



The *Pulpit Exchange*

It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (1 Corinthians 1:21)

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. (Nehemiah 8:8) Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend. (Proverbs 27:17)

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Issue # 7

Keeping Peer Pressure Manageable

I have jotted down *a few Scriptures that have something in common. We see differing groups of peers in these sets of verses. Daniel 1:3, 5, 6* — “And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king’s seed, and of the princes . . . And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king’s meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourish-

ing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king. Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.”

Genesis 37:20–23, 29–31 — “Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit . . . and we shall see what will become of his dreams. And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands; and said,

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Let us not kill him. And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again. . . And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes. And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not; and I, whither shall I go? And they took Joseph's coat, and

killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood.”

Acts 19:24, 25, 32 — “For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen; Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. . . Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more

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part knew not wherefore they were come together.”

Proverbs 1:10, 11, 13–15, — “My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood. . . We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil: Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse: My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path.”

2 *Samuel 13:3, 5* — “But Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah David’s brother: and Jonadab was a very subtil man. And he said unto him, Why art thou, being the king’s son, lean from day to day? . . . Lay thee down on thy bed, and make thyself sick.” And in essence, he said, “When folks come to check on you then you say, ‘Let my sister Tamar come and make cakes and give them to me.’”

What was common about each one of these passages? *The common thread is that each one represents a peer group of various walks of life.* The King told Ashpenaz to collect certain of the children of Israel, of the king’s seed and the princes. Daniel and his three friends were that group. It is a blessing that at least one in that group some time on the way to Babylon, had thought about

the potential pressures they would face in battle and purposed in his heart. This was shared, and we had four that stood together.

The second was that of brothers — Joseph and his brethren — and how they conspired against Joseph. Reuben was minded to not touch his life, or take it, but to let him go. He was quite dismayed, “The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?” However, the next verse says, “And they took Joseph’s coat.” He entered into it with them. He helped carry the guilt of what they had done to their father all those years — leaving him under that false impression.

In Acts 19, There was the silversmith’s guild — a group of craftsman that felt threatened. Their craft was in danger and they knew it. They banded together and started an uproar to try and stop the influence of the Gospel. The thing that I would like to point out here is that the result of that uproar was “Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.” Some were “swept off of their feet” that day. They did not even know what this whole assembly was about. They were shouting and there was kind

of a riot happening. The town clerk had a great job on his hands to still that crowd. However, it became the “in thing” because they were all doing it.

In Proverbs 1, we read about a young man who, (I am not sure if he faced his neighbours, fellow workmen, or who they were) but he was tempted by them to join their ranks and have an easy life. The proverb writer says, “walk not thou in the way with them. If sinners entice thee, consent thou not.”

The last one we referred to was simply two friends — peers — Amnon and Jonadab. Jonadab was “very subtil,” — he was witty and sharp. Today we would say he was smart. He was likeable. I did not continue to read the outcome of that happening, how that after Amnon forced his sister, Absalom made a plot for his life. Two years later at a feast for the king’s son, Amnon was slain, and David was anguished about it. Jonadab said, “No, do not be afraid, Absalom has been plotting this for some time.” He knew all about it, but he failed to warn him or talk about it.

Peer pressure is real, very real. Many and varied are the circumstances. Some of this pressure is productive, like Daniel and his friends, or David and Jonathan, but some of it is disastrous as

well. Peer pressure will always exist. If it is understood and properly governed, it need not spell disaster. It can in fact be an aid for a time. However, we have discovered, many times over that sometimes what we thought was positive, turned out to be negative, and the results were rather disastrous. When peer pressure is positive it can be very relaxing, but alas, when it is different from that, it can be very unnerving.

Our subject title is Keeping Peer Pressure Manageable. This title suggests that it can easily become unmanageable. If it will be kept manageable, it will involve some work and rigour. No doubt, this is why we are looking at such a subject. I would like to look first of all, at why we need to consider the subject like this, then at helps in keeping peer pressure manageable.

I) *Why do we need to consider such a subject?* 1) *All are susceptible to peer pressure, from the oldest to the youngest.* Is this really so? I think it is. Some years ago, a preacher in his middle twenties, went to the Midwest for a weekend Bible conference. I will not give his real name, but this is how he was introduced at this Bible conference. The moderator said, “Now, Brother Joe Smith, the sound, capable, fiery,

young man from back east, will address the subjects before us this afternoon.” The challenge to measure up to something was very great. The young brother’s opening statement was, “I think modesty would be better served if speakers were simply introduced by their name, and the audience allowed to evaluate the message.” That young minister was wise enough to know that if he did not nip that thing in the bud, the pressure would keep on growing. I thought it was a good answer. That young man could not have helped but have been influenced or affected by what was said about him among his peers.

