



“Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment” (Exodus 23:2).

Resisting Peer Pressure

Central Truth: Popular opinion should not influence you to do wrong.

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Topic: Moses; Peer Pressure.

Popular opinion seldom agrees with the will of God. When “everybody's doing it,” the Christian should refrain from it. Why? Because “*we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness*” (I John 5:19). The devil is the “*god of this world*” (II Corinthians 4:4). What a society does under his control is contrary to biblical principles of righteousness.

Many people respond to peer pressure by following the crowd. But the Bible says, “*Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil*” (Exodus 23:2). Christians can exert peer pressure the same as non-Christians. They can exert pressure to do right even when they stand in a minority.

We need authority figures who set an example of righteousness. In the absence of Moses, Aaron yielded to peer pressure and did what he knew was wrong. You will face the same pressure. How can you resist it successfully? Events that occurred at the foot of Mount Sinai will give you some guidelines to withstand pressures to compromise.

Resist Peer Pressure by Understanding Its Causes

Peer pressure is the tension you feel because of your desire to be accepted by your associates. You do not want to be an “odd ball” in social relations. You want to be appreciated and accepted by your peers. There is nothing wrong with that desire. God made you with a social nature which finds fulfillment in social relationships. But when that desire for acceptance by people is greater than your resolve to holiness, it becomes the occasion of

sin. That is why you must guard against peer pressure from this secular and sensual society.

Have you ever been intimidated by unbelievers? Have you ever failed to speak your convictions or engaged in some activity because of the opinions or actions of others? If so, you have felt and yielded to peer pressure.

It is difficult to be “*in*” the world but not “*of*” the world. But that is exactly the position of the Christian. Jesus has chosen you “*out*” of the world so you would not be “*of*” the world. The consequence is that the world hates you (John 15:19). Why would you yield to the pressure of an unregenerate society that hates your holiness and the Savior who has saved you for a life of holiness?

Peer pressure is dangerous. The unregenerate world system is sensual and secular. It is under the control of the devil, the wicked one (I John 5:19). If a Christian yields to peer pressure, he acknowledges a master other than the Lord Jesus (Matthew 6:24). That is not what is expected of a child of God, is it? To yield to the pressures of the world is to rebel against the purposes of God. God warns against secular peer pressure when He calls, “*Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God*” (Romans 12:2). To be conformed is to yield to the world. To be transformed is to yield to God.

Resist Peer Pressure by Considering Its Dangers

Where will society's pressures lead if you yield to them? They will lead you further and further from the Lord. That was what Aaron discovered. Observe the steps away from God recorded in Exodus 32. It will provide warning for you today.

- (1) There was a rejection of the leadership of the man of God (verse 1).
- (2) There was a call for a substitute for the one true God (verse 1).
- (3) There was a surrender by the person who should have stood for God (verses 2-4).
- (4) There was allegiance turned from the true God to a false god (verse 4).
- (5) There was worship of the false god instead of the true God.
- (6) There was a yielding to the lusts of the flesh in the substitute worship (verses 19, 25).

Do you see how each step led further away from God? It is the same today. Compromise of conviction will never bring you closer to God. Take a stand; then stand! When you yield an inch, the devil makes you surrender a yard.

Yielding to secular peer pressure will expose you to the judgment of God (Exodus 32:7-14). God would have fallen upon the people in a judgment which would have destroyed them if Moses had not interceded for them. God calls himself a “*jealous God*” who demands the total loyalty of His people (Exodus 34:14). When His people err, He disciplines them to bring them back to himself.

Yielding to secular peer pressure will cause faithful people of God to suffer (Exodus 32:19, 20, 33-35). Can you picture Moses' dismay when he saw the Hebrews naked and dancing before an idol made by man's hands? Can you imagine his astonishment when he discovered that his own brother Aaron had fashioned that idol? Can you feel his sorrow when he learned of the judgment which would soon fall upon the idolaters?

Moses had been in personal communion with God and had come down the mountain with the law of God written on tablets of stone. Suddenly he was faced with grossest idolatry by the very people for whom God's law was intended. How that must have hurt!

Not all the people participated in the worship of the golden calf, thank God. Only about three thousand out of three million people exerted or yielded to peer pressure that day. Thank God for the great majority who stood faithful to God.

Thank God for the faithful men and women today who will not yield to the pressures of a depraved society. It takes courage to stand against a sexual perversion which God calls an abomination and upon which He pronounces the death penalty (Leviticus 20:13), but which a depraved society calls an “alternate lifestyle.” It takes courage to stand against the slaughter of pre-born children in their mothers' wombs which society approves but upon which God has pronounced the death penalty (Exodus 21:22-25). It takes courage, but it must be done.

Severe judgment falls on those who turn from God. A total of three thousand people were executed for their idolatry that day. Some were of the “mixed multitude” which came out of Egypt with the Hebrews. But others may have been related to faithful people of God. The people of God must remain faithful to God whether their relatives and associates do so or not. Who is praying for you today that you might be faithful in our secular society?

Resist Peer Pressure by Following These Principles

Identify a set of clear principles on which you will not compromise. Distinguish between your opinions and your convictions. What principles

are so important that they are worth fighting for, even dying for? Identify them and stick to them regardless of what happens.

Be willing to stand alone, if necessary. It is likely that public opinion will not agree with your stand on conservative Christian principles. But you must not change. You must learn to say “No” and not mean “Maybe.”

People who stand on conservative Christian principles are feeling more and more pressure to yield. What is the general public view on adultery, divorce, abortion, and sexual perversion? It is not the biblical view. You must stand with the Bible.

Look to people of like mind to stand with you. Moses called, “*Who is on the LORD'S side? let him come unto me*” (Exodus 32:26). Identify the people of God and make them your companions. You will find strength in numbers and courage in fellowship. You are not alone. Thousands agree with your stand for God. Stand!

Expect God to vindicate you in due time. He will close the mouths of the lions (Daniel 6) and quench the violence of fire (Daniel 3). He will not desert you but will give you victory. Everyone experiences peer pressure — children, teenagers, young adults, and older adults. Do not yield godly standards on morality, language, dress, habits, and other areas of Christian lifestyle. Resist compromise. Commit yourself to Christian standards. Never, never, never give up!

Questions for Discussion

1. What is peer pressure?
2. Why is popular opinion rarely the way of God?
3. Why does compromise always lead away from God?
4. What are some convictions that you will not compromise?
5. How does I John 5:19 explain the evil in most peer pressure?
6. What are the dangers in yielding to peer pressure?