PRESSURE TO CONFORM
(PRESSURE)

A. Love & acceptance are basic human needs, & our desire for them is very strong.

1. God designed us so as to need & want these things first from our parents & then from Him.

2. But more often then not, we seek the affection & approval of everyone else but God.

   a. Extended family, spouses, neighbors, friends, co-workers, etc.

3. And what often happens is that our desire to please others, or to be pleased by them, leads us away from the Son of God.

B. The phenomenon is called “peer pressure”.

1. It can work in a positive or in a negative way in one’s life, either making one productive & useful or destructive & useless.

2. Dictionary: “Social pressure by members of one’s peer group to take a certain action, adopt certain values, or otherwise conform in order to be accepted.”

3. We often think that “peer pressure” only affects the young, but in fact every age group is affected by the pressure to conform to the values of a peer group – because everyone wants love & acceptance.

Erma Bombeck, the noted humorist – “It supersedes the love of our mothers, the threats of our fathers, the wisdom of our grandparents, & even the strength of our own convictions... It makes a knee hanging out of a rip in your jeans all right. It makes skipping school cool. It makes drinking, taking drugs & sleeping around acceptable. It’s not important what you do... just so long as everyone else is doing it with you...”

[God foresaw this problem among His OT people. He said, “You shall not follow a crowd to do evil” (Exo 23:2). How do we overcome negative peer pressure? First, let’s notice some examples of those who gave-in to it.]
I. DEFEATED BY PEER PRESSURE

A. **Aaron** {Over 80 yrs of age} agreed to build a golden calf for his people when they requested an idol.

1. And when Moses finally convicted Aaron of his sin, he demanded a response from him.

   Exo 32:19-24 – And I said to them, ‘Whoever has any gold, let them break it off.’ 
   *So they gave it to me, & I cast it into the fire, & this calf came out.*

2. Result of peer pressure: Aaron sounded foolish, & his foolishness prevented him from entering the Promised Land.

3. Were his lies & his desire for the love & acceptance of others really worth it?

B. **Peter** was NOT ready to die (as he told Jesus he was) & he did NOT want to be arrested & put on trial.

1. Peter wandered far away from God; he did NOT want to be identified with Jesus.

2. Result of peer pressure: Peter denied Jesus three times in the presence of a small group; he cursed & swore saying, “I do not know not the man” (Matt 26:69-75); the rooster crowed & Peter remembered what Jesus said, & Peter went out & wept bitterly—he lived with the memory of his denials for the rest of his days.

3. Were his lies & his desire for the love & acceptance of others really worth it?

C. **Many** Jewish rulers believed Jesus to be the actual Christ.

1. But because they loved the praise of men, & feared the Pharisees, & wanted access into their beautiful temple, they were unwilling to confess him (John 12:42-43).
2. **Result of peer pressure**: When Jesus went back to heaven He denied them before God & His holy angels (Lk 12:8-9; Matt 10:32-33).

3. Were their hypocrisies & their desire for the love & acceptance of others really worth it?

[In these cases, the pressure to conform to evil overcame God’s own people because…

1) They refused to stand by their convictions in what they knew to be true.

2) They would not separate themselves from evildoers & temptation.

3) They were afraid to stand-alone.

They were afraid that they would not find the love & acceptance they needed from anyone else.]

II. **DEFEATED THE PEER PRESSURE**

A. **Noah found grace** (favor, love, approval, acceptance) in the eyes of the LORD (Gen 6:3), because…

1. Noah was a just & perfect man in his time – Noah walked with God – Noah did according to all that God commanded him – Noah prepared the ark for the saving of his household – Noah preached righteousness for 120 years (2 Pet 2:5; 1 Pet 3:20; Heb 11:7; Gen 6:3, 5-9, 22).

2. We can only speculate how much ridicule he must have endured because of his obedient faith in God, but Noah did not buckle under pressure of his peers.

   - He **stood** by his convictions, which were based on God’s own words.
   - He **separated** himself & his family from evildoers & temptation.
   - He was **not afraid** to stand-alone.
B. Joshua & Caleb were the only 2 among 1000’s whom God allowed into the Promised Land.

Num 14:7-9 — they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: “The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. 8 If the LORD delights in us, then He will bring us into this land & give it to us, a land which flows with milk & honey.” 9 Only do not rebel against the LORD [implying that going was a command & victory was a promise], nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, & the LORD is with us. Do not fear them.”