Some mother says, “My Billy is doing really well in school. In fact, the last two years, every marking period, he pulled straight A’s.” Really, it is not your friend’s business to know all that, but whenever those things are shared then we feel obligated, or we begin to think about how our youngsters are fairing, then a comparison takes place. Why does a mother say something like this? What kind of pressure does this apply on others and how they would talk about their children?

In an interview some time ago, a struggling youth acknowledged that his radio was made to work again. When he was asked why

he said, “Well, my friends play their radio for me when I am with them, and I felt obligated to return the favour when they are with me.” There was pressure taking place, and someone dropped their guard and complied.

A certain school age boy was overheard telling his mother, “No, mom, I do not want that shirt, it is too plain,” while they were shopping. It was too plain in whose eye’s? Apparently not in mother’s eyes. The boy was conscious of fitting in somewhere. He envisioned his peer group frowning upon that choice, and maybe him not fitting in quite so well.

Why are company banquets and picnics and such like frowned upon? It is simply because all are susceptible to the pressure of socializing on that level. The downward course can often be set. All of us are subject to peer pressure. This is one reason why we discuss a subject of this nature.

2) *We need to discuss this subject because youth are especially subject to peer pressure.* In the youth, the body is maturing. There is the rigour and vigour of youth, but they are not as seasoned as their parents as yet. They have not learned to think with all the experience behind us.

Do you think this is true young ladies and young men that you as a body are especially susceptible to peer pressure? I hope that you agree with my following comments. Youth are maturing in body but they are not yet thinking like seasoned adults. They do not have the experience and so they cannot think quite the same.

In the book of Proverbs, the proverb writer says, “My son, hear this instruction.” He says, “My son,” ten times in the first ten chapters. “My son, listen to this. Do not go down this certain street”, “if sinners entice thee, consent thou not,” “My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, if thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger,” (Proverbs 6:1) “deliver thyself.” (verse 3) He gives positive direction. He says “There is more involved here than what you have learned yet on the surface — there is more involved.”

Let us simply look at Proverbs 1. In verse 2 it says, “To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding.” verse 7–10, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction. My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck. My

son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.” Thus we see that youth are maturing in body but not yet wise as their parents through experience and the rigours of life. One hundred and twenty-nine times, in the first ten chapters the wise man says, “Get wisdom. Get understanding. Do not forsake it.” Do we notice that the primary foundation for that wisdom, is the fear of the Lord which is the beginning of that wisdom?

Youth are especially susceptible to peer pressure because of their need for security. When we grow into our youthful years, we have an especially doubled interest in belonging and being accepted. It seems like after we grow into our middle years, we have started a certain course in life and we are not as conscious about the pressure around us anymore. However, our youth are especially susceptible because of their need for security. It seems doubly important to them to be accepted.

Some of these points I am sharing were compiled by a young man in his twenties, who was assigned this topic, “A Heart Cry of a Teenager.” Young men, if you were assigned that topic, what would you have to say about your heart cry — the heart cry of a teenager? One of the

challenges of youth is that they have not grasped, possibly yet, how strong the power of persuasion and influence really is. If we can see a danger, it often gives us a safeguard. Many young people have not yet fully grasped how important, or what the most important things of life really are.

Some time ago at Bible school a little questionnaire was handed out to the class. One of the questions on that questionnaire was, "What frustrates you most?" This questionnaire was given probably more than thirty years ago. "What frustrates you most?" One common thread in answer to that question that came back was, "I want to obey God and the church and my parents, but what of my friends?" This answer revealed a couple of things. It revealed that they were especially conscious of fitting in with their friends. It also revealed that for a good many of those felt a different tug and pull from their peers than they did from the church and their parents — there were two different directions of travel, and this spelled trouble. We look at such a topic because youth are especially susceptible to peer pressure and we as parents need some help on occasion in steering and exercising our responsibility.

3) *We look at this subject because it can be said of none of us that we have no influence upon our peers.* We influence some way, every day. — in the household, with those we work with, in the school grounds, wherever. Romans 14:7 says, "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." We influence someone somehow. A peer is certainly a person of the same rank or group, or a peer group is all those with about the same age or status. It might be fellow workmen, the folks in our youth Sunday School class or adult Sunday School class. It might be fellow married persons that we associate with.

I said that it cannot be said of any of us that we influence no one. What is influence? It is a persuasion that takes place without folks really understanding what is happening. That is what influence is. There is a pressure applied and we are really not consciously aware of it, and it simply "happens" we might say. Again, that is one of the reasons why peer pressure can be so devastating if it is negative.

