
SPIRITUAL STUBBORNNESS

(HOW TO HANDLE PEER PRESSURE)

(WEEK I)

SERIES PURPOSE: BY THE END OF THIS SERIES, MY STUDENTS SHOULD BE MOTIVATED TO STAND AGAINST PEER PRESSURE AND HAVE SOME PRACTICAL TOOLS TO RESIST IT.

LESSON ONE PURPOSE: BY THE END OF THIS LESSON, I WANT MY STUDENTS TO BE MOTIVATED TO STAND AGAINST PEER PRESSURE.

TEACHING NOTES:

1) Think of any songs that go along with this topic. "Be the One," by Al Denson, could easily be a theme song, running through the series. Put the words on an overhead and sing it each week. Its words, combined with its memorable melody line, could really reinforce this message. Another song: Petra's "Heart of a Hero", from their tape, "No Doubt".

2) Most of my lessons follow a "Topical" format, drawing Scriptures from throughout the Bible to seek God's wisdom on a particular issue. The first part of this lesson takes a different approach. It is "Expository" in nature, taking a single passage and exploring its meaning and application to our lives. I'm following a simple format that you might find helpful in organizing other expositional messages.

Introduction

I. Scripture (Read the Scripture)

Explanation (Explain the Scripture)

Illustration (Use illustrations to clarify the meaning or show how someone applied the truth of the Scripture.)

Application (Give ways for hearers to apply the Scripture.)

II. Scripture

Explanation

Illustration

Application

Conclusion

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Teaching Tips: Briefly look over the main points of this series, to see where it is going. Now, think through your own life and experience. Were there times that you or your acquaintances fell to peer pressure that would help you identify with your sometimes failing students? Were there times you resisted that could encourage and challenge them? Would sharing these regrets and victories bring a more personal flavor to the lesson? Students want to know about your life. Your personal illustrations could be remembered better than any of the flashy stories I share here.

Are there songs that could reinforce the message? A person's testimony, which deals with drug/alcohol addiction, the toll it has taken, and how it all started with peer pressure? Those of you in former Communist countries may know some dramatic illustrations of people who stood for Christ under communism. Don't let those stories die with your generation!

INTRODUCTION

An incredibly powerful force is destroying the lives of students today, a force that pushes people to bet their lives on risky dares, lose their health to drugs, and compromise their faith. We all face it. It's called Peer Pressure. Here are two examples of just how powerful this force is:

ILLUSTRATION: Sharon Scott is a nationally recognized counselor who spent many years working with youth, teachers, counselors, parents and police. Observing why teens get in trouble with the law, she said, "the single major factor influencing these poor decisions was negative peer pressure." (*Peer Pressure Reversal*, 1985, Human Resources Press, Inc., Amherst, Mass., from the Preface.)

ILLUSTRATION: In one survey, guys responded that their #1 reason for having premarital sex was "peer pressure" -- not pressure from the person they were dating, but pressure from their friends.

I'd like to begin this lesson with a story of a girl who didn't fall to the pressure:

ILLUSTRATION: A girl was spending the night with some friends, when the conversation turned to sex. . Her friends had all experienced sex and taunted her about her virginity. Many people would have fallen to the pressure by either pretending to have experienced sex, or at least agreeing with their moral stand. But not this girl. Instead, having had her fill of the teasing, she shot back, "Any time I want, in the back seat of a car, I can become what you are. But no matter how hard or how long you try, you can never become what I am." Wow! What a gutsy girl!

God is looking for a new breed of Christians. A breed that swims upstream while the world floats down. Christians with a "face in the wind" personality. If you don't stand for something, you can fall for anything. This girl knew how to stand. Would you like to be more like her?

Today we will look at three men in the book of Daniel who faced some of the same heat that you face, only turned up several hundred degrees. Let's meet them, and try to uncover their secrets. But first, let's pause and ask God to give us insight.

PRAY

I. "ACT 1" -- THE HEAT IS ON

How do you respond..

A. "SCENE 1" -- ...WHEN THE SETTING IS INTIMIDATING?

SCRIPTURE: "Turn to Daniel 3, and someone please read vs. 1."

"King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, ninety feet high and nine feet wide, and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon."

*Close your eyes and imagine yourself living in **Babylon**, one of the greatest cities of the ancient world. You live in what is now Iraq, about 60 miles south of Baghdad on the banks of the Euphrates River. Off to work one morning, you make your way through the hustle-bustle crowds of this important trading and religious center. Waiting for a cavalcade of soldiers to pass, you gaze about, never ceasing to be awestruck at the sight of some of the most beautiful temples and grandest palaces of your time. In the hot summers, you have at times cooled under Babylon's famous Hanging Gardens, which are counted among the "Seven Wonders of the World."*

*But suddenly a trumpet blast alerts you that this cavalcade is escorting the supreme ruler of all Babylon, **Nebuchadnezzar**. You shudder as you realize that he wields enough authority to execute people without trial. Even though you are an official with certain powers yourself, Babylon and its king have a way of making you feel so small, so insignificant, so vulnerable.*

*A herald announces the completion of **an image** commissioned by the king. Additionally, he announces that all Babylonian officials (that includes you) are to assemble for the dedication at the **plain of Dura**. As a foreigner, you well know that a wrong move on your part would invite jealous political rivals to destroy you. Your first thought is, "By all means, do nothing politically incorrect."*

EXPLANATION: Ok, open your eyes. We're about to meet three Jews who found themselves in this extremely intimidating setting. They're in Babylon, the capital city of one of the world's great kingdoms. Before Nebuchad-nezzar, the most powerful man in the kingdom. Before a huge image which stood about 90 feet high (about the height of an 8 story building) and nine feet wide, either solid or plated with gold. And although we're not told what it looked like, it probably did not look like Winnie the Pooh! What an awesome, intimidating setting! What settings do we find ourselves in that intimidate us?

"The Image": Keil says it was "in human likeness." NBC says the word might mean human likeness, but not necessarily. The dimensions seem odd for a human form, but could include a pedestal, or the upper body could have been human with the lower part some other form. "Babylonian art...delighted in grotesque, gigantic forms..."(Keil). "Regardless of the image's form, it was an awesome sight." - BKC Perhaps overlaid with gold rather than solid. Some of Neb's works were numbered among the Seven Wonders of the World.

ILLUSTRATION: *"You're in a Classroom"*

Sometimes a classroom can be intimidating when the teacher mocks Christianity. A college student found himself in a Philosophy class with a taunting professor. "Who here believes in God?" he challenged from the front of the class. He proceeded to hold up a jar and dare someone to pray that it would not break when he dropped it. "Every year, for seventeen years, we've tried this experiment-- and the jar always breaks. It breaks because God is not real or operative in today's world. Now is there anyone who wants to pray?" Understandably the room was silent. I suppose no one had ever taken up his challenge. Be honest. Would you have admitted your belief in God in such an intimidating situation?

But this time, one student was not intimidated. He responded, "I'll pray that prayer." The professor inquired whether they should all bow their heads. The student told him he could do whatever he wanted to, and proceeded to ask God to honor Himself in the situation. As anticipation mounted, the professor held up the jar, released it, and much to his dismay felt it strike his foot and roll to the floor, fully intact. (Celebration of Miracles, Jodie Berndt, pp. 21,22)

APPLICATION:

Discussion: What kinds of settings intimidate you, or others your age? (Give them an opportunity to share.)

- Do any of you have *classes at school* where a teacher mocks Christianity? Tell us about it.
- A *concert* setting where the performing groups push a wild lifestyle? Who are the wildest groups out today?
- On the *athletic practice field* where that coach swears and belittles you.
- In the *locker room* where all the guys brag about their parties and girls?

