

How Do I Overcome Peer Pressure?

Exodus 23:2: (NASB) You shall not follow the masses in doing evil, nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after a multitude in order to pervert justice.



Peer pressure. When we say those words we typically think about teenagers, school and bad decisions, and those thoughts are accurate. Young people face inordinate amounts of peer pressure on a regular basis and its effects can be devastating! Here's the thing; adults are also subject to peer pressure, and its place in our lives and its effect on our lives is far greater than we might anticipate. For the sake of not only our young people but for our own sake as well, what do we do about it? How do we recognize, address, and deal with the pressures of life that press us into compromised circumstances and bad

decisions? Even more importantly, how do we reverse the process and create an environment in which positive, righteous and loving peer pressure is the order of the day?

(I))Introduction, One Simple Skill to Overcome Peer Pressure, The Behavioral Science Guys

- What if we told you that you could get people to say and do things that they didn't agree with,...
- ...sounds good...
- ...to agree to things that they knew were wrong,...
- ...Like it...
- ...and in the process lower the quality of their lives and the lives of others around them, sometimes even catastrophically so.
- Alright, now you got me. It sounds terrifying doesn't it? But the fact of the matter is it happens every day. In fact, YOU do it every day, and you're subject to it every day.
- The best way to understand a phenomenon like this is to try to recreate it in a laboratory.
- What we're about to show you is a very simple experiment inspired by renowned social psychologist Solomon Asch, and it will reveal this shockingly common form of mind control.

God addressed peer pressure from the very beginning of the nation of Israel's independence:

Exodus 23:1-3,6-7: (NASB) ¹You shall not bear a false report; do not join your hand with a wicked man to be a malicious witness. ²You shall not follow the masses in doing evil, nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after a multitude in order to pervert justice; ³nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his dispute.

You shall not follow the masses in doing evil - this is the core of peer pressure - feeling like you have to follow even though you know it is going down the wrong road.





PRESSURE POINT Following along with the flow of many is a natural and potentially harmful action.

⁶You shall not pervert the justice due to your needy brother in his dispute. ⁷Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent or the righteous, for I will not acquit the guilty.

You shall not pervert the justice due to your needy brother in his dispute when someone who is unfortunate in their life circumstances, someone poor, is in a dispute, they should be treated equally to the other individual. You do not bend justice to their favor just because they are poor. Sometimes our feelings are so strong, they override our better sense.



PRESSURE POINT

Our attachment to helping the needy can pervert our sense of appropriate action.



Be upright, clear and fair in your thinking and actions, even if your feelings may be guiding you in a different way.



While this is a foundation principle, it is easier said than done:

<u>Galatians 2:11-14</u>: (NASB) ¹¹But when Cephas (Peter) came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. ¹²For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision.

When certain distinguished Jews came along and felt the Law still had a place in Christianity, Peter succumbed to deserting people without a Jewish background. Status was his downfall.





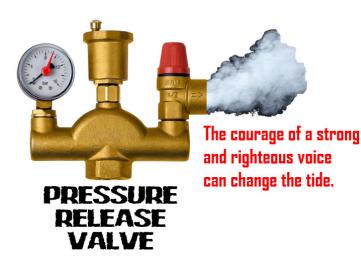
¹³The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.

Because Peter was so well-respected, his hypocrisy contaminated many of the Christians around him and created a difficult situation.



Paul had to call Peter out to set the record straight:

¹⁴But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?



(1) Introduction for young people, *How to Stand Up to Peer Pressure*, *JW.org*

• Whether you're in school or not, you're probably under a lot of pressure, not just from all the studying and those piles of homework but pressure from other kids. Pressure to have sex, or cheat or maybe it's to smoke or take drugs. Of course, you know what they want you to do is bad, but at times you may feel like you are missing out if you don't join them. You're not alone. Since the world began, young people have been dealing with peer pressure, but it doesn't mean you have to give in. The Bible has some good advice. Exodus 23:2 tells us not to just fall after the crowd. In other words, don't do something just because everyone else is doing it. Instead, be your own person. How do you get the strength to stand up to peer pressure? Here are four steps that can help...



Sometimes you know better but are not sure what to do:

James 1:5-8: (NASB) ⁵But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. ⁶But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, ⁸being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.



This is the foundation; how do we get there?

Just how easy is it for someone - anyone - to become an unknowing victim of peer pressure?

