

OVERCOMING PEER PRESSURE

book thirty-one in the series:

THE OWNER'S MANUAL TO THE NEW YOU

DOUG BRITTON, MFT

Five-day Bible study for individuals, small groups, and churches

Day One: Identify the Problem

Day Two: Please God, Not Others

Day Three: Be an Influencer

Day Four: Don't Set Yourself Up

Day Five: Review and Test

Overcoming Peer Pressure: Book thirty-one in “The Owner’s Manual to the New You”

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The Owner's Manual to the New You

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By Doug Britton, MFT

Twelve books on “Knowing God”

Twelve books on “Developing a Godly Character”

Twelve books on “Enjoying Healthy Relationships”

Twelve books on “Overcoming Personal Problems”

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The Owner's Manual to the New You

"The Owner's Manual to the New You," published by LifeTree Books, is a series of forty-eight cross-cultural discipleship books by Bible-based Marriage and Family Therapist Doug Britton. LifeTree Books is making these books available free of charge for individual use.

Each book is ideal for a five-day study by small groups, classes, or individuals. Although this is a forty-eight-book series, each book can be studied as a complete book by itself.

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- Book 1: Who is God?
- Book 2: Becoming a Believer
- Book 3: Your Identity in Christ
- Book 4: Quick Overview of the Bible
- Book 5: How to Study the Bible
- Book 6: How to Pray
- Book 7: Key Christian Practices
- Book 8: Successful Christian Living
- Book 9: Living a Joyful Life
- Book 10: Knowing God's Will
- Book 11: Obeying God
- Book 12: Living in God's Power

Developing a Godly Character

- Book 13: Growing in Christ
- Book 14: Changing Your Self-Image
- Book 15: Changing Your Attitudes
- Book 16: Living with Humility
- Book 17: Living with Purpose
- Book 18: Living with Self-Control
- Book 19: Living with Integrity
- Book 20: Growing through Problems
- Book 21: Trusting God
- Book 22: Breaking Free from Our Culture
- Book 23: Handling Money Responsibly
- Book 24: Staying Faithful to God

Enjoying Healthy Relationships

- Book 25: Keys to Healthy Relationships
- Book 26: Making Friends
- Book 27: Showing Grace to Others
- Book 28: Forgiving Others
- Book 29: Serving Others
- Book 30: Resolving Conflicts
- Book 31: Overcoming Peer Pressure
- Book 32: Helping Others with Wisdom
- Book 33: Dating, Marriage, and Sex
- Book 34: Embracing the Body of Christ
- Book 35: Respecting Authority
- Book 36: Sharing Your Faith

Overcoming Personal Problems

- Book 37: Overcoming Your Anger (Part 1)
- Book 38: Overcoming Your Anger (Part 2)
- Book 39: Overcoming Rejection
- Book 40: Overcoming Temptation (Part 1)
- Book 41: Overcoming Temptation (Part 2)
- Book 42: Overcoming Anxiety and Fear
- Book 43: Overcoming Jealousy and Insecurity
- Book 44: Overcoming Self-Sufficiency
- Book 45: Overcoming Guilt and Shame
- Book 46: Overcoming Discouragement
- Book 47: Overcoming Failure
- Book 48: Overcoming the Fear of Death

Contents

Foreword	7
Small Group Leader's Guidelines	8
Day One: Identify the Problem	9
Homework – Day One	13
Day Two: Please God, Not Others	15
Homework – Day Two	19
Day Three: Be an Influencer	21
Homework – Day Three	25
Day Four: Don't Set Yourself Up	27
Homework – Day Four	31
Day Five: Review and Test (may be removed by leader)	33
About the Author	37
More Books by Doug Britton	38



Foreword

When I was first asked to write a series of downloadable books for intensive discipleship training, I was excited. Jesus has revolutionized my life, and I am glad to share his truths with you.

The pages you are about to study come straight from God's word. They contain truth that puts our feet on the path to the fullest life possible—truth that sets us free.

As Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32).