If you know the feeling, then you know some of what the attendees at the image dedication must have felt.

How do you respond...

B. SCENE 2 -- ...WHEN EVERYBODY'S DOING IT?

Who will read Daniel 3, verses 2 and 3 for us?

SCRIPTURE:

vs.2 *"He then summoned the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials to come to the dedication of the image he had set up.."*

vs.3 *"So the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials assembled for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and they stood before it.."*

EXPLANATION: Some settings are intimidating, but fill the setting with the right people, and the pressure can become almost irresistible. Into our intimidating setting have entered everybody that's anybody in Babylon. Imagine, all the most popular students in your school. Or, all the people in your group of friends that you want to impress. And they are all doing something that you know inside is wrong.

ILLUSTRATION: "The Three Lines Test"

A fascinating study demonstrated our powerful drive to fit in with other people. Ten teens were brought into a room and told that their perception would be tested. Testers held up three cards, each with three lines of different lengths. Students were simply instructed to raise their hands when the testers pointed to the longest line. (Take three note cards and draw this out so your students can actually see them.)

| Card #1 | Card #2 | Card #3 |
|---------|---------|---------|
| A _____ | A _____ | A _____ |
| B _____ | B _____ | B _____ |
| C _____ | C _____ | C _____ |

But unknown to one of the students, the other nine had been instructed to raise their hands when the second longest line was pointed to. Are you following? Guess what happened? In 75% of the cases, "The stooge would typically glance around, frown in confusion, and slip his hand up with the group." Even after repeating the instructions and holding up the next card, the results were the same. (Study by Ruth W. Berenda, found in Hide or Seek, James Dobson.) When we perceive that "everybody's doing it," we face a huge pressure that can coerce us even when we know that everyone else is wrong.

APPLICATION -- "Scenes From Everyday Life"

Discussion: When people try to convince us to do something we think is wrong, they often tell us, "but everybody's doing it!" What are some things that you believe God doesn't want you to do, but it seems like everybody else is doing? (If they give you the blank stare, spoon-feed them the following:

- Do your classmates see movies that you wouldn't feel comfortable taking Jesus with you to see? What kind of pressure do you feel if you go to spend the night at someone's house and find that they've rented a movie that you shouldn't see? What could you say or do?
- Does it seem like everyone is going too far sexually? Would being known as a virgin be embarrassing among your classmates?)

1. You're a girl in high school. A popular, hunk of a guy likes you. And you like him. Besides, hanging out with him would break you into the popular crowd. But he's not a Christian. Do you feel the pressure?

2. It's exam time. You are border line passing in a class. Your chances of passing the final exam are slim. All your friends are all cheating. Your parents will be devastated if you flunk. Will you cheat? How many of you have ever felt the pressure to cheat? In your school, does it seem like most people cheat?

So, Daniel's friends are in an intimidating setting where everybody is doing it. I think you know how they must have felt. But now, the pressure gets even worse.

How do you respond...

C. SCENE 3 -- ...WHEN THE PRESSURE GETS PERSONAL?

SCRIPTURE: Someone read verses 8-15.

EXPLANATION: Just when you thought the pressure couldn't possibly get any worse, you find yourself face to face with an enraged Nebuchadnezzar. Now the pressure gets personal.

ILLUSTRATION -- "A Shocking Experiment"

A famous experiment demonstrated the power exerted when the pressure gets personal. Stanley Milgram, a famous social psychologist, invited people from different backgrounds and occupations to participate in a study that would explore the effects of punishment on learning. Each participant was told to deliver an electric shock when a student made a mistake on a simple learning

"Denounced" (vs. 8):
"a strong word, lit., to tear to pieces." -- (BKC) NASB margin has "ate the pieces of". These Chaldeans were eating our friends for lunch! Perhaps motivated out of jealousy of these foreigner's high positions.

"The King's Wrath":
Refusal to worship the image would amount to "hostility against the kingdom and its monarch..." -- (Keil)

task. Participants were told that the shocks ranged from a mere 15 volts to a dangerous 450 volts. Voltage was to be raised each time a new error was made. Does everyone understand?

Actually, there was no electric shock and the "students" merely acted as if they were being shocked. Milgram explained the experiment to a group of Psychiatrists, who estimated that only one in 1000 subjects would deliver shocks all the way to 450 volts. But they were wrong. Almost two out of every three of the participants obeyed the experimenter, delivering shocks to the end, even though the "students" loudly protested.

Discussion: What can we learn from this experiment? Why do you think the people kept delivering the shocks?

ILLUSTRATION

So how does this work in real life? It's one thing to be in an intimidating setting, like a sleepover where your friends decide to plan a wild party. But when they all look at you, and say, "You *are* coming, aren't you?" then the pressure gets personal. And when peer pressure gets personal, it's impossible for some people to resist.

A ninth grader stood outside of his school with some friends awaiting school to start. One friend, an unusually talented cusser, pointed out that the freshman didn't ever use God's name in vain. "Go ahead, say it! He taunted." The boy gave in to the pressure, because he didn't want his friends to think he was a wimp. But it went against his principles, and 26 years later he still remembers it, and regrets.

APPLICATION: How would you respond if those who can provoke fear in you were to get in your face and order you to compromise? Let's see how our three friends responded to this incredible pressure.

II. ACT 2 - FACING THE HEAT

A. SCENE 1 -- The Stand is Taken

Who will read verses 16 through 18 for us?

SCRIPTURE: vs. 16 – "*Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter.*

vs. 17 – "*If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king..*

vs. 18 – "*But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."*

Commentary: "The Furnace" "Furnaces in Babylon were connected with the firing of bricks," fueled with charcoal to produce the high temperatures. Some of these ancient kilns have been excavated outside of Babylon. (Baldwin) It's good to remind our youth that the Bible is rooted in real history. Neb. was a real ruler of a real empire that has loads of extrabiblical attestation. We're not talking about fairy tales here.

They beat the pressure! “Yea,” you say, “but they’ve not won yet.” But I contend that at this point, it doesn’t really matter what God chooses to do. They might live, or they might die. But they defied the king, stood against the world, sided with God. Don’t you love it? God may deliver them, but even if He doesn’t, they are not going to bow to his idol.

APPLICATION:

Discussion: If you had the guts of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, how would you respond to today’s pressures? When someone asks you to help him cheat? When your friends turn on a movie you don’t feel comfortable seeing?

Today, they would say things like:

- “I believe that God can help me pass this class without cheating. But even if He chooses to let me flunk, I want you to know that I will not bow to your idol of "Success at Any Cost."
- “I believe that God can give me friends without having to date a non-Christian. But even if He chooses not to, and I face some lonely times, I will not bow to your idol of popularity.

B. SCENE 2 -- God Comes Through

SCRIPTURE: Who will read verses 19-23 for us?

EXPLANATION:

After their miraculous rescue, can you imagine how easy it would be to share their faith? You could walk up to anyone, tell them about God, and the king wouldn’t allow anyone to say anything bad about your God! What a change! Now the peer pressure works in your favor!

Commentary: "The fourth person." Some believe it was a preincarnate appearance of Christ. Others, an angel.

Discussion: What are some rewards of standing against the pressure? (Getting into less trouble. Not becoming addicted to drugs. Positive impact on others.)

APPLICATION AND CONCLUSION

These three guys inspire me to stand against the pressures I face. If they could risk their very lives for the faith, surely I can risk my reputation, some embarrassment, or some money in order to stand for Jesus. Let’s bow our heads and close our eyes. Are there one or more areas of your life where you are bending to the pressure, or have been tempted to bend? Would you be willing to silently ask God’s help in making a stand for Him in this area? (Allow time to pray.)

