

Peer Pressure

Psalm 1

I. Introduction: 1, 2

1. 3 Why do people sin? What influences us to violate God's law?
 - A. Ignorance, pleasure, addiction, or unconcern may be causes.
 - B. Weakness causes some to sin—moral weakness.
 - C. Lack of virtue—the courage to say “no” to temptation (2 Pet. 1:5).
 - D. Some sins brought about by those we associate with—peers!
2. Christians are taught not to conform to this world (**Rom. 12:1-2**: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”).
 - A. There is pressure to conform; we all have a need to be liked, be accepted, the need to be popular.
 - B. So we tend to conform so we can fit in with the crowd.
3. ** We use the term “peer pressure” to refer to this.
 - A. We usually think of peer pressure in regards to teens and young adults (true to some degree!).
 - B. But peer pressure affects everyone to some degree or another.
4. Definitions of peer pressure:
 - A. Peer: a companion, an equal in abilities, qualifications, age, background, social status.
 - B. Pressure: exertion of force upon an object; state of being pressed; a constraining or compelling force or influence; to force toward a specific end.
 - C. Therefore, a force exerted by someone who is equal to us.
 - (1) A classmate, roommate, team member, or group of equals.
 - (2) Co-worker, neighbor, friends, club members, church members.
 - (3) Relatives (e.g., spouse).
5. Two possible directions of peer pressure:
 - A. Positive or good: encouraged to do the right thing (**Prov. 13:20**: “He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will be destroyed.”).
 - B. Negative or evil: encouraged or pressured to do wrong (**1 Cor. 15:33**: ASV: “Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals.”).
6. Those with whom we associate determines the direction of the pressure.
 - A. Unfortunately, one cannot always associate with faithful Christians.
 - B. We live in the world and must learn to live in it without becoming contaminated (**John 15:19**: “If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”).

II. Discussion:

1. 4 Sources of Peer Pressure: Let's first look at the sources of peer pressure:
 - A. ** **Companions: 1 Cor. 15:33**: “Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals.”; Prov. 4:14-19; **Psa. 1:1**: “Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;”

- (1) We all need to be extremely careful who we chose as companions!
- (2) Some of the most important choices we will make in life are who we chose as companions (friends, spouse, employer). Relate my experience (we will do things under the influence of others that we would never do by ourselves, mob mentality).
 - (a) Joseph's brothers "*conspired against him to kill him*" (Gen. 37:18-20, **27**: Judah said, "*Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh.*" And his brothers listened.").
 - (b) Amnon caved due to the influence of his cousin Jonadab ("*a very crafty man*") and raped Tamar (2 Sam. 13:1-14).

B. 5 False religions: Jn. 9:18-23 (man born blind, clay, spittle, pool of Siloam, parents pressured)

- (1) Social club atmosphere; everyone wants to "fit in"—not rock the boat, not condemn anyone (PC).
- (2) Preachers face this danger (**2 Tim. 4:1-4**).
- (3) Pressure to please men can be very strong (**Gal. 2:12-14**: "*for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. 13 And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. 14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel,*").
- (4) Many who I've taught the truth understood it and were ready to obey it, but drew back because of peer pressure from fellow members of their false religion.
- (5) Scientific community and TOE and global warming (Samson Dalit and others).

C. 6 Family: **Matt. 10:34-39**

- (1) Some do not obey the gospel because of family pressure (from living and the dead!).
- (2) Some Christians cave into family when they come for a visit (e.g., forsake the assembly).
- (3) Children need to respect and obey their parents (**Eph. 6:1-3**: "*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 'Honor your father and mother,' which is the first commandment with promise: 3 'that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.'*"); wives need to be submissive to their husbands (**Eph. 5:22**: "*Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.*").
 - (a) But don't follow their bad habits (e.g., smoking, drinking, cursing).
 - (b) Set a good example for them! e.g., not forsaking the assembly.
 - (c) Make sure you have your own faith!

