

TEXT Daniel 3:1-18

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURE Romans 8:35-39

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to state the importance of resisting peer pressure that would hinder their spiritual development.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil. — Exodus 23:2

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. — Psalm 1:1

ANSWER TITLE: **A Trial by Fire**

SEARCH TITLE: **Handling Peer Pressure**

**REFERENCE INFORMATION**

According to the Septuagint this incident occurred in the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, after Daniel and his three friends had been in Babylon about twenty years. That was the same year that Nebuchadnezzar burned Jerusalem (586 B.C.).

Just as God had previously revealed to Daniel the dream of Nebuchadnezzar and its interpretation, He now puts into the hearts of these three men the firm determination to be true.

Oppert, who excavated in the ruins of Babylon (1863),

found a pedestal of a colossal statue that may have been the remains of Nebuchadnezzar's golden image. The image was 60 cubits (90 feet) high and six cubits (nine feet) wide, evidently in the form of an obelisk. How grotesque man's idolatry and self-deification are in the sight of the God in Heaven.

The word *dura* means "the wall" and probably refers to the walls built around cities to protect them. "The plain of Dura" is perhaps Tulul Dura, a few miles southeast of Babylon.

**YOUR OPENER**

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# Handling Peer Pressure

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**KEY VERSE:** Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. — Psalm 1:1

## RESPONSES

1. Let the students define *peer*. "One of equal standing with another . . . the associates or companions of one." Who are the peers of a teenager? Who are the peers of a young mother? The peers of the Hebrew children included the princes, governors, captains, judges, treasurers, counsellors, sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces. Daniel was also their peer.

2. Harmful peer pressure forces one into situations that would hinder one's spiritual development. Allow your students to discuss their own personal experiences. Who in our text attempted to exert this type of peer pressure? Discuss with the class whether or not the attempt by the Chaldeans was harmful. The point should be made that this type of pressure can be resisted, and when it is, then the entire experience becomes one of spiritual benefit.

3. Ask for personal experiences of resistance. When is a polite refusal in order? A firm refusal? An open rebuke? Is a wishy-washy answer effective in resisting? Why not? Stress that displaying firm conviction the first time is the best resistance the second time.

4. Daniel 1:8 is a perfect illustration of how Daniel's example encouraged the other three to follow the same course. How might the Hebrew children have reacted in that situation without Daniel's example? Positive peer pressure influences one to enter into situations that are spiritually uplifting and to steer away from spiritually damaging situations. Encourage your class to give their personal examples.

Three young Hebrew men who served God—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—were asked to bow down and worship a golden image. Like true men of faith, they refused. There were, however, some Chaldeans who observed the Hebrews' refusal. They quickly reported the incident to the king. Now the heat was on! It was literally bow or burn. They had to choose between bowing to an idol or being true to the God of Israel.

1. Who are one's peers? Who were the peers of the three Hebrew children? See Daniel 2:48,49 and 3:2,3.

2. What is meant by the phrase *harmful peer pressure*? Give an example of harmful peer pressure from your own experience.

3. How can harmful peer pressure be resisted?

4. Is there such a thing as positive peer pressure? Explain. Give an example of positive peer pressure from your own experience.

## ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

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5. What guidelines can you use to determine whether the peer pressure you experience is positive or harmful?

6. How can resisting harmful peer pressure help a Christian? How do you think it helped the three Hebrew children in Daniel 1?

7. Why didn't God deliver the three Hebrew children from going into the furnace?

8. How is peer pressure experienced among church associates?

9. How can one effectively accept positive peer pressure among friends?

10. Read Daniel 3:30. The end result of resisting harmful peer pressure was a promotion for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Is the end result always a promotion? Explain.

5. Your students should see that God's Word is the main directive in measuring whether the pressure applied is for our good or likely to be harmful. How did the Hebrew children know? They knew by the Commandments of God (Exodus 20:3-5) that they should not bow down to any image. Your students may also suggest that the advice of God's ministers, or Christian parents, might be another way to analyze peer pressure. Observing the lives of godly people and following their example will be helpful.

6. Discuss *taking a stand*. What does it mean? How does one feel immediately after taking a stand? What effect does it have on the next time? How does one feel who fails to take a stand? What happens the next time? How does one obtain the conviction to withstand peer pressure? How does one keep it?

7. Point out that resisting harmful peer pressure won't be easy, nor will the immediate result always seem pleasant. Then refer to the key verse.