If we were to begin consciously observing our environment and interactions, we would most likely be amazed at how often we are exposed to peer pressure. It comes in a myriad of different ways that range from utterly subtle to normal exchanges to blatantly overt. Any expression of the bad kind of peer pressure is a direct challenge to our integrity!

(1)) The test, One Simple Skill to Overcome Peer Pressure, The Behavioral Science Guys

- We sat seven teenagers around a table and asked each in turn to answer a very simple question:
- "Which of the three lines does this object match in length?" Now, it was obviously line C.
- Now here's the intervention the trick we are testing with this experiment.
- The first teenagers are confederates. They are in on it, and they were instructed to give the wrong answer: A.
- This answer was so obviously wrong, but what would the actual person who is not in on it, the one the experiment was designed to observe, what would they say?

Gideon, before his days as a mighty military leader found strength to stand against peer pressure:

<u>Judges 6:1,11-13</u>: (NASB) Then the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD gave them into the hands of Midian seven years. ¹¹Then the angel of the LORD came and sat under the oak that was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press in order to save it from the Midianites. ¹²The angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, The LORD is with you, O valiant



warrior. ¹³Then Gideon said to him, O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us?

Gideon was chosen to right the wrongs. His character was strong, and his faith was intact!

<u>Judges 6:25-27</u>: (NASB) ²⁵Now on the same night the LORD said to him, Take your father's bull and a second bull seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal which belongs to your father, and cut down the Asherah that is beside it; ²⁶and build an altar to the LORD your God on the top of this stronghold in an orderly manner, and take a second bull and offer a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah which you shall cut down. ²⁷Then Gideon took ten men of his servants and did as the LORD had spoken to him; and because he was too afraid of his father's household and the men of the city to do it by day, he did it by night.

The pressure of society pushed his father to this point. The angel of the Lord told Gideon to tear down the altar and make sacrifices to God with the wood. Gideon was afraid to act in daylight. By the cover of darkness, he and his men did what the angel said.

PRESSURE POINT



All of Israel was idolatrous and that created fear of consequences for any rebel.

It is odd to think of someone doing the will of God as a "rebel," but does that not sound like our world today? Gideon went up against an established, idolatrous habit done by God's own people.

<u>Judges 6:28-31</u>: (NASB) ²⁸When the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was torn down, and the Asherah which was beside it was cut down...²⁹...And when they searched about and inquired, they said, Gideon the son of Joash did this thing. ³⁰Then the men of the city said to Joash, Bring out your son, that he may die, for he has torn down the altar of Baal... ³¹But Joash said to all who stood against him, Will you contend for Baal...If he is a god, let him contend for himself, because someone has torn down his altar.

The men of the city come out and are angry. They go to Gideon's father to have him turn over Gideon. Joash is not as courageous as Gideon but still puts up the argument to have Baal fight for himself. He diverted attention without agreeing with the wrong and did not give up his son.





(1) Moral dangers, How to Stand Up to Peer Pressure, JW.org

First, keep on the lookout for moral dangers, and identify any situations where you might be pressured to do something wrong. If you see trouble coming your way don't walk right into it. Find another route and avoid the problem.



POINT Because youth rages with a hormone-filled desire for belonging and satisfaction, every young person is a PRIME target for peer pressure's tidal wave of seductive emotions.



Emotions can seduce us into doing or saying what is not appropriate.

This classic saying comes to mind: Just because you *can* does not mean you *should*:

<u>1 Corinthians 6:12,18-20</u>: (NASB) ¹²All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything...¹⁸Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. ¹⁹Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? ²⁰For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

How will I stand up and be counted in relation to my own integrity? Parents should be teaching this principle to their children.



National idolatry and peer pressure is as big as it gets how about a smaller, more practical example?

As we mentioned before, peer pressure comes in all shapes and sizes. Let's look at peer pressure in the context of the development of the early Christian church, a format that is much closer to our reality. Their challenges were new because Christianity was new, and yet those very same challenges still present themselves today.



<u>Acts 18:24-28</u>: (NASB) ²⁴Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures.

(Source: Biblical commentary from McGee) *Apollos/Alexandria in North Africa* founded by Alexander the Great, was one of the great centers of Greek culture. A great university was there and it had one of the finest libraries in the world. It was there that a Greek version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, was made.

Apollos was a Jew from Alexandria. He was well-educated and had access to some of the greatest learning in the entire world at that time. He understood Old Testament prophecy and began to learn about Jesus.

²⁵This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John; ²⁶and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue.