May God speak to your heart as you read, and may he bring his truth alive in your life.

Your brother in Christ,

Doug Britton

P.S. LifeTree Books is offering this downloadable book and all the other books in "The Owner's Manual to the New You" series free of charge. If you find these books helpful, please feel free to spread the news to churches, ministries, and individuals who might benefit from them.

Small Group Leader's Guidelines

Introduction. These studies are for new believers as well as mature Christians. They are for small groups, discipleship classes, mentors, and individuals. They are ideal for studies lasting from sixty to ninety minutes.

Choose the key points, verses, and discussion questions you will talk about. Don't think you need to cover every verse and question. With new believers, go over the main points, key verses, and selected questions. Go into more depth with mature Christians.

Begin and end each study with prayer. Start by asking God to help each person grow from the study. At the end, ask everyone to pray for help to put God's truth into practice.

Review homework. Before starting the current lesson, ask group members to discuss their answers to some of the previous day's homework questions.

Personalize the lesson. Although it's okay to read each lesson word-for-word, the material will "come alive" if you discuss some of the key points in your own words. Share your own experiences and struggles, and how God has helped you.

As you read, identify important points and key parts of verses. Ask group members to circle them, and then explain why you want to emphasize these points.

Get everyone involved. The more people are actively involved, the more they are impacted by what you are studying. Don't ask questions that can be answered by "yes" or "no." For example, don't ask, "Do you have any thoughts about this?" Instead, ask, "How does this insight speak to you?"

Consider breaking up into smaller groups to discuss the questions if you are leading a large group or class.

Use day five for a review and test. Use the questions in day five as a review and/or test. Remove these pages if you do not want group members to see the questions ahead of time.

Want to Learn More?

Free online resources: For more suggestions for small group leaders as well as many online Bible studies on Christianity and daily living (anger, marriage, self-image, finances, and more), visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com/resources/small-groups

Small group leader's book: For detailed information on how to lead small groups and overcome typical problems, visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore/small-groups.

Day One: Identify the Problem

When I started to write this book, I thought it would be pretty straightforward. Almost everyone has heard of “peer pressure,” and most of us know that giving in to it can cause problems.

But then I realized that sometimes peer pressure can be positive. If you want to wear a swimming suit to church Sunday morning, peer pressure will probably keep you from doing it—and that’s a good thing. If you wore a swimming suit, you would cause a distraction and take away from other people’s worship experience (unless, perhaps, you were in Hawaii).

If you feel like getting up and dancing in the middle of a business meeting, you probably won’t do it because you would lose the respect of everyone in the room—and that’s a good thing. Giving in to peer pressure would keep you from doing something foolish, and likely getting fired.

Looking at a very different example, if a group dares you to drink a bottle of vodka without stopping and you do it, you might end up dead—and that wouldn’t be a good thing.

Peer pressure—the pressure of a group trying to get an individual to do something—can be bad, or it can be good. It depends on the circumstances—who is in your peer group and what the group wants you to do.

He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm. (Proverbs 13:20)

A righteous man is cautious in friendship, but the way of the wicked leads them astray. (Proverbs 12:26)

Discussion questions

1. Do you feel controlled by people or groups? Explain your answer.
2. Describe some situations you have been in where peer pressure was a good thing. Explain why it was positive or helpful.
3. Describe some situations you have been in where peer pressure was a bad thing. Explain why it was negative or harmful.
4. In general, what would be a good guideline to follow when deciding whether or not to go along with peer pressure? Explain your answer.

Who’s pulling your strings?

When I was a child, I used to enjoy watching a puppeteer operate a doll that was hanging from several strings attached to a rod. When the puppeteer pulled one string up, the doll’s arm jerked up. When the puppeteer pulled another rod, the doll’s leg jerked.



Do you ever feel controlled like a puppet by others—your boss, parents, spouse, law enforcement, teachers, politicians, pastor, or society in general? You might be right. Some or all of them might pressure you to act in certain ways.

Your peer group might control you more than you think.