4) *We look at this issue because of the need to safeguard the developing process in our children.* In Proverbs 7:6, 7, we have the wise man observing a certain youth. He says, "For at

the window of my house I looked through my casement, And beheld among the simple ones," (or the untried ones) "I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding." He did not know what he was getting into. He was listening to a voice. He was going down a certain street. He did not understand. This wise man was distraught when he saw this person who was untried being tempted into the trap by another. The end result is in verses 21–23, "With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him. He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; Till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life." We look at this subject because we want to safeguard the development process of ourselves and our children.

5) *We look at this subject because peer pressure can have a very, very strong power.* Why is it that peer pressure exerts the strength of power that it does? *One reason is because the natural tendency is down.* It is not up. It is like gravity; it pulls down. The Bible says, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." (Galatians 5:9) Leaven is a type

of sin and evil. It does not take much to get the process started. If we allow it to get started, it goes down. Thus, the tendency is to lose ground rather than to gain ground, and this makes peer pressure strong. It also sets the stage for a number of things.

Peer pressure also tends to embolden folks in that it may give them and opportunity to express their lower self with the approval of others. Think a little bit on Old Testament times in the wilderness. After Moses had given that positive direction about separation and the ribband of Blue, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram rose up and said, "Ye take too much upon you," (Numbers 16:3) They spoke against leadership. What happened? The Lord opened up the earth and swallowed them up, they and their families, along with two hundred and fifty other priests who bore censors. If Korah, Dathan and Abiram would not have had the courage to speak out like that, do you think those two hundred and fifty others would have perished as well? I think they decided, "Listen. I agree with Korah, and I will join with him." His influence carried over. In fact, before the whole thing was finished, fourteen thousand seven hundred perished in the plague. It had a

ripple effect. There was an influence going out in that group of travellers toward Canaan.

Peer pressure is very powerful because sometimes it leads to the do-it-now and consider the end later. It simply works that way. How many of the thirty some children, or youth, who perished at the hand of two she bears in Elisha's day, decided before they left home that they would join in some kind of mischief with their peers? However, someone said, "Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head," (2 Kings 2:23) and shortly the group was mocking him. The end was devastating. Someone started it and it became so easy to do it and not think about the possible end consequences. This is why peer pressure needs to be guarded because we fall prey to that trap so easily.

Peter said, "I go a fishing," (John 21:3) and his friends went along, did they not? He was distraught. Sometimes peer pressure causes many to go against their better judgment. We looked at the uproar at Ephesus. A good many did not even know what they were shouting about. They were caught up in the fervour of the moment. Think about the prodigal son. He was planning to have a good time with his inheritance. His peers helped him

spend it lavishly and to go on a downward course until he became destitute and penniless. Peer pressure makes acceptance with the group seem almost absolutely necessary for success. "How can I ever buck the tide?" How could Reuben ever say, "But, I tried to deliver Joseph and really this and this is what happened to him." Think about what his brethren would have thought about him, if they were willing to kill Joseph or ready to — what about himself? The pressure was "astronomical" to fit in, blend and hide with them the truth for all of those years.

Peer pressure is powerful because sometimes it gives a false impression of the group. I was at a public sale some years ago and the auctioneer made some kind of off colour remark and a ripple of laughter went through that crowd. A couple of us were dismayed at his comment. It would be very easy to think that only a very small percentage of the folks in that crowd were dismayed because of how many laughed, but what if perchance there were a dozen or two, or more like us, who were offended by that? Think with me a bit from a young person's standpoint. There is a group of ten or twenty young people together. Someone (one or two)

suggests a certain course of action, and okay, the rest kind of take it up. You go home. You were restless and uneasy, but you reasoned like this, “Everybody did it, and so everybody but me must have felt comfortable with it.” Is that really true? Probably not. Probably, there was another half-a- dozen in that group who felt as uneasy as you did but none of you had the courage to stand your ground. Therefore, everyone did it. It may not give a real or true picture of what folks felt like in that group at all.

Again, peer pressure is very powerful because one eventually gets weary of resisting it, if it is in the negative sense. Samson may have reasoned with his parents when they tried to persuade him not to go after the Philistine woman, “I am seeking an occasion against these folks.” Listen, the Philistines were seeking an occasion against him as well. They used his wife, his bosom companion, to get next to his heart and destroy his strength. Think about the tragic end of that whole thing. He was blinded and grinding corn for the enemy. He grew weary of resisting the pressure that he faced.