Apollos is passionately talking about Jesus but does not know the whole story. He knows Jesus came as a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy because of his great Jewish education. He is affecting many around him. He is teaching an incomplete message.

But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

"We appreciate your grasp of the Scriptures, but there is more." They explained to him more about the baptism of Jesus to sacrifice vs. the baptism of repentance taught by John.

²⁷And when he wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace, ²⁸for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

Apollos was a powerful, zealous, educated and articulate speaker. His heart and zeal were well-placed, but his "presence" was misconstrued and became a catalyst for divisions. Many Christians started to flock around Apollos, creating a sub-movement within Christianity that did not belong.



(1))Wrong answer, One Simple Skill to Overcome Peer Pressure, The Behavioral Science Guys

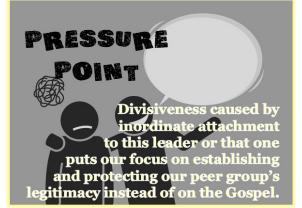
- (Test administrator) Any questions?
- (Participants answer "A")
- He gave the obviously wrong answer.
- What a pushover!



- Well, a pushover but in good company. The surprise here is he's not the exception; he's the rule.
- About two thirds of any group independent of age goes along. Regardless of gender, background most of us are suckers. Social influence is a potent power. So, here we have a textbook example of this deceptively simple form of mind control. We got these teenagers to consciously ignore what they knew to be right.
- And we could have gotten two thirds of you, remember, so don't think you're above it.
- Not at all!

This in many ways is peer pressure at its best, and it needs the best response to disturb it:

<u>1 Corinthians 3:1-8</u>: (NASB) ¹And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. ²I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, ³for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? ⁴For when one says, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, are you not mere men?



Paul instructed them: Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. (<u>1 Corinthians 11:1</u> KJV)

⁵What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. ⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. ⁷So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.

It is about God's will and His way...period.





(1) Stop and think, How to Stand Up to Peer Pressure, JW.org

The second step: stop and take the time to think. Think about the consequences before you give into peer pressure. In Proverbs 14:15, the Bible says, "Smart people watch their step." So, don't just jump in and do what others say. That may be hard to do if you are trying to fit in, but that's the time to use your imagination. How will I feel later if I give in? What might be the outcome? How might my actions affect others that care about me the most?



<u>Proverbs 14:15-16</u>: (NASB) ¹⁵The naive believes everything, but the sensible man considers his steps. ¹⁶A wise man is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is arrogant and careless.



How do we handle a peer pressure situation where there may be life and death consequences?

While our last example was perhaps peer pressure at its best, this next example is peer pressure at its most broad based level of consequence. When the pressure has to do with the physical wellbeing of others, we come to a whole new level of responsibility. Here we find the truly difficult challenge of fear causing a real potential to be unable to truly listen.

Fear can take away our ability to think clearly.

<u>Numbers 13:17-19,21</u>: (NASB) ¹⁷When Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, he said to them... ¹⁸See what the land is like, and whether the people who live in it are strong or weak, whether they are few or many. ¹⁹How is the land in which they live, is it good or bad? And how are the cities in which they live, are they like open camps or with fortifications?...²¹So they went up and spied out the land from the wilderness...



Twelve spies were sent, all would see the same things, but what did they "see" (in their own minds) that they would report back?

<u>Numbers 13:25-28</u>: (NASB) ²⁵When they returned from spying out the land, at the end of forty days, ²⁶they proceeded to come to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the sons of Israel ...and they brought back word to them and to all the congregation and showed them the fruit of the land. ²⁷Thus they told him, and said, We went in to the land where you sent us; and it certainly does flow with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. ²⁸Nevertheless, the people who live in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large.

Once you feel fear, it is hard to see anything else. Fear was instilled in the people through this report, feeding peer pressure.

Polite disagreement, One Simple Skill to Overcome Peer Pressure, The Behavioral Science Guys



- In real life, think of how many smart people have made stupid decisions because social forces overwhelm their better judgment?
- There are benefits to following the crowd. Relying on group wisdom is cognitively efficient.
- And often cognitively superior. We are social learners and derive great benefit by leaning on the judgment of others. Even when a subject spoke their mind it was torture to do it. Watch this girl's face. Social influence is a powerful thing.
- So, the question becomes can we get more of the benefits and fewer the costs?
- What if we replayed the same scenario with the teenagers and added one person, just one, who expresses polite doubt to the crowd?
- (Participant) I guess I saw it different because it looks like it was C to me.
- (All participants answer C)
- Astounding! Ninety five percent now express their true opinions.