But what about the people you hang out with, your peers? They probably have their own expectations or rules that can be just as controlling as anyone else's. For example, what does your peer group think about:

Your clothing

Your peer group may have clear ideas about what is okay and what isn't. There's a good chance they would make fun of you if you dressed in certain ways.

Your hair style, tattoos, piercings, jewelry, or makeup

Your peers might allow you some freedom of expression in your personal style, but they probably would give you a hard time if you looked very different from their idea of "cool."

Your language (or slang)

Your peers might criticize you or make fun of you if you don't speak in the same "language." They might expect you to use the same words, phrases, and style of speech they use.

Your opinions

Your peer group may be very intolerant of opinions or ideas they disagree with. For example, they might get mad or make fun of you if you express the "wrong" opinions about politicians, music, movies, sports teams, talk radio shows, or religion.

Discussion questions

5. Who is in your peer group (or peer groups, if there are more than one), the people you spend time with?
6. How does the peer group expect people to act or dress?
7. How would your peer group respond if you didn't go along with the group's expectations? Explain your answer.

Examples of negative peer pressure

When you are with people, there's a good chance that sometimes you feel pressure to do or say something you know isn't right. This may be because you are trying to fit in, you want to impress them, or you are afraid of their disapproval. There are countless ways in which you might give in to peer pressure. For example, you might:

- Join in when others criticize or gossip about someone.
- Spend more money for lunch than you should because your friends are spending a lot.
- Steal something or shoplift.
- Laugh at a dirty joke (or tell a dirty joke).
- Get drunk or smoke something you shouldn't smoke.

- Make fun of someone of a different race.
- Make fun of someone because of their clothes.
- Go to an inappropriate movie.

Discussion question

8. What are some ways you have given in to peer pressure?

Teenagers often face challenges in high school

I sometimes counsel Christian teenagers who are in public high school. For many high schoolers, these are awkward and lonely years. But Christian teens sometimes feel even more isolated and alienated than non-Christians, since in a lot of high schools, Christianity is looked down on by many teachers and other students.

These teenagers are often embarrassed to be identified as Christians, and many try to hide their faith. For them, high school is a time of survival, trying not to be known as a Christian, while trying not to do too many bad things. Many times, the end result is that their faith slips as they become increasingly influenced by their peers.

Adults often face similar challenges

Adults too may try to hide the fact that they are Christians on the job, on athletic teams, or with friends. The Bible tells us that Peter and Barnabas gave in to peer pressure.

Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. (Galatians 2:12-13)

Leaders sometimes face challenges

Leaders sometimes give in to peer pressure, going along with their followers even when they know they shouldn't.

A striking example of this is found in Chapter 32 of Exodus. When God was speaking to Moses on Mt. Sinai, the people got restless and asked Aaron to make them "gods." Although Aaron was the High Priest and fully aware this would be very wrong, he went along with them.

When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, "Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him." Aaron answered them, "Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me." So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, "These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt." (Exodus 32:1-4)

Discussion questions

9. What are the main ways peer pressure is a problem for you?
10. Say a short prayer asking God to help you learn how to overcome peer pressure as you continue reading this book.

Do you know Jesus?

This book was written to help believers in Jesus grow in their faith and personal life. You will get the most out of these pages if you know Christ, since it is through his love and power that you can truly change. If you have not yet entered into a relationship with Jesus, let me invite you to accept him as your Savior and Lord. Make this your personal prayer:

Jesus, I believe you are the Son of God, and I need your help. I confess I have sinned and failed you in many ways. I invite you to be my Savior and Lord, and I ask you to help me follow you the rest of my life. Thank you for loving me, forgiving me, and accepting me as your child.

If you prayed this prayer, welcome to the family of God. God has plans for you—to transform you. You have an exciting life ahead of you!

Memory verse

*A righteous man is cautious in friendship, but the way of the wicked leads them astray.
(Proverbs 12:26)*

Want to learn more?