6) *We need a topic of this nature because we started out with the fact that all are susceptible.* The list of pressures is

almost endless. We could spend all the rest of our time, and more, thinking about Bible examples. David’s brothers (when he went to give his gift from his father to them at the scene of the army) mocked and ridiculed him, “With whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness?” (1 Samuel 17:28) Think about the influence of the ten spies. It was ten against two. What were they to say, “Yes, there is a multitude of abundance in the land but there is giants in the land and we are like grasshoppers in their sight?” They persuaded the people to the point where they were almost ready to stone Joshua and Caleb with stones because of what was said.

Johnny brags about his car’s performance. You have never tried yours out yet, but Johnny said what his will do and . . . well . . . it nudges you toward trying yours out to so you can say what yours will do someday. Young men hold tight. If you never try yours out, you will never be tempted to tell your friends what it will do, because you stood your ground and did not do it.

We have been looking at why it is necessary. The first reason, or help in managing peer pressure, and keeping it manageable is to understand the danger and the challenge of the whole thing.

II) *I would like to look now at some helps in keeping peer pressure manageable.* 1) *We need to understand that even positive peer pressure is not an end in itself.* It is good. It is a comfortable feeling if we as parents can allow our young people to be with another family for a bit, and we are perfectly at ease because we know what they stand for. This is a good feeling. The goal that we want to get across to our children is to do right because it is right. This is much more honourable than simply doing right because our friends are doing right. Therefore, even positive peer pressure is only beneficial as a safeguard while the maturing process goes on and conviction is developed. If personal conviction is never developed, then we are ill prepared to stand alone whenever that test really comes. Therefore, we are glad for positive peer pressure, but we may not trust in that. It is only a safeguard while the conviction process is going on.

2) *Another help is that we need to cultivate the will to say, "No," to self.* A scheduled well-governed life lends itself to not drifting with the crowd, because we are accustomed to doing things in a timely manner. We get up when the alarm clock rings. It says something about our charac-

ter. We say "No," to temptations of the flesh, and those thoughts that come into our minds. Whenever we develop a governed disciplined life, of saying "No," to fleshly impulses and temptations, it helps us to be fortified against peer pressure as well. Develop a firm conviction to do right. We need to know right from wrong. Parents, we start this whenever our youngsters are preschoolers. When you tell a lie, you get punished. You are trained to govern yourself. You are trained to say "no" to an impulse that takes place. This has a very positive benefit by the time one reaches their middle teens.

Daniel and his friends purposed in their hearts. When did they do it? At the last minute? I do not think so. They did it as they were on the way to Babylon. They did it because they were young men of calibre and character and they knew that the tests in Babylon would be very real. They decided from the first that to maintain a purity in their stand and their religious convictions was more important than life itself to them. They made their mind up on that and that set the stage for them later.

Jonathan and David were good friends. What kind of influence were they upon each other? Very

positive. In order for that friendship to exist, Jonathan needed to give up an aspiration — the very kingship. He was in line for the throne. As soon as he realized that David was God’s next choice for the king of Israel, he wanted God’s will before his own satisfaction. This established the basis for their closeness in their friendship.

Sometime ago I read an article on teenage drinking. The tenor of this article in essence said that all we can do is limit the influence to some degree because it is so powerful. It was hardly reasonable to think that teenagers would not drink. In the questionnaire that was given out they asked, “Why do you drink?” “Well, others do it. I am bored. I do not have anything to do. To loosen up.” They did not have anything else positive to do and their roots were not in a foundation such that it helped them to say no to the pressure around them.

Some years ago there were five young men on a Sunday evening travelling in their car to go to church at a neighbouring church (so they thought). However, the car turned a different direction. Someone in the back seat asked, “Where are we going?” “Well, you will find out after a while.” So they drove on

for another fifteen minutes and finally one said, “Where are we going?” “Well, Billy and I decided we are going to the movies tonight.” Then there was silence for the next ten minutes. Finally, one of those young men said, “I am not going in.” Shortly after, the second one said, “I am not either.” One block from the movie theatre, the other one said, “Stop. I am getting out too.” Now it was three against two, and they turned around and got to church late. If one would not have had the courage to do what he knew was right, all five of those would have been polluted in mind in that theatre that night. They would have had things from there that they would have had trouble rejecting from their thought life for the rest of their life, no doubt.

Cultivate the will to say “no” to the fleshly impulses and the things that Satan would have you to do, and do it promptly. It is an immense help in keeping peer pressure manageable. Get this across to your children when they are in first, second, and third grade and not when they are fifteen to seventeen, because if we fail in the first category, we certainly, no doubt, will in the second.

