

PEER DARING TO BE DIFFERENT PRESSURE



PEER DARING TO BE
DIFFERENT
PRESSURE

HOT

SHOTS

Peer Pressure: Squeezed by the Crowd

Written by Mark Farnham

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Today's youth are caught in a tug-of-war between independence and conformity. No one wants to just go with the flow, but few people want to stick out from the crowd, either. And even among those who want to be different, most try to group with others who are different in similar ways. For those very few who manage to be truly unique, even they want everyone else to see them. All of us, young and old, are influenced by others in at least some small way.

Adrift in a culture that has destroyed old sources of truth and community, many teens seek out superficial, noncommittal relationships that give them a sense of bearing and foundation. Since authority is unnecessary and morality outdated, they seek help from their peers, those friends and non-friends who are more than willing to mock, cajole, or laugh them into conformity.

Peer pressure exerts its power today more than ever. Youth are told to go their own way, but that way is more often than not a path followed by many people driven by the same destructive desire for self-gratification. It's a subtler kind of pressure, because it tells teens that they can truly be independent and self-contained.

In reality, the world offers nothing but bondage and dependence—dependence on friends, on material possessions, on the attention of the crowd, on any other desire or lust.

God's solution is a dependence on Him, which can liberate us from bondage and help us fulfill our mission to showcase His glory. We must look to Him for strength, for peace, and for wisdom. No other source is worth our attention. When we do allow others to influence us, we must always compare their advice with the Bible.

This five week study can help teens fight negative peer pressure, encouraging them to influence others to serve God.

How to teach this study

Hot Shots are written with the firm belief that teens learn much better when they are actively involved in the learning process. Teaching does not have to be dry, boring lectures or fruitless question and answer sessions. The most remembered lessons are those that included taste and touch, humor and drama, discussion and study, video and music. Active learning uses all these elements and more. It places the student shoulder-to-shoulder with the teacher instead of twenty feet away. It brings stories to life and gives information meaning. It changes thinking, speech, behavior and life.

The sections in each lesson have a specific function within the lesson.



The Warm-up is an exercise that creates a sense of togetherness and begins the meeting with a fun game or interesting discussion.



The Bridge introduces the subject content with a provocative illustration.



The Content is the explanation and application of the lesson.



The Closing summarizes experiences and calls for a commitment from the teens.

Different active learning styles are used to reinforce and illustrate the content, including discussion, role play, question and answer, sight, smell, taste, video, music and many more!

Before you start the study...

Read the Introduction, Course Objectives and Overview. It is important that you understand the scope of this study before you teach it.

Before each lesson...

1. Read through the lesson and take note of the Lesson Aim, Objectives and materials needed for active learning segments.
2. Plan ahead to modify the lesson if necessary. Your facilities or equipment may limit you. Substitute your own ideas if necessary.
3. Each lesson is designed to be taught in 20-30 minutes. Preparation will enable you to shorten or lengthen the lesson to meet your time limit.
4. Be excited when you teach! An excited teacher communicates that what he is saying is important, and students take notice. If you can't get excited about an active learning segment or a warm-up, develop your own that will work with your teens.



Course Objectives

By the end of this course students will:

- define peer pressure and see what it does to them
- experience the importance of decisions
- learn what makes a good friend and how to get rid of a bad friend
- identify types of peer pressure and how to resist them
- commit to use positive peer pressure for God

Overview

Lesson 1: What is Peer Pressure?

- **Lesson Aim:** To help teens understand what peer pressure is
- **Text:** Galatians 2:1–13

Lesson 2: The Basis of Friendship

- **Lesson Aim:** To help teens choose the right kind of friends
- **Text:** 1 Samuel 18–20

Lesson 3: Pushed, Pulled, and Squeezed

- **Lesson Aim:** To help teens understand how friends influence them
- **Text:** Romans 12:2

Lesson 4: Battling the Bad

- **Lesson Aim:** To help teens learn how to fight negative peer pressure
- **Text:** 2 Timothy 3:1–5

Lesson 5: Harnessing the Good

- **Lesson Aim:** To help teens use positive peer pressure to glorify God
- **Texts:** 1 Samuel 17; Daniel 1

LESSON 1

What is Peer Pressure?