D. 7 Employer: Gen. 39:7-9; 1 Tim. 5:8

- (1) Want to please them to retain job, gain promotion, etc.
- (2) Want to get along with co-workers (dirty jokes, pilfering).
- (3) Your refusal to do wrong may bring hardship on them (e.g., work too hard).
- (4) We must not allow our need to make a living destroy our soul (**Matt. 6:33**: "*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*").

E. 8 Government: **Dan. 3:12**: "*There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; these men, O king, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up.*"; **Dan. 3:16-18**: "*Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. 17 If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. 18 But if not, let it be known to*

you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.”; 2 Sam. 11:14-17 (David→Joab→Uriah; fellow soldiers had to cooperate).

- (1) Who knows how much pressure Christians will face in the near future (e.g., same-sex marriage, teachings against homosexuality, etc.).
- (2) Will churches be forced “underground”?!
- (3) If such takes place will we pressure one another to conform? Many have already caved!

F. **9 School:** if you openly live the Christian life, exhibit wholesome moral views, conservative political perspectives you are increasingly marginalized and discriminated against (e.g., young Republican group on one college campus, administrators tried to force every member attend “sensitivity training”!).

- (1) Evolution, homosexuality, sex outside marriage, legalized marijuana, etc.
- (2) Students are in a very vulnerable position; if don’t “tow the party line” may receive a poor grade.
- (3) Some teachers/professors can be very condescending and demeaning; force their views by making students appear stupid, ignorant, etc.
- (4) Make no mistake, Christianity and wholesome moral values are under attack!
- (5) Don’t cave! Many of these people have demented and twisted values, plus they are not nearly as smart as they would like you to believe (esp. when it comes to evolution, etc.).

G. **10 Society in general:**

- (1) Nowadays young people are mocked if they are a virgin (**1 Cor. 6:18:** “Flee fornication.”).
- (2) One of the most precious gifts you can give your potential spouse is your purity (**Heb. 13:4:** “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.”).
- (3) If you don’t support abortion you are “anti-women.”
- (4) If you don’t “celebrate” homosexuality and same-sex marriage you are “on the wrong side of history,” Neanderthal, homophobic.

H. **11 Crowd: Ex. 23:2:** “You shall not follow a crowd to do evil...”

- (1) Good example found in the OT: **Ex. 32:1:** “Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, ‘Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’”
- (2) Don’t underestimate the power of a crowd to influence your behavior (again, people will do things as a “mob” they would probably never do on their own; don’t get caught up by it!).
- (3) The “majority” are usually wrong, not right!

2. **12 Evil Peer Pressure:** Recall we said peer pressure can be positive or negative; here are some of the evil aspects of peer pressure:

A. **** Sins arise from peer pressure: 1 Peter 4:3-4:** “For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles — when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. 4 In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.”

- (1) Pleasing your date? Pre-marital sex, dancing, inappropriate movies (sex, foul language, violence).

- (2) Please your buddies? Cursing, drinking, smoking, gambling, or even worse (e.g., crime like shoplifting, assault, etc.).
- (3) Please team members and coaches? Miss services to play ball, play in band, etc.
- (4) Desire to be popular—run with the “in crowd,” drinking, cursing, smoke marijuana, etc.
 - (a) Some otherwise “good kids” have been influenced by peer pressure to commit heinous crimes (e.g., theft, murder).
 - (b) People will do things in a group setting that they would never in a million years do alone!

B. 13 Bad habits formed early in life due to peer pressure: 1 Cor. 15:33

- (1) Smoking, drinking, drugs, cursing, etc.; just a word about cursing: if you have to resort to profanity, slang, etc. to express your ideas you’re pretty short on vocabulary and have pretty small ideas! Ebonics→Coach Lewis
- (2) Never start, never get hooked (**Jer. 17:1-2**: “*The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron; With the point of a diamond it is engraved On the tablet of their heart, And on the horns of your altars, 2 While their children remember Their altars and their wooden images By the green trees on the high hills.*”).