3) *Another help in managing peer pressure is to live and teach*

a growing relationship with Christ. One of the reasons why peer pressure is so strong is because of the need for acceptance. Whose acceptance do we want as parents? Do you want this young people? The Bible says, “there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.” (Proverbs 18:24) and even if thy “father and mother forsake [thee], then the LORD will take [thee] up.” (Psalm 27:10) Christ will be your support. Therefore, cultivate a growing relationship with Christ. I like to ask folks in instruction class sometime along that course, “What is the most important thing in life to you?” What is it young ladies? What is the most important thing in life to you now? Young men? Would you answer “To get to glory and serve the Lord with all my heart?” Is there anything else that is more important? There is not of course. I said, “to live and teach a growing relationship with Christ.” Our children are masters at discovering whether that is really our most important thing as well. It is almost impossible to teach them what ought to be their most important thing if they do not see it in us day by day. We must live a growing relationship with the Lord.

4) *Another help in keeping peer pressure manageable, is to*

expose our young people, (our children) to good times with divers groups of people. There is a growing feeling in our communities that if children will enjoy themselves, they need to be with those of their own age group, and only that, otherwise, it will be dull. If we had the choice of sending our middle teenagers to our grandparents for a day or to some of their equals for a day, and this needed to happen every so often throughout the year, where would we lean toward — more time with the grandparents, or more time with their peers? I wonder. Take your children to the grandparents when you have need of a babysitter more often than you do to those of their own age. The good times can be a family night together. Do things as a family. Have a family night — an extended time of discussion of issues around the supper table on a winter evening when there is nothing pressing afterwards and not only small talk. Treasure them.

I remember very vividly in my childhood my father was going to a sale and one of his peers (an equal of his) was going with him some distance away. We “got wind” that this party’s two boys (who were our age) were coming along with him. We made some interesting plans for those five,

six, seven hours together. However, I think our parents knew that much time would be negative, and so what did they do? They decided to drop us four boys off (we were ten, eleven years old) at brother Isaac Baer's house. Isaac Baer was an old man. He was in his upper sixties, the low seventies then. Think about that nine and ten-year-olds, how old do the folks in their sixties and seventies seem to you? We were disheartened. In fact, we were dismayed. In fact, we did a little bit of persuasion, but we did not win. Our father said, "Listen, You ask brother Isaac what things were like whenever he was a young man your age, and that will get it started." Well, it got it started all right and we had a good time. I wonder if our parents did not realize that this was an opportunity to help break down the idea that the only time you can really enjoy yourself is with those your own age. They were in fact, militating against the generation gap. Thus, we do our children a favour and we help to manage peer pressure by exposing them to a broader spectrum. Of course, our parents did not take us to someone who would not show us a good time that day.

5) *Govern the amount of time that is spent with their peers.*

The hours can be astronomical — very beyond us. If our child goes to school, the standard amount of days, the time they spend going to school and at school, and the time they spend fellowshipping with their friends after regular prayer meetings and Sunday morning and Sunday Evening services, amounts to about five hundred and fifty hours in the course of a year. During this time, they are outside of our jurisdiction. They are in the influence of someone else. After that young person gets a job, and spends even more hours going to and from work, it may actually rise to twenty-six hundred hours in a year. Does that leave a lot of room for pajama parties, overnight stays, and extended week-long, two-week-long stays with friends in another community? Does it really? I wonder if we are not doing our youngsters an injustice by not regulating a bit closer sometimes how much time they spend with those their same age.

The community children (our neighbours down the road) probably spend between four and seven hours a day doing what? Watching TV. What do our children do in those four to seven hours per day? We would say they certainly have more chores than the neighbours, but they are

not working all the time? One of our peer groups is brothers and sisters as well. How many negative things have taken place within the family unit whenever youngsters were not adequately supervised? How many things have happened? I am sure you could think of some. Therefore, we need to know what they are doing. They need to be supervised.

6) *Choose your children's peers carefully.* Do your children choose their friends or do you choose their friends for them? I would like to propose that we as parents basically choose the friends that our young people will have. We do this by whom we visit most often and what we major in. If we take our young ladies to households where their necklines are out of order, where they have very bold prints on their dresses, have the lowest cut shoes and the highest heels, where the hairdo's are marginal or still like a little boy's in their middle teens, or where they do not put on their suit coat until it is entirely too cold to go without it, or if they are avid hunters or whatever, be it known, we are asking our children to marry that calibre someday. Parents, there is an influence factor. We help to set the stage as to whether peer pressure will run

away from us or whether it will be manageable by whom we visit and whom we put them in touch with. The same thing would be true of the young men as well.

Many a parent has wrung their hands about the type of friends that their young folks chose. Who was largely responsible for those friendship choices? Is it not we that put them in touch with the calibre of people that they have their times with?