One polite disagreement changed the responses of the group. Holding our integrity at a high level can cause positive change.

Numbers 13:30-32: (NASB)

³⁰Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, We should by all means go up and take possession of it, for we will surely overcome it. ³¹But the men who had gone up with him said, We are not able to go up against the people, for they are too strong for us. ³²So they gave out to the sons of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out...





Numbers 14:1-2,4,6-9: (NASB) ¹Then all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. ²All the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron; and the whole congregation said to them, Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness!...⁴So they said to one another, Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt...

Fear spreads and with it the peer pressure to obey that fear, and fear then becomes irrationality.

⁶Joshua...and Caleb...of those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; ⁷and they spoke to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, saying, The land which we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. ⁸If the LORD is pleased with us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us—a land which flows with milk and honey. ⁹Only do not rebel against the LORD; and do not fear the people of the land, for they will be our prey...



Powerful **BIG PICTURE** perspective: See the challenge through God's eyes.



Can you frame this from the perspective of God as the parent of all humanity? He is responsible to teach us how to make good choices and not be pressured by the evil and unrighteousness of this world.

God is not dealing directly with every human being right now. That will come in the next age when all are resurrected. For now the "called out" ones are getting the opportunity to be taught even though we sometimes do not listen. He gives us everything we need to be able to overcome peer pressure.

(1) Plan ahead, How to Stand Up to Peer Pressure, JW.org

PRESSURE RELEASE VALVE

• Step three: you need to plan ahead. Proverbs 24:5 says that a person who has knowledge increases his power. If you know exactly why you are saying no to something, why something is bad, it can give you the strength to say "no."





<u>Proverbs 24:5-6</u>: (NASB) ⁵A wise man is strong, and a man of knowledge increases power. ⁶For by wise guidance you will wage war, and in abundance of counselors there is victory.



What is the one thing more than anything else that can shift peer pressures' influence to a godly end?

As we take our final look at this incredibly difficult matter, there is one thing that can change things. One thing that can shift the mood - alter the thinking and redirect the actions of a group of peers heading down a slippery slope of darkness. The best part is that this one thing is not miraculous or impossible - it is present in each of us! There is great power in this one thing!

Power of one, One Simple Skill to Overcome Peer Pressure, The Behavioral Science Guys

- What's the point here? It's the power of one. We have an innate fear of being shunned by valued groups. When you feel like you're the odd person out, don't stifle your concerns. Simply express them respectfully. It turns out this small dissent can provide powerful permission to the silent concerns of others.
- Yes, you don't have to risk being an outcast in order to test your concern. You don't have to scream and yell. You don't have to call others names. The quiet, polite expression of doubt can turn the rest of the group from zombies into thinkers.

Polite disagreement with the group lets them know there is another way. Often there are others feeling the same thing but without the courage to do the right thing. When one person stands up and speaks, other people often follow what is right.

We will review all of our lessons today in the context of when Paul assigned Timothy to take a leading role in the early church. Paul focused Timothy on not giving in to the pressures of being minimized because he was such a young leader.





1 Timothy 4:1-2, 6-7, 10-13: (NASB)

Be upright, clear and fair in your thinking and actions, even if your feelings may be guiding you in a different way.	¹ But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, ² by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron
The courage of a strong and righteous voice can change the tide.	⁶ In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following.
Make God's wisdom your guide through faithful prayer and focus.	⁷ But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness
When we are too afraid to make a public statement, making it more quietly will work. THE KEY IS MAKING THE STATEMENT!	¹⁰ For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.
Be well-armed and prepared for the inevitable battle by not only rehearsing what is right and wrong, but WHY things are right or wrong.	¹¹ Prescribe and teach these things.
A strong voice of perspective - Paul was unequivocal in his assessment: All is from God and we are mere instruments, so get over yourselves!	¹² Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.
STOP! THINK! It only takes a moment to remind yourself what is important.	¹³ Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching.

(1) Take action, How to Stand Up to Peer Pressure, JW.org

• Now the fourth step: take action. No, you don't have to give your peers a lecture. Just say "no" clearly and confidently. You may be surprised at their reaction. Each time you take a stand for what you know is right, you get stronger and stronger and that makes it easier to resist the pressure the next time. You don't need to be rude, but you could give a reason to why you wouldn't want to join in. If they do keep pressuring you just remember this. Giving into peer pressure is kind of like being turned into a puppet with your peers pulling the strings. You can't hide from peer pressure, but you can stand up to it.