Don’t miss next week! This week’s lesson hopefully inspired us, but didn’t give us some of the practical how to’s that we need to fight peer pressure. For the next two weeks, we will get super practical. Don’t miss it!

SHARPENING YOUR AX HOW TO TELL A STORY

Great story telling is an art. Lincoln campaigned his way to the presidency using his persuasive and delightful art of telling stories. Jesus Himself often told stories, called parables, to drive His points home. How we tell stories can make the difference between a yawner and a life changing presentation?

As some teachers tell the fiery furnace story, students will hang on every word: sometimes awestruck, sometimes laughing, but always delighted. Other teachers will manage to bore their kids with a story that should pack a major punch. What makes the difference between the two storytellers?

1. Some, after reading the biblical text, will **give it a contemporary setting**. "So it's like Shadrack and his two friends arrive at the university, casually pick up a school newspaper, and notice headlines that read, 'ALL ATHLETES REQUIRED TO ATTEND TOTAL ACHIEVEMENT SEMINAR AT 9:00 IN THE AUDITORIUM.' Now for these guys, the soccer team is their life, so they make their way to the auditorium. As they enter, their coach introduces some guru complete with Eastern robe and sandals, and says that anybody wanting to remain on the team needs to follow this guy's path to athletic perfection. If you don't, hit the road. And don't come back, because this show of disunity cuts you from the team. The little guru invites them all to stand, close their eyes, and visualize a spirit guide..."
2. Others will keep the biblical setting, but **add reflections of what the three men must have thought**, compromises they were tempted to make, etc.
3. Master story tellers **avoid monotone narration**, choosing rather to speak with the excitement that the story naturally generates. Vary your rate. Vary your pitch. Vary your volume. (Tip: Record yourself as you practice. It's amazing how different my pitch, rate and volume sound on tape, compared to how I imagine that I sound. Now, listen to some of your favorite communicators on tape to note their strengths/weaknesses in this area.)
4. **Practice the story until you know it by heart**. Then you can tell it naturally rather than read it mechanically. But I usually read the Bible stories. In this case, practice reading it until it sounds like you are telling, not reading the story. (Again, a recorder can help you here.)
5. **Paint pictures with your words**, so that listeners not only hear the story, but experience it with their imagination.

Try out some of these ideas with the illustrations and Bible story used in this lesson. (Continued Next Page)

SPIRITUAL STUBBORNNESS HOW TO HANDLE PEER PRESSURE (WEEK II)

PURPOSE: BY THE END OF THIS SESSION, MY STUDENTS WILL KNOW SPECIFIC WAYS TO PREPARE THEMSELVES TO WIN THE BATTLE WITH PEER PRESSURE.

INTRODUCTION

Last week we looked at how peer pressure destroys lives: manipulating people to take drugs they don't really want to take, pushing them to take dangerous risks, and filling our lives with painful memories. But last week we found a glimmer of hope by looking at three guys who faced the ultimate peer pressure and beat it. Who remembers who they were and what they did? Now we will begin looking at practically how we too can stand against the crowd and develop a "face in the wind" personality.

I believe that God wants to change some lives as we seek His direction in this critical area. Let's pray that He'll show up and leave His mark.

PRAY

Pull out your student sheet for this session and notice the section called "Action Points" at the end. As we go through the lesson, expect God to speak to you. And be prepared to write down any actions that you feel God wants you to take as a result of each point.

So, let's get started. How can we resist the incredible peer pressure that's out to destroy us?

1. Realize How Cool You Really Are! (Psalm 8:3-9)

*vs. 5 – "Yet Thou hast made him a little lower than God,
And dost crown him with glory and majesty!"*

DISCUSSION: What do you think the "him" in this verse is referring to? (Get a response.) Angels? Extremely spiritual people? No. He's referring to all people, including you. That means that, no matter what you think of yourself, and no matter what other people think of you, **YOU'RE INCREDIBLY IMPORTANT!**

What do you think your view of yourself has to do with your ability to stand against peer pressure? (If you accept yourself because God accepts you, then you won't desperately crave the acceptance of your peers.) (See "Temptation" study, IB, for more detail.)

If you are a child of God, Satan fears your potential impact. Through your life and prayers, you can do serious damage to his work on campus. And he knows this. So perhaps one of his greatest schemes is to convince us that we are small and weak. But I can handle people looking at me as meek, mild-mannered, and sometimes clumsy Clark Kent, as long as I know that beneath my shirt I'm Super Man—indwelt by the Spirit of the almighty God, sent into enemy territory to save a lost world. Never forget who you are!

And remember, once you graduate, odds are you'll never again see most of your classmates. Get this: we're allowing people we'll never see again to influence some of the most important decisions we'll ever make!

For some of us, a good action point would be, "Learn to see myself as God sees me."

2. Choose Your Closest Friends Carefully (I Cor. 15:33)

"Do not be deceived: 'Bad company corrupts good morals.'"

What do you think this verse means? Do you think it's always true? Why? Can you tell me any stories of friends or relatives who got onto the wrong track because of bad friends? Can you tell me of any people who have gotten onto a good track because of good friends?

*Illustration: A 14 year old from California commented, "I know that peer pressure is very much out there. But peer pressure doesn't always have to be negative. I am often influenced by peers to do better in academics, athletics."
(USA Today Teen Panel, 1994)*

Illustration: As basketball superstar Kareem Abdul Jabbar once said, "You can't let people who aren't going anywhere influence your opinions." So, hang around people who are going somewhere.

If your peers push you the wrong direction, change peers! Then you can get this powerful force working *for* you in a positive direction as your peers influence you to stand for God. Remember: Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego had each other.

And speaking of positive peer pressure, don't forget that you're not the only one that feels a need for acceptance. Virtually everybody feels self-conscious at your age. And believe it or not, a lot of people feel the pull to be accepted by you! *At the time of your life when peer pressure pushes the hardest, you may have the potential to exert the greatest influence of your life!* When you stand for Christ, some students watch and want to be more like you. Even if you consider yourself the nerd of your entire class, there are younger kids, or a younger brother or sister who look up to you. Use that influence well!

Listen carefully. This might be the most difficult thing you ever do. But I beg you to consider it. Are you hanging around the wrong crowd? If so, your action point is, **CHANGE CROWDS!**

3. SET SOME NON-NEGOTIABLES

Daniel's friends didn't call a time-out and huddle up to decide whether or not they would worship the image. Apparently, they had already committed themselves to keep the second commandment (you shall not make or worship idols). There's no way anyone could negotiate a compromise. It was a non-negotiable for them.

Do you have some non-negotiables in your life? Standards you won't compromise, even if they risk your life?

Illustration: A fellow named Menclus once said, "To act without clear understanding, to form habits without investigation, to follow a path all one's life without knowing where it really leads—such is the behavior of the multitude."

Discussion: Do you agree with Menclus? Why is it often better to stand against the crowd?

Illustration: A Bible teacher asked a student in his class if she would have sex with an attractive man if she were offered \$1,000,000.00. "No," she replied. "But would you at least have to think about it?" responded the teacher. "I suppose," she replied. "Then would you have sex for \$20.00?" continued the teacher. She shot back, "What kind of girl do you think I am?"

"We've already established that," said the teacher. "We're just negotiating a price."

What was this girl's problem? (If she had set her non-negotiables in the area of sex, no offer of money could have tempted her to even think about it. Non-negotiables carry no price tag.)