7) *Carefully consider the challenges of larger group activities.* I would like to share a few personal observations concerning this. The pressure seems upon us again and again, down through the years to have some sort of gatherings. What do those gatherings do? Are they necessary? I believe that the social needs of our youth and us as adults, are largely met by spiritual fellowship, by our middle and late teens. Furthermore, I believe the home is responsible for the oversight of the other interchange and not the church. When social interchange becomes mostly fun oriented, it contributes to a decline and build-up of negative peer pressure. I firmly believe that.

I believed this for a long time, but recently I was re-entrenched in it in reading a chapter in a book entitled, *The Pennsylvania*

German Society. This was written by a secular man, who was not plain, about the Berks County Dutchmen. They were not plain people, but they were a close-knit society. In this book there was a chapter on their social life. I would like to share a few observations. When they first settled, they were very far from civilization. He wrote, "Early in the settlement of the various rural localities of these Pennsylvania Germans, the only social interchange they had was at home, at school, and at church, and an occasional traveller that came through." If you did not see anyone for weeks, when that traveller came through and shared the bits of news around the fire after supper the whole family was an audience to that. He pointed out that fifty to eighty years later, the communities had grown but at that point yet, the only day of the year that was designed purely for fun was the county fair and that was one day.

Then in another article, this man was wringing his hands over what happened over the community solidarity and unity as well as home life whenever that whole thing fell apart. When did it fall apart? It fell apart whenever folks went away to a social, to the dance, or whatever. He points out very ably that as long

as their social life was met in the family, at church, at house raisings, helping folks move in, at apple schnitzings, the corn huskings and such like, they had a very close-knit community and very solid families. It is true that there was a lively side to some of those gatherings, but he ably points out that as long as that lively thing was the secondary factor and service and work was the primary factor for spiritual development, there were a strong community unity and a strong commitment to homes. However, as soon as the young folks got to leaving home solely to have a good time, something happened to family life, and it happened rather quickly. He shows it ably. He did not know how to return to the former closeness. Will it do the same for us? I think so.

I know how to return. We need to keep our social interchanges built around spiritual things and service and not fun. We must keep service the central factor, and the enjoyment the secondary one. In doing this we will safeguard ourselves in peer pressure matters.

In the second place, do these large gatherings really do what we think they should? Some folks advocate them because the folks need to learn to be socially

developed and the timid drawn out. Do larger gatherings really do that? I question whether they do. The timid become more withdrawn, and who finally “steals the show” at those larger gatherings? It is the physically able, the witty, able person who carries the day and it sends a signal — a very, very loud signal — to the fellow young people group that if you really want to be in, you have to be smart, witty and agile. This is what it says. It causes young folks to rate those things much, much higher than they are really worth. This is what happens. Thus, peer pressure is building and it is distorting their thinking. A loss of reserve often takes place as well, and folks start treating other young people with as much closeness as they would their brothers and sisters and we know what happens in the end.

8) *Cultivate an open sharing with your children.* We might ask, “How am I to do that?” Discuss issues with them frankly. Be the ones who share the necessary information of life with them. Read some of the books that they read and ask them, “What were the challenging factors that they saw in those books?” Recently I asked a little ten-year-old who was reading *The Bishop’s Shadow*, “Who

would you rather be, the bishop or Theo?” It was hard for him to decide, but it was a good touch with that young man. Finally he said, “It is really hard. Probably the bishop, but I do not really know.” Read some of what they are reading so you can enter into it with them.

Your children should know your expectations of them before the crisis time arises. When will they be allowed to go with their older brothers and sisters outside of your presence? What will the courtship requirements be? They ought to know that at sixteen and not at nineteen, because young people do not like surprises. We need to understand also that sobriety is not often overemphasized. Ecclesiastes 7:2 says very forthrightly, “It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting.” It is better. Why? Because it helps us to think in terms of eternity instead of right now. The house of feasting is only built around the present.

9) Lastly, *if we will keep peer pressure manageable, we need to look within, as much as we look without.* We are concerned that others are fit for our children to associate with. We need to be equally as concerned that our children, and our homes are exhibiting the right influence

upon others as well. Let us not only look across the fence as to where our young folks are going, but let us look to ourselves whether we are worthy as well.

May the Lord help us as we endeavour to relate to the pressures of life. May we be like Daniel and his friends, or like David and Jonathan, or like Anna in the Temple. I thrill every time I read that account of when she met the Saviour as a widow of

eighty- four years old. It says she went out from that experience and “spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.” (Luke 2:38) She knew who they were and she had a closeness with them. Let us make sure that our peers (the ones closest to us) are those whom we know are looking for redemption in Jerusalem. May the Lord help us to keep peer pressure manageable.