8. Without reference to specific individuals, let the students discuss both positive and harmful peer pressure exerted by different church associates. The spiritually shallow will pressure their peers to be likewise. Those who seek spiritual development encourage their peers to seek the same. What methods do each use?

9. As your students discuss this, they should see the importance of being submissive and receptive to any directive which would seem to encourage them in the right way spiritually. If the pressure is for their spiritual good, then they should accept the pressure and yield. Discuss specific ways they can be of help to one another. How do you think the three Hebrew children were able to encourage one another? What words of encouragement can we offer to others? Discuss the importance of upholding the doctrines and supporting the ministry. What effect does this have on others?

10. The promotion may not come from man, but it will come from God. One's spiritual development takes a giant leap forward each time harmful peer pressure is resisted. Would you feel any different about the subject if the three Hebrew children had perished in the fiery furnace?

## YOUR WRAP-UP

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## SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

What is a peer?

How can resisting the wrong type of peer pressure help a Christian?

Is there such a thing as positive peer pressure? How can you know if the pressure you feel is positive or harmful?

How does peer pressure tie in with our previous lessons about choosing our friends? with the lesson about Jesus as our best Friend?

What kind of pressure are you exerting on your friends?

If you were with a group of friends, and they were shopping, what would you do? Based on your decision, ask yourself:

What will my friends think?

What will the store manager think?

What will my parents think?

What will the Lord think?

As you live your life each day, who among your friends and acquaintances do you feel you are trying to please the most?

If you feel you have yielded to negative peer pressure, what should your next step be?

Ask students for some input of situations that come up in everyday life that would cause peer pressure. Ask them to help you try to come up with answers to the problems.

In the ANSWER story, it says we might wonder how Bible stories of events that took place hundreds of years ago could affect us. In what ways can we gain by reading and discussing such stories?

## THINGS TO DO

Use a rock, a soft piece of wood, two nails and a hammer. By hammering a nail into each object, compare how a soft (wood) Christian cannot resist pressure (nail), while a strong (rock) Christian will resist the pressure better.

Using the following situations, do some role-playing on how to resist peer pressure. You could play one part and

have the children play the other, or they could volunteer to take the two parts and act out the role. After each example, discuss what should have been done or said differently. This will encourage the students to take a stand against sin and peer pressure to do the wrong thing.

1. A boy or girl you like very much has asked you to go to a dance. You know you should not go but he/she is being very insistent. You are trying to say no.

2. You are with a friend who takes you to another friend's home. They are drinking, and your friend is trying to get you to join the party. You are trying to say no.


3. Your friend knows where the teacher has the answers to the test you are about to take, and is insisting on sharing them with you because you didn't get to study. You are trying to say no.

While discussing the need in all of us to feel we fit in with our friends, fold and cut out a chain of connected people figures. Then explain that if those around us are moving in the wrong direction, we must remove ourselves (cut one figure out) and stand alone, even if it is difficult.

## Answers for ANSWER

### What Should I Do?

Don't give in to anyone who tries to get you to do something you know is wrong. Do the things that will help you grow for Jesus. Read each story below and mark an X by the lines which you feel would be a good way to end the story.



1. Your classmates tease a boy because he is fat and has freckles. He moves and sits next to you. You . . .
  - talk to him about today's lesson.
  - refuse to say "Hi" to him.
  - invite him to your house.
  - pretend you didn't notice.
  - roll your eyes at your classmates.
2. Your friends invite you to the beach Saturday. But you had promised to mow the lawn for old Mrs. Jones. You . . .
  - conveniently "forget" the lawn job.
  - call her up and say you have a cold.
  - pay your little brother to do it.
  - call her and ask if you could do it Monday.
3. Three boys in your math class ask you to cut class with them. You . . .
  - tell them know what they said.
  - say you don't want to get behind on your math lesson.
  - go with them just this once.
  - pretend you didn't hear them.
4. The kids in your afternoon science class pass some test answers around during an exam. You . . .
  - hand it back to the person who gave it to you and say, "I can't cheat."
  - take it straight to the teacher.
  - tear it up and stamp on it.
5. Your cabin mates at camp sneaked out at night. You didn't go, though you tioned the next day you . . .
  - tell on the others.
  - keep quiet.
  - urge your cabin mates to tell the truth.
  - say the guys in the next cabin did it.