ACTIVITY: Hand out paper and pencil to each person. Divide into small groups of around three. "This is a time for you to exchange ideas of non-negotiables that would be good for each other to adopt. *Non-negotiables are things you won't bend or change on, no matter what the price.* Write down the ideas presented in your group. Then tonight, in the privacy of your home, just between you and God, you can narrow down your list." (When it appears they are struggling for new ideas, give them some suggestions, such as, "Once married, I will remain faithful to my mate." "I will save sex for my mate." "I will always stand up for my family." "I won't cheat in school." "I will never smoke." "I will never use illegal drugs." "I will never quit going to church.") Avoid commitments that would be impossible to keep and only produce guilt in the future, such as, "I will never miss a day of reading my Bible."

4. SEE THROUGH THE DECEPTION

DISCUSSION: Look up Psalm 84:11. *“No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.”* If we really believed this verse, how would it help us stand against peer pressure? (If they can’t make the connection, dig further – *“So a friend tells you that you’re missing out on something great because you don’t take drugs. Now, read this verse in the light of that. What’s the connection?”*) No matter how much some people try to convince you that you’re missing out by standing for God, just remember, God’s way is best. He’s not an almighty party pooper. He’s just smart enough to know the misery that the party lifestyle leads to. He’s seen it happen every generation for thousands of years. Sometimes following God’s way is tough in the first quarter of the game, but later in the game you’ll see it pay off.

Illustration: Do you remember the stand Moses took? (If your youth are clueless about the life of Moses, you should give a little background at this point. You might even use a clip from “The Prince of Egypt” movie.) From a worldly standpoint, he had it made. Raised among the wealthy and powerful, the movers and shakers of Egypt, he could have lived out his days in luxury. It must have seemed utterly stupid for Moses to reject the “cool” crowd to identify with the slaves. In a lesser sense, it would be like someone being a great, popular athlete at school, a lifetime member of the coolest of the cool crowd. But he risks his status by standing up for some “geeks” who were being taunted by his friends, and ends up having lunch every day with the unpopular students. What could motivate someone to do this? Look up Hebrews 11:24-26 to find the answer.

“By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.” (NIV)

According to the passage, Moses habitually fixed his eyes on the future reward, not the present situation.

Moses could handle the situation because he could see that life was more than being liked by those around him. And think what happened. Had he chosen the easy road, at best he may have gone down in Egyptian history as a great leader. But by bucking the system, he became an Old Testament hero and remains a household word in much of the world 3000 years later. And even as recent as 1998 the movie “The Prince of Egypt” was made about his life.

The bottom line? Always look at the long-term reward rather than the short-term thrill. The pleasures of sin are passing. Go for God’s lasting pleasures instead.

Bonus Illustration (at no extra charge): The Martyrdom of Polycarp. Have any of you run across the name “Polycarp” in your history classes? He was a church leader in the second century, a disciple of some of the original apostles. But Christianity wasn’t popular among many in his town. In fact, they called Christians atheists, because they didn’t believe in all the Roman gods. After torturing several Christians and feeding them to the lions, the crowd wanted the church leader himself.

So now the aging Polycarp finds himself before a jeering crowd in a stadium, with the governor urging him to renounce his faith. He knew that to stand against the crowd would probably cost him his life. (For the brain dead among us, this is bigger than someone urging you to smoke or cheat. Can you imagine the pressure this old man faced?)

Well, here’s how the scene unfolded: The proconsul urges Polycarp, “Swear, and I will set you free: curse the Christ.” But Polycarp answered: “For eighty-six years, I have been his servant, and he has never done me wrong: how can I blaspheme my king who saved me?” “I have wild beasts,” said the proconsul. “I will throw you to them, if you don’t change your attitude.” “Call them,” replied the old man. “If you make light of the beasts,” replied the governor, “I’ll have you destroyed by fire, unless you change your attitude.” But Polycarp countered, not with a wimpy plea for mercy, but a bold challenge: “The fire you threaten burns for a time and is soon extinguished; there is a fire you know nothing about—the fire of the judgement to come and of eternal punishment, the fire reserved for the ungodly. But why do you hesitate? Do what you want.” So old Polycarp basically tells them to get on with it. Bring on the fire! The sooner the better.

The end of the story? The enraged crowd immediately gathered wood for the fire. Polycarp then prayed a beautiful prayer, not for deliverance, but of praise to God and thankfulness for the opportunity to die for Jesus. Then, they killed him. (Pause for emphasis.) But that’s not the end of the story. Polycarp went immediately to paradise. And everyone else died too, eventually. The governor and the crowd all eventually died of one cause or another. And for almost 2000 years, they’ve been

Hebrews 11:24-26

If time allows, this passage is worthy of your and your students’ reflection. The recipients of this letter had faced public insult, persecution, and had stood by those who were persecuted (see 10:32-39). Your youth who fear standing against the tide can identify. The author encourages them with the example of Moses (cr. Ex. 2 and Acts 7:23ff.)

“Moses weighed the issues of time in the balances of eternity.” (Bruce)

Westcott notes that the tenses used for “refused” (v. 24), “chose” (v. 25), and “accounting” (v. 26) “point to a crisis when the choice was made, as distinct from Moses’ ‘habitual spirit’ of ‘looking’ (v. 26).” (Greek tenses can indicate kind of action, as well as time of action.)

See Heb. 12:1ff. for how the author applies these examples of faith to the recipients of the letter.

receiving their reward or punishment. Old Polycarp knew what was coming. With his eyes on heaven, nothing on earth could intimidate him. (Historical material from Eusebius, History of the Church, IV 15; and Homersham Cox, History of the World.)

CONCLUSION

Now, look back over your action points. Some of you need to pray that God will strengthen your self image. Others desperately need to make a break from the peers that are manipulating you. Some need to set some non-negotiables in writing. Still others need to pray that God will open your eyes to the fact that He loves you, His way is best, and that ultimately the only thing we miss by being Christians is Hell. Will you pray about these action points now?

PRAYER

Next week we will get so practical that we will learn specific responses you can give when people try to manipulate with come on's such as, *"If you're really my friend, you'll..."*, or *"Don't you know that everybody's doing it!"* Don't miss this session! (Assign next week's skit.)

Sharpening Your Ax Using Body Language

Look at the highlighted sections of the Polycarp illustration. Could appropriate body language enhance your presentation? Here are some suggestions, which of course would have to be adjusted for your personality and the unique meaning of various bodily movements according the culture you are reaching.

- If you stand as you teach, consider standing to one side when quoting Polycarp, the other side for the Proconsul, like you are playing the part of each, alternately speaking to each other.
- When Polycarp begins, "...there is a fire you know nothing about..." point a finger solemnly at the proconsul.
- On "But why do you hesitate?", hold your hands and shoulders in the "I don't understand" position (hands lifted, shoulders shrugged.)
- On "Bring on the fire," motion toward yourself with your hands and fingers, as if to say, "Come on!"

Practice in front of a mirror to see if your movements look forced or natural. If your movements appear melodramatic, they will take away from your message.

SPIRITUAL STUBBORNNESS HOW TO HANDLE PEER PRESSURE (WEEK III)

INTRODUCTION

We've been talking about peer pressure, how it manipulates us to do things we regret, and how it leaves many people with painful memories. We all want to make our own decisions, to take control of our own lives, but it seems that given the right set of circumstances, like being in a small group of people that we desperately want to impress, even the strongest and the boldest of us can melt. This week, we will talk about how practically to respond to those situations when the pressure is building. Pray silently that God will speak to you and help you absorb this material, which could one day save your life.