Many teens, if asked, would say that they are not influenced by peer pressure. Yet those same teens use phrases like, “everybody else is doing it” and “I’m not going unless you are.” In fact, all people are influenced to a certain degree by the people around them. Teens are especially influenced and often don’t know it. They don’t understand what peer pressure is and how it works. They don’t know that giving in to peer pressure can change who they are. Teens need to understand this powerful force that affects their choices.



To help teens understand what peer pressure is.



Students will:

- experience peer pressure and be forced to make a decision
- learn the definition of peer pressure
- see how peer pressure robs them of their individuality
- understand the need to consider the consequences of their choices



Galatians 2:1–13

In this passage, Paul recounts the story of his trip to Jerusalem for the Jerusalem Council. Legalistic Jews were trying to add circumcision to faith for salvation. Titus did not give in to the peer pressure of these Jews, but Barnabas surrendered to the pressure not to associate with the Gentiles.

The Lesson



Arrange for one of your teens with leadership influence to arrive early. As others enter class, have your volunteer try to convince others to do something unusual such as sit in the front rows or

What You Need

A volunteer

What You Need

A chalkboard or overhead projector

back rows, turn their chairs around, etc. Have your volunteer convince as many as possible to imitate him. He should not tell the others what is happening, but simply apply peer pressure to others to listen to him. He may be successful, and he may not. Either way illustrates the idea of peer pressure. Other suggestions: try to convince each teen to sign his or her name on the chalkboard; try to convince others to push their chairs into a close group surrounding your volunteer.



Say, "None of you realize this yet, but you are all part of an experiment. I wanted to illustrate today's lesson. Some of you unknowingly gave in to peer pressure by following _____'s example. Others did not. This is a simple demonstration of how easy it is to be influenced by those around you."



Before we can begin talking about peer pressure, we must know what it is.

Definition

Write the following definition on the chalkboard or overhead: Peer pressure is the _____ of your _____ on your _____. (Answer: influence; friends; decisions)

Ask the teens to try to fill in the blanks of the definition. If they need a hint, scramble the answers and write them on the board.

The definition on the board shows the three ingredients of peer pressure: 1) an influence 2) by friends 3) that affects decisions.

The Influence

Peer pressure is a powerful force, especially in the life of a teenager. Every teen needs to be aware of what peer pressure does. Have the teens turn to Galatians 2. Read verses 1–13 and briefly explain the context. Paul, Barnabas, and Titus journeyed to Jerusalem to help settle a theological problem that was troubling the church in Jerusalem. The dispute arose when saved Jews began teaching that a Gentile who came to Christ also needed to be circumcised. These Jews were putting tremendous pressure on Gentile Christians. When Paul arrived with his companions, a curious thing happened. Ask, "What happened with Paul's companions?" Look at verses 3 and 13. Titus stood firm against the peer pressure while Barnabas gave in! Many of the effects of peer pressure are evident in this passage.

It causes us to do what we normally would not do

Say, "Each person that entered the class and gave in to the peer pressure by (your volunteer) did something he or she would not normally do. In fact, you did some-thing that would not normally even cross your mind.

Friends can make an idea we never thought of sound good. That can be positive and negative."

It removes our focus from what God wants in our lives (v.13)

The Jewish Christians created another gospel by adding circumcision (Gal. 1:6–7), and Barnabas allowed their pressure to take his focus from the true Gospel. Just as the Jews turned Barnabas away from the true message God intended him to share, your friends may turn you away from God's intentions for you.

Object Lesson

Pass around a package of candy bars that are shaped alike. Encourage each person to take one without eating it. Say, "When you make a decision because of peer pressure, you become just another copy of someone else. God didn't make us like these candy bars. Every decision (good or bad) should be made because it agrees with what God says is right, not just because others want us to (Acts 5:29). God doesn't want us to be cookie-cutter Christians."

It allows others to think for us (vs. 5–6)

God wants every person to think about what they do since each one will stand before Him someday. God has given everyone a mind, and He expects us to use ours (Rom. 14:4–5, 12).

It promises a false acceptance

Many teens give in to peer pressure because they don't want to stand out. They want to blend in and feel accepted by the crowd. However, just because you give in to peer pressure doesn't mean you will be truly accepted. Many times teens put pressure on others just to see if they will cave in. They know if you'll do what they say, you can be used to do what they want.