Book by Doug Britton

Defeating Temptation

www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore/temptation

Day Two: Please God, Not Others

One of the best ways to overcome peer pressure is to change your focus from pleasing people to pleasing God. Here's how Paul put it:

Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ. (Galatians 1:10)

Many years before Paul wrote these words, David warned us not to be controlled by sinners or mockers, but instead to delight ourselves in God's law.

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. (Psalm 1:1-2)

Solomon made a similar point when he wrote:

Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe. (Proverbs 29:25)

Discussion questions

1. Why is important to please God, not others?
2. Reread the previous three verses. Which one stands out to you the most? Explain your answer.

Grow in your relationship with Jesus

As you grow closer to Jesus, you will become more like him, and you will have greater power to resist peer pressure. Your desire to please him will grow, and your desire to please others will lessen.

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. (Colossians 3:1-3)

Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. (1 Thessalonians 4:1)

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen. (2 Peter 3:18)

Discussion questions

3. How important is pleasing God to you? Is your heart set on things above? Explain your answer.



4. How can growing closer to Jesus help you resist peer pressure?

Being a Christian is much more than joining a religion. It is entering a relationship with Jesus. It is growing closer to him. It is loving and serving God with all your heart.

Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. (Deuteronomy 6:5)

And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. (Deuteronomy 10:12)

You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. (Jeremiah 29:13)

“Even now,” declares the LORD, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.” (Joel 2:12)

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. (Mark 12:30)

Discussion questions

5. What does it mean to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength? Explain your answer.
6. Take a few minutes to pray, asking God to help you know him better and love him more.

Don't be ashamed of Jesus

Have you ever been with people who were making negative comments about Christianity or about Jesus himself? If so, have you ever felt awkward or possibly ashamed of the fact that you were a Christian?

Read about a time some Jewish leaders who believed in Jesus did not confess their faith:

Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved praise from men more than praise from God. (John 12:42-43)

It's easy to think poorly of these leaders for their lack of loyalty to Jesus, but I think many of us have had similar reactions at times.

Let's read what Jesus said about people who deny knowing him:

But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven. (Matthew 10:33)

If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels." (Mark 8:38)

These are sobering warnings, but there's hope for you if you have denied Jesus. Peter, a key apostle, denied Jesus, yet he reconnected with Jesus later and shared the gospel with countless people.

Jesus is your best friend, and much more than your best friend. He is God. He gave you life, and he made the supreme sacrifice to give you spiritual life. Don't let peer pressure turn you away from him.

We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else. (1 Thessalonians 2:6)

Discussion questions

7. Do you ever feel awkward or embarrassed about being a Christian? If so, describe the situations when this happens.
8. How can you stay faithful to Christ when you are around people who are hostile toward Christianity?

Reach out to others

Today's study is about pleasing God, not others. However, that doesn't mean we should be hostile to others. God wants us to love everyone and be the best examples we can be to them. Many times that means serving or helping them. As Paul wrote:

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. (1 Corinthians 9:19)

Discussion questions

9. When is it a good idea to be concerned about what others think?
10. When is it a bad idea to be concerned about what others think?

Pleasing God, not others, doesn't mean you should correct or argue with everyone who criticizes Jesus. If someone says something bad about Christianity, silently ask God how (and if) you should respond. There will be times when you should speak, and there will be times when you should be silent.

I once had a supervisor who made extremely negative comments about Christianity. Other times he asked me challenging questions. Although I would have been glad to have these discussions with most people, I was sure he was trying to get me to say something he could use to get me fired. I chose to be quiet. I was not denying Christ. I was trying to be wise.

Whoever corrects a mocker invites insult; whoever rebukes a wicked man incurs abuse. Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you. (Proverbs 9:7-8)

I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. (Matthew 10:16)

Discussion question

11. Do you agree that there may be times when you should not respond to challenging comments? Why or why not?

Ask yourself, "What would please God?"

When you are faced with peer pressure to do something or go somewhere, silently pray and ask yourself, "What would please God?" or "What would Jesus do?"