Pray

5. BE PREPARED (Eph. 4:27; II Cor. 2:11)

"...and do not give the devil an opportunity."

"...in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes."

The apostle Paul told the Corinthians that they were not unaware of Satan's schemes. But many of us seem unaware of a scheme he uses over and over - trapping us in situations we are totally unprepared to deal with. Here's an example:

ILLUSTRATION: *A ninth-grader found himself in a pressure cooker. On a school trip, in a hotel room, late at night, his roommates began to plot an early morning rendezvous with a group of girls. And he knew they weren't planning on playing checkers. He shuddered to realize the potential consequences:*

sent home from the trip, expelled from school, tarred and feathered by his parents, etc. But he didn't dare say anything. In fact, he had no clue what to say. He was totally unprepared. (Note: All these illustrations are about real life events that really happened.)

Ephesians 4:27: "From a fast-bolted door the devil turns away"—(Spanish Proverb). "Wherever he finds a heart shut, (the devil) finds a door open." (Moule) The phrase, "do not give," is present active imperative, meaning either "stop doing it" or "do not have the habit of doing it" (Robertson).

Point 5 draws some points from a successful program called "Peer Pressure Reversal", which trains teens to handle peer pressure. (See Peer Pressure Reversal: An Adult Guide to Developing a Responsible Child, by Sharon Scott, Human Resource Development Press, Inc., 1985.)

Do you ever find yourself in situations like this, where you want to make the right choice, but have no idea what to say or do to break free? This is where some advance preparation comes in handy. Thousands of youth have prepared themselves for situations just like this by learning

and practicing this three step maneuver. In the next few minutes, let's prepare for some situations that could well affect our entire lives.

STEP #1: BE ALERT (Proverbs 5:8)

*“Keep your way far from her,
And do not go near the door of her house...”*

ILLUSTRATION: How many of you understand the “tackle” position in football? (If a person in the youth group plays this position, or even just plays football, you might prep him ahead of time for an interview at this point and bring out the desired points.) Of course, the tackle's job description is to tackle the man with the ball. So, you'd think that whoever is quickest, strongest, and most able to pull a person to the ground would be the best tackle. But there is much more to this position than first meets the eye. If the offense outwits him, he may find himself stranded on the wrong side of the field.

A truly great tackle must be able to see a play developing. Once the ball is hiked, he immediately notes the direction the offensive line is pushing the defenders, where the quarterback is moving, and how the play is developing. On a professional level, top tackles repeatedly watch films of the opposing team in action, in order to spot those subtle shifts, or a slightly different lineup that may give away the next play. You see, if he knows where the ball is going before it gets there, he can be there to make the tackle.

In the same way, if you can see a pressure situation coming, you have time to either avoid it or prepare yourself for your response. Watch this skit and be prepared to discuss the danger signs that should have warned Henry of what was coming. (If skits don't work well in your setting, you could tell the following skit as a story, or better, tell a story from your own life that could illustrate the points we want to make at the conclusion.)

SKIT TIME!

(To be prepared the week before.)

SETTING: A SMALL CONVENIENCE STORE, COMPLETE WITH STORE MANAGER AT THE CASH REGISTER. A SMALL SET OF BOOKSHELVES COULD BE LOADED WITH SOME CANNED GOODS AND CANDY, GIVING THE YOUTH AN AISLE TO HIDE AND TALK IN.

ENTER HENRY, DRESSED AS WHATEVER THE LOCAL YOUTH SUBCULTURE OR POPULAR TELEVISION PROGRAMS DEEM AS “NERD” ATTIRE (IDEAS: ONE SHIRT TAIL OUT, A LITTLE TOILET PAPER HANGING OUT OF PANTS, MULTICOLORED PENS AND HUGE CALCULATOR IN SHIRT POCKET, GEEKY SHIRT. IT WILL BE MORE HUMOROUS IF YOU CAN USE A VERY POPULAR, JOCK TYPE FOR THIS PART.)

HENRY: WALKING INTO THE STORE, HE SAYS ALOUD TO HIMSELF, “GOLLY GEE, IT’S JIM AND BART! WOW, ARE THEY COOL! (HENRY SNEEZES, UNSUCCESSFULLY TRYING TO FREE HIS HAND OF A BUGGER [USE A SMALL, BUT VISIBLE, PIECE OF SILLY PUTTY OR STICKY GOO.] DURING THE REST OF THE SKIT, THE BUGGER COULD KEEP TURNING UP IN PROMINENT PLACES, E.G., THE SIDE OF HIS FACE, WIPES ON COUNTER TOP AT END OF SKIT AND ENDS UP ON SHOPKEEPER’S FACE.)

BART: (TO JIM) “HEY, ISN’T THAT HENRY COMING IN?”

JIM: “YEAH, THE TOTAL NERD.”

BART: “LET’S GET HIM TO DO THE DIRTY WORK FOR US.” (ALL THIS TIME, JIM AND BART ARE DRESSED LIKE TROUBLE, LOOKING SNEAKY AND OBVIOUSLY HIDING IN THE SHADOWS.)

JIM: “HEY HENRY! COME HERE MY MAN!” (CALLING HIM OVER IN HUSHED TONES, PUTTING ARM AROUND HENRY LIKE HE’S A BIG BUDDY.) “YOU’VE ALWAYS STRUCK ME LIKE A GUY WHO’S ITCHING TO MOVE INTO THE INNER CIRCLES OF THE COOL CROWD. BEHIND THIS MEEK EXTERIOR (HE LOOKS OVER HENRY AND WHINCES) DON’T YOU WANT TO LIVE ON THE EDGE AND HAVE SOME EXCITEMENT?”

HENRY: (OBVIOUSLY FLATTERED, BUT CONFUSED.) “WELL, SURE. I MEAN... I GUESS.”

BART: “THEN HIDE AWAY SOME OF THIS CANDY AND WE’LL MAKE IT FOR THE DOOR.”

HENRY: (FUMBLING FOR WORDS) “BUT WHAT ABOUT...?” (BUT BART AND JIM STASH SOME STUFF IN HIS POCKETS AND JACKET, PUT THEIR ARMS AROUND HIM, AND BEGIN TO LEAVE.)

SHOP OWNER: (NOTICING A CANDY BAR DROPPING FROM HENRY’S POCKET.) “HEY YOU THIEVES, COME BACK WITH MY MERCHANDISE! (YELLING AFTER THEM) “HENRY TURNER, I KNOW YOUR PARENTS AND I KNOW WHERE YOU LIVE. YOU’RE HISTORY YOUNG MAN!”

AUDIENCE APPLAUDS APPROPRIATELY FOR THE ACTORS.

Now, think about the skit. What should have been some warning signs for Henry? What would have been the easiest time for him to escape the situation? (The earliest point possible. Before even entering the store.) Can you tell me some other warning signs that we should be able to

spot before the pressure gets personal? (Let them share as many as possible before giving them the list.)

ANALOGY: When you prepare for your driver's license test, you have to learn many danger signals, like flashing lights, construction warnings, "Steep grade", "Low Shoulder", "Children at Play." When an experienced driver sees these signs, a danger light goes off in his head, and he becomes alert to danger. There are also danger signs to warn us about peer pressure situations. Learn these signs well and you can get out of situation before the pressure gets to you.

