

Christ And Culture

Lesson 1: Peer Pressure

Introduction:

- A. Did you know that people are a lot like a flock of birds? What about a colony of termites? Have you ever seen a bunch of birds taking off and flying together in perfect harmony? Termites do the same thing. Scientists who study these creatures say that they are acting like they have one brain. In fact, one termite wouldn't know what to do if he didn't watch the termite beside him. We are like birds and termites. We often watch what others around us are doing and imitate it. That's why fads are fads!
- B. What we are talking about is peer pressure. When I say, "Peer Pressure" what am I talking about?
- Let's break it down easy. What is a peer and what is pressure?
 - Peer – This is someone who is like you. They are your age. They are around you a lot. They may be friends of yours, classmates, coworkers, and neighbors.
 - Pressure – Is forcing something. With peer pressure, what is being forced is you. The way you think and act is being forced a certain way.
 - So it is when your peers pressure you into doing something or being a certain way. It may be pressure put on you personally or pressure on a big group – *Everybody's doing it!*
 - Illustration: Play-Doh factory with different shapes.**
 - How does peer pressure work? Sometimes people will make fun of you if you don't do or say what they want. You may get left out because you won't go along with them. It may be that you want to be more like your friends. You want to be accepted. You want to be popular. It can even come in the form of bullying... you may give in just to stop the pressure.
 - Is peer pressure good or bad? Usually we think about it being bad. If you have a group of friends who are bad, they will bring you down, right? But what if your group of friends are really good? What if your friends build you up and help you decide to do what's right? That's peer pressure too. So it really depends on the kind of people we let influence us! **(Prov. 13:20)**
- C. The Bible talks about peer pressure. Not only does it talk about peer pressure, but it tells us what to do about it. Today, let's look at a group of friends who faced intense peer pressure. People tried to force them to change who they were. Who were they? Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. You might know the last three by a different name – Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego
- D. Give background to the story of Daniel and his friends

A. To Fight Peer Pressure... Choose Right!

- Choose Right First! **(Daniel 1:5-9)**
 - Remember what Daniel is facing: He has been taken as a captive in war. He is a prisoner. He is ripped away from his home and moved to a foreign country. They don't dress like him, they don't eat like him, they don't talk like him, and most importantly they don't believe like him! He is a square peg in a world of round holes. He doesn't fit in. He really didn't want to fit in.
 - Put yourself in his shoes: You've just been captured. You walking chained up like a criminal. Soldiers with scary weapons are beside you. You just seen your home city destroyed. People died. You don't know what tomorrow will be like. What are you thinking about? We know at least one thing Daniel thought about... He planned that when he got to Babylon he'd obey God. , Daniel knew he'd be pressured to disobey God, so he made a strong commitment.
 - His devotion to obeying God was tested early. Because he was young and strong, he was given the job of serving the king of Babylon. The king wanted his men to be strong and healthy, so he

fed them well. Sounds good right? One problem... Daniel was a Jew. As a Jew God had told them certain kinds of food were unclean... like pork. The king put food in front of Daniel that had to be tasty, but it would have been wrong to eat it. This was tough! Is he going to disobey the king? Daniel already decided what he would do. He would obey God!

d. The Bible tells us that Daniel “RESOLVED” not to defile himself. Your Bible may say “He Purposed In His Heart” – It means the same. He made up his mind ahead of time to do right. He knew he would be tempted to do wrong. He thought of what might happen. He made a plan!

e. Application: What about you? To beat peer pressure, you have to choose to do what’s right BEFORE you are tempted to do what is wrong (**Proverbs 4:23**)

2. Choose Right Friends!

a. So we’ve talked about Daniel, but he wasn’t alone was he? Three guys were named with him. Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abednego). When Daniel refused to eat the sinful food, he didn’t have to stand alone. They stood with him! (**Daniel 1:17-19**)

b. Evidently these four guys became pretty good friends. We don’t know if they knew each other before being carried away from home or not. But they found each other. Why? Because they were all committed to doing right. They had something in common... their faith.

c. Last we saw, everything was going good. Daniel and his friends fought hard against peer pressure and won. But the battle wasn’t over. The king has a dream and he wants someone to interpret it. He calls in his servants, which would have included Daniel and his friends and asks for the interpretation. That sounds hard enough... but he refuses to tell them what the dream was. He knew his men would just make something up. If they know the dream, surely they know what it means. But here’s the worst part... if the men couldn’t tell him about the dream, he’d have them all KILLED! This would have included Daniel and his three friends. So what do they do? They get together to pray together about it. God heard their prayers, saw their faith, and revealed the dream to them. They were saved! (**Dan. 2:17-18**)

d. But there’s more peer pressure! Later on the king, Nebuchadnezzar, decides to make this HUGE statue of himself. He then wants all of his men to be there for a celebration of it. He makes a command that when the music was played, EVERYONE was to bow down. What’s the problem with that? It’s IDOL worship! So the day comes... the music sounds. Picture the scene... A MASSIVE crowd of people suddenly bow down. All you see are the backs of men. Then suddenly, you notice it. Three guys are standing there tall. Refusing to bow. Refusing to worship the idol. It was Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! This has to be hard to do. Everyone was doing wrong, how could they do right? They stood together! The king questions them, yet they stand together with courageous boldness! (**Daniel 3:12, 16**)

e. Application: What about you? To beat peer pressure, you have to choose to seek out friends who will help you do right instead of encouraging you to do wrong (**Prov. 27:17; I Cor. 15:33**)