C. 14 Sins committed by adults due to peer pressure: 1 Cor. 15:33

- (1) Cheat/steal on the job, don’t give a full day’s work for a full day’s pay—everyone else does it?!
- (2) Miss services to fulfill other “obligations”: They expect it of me! e.g., rotary club, softball team
- (3) Socialize with co-workers (drinking); if you don’t you won’t get promoted.
- (4) Water-cooler talk (dirty jokes and stories, sexual escapades, etc.).

3. Overcoming Peer Pressure:

A. Remember who we are to fear: Lk. 12:4-5: “*And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. 5 But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!*”

- (1) Chief rulers (**Jn. 12:42-43**: “*Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; 43 for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.*”).
- (2) Peter, Barnabas and other Jewish Christians (**Gal. 2:11-14**: “*Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; 12 for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. 13 And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. 14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, ‘If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?’”).*
- (3) We need to imitate Paul (**1 Thess. 2:4**: “*But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.*”; **Gal. 1:10**: “*For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.*”).
- (4) Cannot serve two masters! **Matt. 6:24**: “*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other.*”

B. Choose companions wisely: 1 Cor. 15:33: “*Do not be deceived: ‘Evil company corrupts good habits.’”*

- (1) Jesus associated with sinners for the purpose of teaching them (Matt. 9:9-13).

- (2) Is that our purpose? How long will they associate with us if we follow Jesus?
- (3) If your “friends” are not concerned for your eternal soul they are NOT your friends!

C. Be careful where you go:

- (1) You’ve heard the saying, “He was at the wrong place at the wrong time”? Verily I say unto you never go to the “wrong place” in the first place!
- (2) Many times weak Christians will place themselves in situations where temptations will abound (**2 Pet. 2:7-8**: “*and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked 8 (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds) —“*”).
- (3) It is simple: If we stay away from such places we will not be tempted!
- (4) Especially true where you chose to work:
 - (a) Is the work environment hostile to my walk as a Christian?
 - (b) Is there a faithful congregation where I will be moving?
 - (c) Not only is the congregation faithful, but will it provide me with an opportunity to participate, grow, etc. (e.g., marrying a Christian is not enough: Will this Christian mate truly help me get to heaven?).
- (5) Final thoughts on this point: Psa. 1

D. Learn the word of God:

- (1) How did Jesus confront temptation? **Matt. 4:4**: “*It is written...*”; **v. 7**: “*It is written again...*”; **v. 10**: “*Away with you, Satan! For it is written...*”
- (2) How do we confront temptation? **Psa. 119:11**: “*Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.*”

E. Grow in virtue: 2 Pet. 1:5: “*But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue...*”; **2 Pet. 1:8-10**: “*For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. 10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;*”

- (1) Virtue: moral excellence, goodness, righteousness (Dictionary.com). However, there’s more: virtue comes from a word meaning “valor”; so virtue expresses the idea of moral and spiritual courage and excellence; the courage to do what is right simply because it is the right thing to do!
- (2) Virtue takes each step upward because it strengthens us for the next step.
- (3) Soon we become known as one who does right (Jas. 4:7-8).

F. Assemble regularly: Heb. 10:23-25: “*Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*”

- (1) Associate with God’s people (**Heb. 3:13**: “*but exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*”).
- (2) Use hospitality, cultivate strong friendships with faithful Christians (1 Pet. 4:9: “*Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.*”).

III. Conclusion:

1. We are admonished to fear God and keep His commandments—Why? **Ecc. 12:13-14:** “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all. 14 For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.”
2. Reject Jesus—rejecting the standard (Jn. 12:48:).
3. Do you have the moral and spiritual courage to seek to please God rather than men? **Gal. 1:10:** “For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.”
4. The payoff is great!
 - A. If you cave into peer pressure you are a spineless jellyfish of a person (**Rom. 6:23:** “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”).
 - B. If you show moral and spiritual courage, not allowing peer pressure, to influence you; you are in elite company ().

Adapted from a sermon (“Dying With The Philistines”) by Andy Alexander in *Sermon Outlines*, pp. 9-14.