Scripture References

Genesis		Psalms		Luke	
37:20–23	125	27:10	137	2:38	142
37:29–31	125				
		Proverbs		John	
Numbers		1:2	130	21:3	133
16:3	132	1:7–10	130		
		1:10, 11, 13–15	127		
		6:1, 3	130		
1 Samuel		7:6, 7	131	Acts	
17:28	134	7:21–23	132	19:24, 25, 32	126
		18:24	137		
				Romans	
2 Samuel		Ecclesiastes		14:7	131
13:3, 5	127	7:2	141		
				Galatians	
2 Kings		Daniel		5:9	132
2:23	133	1:3, 5, 6	125		

From the Previous Issue:

The Ecumenical Effect of Mennonite Relief Efforts
 From a message by Luke Sensenig
 Centerville Mennonite Church
 Saturday May 29, 2004

Book Reprint (Continued)
One Hundred Lessons In Bible Study

LESSON 5.
Abraham.

I. Sketch of his life.

1. Birth. — Genesis 11:26.
2. Called of God, and sent to Canaan. — Genesis 12:1–5.
3. Life in Egypt. — Genesis 12:10–20.
4. His dealings with Lot.
 - a. Brings Lot out of Egypt. — Genesis 13:1.
 - b. Strife between their herdsmen. — Genesis 13:6–12.

NOTE. — The natural fruit of covetousness.

- c. Rescues Lot from captivity. — Genesis 14:13–16.

NOTE. — By this act Abram showed that he was above holding malice.

- d. Intercedes for Sodom. — Genesis 18:23–33.
5. The circumcision. — Genesis 17:23–27.
6. Entertains angels. — Genesis 18:1–8.
7. His wives. — Genesis 12:5; 16:2, 3; 25:1.
8. His children. — Genesis 16:15; 21:3; 25:2.
9. Abraham blessed.
 - a. By Melchizedek. — Genesis 14:18–20.
 - b. By God. — Genesis 12:1–3.
10. God's promises to Abraham. — Genesis 12:2, 3; 17:6; 18:17, 18; 22:18; 26:4.
11. God's covenant with Abraham. — Genesis 15:18.
12. Purchases the cave of Machpelah. — Genesis 23:3–18.

NOTE. — Purchased as a burying ground for his wife, Sarah, who is the only woman whose age is mentioned in the Bible. According to the sacred record, the following persons have been buried in this cave: Sarah, Abraham, Isaac, Rebekah, Leah, Jacob.

II. His faithfulness.

1. In offering Isaac. — Genesis 22:1–12; Hebrews 11:17–19.
2. Counted to him for righteousness. — Genesis 15:6.
3. Testimony of others. — Isaiah 51:2; Hebrews 11:8–12; James 2:21.

III. Thoughts on his life.

1. Abraham believed, even if God did not immediately fulfill His promises. The severest test of faith occurs when circumstances apparently disprove the truth of God's word. Abraham showed how to trust in God under discouraging circumstances, and all the hosts of God rejoice in his example of sublime faith.

2. The best way of proving faith is by works.

3. Abraham withstood the greater temptations in life, but was, on several occasions, overcome by smaller trials. Look out for little sins.

4. While we marvel at Abraham's faithfulness, let us not forget that God also was faithful to His promises. God has never been known to break a covenant.

1. Who was Melchizedek?

2. What relation was Abraham to Sarah? When, and for what purpose, were their names changed?

3. What is the darkest spot in Abraham's career? the brightest?

4. Discuss Abraham as an example of faith. Of works.

5. Of what is Mt. Moriah a type?

LESSON 6.

Jacob

I. Sketch of his life.

1. Birth. — Genesis 25:26.

2. Jacob and Esau.

a. Their occupation. — Genesis 25:27.

b. Jacob purchases the birthright. — Genesis 25:29–34.

c. By deceiving his father, he receives the blessing. — Genesis 27:1–29.

d. To escape the vengeance of Esau, he fleeth, but first receives his father's blessing. — Genesis 27:41–46; 28:1–5.

NOTE. — Would be critics have made much ado over the manner in which Jacob received the blessing. They seem to lose sight of the fact that he was divinely appointed to receive the blessing. It is doubtful if Jacob's questionable methods availed him anything, as his father afterwards blessed him of his own free will.

e. Esau to serve Jacob. — Genesis 25:23; 27:29, 37, 40;

2 Samuel 8:14.

f. The brothers reconciled. — Genesis 33.

g. Bury their father. — Genesis 35:29.

3. Jacob and Laban.

a. How Jacob becomes Laban's son-in-law. — Genesis 29:1–28.

b. Business matters. — Genesis 30:25–43.

c. Jacob's secret departure, and covenant with Laban.—

Genesis 31.