Discussion question

12. Is silently praying "What would please God" a practical way to overcome peer pressure? Why or why not?

Memory verse

We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else. (1 Thessalonians 2:6)

Want to learn more?

Free online Bible studies

Studies on overcoming temptation

www.dougbrittonbooks.com/resources/temptation

Homework – Day Two

1. Paul wrote that he wasn't trying to please people (Galatians 1:10), yet he wrote many times about serving people. Was he contradicting himself? Why or why not?
2. How can we know if we are pleasing God? Explain your answer:
3. Do you ever think about pleasing God when you are tempted to go along with negative peer pressure? How can you improve in the future?
4. Have you ever felt awkward or ashamed about being a Christian? Explain your answer:

Day Three: Be an Influencer

In Day 1, you read about the dilemma many Christian teenagers face in public high school. They are often embarrassed to be identified as Christians, and many try to hide their faith. As a result, many find their faith slipping, and they become increasingly influenced by their peers.

Adults face the same dilemma. We may find ourselves going along with others when we know we shouldn't. We might go to movies that we know would displease God. When we talk with neighbors, we might avoid bringing up "religious" topics because we are afraid of what they might say. When people criticize Christianity, we may stay silent.

In Day 2 you read about one way to overcome peer pressure—pleasing God, not others. Today you will read about another way to overcome peer pressure—to be an influencer.



Choose to be someone who influences, not someone who is influenced

You have a choice as you go through life—to be an influencer or an “influencee” (someone who is influenced by others). Most people are influencees. They are highly influenced (or controlled) by peer pressure.

Discussion questions

1. Would you describe yourself as an influencer or an influencee. Explain your answer.
2. Describe someone you know who has been a positive influencer in your life. Describe what he or she did that was helpful.

If you are an influencee, I'd like to encourage you to develop an entirely new way to think about yourself—as an influencer. When you develop this attitude, you will discover it is a powerful antidote to peer pressure.

An influencer is someone who thinks, “I'm going to make a difference.” Whenever an influencer is with other people, he or she is praying to love others and be a good representative of Christ.

You may be a carpenter, homemaker, city mayor, or unemployed. Whoever you are, you are “God's workmanship,” created to do good works. You will have numerous opportunities every week to interact with people, numerous opportunities to silently pray for people, and numerous opportunities to represent Jesus in your words and attitude.

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10)

Discussion questions

3. What is the difference between an influencer and an influencee?
4. Would you like to be an influencer? Why or why not?
5. How can being an influencer help you break free from peer pressure?

Redefine true strength

If someone dares you to drink a quart of eighty-proof vodka, or to take a handful of unknown pills, you may think you have to accept the challenge to prove you're fearless or strong.

Actually, just the opposite is true. If you go along with something as foolish as that, you are being weak. It's much easier to go with the crowd than to say "no."

Your "friends" may define strength as drinking the vodka or taking the pills. But true strength is taking a stand against what might harm you, no matter what people say or how much they pressure you.

Discussion question

6. Do you agree that "true strength" is taking a stand against people who want you to do something harmful? Why or why not?

You are an ambassador for Christ

Wherever you are, you are representing Christ. As Paul wrote, you are his ambassador. Pray to represent Jesus well.

Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should. (Ephesians 6:19-20)

We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. (2 Corinthians 5:20)

Don't be obnoxious about your faith, trying to force people to become Christians. Instead, pray for opportunities to lovingly share the good news about Jesus' love.

Being an ambassador is more than talking about Jesus. It is also being a good example in friendliness, honesty, and behavior. Every kind word you say, every way you reach out to others, can make a difference.

Discussion questions

7. What is an ambassador?
8. What does it mean to be an ambassador for Christ?

Be prepared to be seen as different

If you are an influencer, you don't try to be just like everyone else. After all, you are representing God, and his values and laws are very different from those of some people around you.

If your peers reject you because you don't give in to their pressure, be willing to stand alone, as an "alien and stranger in the world."

Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. (1 Peter 2:11)

Discussion question

9. Are you willing to be seen as different, as someone who doesn't give in to peer pressure? Why or why not?

Look for ways to help others

You may not be a leader or have a position of authority, but there are many ways you can make a difference in others' lives. For example, you could:

- Visit someone who is home-bound.
- Talk to the administrator of a skilled nursing facility and ask if any residents would like a visitor.
- Volunteer to tutor children in an after-school program.
- Volunteer to help in a rehabilitation program.
- Help someone move.
- Mow a neighbor's lawn.
- Send an encouraging email, text, or letter.

There are countless ways you could reach out to others. Each time you reach out, you are redefining who you are. You are someone who cares. You are someone who makes a difference.

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

Discussion questions

10. What are some ways you could help others?
11. Do you think this might help you start to break free from peer pressure? Why or why not?

Reach out to lonely people

Whether you are in school, on the job, at church, or in another social group, look for people who seem lonely or who don't seem to fit in. Reach out to them. You can make a tremendous difference in their lives, and it can make a big difference in your life.

Discussion question

12. Where do you think you could find some lonely people or people who don't seem to fit in?

Memory verse

We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. (2 Corinthians 5:20)

Homework – Day Three

1. Define “influencer” in your own words:
2. Define “influencee” in your own words:
3. When you get together with your peer group, can trying to be an influencer help you resist negative peer pressure? Why or why not?
4. Describe someone who has been a positive influencer in your life:
5. Are there ways you could influence others the same way that he or she influenced you? Explain your answer:

Day Four: Don't Set Yourself Up

It's easy to go through life without really thinking about what we are doing. We slip into routines without asking ourselves if we are making good choices. In fact, we often are not aware that we are making choices.

The Bible encourages us to take a different approach—to live carefully and purposefully.

The highway of the upright avoids evil; he who guards his way guards his life. (Proverbs 16:17)

Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise. (Ephesians 5:15)

In today's lesson, you will have the opportunity to look at key areas of your life, and then to make some choices about your friends and activities.



Discussion questions

1. Reread Proverbs 16:17 and Ephesians 5:15. What is the main point of these verses?
2. How well do you put these verses into practice? Explain your answer.

Stay away from people who will tempt you to do unhealthy things

If you are honest with yourself, you could probably make a list of people you know who are not good influences—people who encourage you to do unhealthy things. The Bible warns us to stay away from them.

A righteous man is cautious in friendship, but the way of the wicked leads them astray. (Proverbs 12:26)

Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evil men. Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from it and go on your way. (Proverbs 4:14-15)

Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn his ways and get yourself ensnared. (Proverbs 22:24-25)

Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat, for drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags. (Proverbs 23:20-21)

But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat. (1 Corinthians 5:11)

I am not suggesting you only spend time with Christians. It's important to love and interact with non-Christians as well as Christians. The point is to be wise. Stay away from those who will tempt you to sin.

If you need to be around “dangerous” people, people who will pressure you to do foolish or dangerous things, pray ahead of time. Ask God to help you be strong and wise. Also ask him to help you be an influencer, not an influencee.

Discussion questions

3. How much of your time do you spend with “dangerous” people? Explain your answer.
4. Would you like to spend less time? If so, what steps could you take?

Spend time with positive people

If you mainly hang out with people who want you to do unhealthy things, you live with constant temptation to give in to their negative peer pressure. Make it a project to spend time with healthy people, especially other Christians who will encourage you in your faith. In the book of Acts, we learn that this was so important to the early church that they met together every day.

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts. (Acts 2:46)

The Bible describes all Christians collectively as “the body of Christ.” That means we are intimately connected, yet we often do not act that way.

Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. (1 Corinthians 12:14)

If I were to cut off my ear and put it on the floor, how long would that ear survive? Not long. It is designed to be connected to the body.

That is the way we are as Christians. We need each other.

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:25)

Discussion questions

5. Do you have positive friends, people who will encourage you to make good choices? Explain your answer.
6. If you need to make some healthy friends, what steps will you take?