It removes our focus from what God wants in our lives

Your friends might tell you that your hesitation to perform a certain action is unnecessary. You should do what feels right, they say. Your fun and happiness are all that really matter in life. If you've spent any time in God's Word, you realize that God says something quite different. His Word tells you who He is and how He behaves. Anything you do that is contrary to God's character is sin. If your friends don't know God or don't want to please Him, the things that they pressure you to do are based on what pleases them best. You must decide whether your life will please the infinite God of the universe who truly cares for you or the finite people of this world who always care most for themselves.

What You Need

A package of candy bars

What You Need

Copies of “Choices, Choices, Choices”

Pens or pencils

Decisions Handout

Distribute the “Choices, Choices, Choices” handout. Give teens a few minutes to fill them out and then ask a few teens to share their answers. Ask which of the decisions already made was in some way affected by peer pressure. Also ask what the consequences would be if they chose differently than they did. Say, “Every decision you make is important. Every time you make a decision you should ask yourself two questions.”

Why am I choosing this option? A decision should always be made because it agrees with what God says is right, and not because others are doing it or want you to do it. For a Christian, peer pressure often becomes a battle between God’s way of thinking and people’s way of thinking. Ask yourself whether your decision will honor God. You can also ask yourself, “If my friends were not doing this, would I do it anyway?” If you say “no” to either of these questions, you can be sure you are being strongly influenced by peer pressure.

What will the consequences of my choice be? Proverbs 22:3 says the difference between the wise man and the fool is that the wise man realizes every action has a consequence. We must decide if the consequence will hurt us or help us. We must also consider whether our choice will affect others. A decision to do something unlawful could bring harm or shame on your family. A decision to do something immoral with your friends or hide your friends’ actions from others could bring harm on your friends.

God warns you to beware of peer pressure. One phrase He uses is “respect of persons” (showing partiality). When a judge was appointed in Israel, he had to obey a charge from God not to respect persons he judged. In other words, the judge was not to consider a man’s position or popularity whenever he made a decision about a verdict. As God holds a judge responsible for a proper verdict, so He holds you responsible for making proper decisions about your life so that it will align with your knowledge of Him. Don’t make a decision because your “cool” or popular friends recommend it. Your knowledge of God should translate into a fear of God which will repel peer pressure—the respect of persons. (2 Chron. 19:5–7).

What You Need

Two whip-cream pies

A book or small gift



Ask for a volunteer and send him out of the room. Choose three more volunteers to act as “vending machines” and have them stand in front of the class and hold an object behind their backs. Two will hold whip-cream pies, and one will hold a prize (a book or small gift). Bring the volunteer back into the room and tell him that he must decide where the prize is by listening to the audience’s coaching. The audience can try to influence him either way. Whichever vending machine the volunteer uses, he must take what’s given to him. After he has received his pie in the face or prize, say, “Seeing the consequences of a decision is not always easy. It doesn’t help to have friends who confuse your decision by putting pressure on you. However, God’s Word will tell us the consequences of our decisions if we’ll only listen. The consequences of your decisions can be life-changing or life-destroying.”

CHOICES, CHOICES, CHOICES...

List five choices you have already made today.

Example: "I chose to wear blue socks instead of white socks."

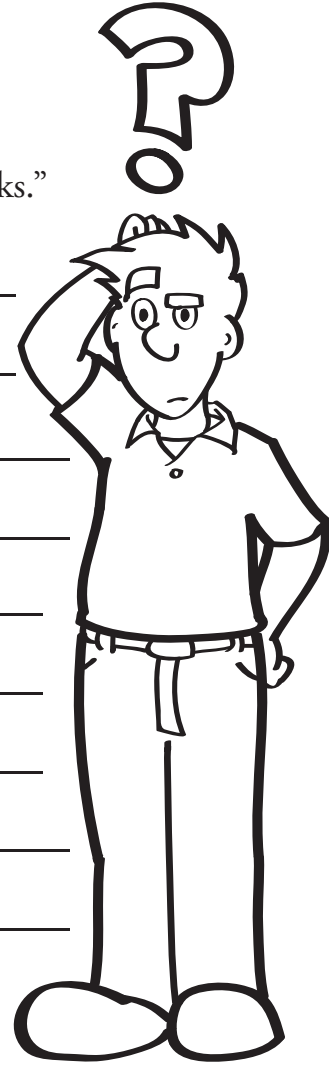
1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____



Which of these choices were influenced by what your friends would think?