3. Choose Right Regardless!

a. If you choose to do what is right, you will make enemies. That’s not fair is it? But that’s exactly what happened with Daniel and his friends. Not only will you make enemies but those enemies will do everything they can to make you feel small and make your life hard. With Daniel & friends, they lied, manipulated, and tried hard to get them in trouble... It worked!

b. So remember the statute Nebuchadnezzar built? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were told they had to bow down or they would be killed. They would be toast... literally... thrown into a burning fiery furnace. It was so hot, that the people who threw them in were killed by the heat (How would you like that job?! Listen to their courageous faith, as they trusted that God could save them, but refused to bow even if God didn’t save them! (**Daniel 3:16-18**). Yes, they were thrown into the fire... and yes God saved them. But they didn’t know how it would work out. These men were willing to die for their faith. They did right regardless!

- c. Daniel faced this peer pressure too. He had enemies who convinced the king to make a law that made it illegal to pray to anyone but the king. Not only was it illegal, but if you broke the law, you would be thrown into the lion's den. Well, Daniel had a problem. He had to pray. He wanted to pray. But he could pray to no one but Jehovah God! So what did he do? He kept praying as he always did. He prayed knowing he could be killed for it. What happened? He was seen. He was thrown into the lion's den. But God made it so the lions would not bother him. All night long people thought he was being killed and eaten. But Daniel lived. But again, Daniel didn't know God would save him. He was willing to die (**Dan 6:10, 21-22**)
- d. Application: What about you? To beat peer pressure, you have to choose to do what is right, even if it hurts. Choose what is right no matter what the consequences are (**Revelation 12:11**)

B. To The Parents: What Can A Parent Do?

1. Teach Your Children God's Word → They are going to be taught many things by many people. They will be bombarded with worldly values and morals. If you don't teach your children, someone else will. Don't assume they are getting God's word in Bible class. It's your job first and foremost. As you teach them God's word, put skin on it... make it practical. Show them how to live it!
2. Set The Example → You cannot expect your children to resist peer pressure, while you compromise your morals and convictions because you want acceptance by your friends, family, or coworkers. Kids are neither blind nor stupid. If your life at home doesn't match your faith in the pew, they will notice!
3. Help Them Choose Right Early On → From the time they are little, teach them actions have consequences. Let them suffer for choosing to do wrong. Discipline is essential. As they get a little older, they do have to start making their own choices, but don't let them run headlong into sin saying, "Well, they have to decide for themselves..." You wouldn't let them walk out mindlessly into traffic would you?
4. Know Their Friends And Their Behavior → Friends walk in the door and put on a good front. They are courteous and thoughtful. As soon they get away, it may be a different story. Care enough to spend time with them getting to really know them. Find out what they are doing. Be nosy. Your kids need it! Peer pressure is tough for adults... you know its even harder for those who are younger.
5. Monitor Cell Phone, Tablet, and Social Media Use → There is so much going on right now, especially among middle and high school kids, it's scary. There are social media apps and internet setups (like the black web) specially designed to avoid parental monitoring. Sexting is a HUGE problem. But so is bullying. We are so connected that the peer pressure doesn't end when they get home
6. Do Not Bury Your Head In The Sand → You will always look at your child the way you did when you first held them in your arms... the way you looked at them when you took them by the hand and taught them to walk. But they are growing up. They are beginning to walk on their own and there is a lot to trip them up. Your child is not so sweet and innocent that they would never do that... whatever that is. Do you believe, "Let him who thinks he stands take heed..." → Doesn't that apply to your kids?
7. Have Real Life Conversations → Not just the birds & bees, but that is needed too. It is uncomfortable to talk about some subjects. Perhaps we fear that we will expose them to too much life too soon. Here's the thing... they've already been exposed. They may not fully comprehend it, but they have heard about it. It's everywhere. The innocence of youth isn't as innocent as you think. Your child is likely more aware than you realize... again, we like to think of them as younger than they are. If you don't teach them about what is going on out there, they will learn it from people with worldly values!
8. Be The Parent Not The Peer → It's nice if you can hang out with your kids and be their friend. But God has not called you to be one of their buddies... you are called to be their parent. If you parent now, later on you will have that friendship. But right now you have to be willing to make the hard decisions, deal out consequences, and make them mad.