Ask yourself, “Am I setting myself up?”

If you go into a dangerous situation, be honest about your motives. Are you going for seemingly innocent reasons, but inside you know you are preparing to sin?

Don't flirt with danger, putting yourself in a position where you are likely to be tempted. In other words, don't set yourself up to sin. Instead, identify activities, settings, or situations that are dangerous for you, then avoid them whenever possible. Remember Proverbs 16:17:

The highway of the upright avoids evil; he who guards his way guards his life. (Proverbs 16:17)

Discussion question

7. Can you think of a time when you set yourself up to sin? Briefly describe it. What lessons can you learn from that experience?

Evaluate your excuses for giving in to peer pressure

Here are some common excuses people give for sinning:

- Everybody's doing it.
- We're in love, so it's okay.
- Nobody will ever know.
- I deserve to have fun.

Discussion question

8. How do you think God would respond if you gave him these excuses for sinning? Explain your answer.

Think when you face peer pressure

There's a good reason peer pressure is called "pressure." It can be hard to say "no." Ask yourself these questions if someone tries to pressure you to do something:

- Is this person trying to control me?
- Am I willing to be controlled?
- Is this person a true friend? Is he or she really interested in my welfare?
- Would it be safe to do this?
- Would it be wise to do this?
- Is this something God would want me to do?
- What does the Bible say about it?
- Would I do this mainly because of peer pressure?
- Do I think I need to do this to show I am not afraid? Would I show more strength of character if I said "no"?

Discussion question

9. Choose three of the above questions you could ask yourself to resist peer pressure. Why did you choose them? Would they really help? Explain your answer.

Say "no" to temptation

Sometimes the easiest and fastest way to resist peer pressure is to simply say "no."

My son, if sinners entice you, do not give in to them. (Proverbs 1:10)

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

Declare independence

Let me invite you to join me in making a personal declaration of independence from peer pressure (and media pressure):

I don't care if people around me think I'm cool or not. If they pressure me to do something that's not good for me, I'm going to say "no." If that means I lose their "respect" or "friendship," so what?

I'm not suggesting you declare independence from everyone and everything. But I am inviting you to declare independence from peer pressure and society's unhealthy pressures.

Make it your goal not to let other people, TV, advertising, or anything else control you. It can seem impossibly hard to say "no," and there will be times you aren't successful. But every time you overcome peer pressure or our society's unhealthy pressures, it feels great.

Discussion question

10. Do you want to declare independence? Why or why not?

Memory verse

Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise. (Ephesians 5:15)

Day Five: Answer Key to Test (may be removed by leader)

Note to teachers and small group leaders

Remove this page if you do not want group members to see these answers ahead of time.

True or false

- F 1. Peer pressure rarely hurts our Christian walk.
- T 2. Teenagers frequently have to deal with peer pressure.
- F 3. Pleasing God has nothing to do with overcoming peer pressure.
- T 4. It's good to ask, "Would this please God?"
- F 5. It's better to be an influencee than an influencer.
- F 6. It's important for Christians to act like everyone around them.
- T 7. Reaching out to lonely people might help you overcome peer pressure.
- T 8. Spending time with other Christians can help you overcome peer pressure.
- F 9. It's impossible for a born-again Christian to give in to peer pressure.
- T 10. The Bible says a lot about avoiding people who want you to sin.

Memory verses

- 1. 2 Corinthians 5:20

We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.

- 2. Ephesians 5:15

Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise.



About the Author

Doug Britton, Bible-based Marriage and Family Therapist, has helped hundreds of thousands of people as a therapist, clinical director of a treatment center, seminar speaker, radio co-host, and author of over twenty books that show people how to apply God's truths in their daily lives.

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Doug has written Bible-based books on many daily-living topics. Visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore.

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Doug is the founder and president of LifeTree Institute and LifeTree Books. If you would like him or another member of the LifeTree team to speak in your church on any of the above topics, please visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com and click on the "Seminars" link.

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