LESSON 2

The Basis of Friendship

Have you ever thought about why you have the friends you do? What is it about them that made you want to be their friends? Not many people think about these important questions. The world chooses friends because of popularity, reputation, accomplishments, wealth, and more. A Christian's choice of friends should be different, though. It should be based on what God's Word says makes a good friend.



To help teens choose the right kind of friends.



Students will:

- taste the importance of choosing good friends
- reveal what they consider to be important in a friend
- discover what the Bible says a good friend is like
- rate their own friends and see if they need to make new ones



1 Samuel 18–20

This passage tells of the close friendship of Jonathan and David. Many of the elements of their relationship set a good example of what a good friendship is. The circumstances of their lives tested them and revealed the strength of a good friendship.

The Lesson



Get a caramel apple kit from the grocery store or follow the directions on the back of a bag of caramels. Choose three round apples and an onion of similar size and shape. Prepare the caramel apples and onion, and bring them to class. Ask for four volunteers to compete in a speed eating contest. Have them choose their caramel "apple" and begin. After a bite or two, the one who

What You Need

- 3 caramel apples
- 1 caramel onion
- Any leftover caramels

chose the onion will realize it. After the laughter has died down, say, “These volunteers had no idea how important their choice of an apple was. In the same way, many teens don’t realize how important it is to choose the right kind of friends.” Pass around the rest of the caramels.



Have your teens turn to Proverbs 9 and show the results of choosing the friend of wisdom (v. 11–12) and the friend of folly (v. 18).



Say, “Whether you realize it or not, each of you chooses friends based on what you consider is important in a friend.”

Handout

Distribute copies of the “Build a Friend” handout. Give teens five minutes to build their friend according to the four things they consider most important in a friend. Have some of them share their answers.

Say, “The Bible has much to say about the way we should choose friends. It describes the type of people we should make our friends.”

Small Group Research

Divide teens into groups of two or three and assign one or more of the following passages to each group. Give them a few minutes to discover the principle on friendship taught in the passage and give an example of how that principle can be practiced or violated in real life. They may discover principles different from the ones listed below. Have each group choose a spokesperson to report the findings of the group. As each group reports, write the principle on a chalkboard.

Leviticus 25:14–15—A friend will not take advantage of you; he won’t ask to copy your homework so he can get a good grade.

2 Samuel 12:1, 7—A friend will confront you when you’re wrong; if she hears you swear, she’ll tell you to your face that it’s wrong to swear.

Job 6:14; Proverbs 17:17—A friend will be present to support you when you’re down; when you’re discouraged, he won’t ditch you for others who are more “fun.”

Proverbs 19:4, 6—A friend will be loyal to you regardless of what you have or don’t have; she’ll invite you to her party even though your family isn’t as well off as most other families in her circle.

Proverbs 27:6—A friend will tell the truth even though it may hurt you; he will tell you in a kind way that your breath really stinks, even though it might hurt your feelings at first.

Proverbs 27:9—A friend will give you good advice; she won’t tell you to date that guy behind your parents’ backs.

What You Need

Copies of “Build a Friend”

Pens or pencils

Ecclesiastes 4:10—A friend will lift you up when you fall; when you get caught shoplifting he won't avoid you like the plague and call you a "klepto" (kleptomaniac), but he'll encourage you not to steal anymore.

Ecclesiastes 4:12—A friend will stand with you in a fight; when someone makes fun of your Christianity at school, she will stand up with you for the Lord.

Deuteronomy 13:6-10—A friend will not try to get you to do wrong; he won't ask you to go drinking with him.

Psalms 15:3—A friend will not gossip about you or embarrass you; she won't tell everyone about the big zit you're trying to hide and call you "Volcano Girl" as you enter class.