Powerful BIG PICTURE perspective: See the challenge through God's eyes. ...and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds... Remember who you REALLY are and what you REALLY stand for. ¹⁴Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was Focus can overcome fear bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the iust be sure to create laying on of hands by the presbytery. ¹⁵Take pains with spiritual muscle memory these things; be absorbed in them, so that your by daily absorbing godly principles. progress will be evident to all. ¹⁶Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.

Pay close attention to yourself - One of the keys to overcoming peer pressure is to make sure you are standing for your own integrity before God. How *should* I react in this situation? How *could* I react in this situation? Falling into peer pressure can be a choice. Choose to have godly wisdom crush the peer pressure out of your life!

So, how do I overcome peer pressure? For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions... Think about it...!

And now <u>even more</u> to think about... only in the Full Edition of CQ Rewind!

Here is the larger context of the issues that the brotherhood in Corinth created around Paul and Apollos. Paul wasted no time in getting to the issue in his letter to them:

<u>1 Corinthians 1:10-17</u>: (NASB) ¹⁰Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. ¹¹For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. ¹²Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. ¹³Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? ¹⁴I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵so that no one would say you were baptized in my name. ¹⁶Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other. ¹⁷For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void.



Paul goes back to the issue in his letter a second time as their attitude of divisiveness was an obvious symptom of something much larger - spiritual immaturity:

1 Corinthians 3:1-23: (NASB) ¹And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. ²I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, ³for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? ⁴For when one says, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, are you not mere men? ⁵What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. ⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. ⁷So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. ⁸Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. ⁹For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. ¹⁰According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. ¹¹For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹²Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. ¹⁴If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. ¹⁶Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?¹⁷If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are. ¹⁸Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, he must become foolish, so that he may become wise. ¹⁹For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written, He is the one who catches the wise in their craftiness; ²⁰and again, The Lord knows the reasonings of the wise, that they are useless. ²¹So then let no one boast in men. For all things belong to you, ²²whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you, ²³ and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God.

Peer pressure has been shown here as a symptom of our desire to establish "rank" amongst ourselves and this, of course, is an entirely unspiritual exercise.

The issues with Paul and Apollos showed this danger:

1 Corinthians 4:1-16: (NASB) ¹Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. ²In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy. ³But to me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself. ⁴For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord. ⁵Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God. ⁶Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other. ⁷For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it? ⁸You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings without us; and indeed, I wish that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you. 9For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. ¹⁰We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor. ¹¹To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; ¹²and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; ¹³when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now. ¹⁴I do not write these things to shame you, but



to admonish you as my beloved children. ¹⁵For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. ¹⁶Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me.

In spite of the factions improperly developing, it is obvious that Paul and Apollos were working together and on the same page:

<u>1 Corinthians 16:12-14</u>: (NASB) ¹²But concerning Apollos our brother, I encouraged him greatly to come to you with the brethren; and it was not at all his desire to come now, but he will come when he has opportunity. ¹³Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. ¹⁴Let all that you do be done in love.

<u>Titus 3:12-14</u>: (NASB) ¹²When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, make every effort to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. ¹³Diligently help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way so that nothing is lacking for them. ¹⁴Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful.

Next is the larger context of the peer pressure issue that Peter had and the confrontation by Paul to correct it. Paul not only speaks out on the issue, he explains the appropriate thinking in great detail.

This explanation makes the argument about spiritual freedom and not an argument between individuals:

Galatians 2:1-21: (NASB) ¹Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. ²It was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain. ³But not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. ⁴But it was because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage. ⁵But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you. ⁶But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me. ⁷But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised ⁸(for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles), ⁹and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we might go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. ¹⁰They only asked us to remember the poor—the very thing I also was eager to do. ¹¹But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. ¹²For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. ¹³The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews? ¹⁵We are Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles; ¹⁶nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified. ¹⁷But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be! ¹⁸For if I rebuild what I have once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor. ¹⁹For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God. ²⁰I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me. ²¹I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.



Texts to help with our peer pressure battles:

<u>Hebrews 13:7-9</u>: (NASB) ⁷Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. ⁸Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. ⁹Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings; for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, through which those who were so occupied were not benefited.

<u>2 Corinthians 5:16-17</u>: (NASB) ¹⁶Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know him in this way no longer. ¹⁷Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

<u>1 John 1:7-9</u>: (NASB) ⁷...but if we walk in the light as He himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.