1. They **stood** by their convictions or belief in God’s promises.

2. They **separated** from the faithless evildoers who said, “We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we” (13:31).

3. They were **not afraid** to stand alone against the ten faithless spies & an entire nation that was ready to stone them with stones (14:10; see also 14:39-45) — And we sometimes can’t bear the pressure of a little embarrassment that comes from submitting ourselves to the NT.

C. Jesus is the all time greatest example of how to defeat peer pressure.

1. First of all, did Jesus ever go out looking for a peer group that He could join & emulate?

   a. **Young people** are faced with the pressure of joining a group—older people have their little clubs & social organizations—but Jesus never concerned Himself with such things.

   b. Oh, He found a group all right, but it was a group of men & women who were doing the will of God—who considered Him to be peerless (unequaled, unrivaled, superior, matchless, without equal).

   c. Jesus had no peers, but His disciples were peers of one another, urging faithful devotion to Him.
2. Jesus stood on the word of His father in heaven (Jn 8:55).

3. He separated from the faithless that saw His miracles but refused to accept Him (Jn 7:1-7).

4. He was not afraid to stand alone in Pilate's Hall & receive an unjust sentence of death; He even went to the cross alone to purchase our eternal redemption from sin (Heb 9:12).

5. And the example of Jesus had such an impact on the early Christians that many of them went through the same ordeal & overcame, by faith, the pressure to conform to evil.

Polycarp (A.D. 69?-155) the bishop of Smyrna, was put on trial because of his faith in Jesus Christ, the proconsul urged him, saying, “Swear, & I will release thee; -- reproach Christ.” Polycarp answered, “Eighty & six years have I served him, & he never once wronged me; how then shall I blaspheme my King, who hath saved me?” Polycarp was burned at the stake because he refused to deny Christ.

CLOSING

A. God in His word repeatedly warns of the corrupting influence of evil associations (Prov 1:10-19; 4:14-19, 1 Cor 15:33-34) – this matter is especially relevant to our young people.

1. When others use corrupt & filthy language, count it an honor to stand alone!

2. When others would pressure you to smoke, drink, or use drugs, count it an honor to stand alone!

3. When you are pressured to give away your moral purity when your peers are promiscuous, count it an honor to stand alone!

4. When others would make fun of you for not going to most of the movies – or going to a so-called Christian rock concert—because you’re a Christian, count it an honor to stand alone!

5. It’s easy to go along with the crowd, but it takes courage to stand alone & not be afraid when so many are against you.

6. Keep in mind, this world is opposed to God’s will; if you stand up for what is right, you will often have to stand alone.

7. But you are never truly alone; if God is with you, you are in the majority (Rom 8:31).
Josh 24:14-15 – Now therefore, **fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity & in truth**, & put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River & in Egypt. Serve the LORD! 15 And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, **choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve**, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. **But as for me & my house, we will serve the LORD.**

2 Tim 3:10-17 – But **you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, 11 persecutions, afflictions**, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra — **what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me.** 12 Yes, & all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. 13 But evil men & impostors will grow worse & worse, deceiving & being deceived. 14 But you must **continue in the things which you have learned & been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, 15 & that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.** 16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, & is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Eph 6:10-18

**B. One who foolishly attempts to please everyone will ultimately please no one.**

1. More importantly, to please God is to alienate man; to please man is to alienate God (Jas 4:4); we must make a choice.

   a. On the Day of Judgment, whom do you want as your friend & whom do you want as your opponent?

   b. Your eternal destiny depends on this simple question: Are you going to please God or man?

   c. A Christian overcomes peer pressure by desiring God’s love & acceptance over man’s approval (Gal 1:10; 1 Thess 2:3-4; 2 Tim 2:3-4).

**C. Have you NOT obeyed the gospel because you are afraid of what others might think?**

1. Do you fear being rejected? Are you ashamed to wear the name of Christ?

2. One day we will stand before the Lord Jesus our Judge & give an account of our lives to Him (2 Cor 5:10).

3. If we are ashamed of Him now, He will be ashamed of us on that Day (Matt 10:32-33; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26).

4. But how could anyone be ashamed of Christ?

   a. No one has ever loved us more - or - done more for us that Jesus.

   b. You can wear His name with self-respect & dignity, even when you must suffer for it (1 Peter 4:12-16).

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