A red light should begin flashing in your head when you see or hear:

- **Older guys taking a special interest in younger girls. Often they prey on girls who have not developed the ability to stand against their advances.**
- **People dressing or acting in rebellious ways.**
- **People hanging out in places where no one can see what they are doing.**
- **Constant negative conversation ("These teachers all suck..."; "Are those nerds idiots or what?")**
- **A feeling in your gut that something's not right. Could the Holy Spirit be warning you?**
- **Excitement over disobedience to authority ("I'm skipping school tomorrow." "We put away four six-packs over the weekend.)**

Get to know the standard lines people use to pull you in. Some people are experts at manipulating others with phrases like these.

Discussion: Ask the group how many lines they can come up with. Write them on a black board, overhead, or poster paper, and add any of the following they missed. Then ask the group what emotions these statements appeal to in us, how they manipulate us. Mention my remarks in the parentheses only if your students can't come up with them.

1. **It's no big deal.**
2. **We won't get caught.**
3. **Hey, be cool! (Who wants to be a nerd?)**
4. **Don't be a wimp. (Our desire to be macho, brave.)**
5. **Are you chicken? (Appeals to our pride, self esteem)**
6. **You're not scared, are you? (Our desire to be macho, brave.)**
7. **If you're really my friend, you'll.... (Our need for friendship.)**
8. **Grow up! (We hate to be labeled immature.)**
9. **But everybody's doing it. (Appeals to our desire to fit in, fear of being left out.)**
10. **I'm going to get a beer, let's go. (The appeal of authority, leadership.)**
11. **It'll be a blast. (Appeal to our sense of adventure.)**
12. **If you love me, you'll let me. (Our fear of losing a friend.)**

Tip: In general, never tell your youth something they could better discover themselves. Always look for opportunities to get them thinking on their own.

STEP #2: BE WISE (Gal. 6:7)

***“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked;
For whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.”***

Can someone try to put this verse into your own words? What do you think it means? Do you think we reap consequences in eternity or this life or both?

ILLUSTRATION: *On a Friday night, in the winter of 1997, near Boston, a group of teenage girls celebrated making the cheerleading squad at a dance with some friends. Someone got hold of some prescription muscle relaxants and offered them around. It looked like fun. It seemed everyone was doing it.*

DISCUSSION: Divide into two groups, with a volunteer sitting between the two groups. Group #1 will try to convince the volunteer to try the drug (acceptance by peers, potential “high,” etc.), helping the group to realize some of the pressure felt by the cheerleaders. Group #2 will try to convince the volunteer that the potential consequences are too great (physical danger, potential of doing something while drugged that you would later regret, trouble with parents and authorities, etc.), representing the conscience of the cheerleaders.

Do you ever feel like this? Two voices inside calling you two directions?

What do you think the cheerleaders chose? Some took the pills by the handfuls. Some began passing out, others throwing up, others fell into such a deep sleep that no one could wake them, others began foaming at the mouth. Thirteen ended up in the hospital, ten of those in critical condition. Some would have died in their beds had the parents not taken them to the hospital. (Facts from newspaper reports.)

Don’t be deceived. Rebellion has consequences. Don’t let people pressure you into things you know are wrong.

But sometimes, when they put on the squeeze, it’s hard to decide quickly if the activity is right or wrong. Here are four questions to ask yourself when you need to make a quick decision: (Read the Scripture first, and let the youth draw out the principle.)

1. Would Jesus do it?
2. Does it break the law? (Romans 13:1-7)?
3. Could it make an authority (parents, shop owner, school official) angry? (Ephesians 6:1-3)
4. Could someone get physically or emotionally hurt? (Mt. 7:12)

(Note that the cheerleaders' decision failed on all four counts.)

CONCLUSION

I wonder how many people who have died taking dares who would be alive today had they only known how to *be alert* and *be wise*. But you can know these principles and still fall for the pressure if you're not willing to live out the truth. I'll give you a moment to complete your action points with anything you need to do to apply this message. Perhaps He wants you to stop hanging around that group of friends that is headed the wrong direction. Maybe you should go home and practice some of these responses, in preparation for the times when you will need them. Whatever your decision, I'll give you a moment to write and pray.

SPIRITUAL STUBBORNNESS HOW TO HANDLE PEER PRESSURE (WEEK IV)

PURPOSE: BY THE END OF THIS SESSION, MY STUDENTS SHOULD KNOW PRACTICAL WAYS TO RESPOND TO COMMON PEER PRESSURE SITUATIONS, AND HAVE JESUS AS LORD OF ALL THEIR DECISIONS.

INTRODUCTION

For three weeks, we've been talking about one of the most powerful forces you will ever come against. Because of this force, many students in our country will die before the end of this school year. Do you remember the name of this force? That's right. Peer pressure. It's hard to imagine all the heartache that comes as a result students and adults falling for peer pressure. In this final week, we'll give you some ammunition to help you make a stand when you need to. But to defeat a foe so powerful, we need God's help. So let's ask Him.

PRAY

Last week we took steps one and two. First, **BE ALERT**, so that you can see peer pressure situations before they develop and stay away. Second, **BE WISE**, knowing that God's way is best and knowing how to tell right from wrong in a situation. Today, we take step three.

STEP #3: BE BOLD (Daniel 3:18)

“...we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

Sometimes we've made the right decision, and want to resist, but like the 9th grader we talked about last week, we have no idea what to say. Remember the situation? He found himself on a high school trip where his roommates were planning a late night rendezvous with some girls. He knew he didn't feel right about it, and that the consequences could be really bad, but he just didn't know what to do.

"For any kind of peer pressure, young people desperately need a variety of quick, clever, and affective responses that they can 'whip out' on a moment's notice." (Scott, p. 38)

Here's where we go into training for the war. Master these responses, and you will know what to say the next time the pressure is on. By the way, I've listed many responses on your student sheet. Just add any good ones that we come up with during the activity.

ACTIVITY! Let's look at all the standard lines that people try to manipulate us with (the ones we wrote under "Step #1), and come up with ways we can respond the next time it happens. (Again, either include these on the student handout or write them in full view of the group. In this way, they can practice the responses later.)

- **"NO/ I'll pass/ No way."** (It's direct, honest, courageous, and doesn't leave much room for discussion. Think: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego)
- **Leave without saying anything.** (Think: Joseph. "And she caught him by his garment, saying, 'Lie with me.' And he left his garment in her hand and fled...". [Gen. 39:12] But if at all possible, take your clothes with you!)
- **Ignore.** (Can be effective when people whisper to you in class that they want to cheat off of your paper.)
- **Give a good reason why you can't.**
 - a) "I've got homework."
 - b) "I have other responsibilities."
 - c) "My dad would strangle me."
 - d) "A couple of years ago, I might have gone along. But I put my life in God's hands. He's never let me down and I don't want to let Him down." (This is much like Joseph's response: "How could I do this great evil, and sin against God?" [Gen. 39:9; see also Peter and John in Acts 4:18-20])
- **Disarm them with humor.**
 - a) "Shoot! That's the same night as my Hollywood screen test."
 - b) "I'd love to, but I promised my dog I'd brush her teeth tonight."
 - c) "Is that a low-tar joint? I only smoke low tar."
 - d) "I'm waiting for the Surgeon General's report."
 - e) "I just popped a few "M & M's;" I can't handle any more today."

f) “Sure! If you don’t mind my barfing all over your couch (or car).”

- **Mix your response with a compliment, to soften the blow.** This especially helps when you’re afraid to risk a friendship. (Sometimes the people pushing you really don’t want you to say yes and follow through. They are just talking big. Remember the ninth grader who was sweating through how to respond to the planned rendezvous with the ladies? By the appointed time of departure, all the big talkers were sleeping like kittens!)

a) “You’re too important to me to let you do that.”

b) “You’re too smart to really mean that.”

c) “You’re too good a friend. I don’t want to see you get hurt” (“get in trouble.”)

d) “I know you can come up with something better than that idea!”

e) “If we got caught, my parents wouldn’t let me do things with you anymore. I’d hate that.”

