

The Old Hickory

Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Peer Pressure

Much of God's covenant with Israel of old dealt with human relations. Various and sundry laws pointed out how the Jew was to conduct himself among his peers. One of these admonitions was, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil" (**Ex. 23:2**). This was a very important decree; it showed the danger of peer pressure and pointed out very explicitly the dangers of being led astray by evil men. Peer pressure was an important factor in their lives; it has been from that time to the present. And perhaps as never before, peer pressure is an issue we have to wrestle with.

A leading educator noted that peer pressure is the strongest influence exerted on young people today. He stated that in most cases it is twice as strong as the influence of home and family, and yields a far greater influence than religion. I share this educator's convictions. All young people want to be accepted by their peers. And if to do so means disobeying parents and selling out personal convictions, some are willing to do so just to be a part of the bunch. In dealing with young folks and their problem of peer pressure, we often quote and expound on **1Corinthians 15:33**, "Evil companionships corrupt good morals." I contend this is a very important verse dealing with this subject. This

admonition does caution against the dangers of peer pressure being exerted by those who are void of spiritual convictions and virtues. Let us continue to warn our young people of the dangers of their associates that rob them of their virtues.

But is all peer pressure centered in young people? Does this pressure cease when we become adults? Well, certainly at all stages of life there are peer pressures put on us by those with whom we mix and mingle day by day. The Bible is not silent on this matter. Men and women of God have always faced immense pressures in dealing with their peers. And when God has spoken, He has always done so with a stern warning against letting our associates rob us of our moral integrity.

One of the most striking examples of this occurred in the life of Peter. Peter is one of our favorite Bible characters. He was truly one of Christ's most ardent followers. We hear him saying, "Even if I must die with thee, yet I will not deny thee" (**Matt. 26:25**). We hear him declare, "Lord, with thee I am ready to go both to prison and death" (**Luke 22:33**). But on that fateful night of the arrest and mock trial of the Lord, Peter "followed afar off" (**Matt. 26:53**); he stood with the wrong crowd, the enemies of the Lord (**Matt. 26:69**). And upon being asked of his allegiance to Christ, he cursed, swore, and denied that he even knew Him (**Matt. 26:69-74**). Peter, when alone in a crowd of unbelievers who were the enemies of Christ, relented to peer pressure.

What a lesson for the Christian today. I contend that when we are alone, with the wrong crowd, those with no regard for the Lord nor spiritual values, we are at the most vulnerable moment of our spiritual life. And so often, like Peter, the pressures from our peers lead to our downfall.

There are numerous other examples in the New Testament on this subject. Peer pressure played a leading role in the rejection of Christ by the rulers of the synagogue (**John 12:42, 43**). The Scriptures tell us they believed on Him, "but because of the Pharisees they did not confess it, lest they should be put out of the synagogue. For they loved the glory that is of men more than the glory that is of God."

Likewise, peer pressure was the deciding factor in the heinous crime of Herod, (**Matt. 14:1-12; Mark 6:23**). Herod feared and respected John, but his oath, along with "them that sat at meat with him" (his peers) prevented him from backing down on his promise, and resulted in the vile deed of having John the Baptist put to death. In this we see the influence and power of wicked men and the insidiousness of peer pressure.

But there is another side of the coin of peer pressure. Not all the characters of the Bible collapsed under the pressure of their associates. Many stood, often alone, in the face of severe pressures put on them by others.

Let us ever be aware of the immense pressures put on us by our peers, especially those with no regard for God and spiritual values. And let us profit from the mistakes others made and redouble our efforts to not yield to these peer pressures as they did.

- Bob Waldron

Wanted: An Open Mind

While traveling the Mediterranean coast preaching the gospel, the apostle Paul came to a city by the name of Berea. In the previous cities Paul had visited he had met stiff opposition to the message of the gospel of Christ he was preaching. The people he met in Berea must have been a breath of fresh air. *"These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so"* (Acts 17:11).

What did Paul find in Berea? He discovered people who had an open mind. So many of the audiences that Paul encountered would quickly turn against him when they began to get an idea of what he was saying. Not the Bereans. They investigated the Old Testament Scriptures to make sure that the news about Jesus of Nazareth matched the prophecies of the Messiah. They gave the gospel a fair hearing and as a result, “...*many of them believed*” (Acts 17:12).

If you ever expect to find God, to find the way of salvation to God, and to continue to walk in the way of God, you must be open-minded. One attitude that will keep you from finding and living the Lord’s will is that of placing a wall between you and everything with which you disagree. God’s truth will often challenge our preconceived ideas and unless we allow those ideas to be challenged, we run the risk of locking God’s truth out of our hearts and minds. We need to always be willing to hear the other side of a matter regardless of how strong we may disagree with it. We need to always be willing to expose our beliefs and practices in religion to an examination by the Bible. The truth will only shine brighter under the light of Biblical inspection.

Do you have an open mind? It is the only mind that will receive the teaching of God; it is the only mind that will lead one to the way of God.

- Phillip Mullins

SUNDAY’S LESSONS: Sunday morning: “*The Man Evil Made!*” (text: Psalm 36:1-4); Sunday evening: “*God The Redeemer!*” (a lesson from Deuteronomy 15:12-15).

SCHEDULE: Our Fall Gospel Meeting will be July 29-Aug. 3, with Aaron Andrews.