4. Jacob's visions.

a. Of the ladder. — Genesis 28:10–15.

b. Of God's host. — Genesis 32:1.

5. Wrestles with the angel. — Genesis 32:24–29.

NOTE — Two results are mentioned in connection with this event:

(1) Jacob limped; (2) he received a blessing. Hereafter we hear no more of his sharp business methods, his deceptions, his worldly wisdom: but we learn to know him as a worthy patriarch in a family destined to become a mighty nation. His name was no more Jacob, but Israel.

6. Builds all altar at Bethel. — Genesis 35:6–15.

7. The great famine. — Genesis 41:54–57; 42; 43.

8. Life in Egypt. — Genesis 46:28–34; 47:5–12; 48; 49.

9. Death and burial. — Genesis 49:33; 50:1–13.

II. Thoughts on his life.

1. Jacob buried all idols before he erected the altar at Bethel. Every vestige of idolatry must be abandoned before we can get into covenant relationship with God.

2. Jacob had his brightest visions when he was most completely crushed. Our brightest experiences occur, not during times of personal triumph, but at times when we feel that there is nothing left but to hold on to God.

3. Two things are especially noticeable about Jacob in his last days: (1) he was in a strange land, dependent upon the charities of others; (2) he was an honored patriarch. His shrewd, worldly wisdom had come to naught. The righteousness of his later years had already begun to bear fruit.

1. Show that the names "Jacob" and "Israel" were both appropriate at the times of his life when they were applied.

2. Contrast the characters of Jacob and Esau.
3. How did Esau prove his unworthiness?
4. Explain Jacob's vision at Bethel.
5. Compare the private lives of Isaac and Jacob.

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A Broken Heart	Classroom Underachiever, The
A Checklist for Maturity in Christ	Comfort — 1 Thessalonians 5:11
A Goal Oriented Life -- 1) Unity, 2)	Confidence
Purity, 3) Maintaining and Promoting	Consecration
Truth, 4) Cultivating Good Relationship,	Consider Your Ways
5) Evangelization	Continuation of a Scriptural Church, The
A Surrendered Life	Contrasts -- Luke 16
A Throne Room of Heaven — Revelation	Cultivating Wholesome Speech
4:2	Daily Battles
According to His Promise	Dayspring From on High, The — Luke
Action of Love, The	1:78, 79
Amalek — A Type of the Flesh	Deception
And What Profit Should We Have, If We	Deception of the Third Way, The
Pray Unto Him? — Job 21:15b	Did You Take Your Vitamins? — Victory,
Be Ready to Give an Answer	Indwelling Holy Spirit, Thankfulness,
Be Still and Know That I Am God	Ability, Mercy, Inheritance, New
Behold My Glory	Creation
Being in God's Will — My First Priority	Discerning God's Will
Being Peacemakers	Doctrine of Self-Denial, The
Blending Personalities for Effective	Eternity
Service	Experiencing the Power of Prayer
Blessings of Spiritual Brotherhood	Faith
Break Up Your Fallow Ground — Hosea	Finding Victory Over Discouragement
10:12	Forgiveness
Building Personal Convictions	Forgiveness of Sins
Building Up Yourselves on Your Most	Giving
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Call of Jesus, The	Glory of Christ's Birth, The
Call to Repentance, The	God's Free Gift of Grace
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Christian Courtship	God's Reasonable Requirements —
Christian Home, The	Deuteronomy 10:12-11:9
Christian Home, The — Psalm 23	Greatest Commandment, The
Christian Relating to Trials and	Having a Conscience Void of Offense
Chastening	Hear Ye Him
Christian's Hope, The	Heartthrob of the Home, The

Heaven — The Christian's Objective
 Heirs Together of the Grace of Life
 Honour Thy Father and Thy Mother
 How Can I Contribute to the School?
 I Am Glorified in Them — John 17:10
 Identifying Spiritual Apathy
 Idolatry in the Heart
 Incarnation, The
 Ingredients for Healthy Interpersonal
 Relationships
 Inspirational School Meeting: Meeting
 the Social and Emotional Needs of Our
 Children
 Inspirational School Meeting: Packing
 the Children's Lunches
 Inspirational School Meeting: Remember

Now (Ecclesiastes 12:1)
 Inspirational School Meeting: Science
 Instilling Fortitude in Our Youth
 Keeping Brotherhood Concept in Church
 Life
 Keeping Our School Curriculum
 Interesting
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 Keys to Christian Victory
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 Let us Labour to Enter Into Rest
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5:16

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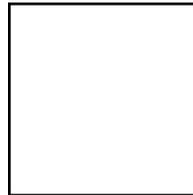
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