- **The better idea.** “Why don’t we go ride bikes/ visit a friend/ see a movie/ go get a snack instead?”
- **When they won’t take “no” for an answer...**

Q. “Are you chicken?” A1. “Yea, so what?” A2. “Right.”

Q. “Aren’t you my friend?” A1. Sure, that’s why I don’t want to do this with you.” A2. If you’re really my friend, you won’t pressure me to do something I don’t want to do (don’t believe is right).

Suggestions: Respond confidently, finally, definitely. If they keep pressuring you, cut it off: “I’m leaving. I’m not talking about it any more.” (Eph. 4:27 – “...do not give the devil an opportunity.”)

ACTIVITY: Divide into groups of two. Tell each group to find who has the longest feet. Let that person go first. Give each of the following situations to the whole group. Let “Big Foot” give his/her response to the other person. (They can look at their student sheet if they need ideas.) The other person will respond next. (In this way, they get to actually practice their responses. This is a much more effective way to train youth.)

SITUATION #1: a) “Little” Foot” is on the phone with you, and has invited you over to her house to sneak some of her parent’s wine from the fridge. How will you respond?

b) “Big Foot” is on the phone

SITUATION #2: a) “Big Foot” is walking to school with you and starts pleading, “Man, you’ve got to help me. I forgot to do that research project. My teacher will flunk me without it. Just let me borrow yours and I’ll copy the highlights of it before school starts.”

b) “Little Foot” is walking....

Look over these responses at home. Practice them when you have a chance. Some of you might need to use them this week! If you do, tell us next week.

6. SETTLE THE LORDSHIP ISSUE (Lk. 9:23; Mt. 6:24)

“...If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”

“No one can serve two masters...”

ILLUSTRATION: When church father Athanasius was brought before the tribunal, he was asked, “Athanasius, do you not know that the whole world is against you?” He responded, “Then Athanasius is against the whole world.”

If you wanted to use Athanasius’ response today, and someone said to you, “Don’t you realize that everyone’s against you?” How would you respond? (“Then I guess it’s me against everyone.”) Let’s all say that together. (Say it a few times as a group.) Doesn’t it feel good to say it? Isn’t there something inside all of us that wants to be different, to break from the crowd and set our own course.

Mt. 6:24: “Mammon” = wealth, property, earthly goods (AG, Kittel, NBD). But one commentator, noting that the word probably came from a word originally meaning “trust or confidence”, expands its meaning in the present text to “wealth as a ground of our hope.” Beware of this common exegetical fallacy! Often preachers and even commentators will take a meaning of a word from one time period and assume that it retains the same meaning in a different time period. But think about it. The English word “nice,” came from the Latin *nescius*, meaning “ignorant.” When you call people “nice,” do you also mean that they are “ignorant?” (Highly recommended: *Exegetical Fallacies*, by D.A. Carson. Assumes some knowledge of Greek.)

Athanasius had set his course, and it didn’t matter to him how many were against him. His secret was that Jesus, not the world, ruled his life. I guess he knew that he and Jesus were the majority, even if they were against the whole world.

CONCLUSION

Do you feel tossed about by the crowd, unable to stand for what is right? Perhaps you have never settled the lordship issue. Would you like Athanasius’ guts, the stubborn faith of Shadrack and friends, the ability to stand like the gutsy girl who stood up for her virginity? The first step is to settle the lordship issue. I challenge you tonight to invite Jesus to sit on the throne of your life. Once he’s in control, He can give you the power to stand, no matter what the pressure.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Homework: Review the responses I’ve listed on your student sheet. Over the next couple of weeks we’ll practice these some more, so that you’ll feel comfortable using them when the time comes. And if any of you have the opportunity to make a stand over the next few weeks, please let me know so that we can encourage the rest of the group. (If they do make a stand, make a big deal out of it. It is a big deal. Whoop and holler!)

Followup:

For greater effectiveness, plan to review the comeback lines for the next few weeks. “The average retention rate of heard material for the adult of average intelligence is 25% immediately after hearing it; 30 days later, if they haven’t heard it repeated, the retention is down to a mere 2%.” (Scott, p. 81.)

***SHARPENING YOUR AX
USING CHRISTIAN BIOGRAPHY***

In this lesson, I included a couple of “Great Christian” illustrations. The cheerleader and sports hero illustrations are good for keeping attention and underlining truth, but for a generation with few worthy heroes, why not try to provide our youth with a few.

Just think of the wealth of colorful personalities and events we have to draw from. God miraculously blinds border guards to smuggled Bibles. Christians die bravely in Roman Arenas.

Hudson Taylor trusts God alone for financial support as he penetrates an unreached culture for Christ. The pope condemns Martin Luther, who is promptly kidnapped by friends to the safety of a castle. He marries a former nun who slipped out of the convent via a wooden barrel. George Mueller supports thousands of orphans without asking for a dime.

Ruth Tucker’s From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya presents short biographies of Christian missionaries, warts and all. This book alone added over 50 illustrations to my file. Many interesting biographies are available through your Christian bookstore.

SPIRITUAL STUBBORNNESS

(WEEK ONE)

INTRODUCTION

“The Power of Peer Pressure”

“A Gutsy Girl”

THE HEAT IS ON

How do you respond...

A. ...WHEN THE SETTING IS INTIMIDATING (DANIEL 3:1)

“A Day in Babylon”

“An Intimidating Classroom”

B. ...WHEN EVERYBODY’S DOING IT? (DANIEL 3:2,3)

“THE THREE LINES TEST”

C. ...WHEN THE PRESSURE GETS PERSONAL (DANIEL 3:8-15)

“A SHOCKING EXPERIMENT”

“A Freshman is Challenged to Cuss”

FACING THE HEAT

A. THE STAND IS TAKEN (DANIEL 3:16-18)

B. GOD COMES THROUGH (DANIEL 3:19-23)

ACTION POINTS

SPIRITUAL STUBBORNESS

(WEEK TWO)
OVERHEAD

INTRODUCTION

1. GIVE YOUR SELF ESTEEM A BOOST (PSALM 8)

“IT’S OKAY TO BE SEEN AS CLARK KENT, AS LONG AS...”

2. CHOOSE YOUR MOST INFLUENTIAL PEERS CAREFULLY (I Cor. 15:33)

“A California 14 Year Old”

“Kareem Abdul Jabar”

3. SET SOME NON-NEGOTIABLES

“Would you...for \$1,000,000.00?”

4. SEE THROUGH THE DECEPTION (Psalm 84:11)

“Moses Takes a Stand”

“An Old Man Named Polycarp”

ACTION POINTS

OVERHEAD

SPIRITUAL STUBBORNNESS

(WEEK THREE)

INTRODUCTION

5. BE PREPARED (Eph. 4:27; II Cor. 2:11)

“A Ninth Grader in the Pressure Cooker”

STEP #1: BE ALERT! (Proverbs 5:8)

A RED LIGHT SHOULD BEGIN FLASHING IN YOUR HEAD WHEN YOU SEE OR HEAR:

- Older guys taking a special interest in younger girls.
- People dressing or acting in rebellious ways.
- People hanging out in places where no one can see what they are doing.
- Constant negative conversation.
- A gut feeling that something's not right.
- Excitement over disobedience to authority.
- People trying to manipulate you with their words.

