over and over of dangers which threatened him (Prov. 1:10,11,15; 2:12,16; 4:14,15; 5:8; 13:20; 20:19; 22:24,25; 23:6,20, etc.).

**Children must learn actively to work for their own spiritual growth and development.** Bible study, prayer, regular attendance in class, worship, and meetings are vital. They must learn to seek the kingdom first (Matt. 6:33).

Parents have far more influence over their children than they may realize. It is vital that a good example be set in all areas of life. The home must be a happy and harmonious haven filled with joy and love. Children must be loved, cared for and properly disciplined. Often peer pressure leads them astray for their home life is not according to God’s plan.

Peer pressure is great, but it can be overcome. Jesus did. The Apostles did. We have help. “I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one” (1 Jn. 2:14b).