Say, "These are some of the characteristics God says make a good friend." Have the teens turn to 1 Samuel 18 and notice what the Bible says about David and Jonathan's friendship.

- **18:1-4**—Their friendship was based on love (unselfish behavior). There was nothing improper about their relationship as some suggest. They simply treated each other as they wanted to be treated themselves. They were unselfish and were concerned for the good of the other.
- **19:1-3**—Jonathan was more concerned about David's well-being than his own. Jonathan would have been king after Saul if he had let Saul kill David, but he gave up his kingship for his friendship.
- **19:4-6**—Jonathan stood up for David and defended him. Jonathan stood with David against his father even though he could have been killed for doing so.
- **20:14-17**—David promised to be loyal to Jonathan. David committed himself to be loyal to Jonathan and all of Jonathan's descendants. Even though later others wanted David to break his loyalty to Jonathan's son, he wouldn't do it.
- As long as Jonathan was alive, David never fell into sin. Perhaps one of the reasons David sinned with Bathsheba was that he didn't have a friend to stop him.

What You Need

Copies of "My Friends"

Pens or pencils

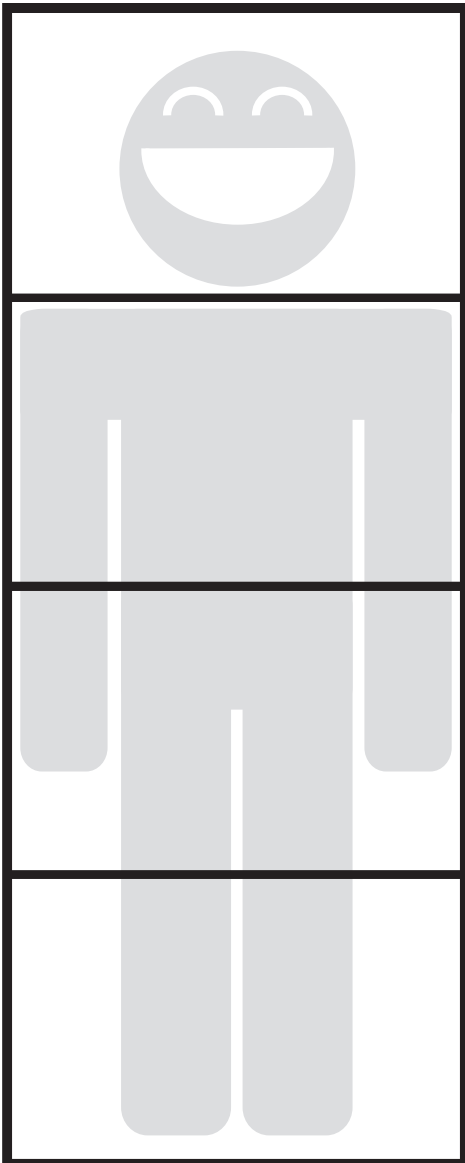


Handout

Distribute copies of the "My Friends" handout. Give teens a few minutes to fill them out and then close in prayer.

Build-a-Friend

What do you consider most important in a friend? Choose four items below and construct the perfect friend with the most important characteristic at the top, the second most important below that, etc. until you have the top four elements of a perfect friend.

Rich		Athletic
Popular		Stylish
Godly		Cool
Smart		Friendly
Good-looking		Loyal
Funny		Talented

My Friends

How do your friends rate as sources of peer pressure? Take this brief test to see if they're putting too much pressure on you. Rate them on the following scale: Always true: 2 points; Sometimes true: 1 point; Never true: 0 points.

- 0 1 2 My friends don't take advantage of me
- 0 1 2 My friends confront me when I do wrong
- 0 1 2 My friends support me when I'm down
- 0 1 2 My friends are loyal regardless of my family's financial state
- 0 1 2 My friends tell me the truth—even when it hurts me
- 0 1 2 My friends give me good advice
- 0 1 2 My friends lift me up when I fail God and them
- 0 1 2 My friends stand with me in a spiritual fight
- 0 1 2 My friends don't try to get me to do wrong
- 0 1 2 My friends don't gossip about me or embarrass me

My friends' score: _____

Scores	
15–20:	You've got pretty good friends
8–14:	You may need to take a look at some of your friends
Under 8:	You need new friends!

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