

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 1 Corinthians 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 favourite 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 OR 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.

-by Bob Waldron

All Mothers Are Working Mothers

Did you know, ladies, that by the time a mother of three rears her children to age eighteen that she will have put in more than 18,000 hours of child-generated work? That's work you wouldn't have to do if you had no children. It's tiring just to think about it!

The mother who invests her time and talents in the rearing of her own children is too often unappreciated by the man and children she tries so desperately to serve. How could a little four-year-old girl or boy understand the importance of what Mommy is trying to do? We can only hope that each passing year and the maturity it brings will help children to understand. And we can only pray that a man who finds himself so fortunate will express his love and appreciation for such a wife.

We wish that every mother could understand how precious the days they invest in child-rearing really are. No job anywhere could be any tougher; no job anywhere could be more important!

-by Mark White

The Holy Spirit: A Distinct, Divine Being

The dictionary defines a "person" as: "a being characterized by conscious apprehension, rationality, and moral sense." Certainly, the Holy Spirit has the identifying marks of a distinct personal being.

Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as "He" (John 14:26; 16:13). He possesses 'will' or desire (1 Corinthians 12:8-11). He makes judgments (Acts 15:28). He does things which manifest personality. He: searches (1 Cor. 2:11); teaches (1 Cor. 2:13); speaks (1 Tim. 4:1); testifies (John 15:26); leads (Rom. 8:14); forbids (Acts 16:6,7); convicts (Heb. 10:29); hears (John 16:13); and intercedes (Rom. 8:26,27).

The Holy Spirit suffers things that reflect personality. He: can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30); can be insulted (Hebrews 10:28,29); can be resisted (Acts 7:51); can be spoken against (Matthew 12:32); can be lied to (Acts 5:3,4).

Additionally, the Holy Spirit possesses the attributes of deity. He is eternal (Hebrews 9:14). He is omnipresent (Psalm 139:7-10). He is omniscient (1 Corinthians 2:10-11). And the works that God does (omnipotence) are also attributed to the Holy Spirit (Job 33:4; Psalms 104:30). In fact, in Acts 5:3,4 the Holy Spirit is actually identified as God.

The Holy Spirit is one of the three divine beings of the Godhead. He possesses distinct personality and owns all the attributes of deity. We must acknowledge and honor Him as God.

- by Greg Gwin