STEP #2: BE WISE! (Gal. 6:7)

“Cheerleaders Face the Pressure”

FOUR QUESTIONS FOR A QUICK DECISION:

A. WOULD JESUS DO IT?

B. DOES IT BREAK THE LAW? (Romans 13:1-7)

C. WILL IT MAKE AN AUTHORITY ANGRY? (Ephesians 6:1-3)

D. COULD SOMEONE GET PHYSICALLY OR EMOTIONALLY HURT? (Mt. 7:12)

ACTION POINTS

SPIRITUAL STUBBORNESS

(WEEK FOUR)

INTRODUCTION

STEP #3: BE BOLD! (Daniel 3:18)

BRAINSTORM!!! HOW CAN WE RESPOND?

- “NO/ I’ll pass/ No way.” (It’s direct, honest, courageous, and doesn’t leave much room for discussion. Think: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego)
 - Leave without saying anything. (Think: Joseph. “And she caught him by his garment, saying, ‘Lie with me.’ And he left his garment in her hand and fled...”. [Gen. 39:12])
 - Ignore. (Can be effective when a person whispers to you in class that they want to cheat off of your paper.)
 - Give a good reason why you can’t.
 - “I’ve got homework.”
 - “I have other responsibilities.”
 - “My dad would strangle me.”
 - “A couple of years ago, I might have gone along. But I put my life in God’s hands. He’s never let me down, and I don’t want to let Him down.” (Joseph: “How could I do this great evil, and sin against God?” [Gen. 39:9])
 - Disarm them with humor.
 - “Drat! That’s the same night as my Hollywood screen test.”
 - “I’d love to, but I promised my dog I’d brush her teeth tonight.”
 - “Is that a low-tar joint? I only smoke low tar.”
 - “I’m waiting for the Surgeon General’s report.”
 - “I just popped a few M and M’s; I can’t handle any more today.”
 - “When asked to drink... “Sure, if you don’t mind my barfing all over your couch (in your car.)”
 - Mix your response with a compliment, to soften the blow.
 - “You’re too important to me to let you do that.”
 - “You’re too smart to really mean that.”
 - “You’re too good a friend; I don’t want to see you hurt (“get in trouble,” “make trouble,” etc.).
 - “I know you can come up with something better than that idea!”
 - “If we got caught, my parents wouldn’t let me do things with you anymore. I’d hate that.”
 - The better idea. “Why don’t we go ride bikes/ visit a friend/ go get a snack instead?”
 - When they won’t take “no” for an answer...
- Q. “Are you chicken?” A1. Yea, so what? A2. Right.

Q. “Aren’t you my friend?” A1. Sure, that’s why I don’t want to do this with you.” A2. If you’re really my friend, you won’t pressure me to do something I don’t want to do, or something I don’t believe is right.”

6. SETTLE THE LORDSHIP ISSUE (Luke 9:23; Mt. 6:24)

“Athanasius Answers the Tribunal”

ACTION POINTS

SPIRITUAL STUBBORNNESS

(WEEK ONE)

INTRODUCTION: “*The Power of Peer Pressure*”

“*A Gutsy Girl*”

THE _____ IS ON

How do you respond...

A. ...WHEN THE _____ IS
INTIMIDATING (DANIEL 3:1)

“*A Day in Babylon*”

“*An Intimidating Classroom*”

B. ...WHEN _____ DOING IT? (DANIEL 3:2,3)

“THE THREE LINES TEST”

C. ...WHEN THE _____ GETS PERSONAL (DANIEL 3:8-15)

“A Shocking Experiment”

“*A Freshman is Challenged to Cuss*”

_____ THE HEAT

A. THE _____ IS TAKEN (DANIEL 3:16-18)

B. _____ COMES THROUGH (DANIEL 3:19-23)



ACTION POINTS:

SPIRITUAL STUBBORNNESS

(WEEK TWO)

INTRODUCTION

1. GIVE YOUR _____ A BOOST (PSALM 8)

“IT’S OKAY TO BE SEEN AS CLARK KENT, AS LONG AS...”

2. CHOOSE YOUR MOST INFLUENTIAL _____ CAREFULLY (I Cor. 15:33)

“A California 14 Year Old”

“Kareem Abdul Jabar”

3. SET SOME _____

“WOULD YOU...FOR \$1,000,000.00?”

4. SEE THROUGH THE _____ (Psalm 84:11)

“Moses Takes a Stand”

“An Old Man Named Polycarp”



CONCLUSION: YOUR ACTION POINTS

STUDENT HANDOUT

SPIRITUAL STUBBORNESS

(WEEK THREE)

5. BE _____ (Eph. 4:27; II Cor. 2:11)

“A Ninth Grader in the Pressure Cooker”

STEP #1: BE _____! (Proverbs 5:8)

A RED LIGHT SHOULD BEGIN FLASHING IN YOUR HEAD WHEN YOU SEE OR HEAR:

- Older guys taking a special interest in younger girls.
- People dressing or acting in rebellious ways.
- People hanging out in places where no one can see what they are doing.
- Constant negative conversation.
- A gut feeling that something’s not right.
- Excitement over disobedience to authority.
- People trying to manipulate you with their words.

STEP #2: BE _____! (Gal. 6:7)

“Cheerleaders Face the Pressure”

THREE QUESTIONS FOR A QUICK DECISION:

- A) WOULD _____ DO IT?
- B) DOES IT BREAK THE _____? (Romans 13:1-7)
- C) WILL IT MAKE AN _____ ANGRY? (Ephesians 6:1-3)
- D) COULD SOMEONE GET PHYSICALLY OR EMOTIONALLY _____? (Mt. 7:12)



SPIRITUAL STUBBORNNESS

(WEEK FOUR)

STEP #3: BE _____! (Daniel 3:18)

BRAINSTORM!!! HOW CAN WE RESPOND?

- **“NO/ I’ll pass/ No way.”** (It’s direct, honest, courageous, and doesn’t leave much room for discussion. Think: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego)
- **Leave without saying anything.** (Think: Joseph. “And she caught him by his garment, saying, ‘Lie with me.’ And he left his garment in her hand and fled...”. [Gen. 39:12])
- **Ignore.** (Can be effective when a person whispers to you in class that they want to cheat off of your paper.)
- **Give a good reason why you can’t.**
 - **“I’ve got homework.”**
 - **“I have other responsibilities.”**
 - **“My dad would strangle me.”**
 - **“A couple of years ago, I might have gone along. But I put my life in God’s hands. He’s never let me down, and I don’t want to let Him down.”** (Joseph: “How could I do this great evil, and sin against God?” [Gen. 39:9])
- **Disarm them with humor.**
 - **“Drat! That’s the same night as my Hollywood screen test.”**
 - **“I’d love to, but I promised my dog I’d brush her teeth tonight.”**
 - **“Is that a low-tar joint? I only smoke low tar.”**
 - **“I’m waiting for the Surgeon General’s report.”**
 - **“I just popped a few M and M’s; I can’t handle any more today.**
When asked to drink... **“Sure, if you don’t mind my barfing all over your couch (in your car.)”**
- **Mix your response with a compliment, to soften the blow.**
 - **“You’re too important to me to let you do that.”**
 - **“You’re too smart to really mean that.”**
 - **“You’re too good a friend; I don’t want to see you hurt (“get in trouble,” “make trouble,” etc.).**
 - **“I know you can come up with something better than that idea!”**
 - **“If we got caught, my parents wouldn’t let me do things with you anymore. I’d hate that.”**
- **The better idea.** **“Why don’t we go ride bikes/ visit a friend/ go get a snack instead?”**
- **When they won’t take “no” for an answer...**



**Now,
repeat
after me!!!**

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