

Peer Pressure

Recognizing the Warning Signs
and Giving New Direction

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I will never forget my first day of high school. I was moving from a private elementary school where I knew everyone to a public high school where I knew no one. I was terrified I wouldn't be accepted. My Christian upbringing only added to my worries. I was afraid that everyone's values would be light-years away from mine.

My mind was filled with questions: *Would I be liked? Would I be accepted? Would I be considered "cool"? What group would I fit in with? How much rejection and mockery would I have to endure before I was finally "in"?* That first day of high school I felt like an alien from another planet. I knew it wasn't true, but I felt like every eye in the entire place was sizing me up.

What was the source of my fear, stress, and anxiety? We call it "peer pressure," but that title doesn't really do it justice. This is a huge issue that affects every part of your teenager's life. The way your teenager deals with peer pressure now will impact the rest of her life. How can you help?

Begin by getting God's perspective on this problem. God, in the Bible, says many useful and life-giving things about peer pressure that will help you and your teenager.

What Does God Say About Peer Pressure?

Peer pressure is not just a teen issue—it's a human issue. The Bible calls peer pressure “fear of man,” and we all struggle with it. Each of us has, at different times, given the people around us more power than God intended them to have. We all can be fearful about what people think of us, how they will respond to us, or what they may do to us. We all have people in our lives whose opinion means more to us than it should or who have the power to control us more than they should. God knows we have this struggle, so he talks about it in the Bible:

Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but
whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe.

(Proverbs 29:25)

Do not put your trust in princes, in mortal men, who cannot save. When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing. (Psalm 146:3–4)

Look also at Isaiah 51:7–8 and Jeremiah 17:5–8. Notice that God is speaking to everyone in these verses. He is calling everyone (not just teenagers) to trust in the eternal God who saves them, instead of people who cannot save and will soon die. Your teenager is dealing with the same universal human struggle you are dealing with—putting his trust in the wrong place. The only difference is that his struggle is being played out in the context of the teen years.

Peer pressure is a vertical, not a horizontal problem. The Bible is very clear that the reason the opinions of people control our teenagers (and us) more than they should is rooted in our relationship with God. The apostle Paul says that everyone has “exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served