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Timothy was told not to partake in the sins of others (1 Tim 5:22).

The attitude teenagers have toward their parents is often influenced by their friends. Don't expect a teenager to spend five hours a day on Facebook and then honor their mother and father (Eph 6:1-4). I was at a school board meeting a few years ago when the lady sitting next to me gave the perfect definition of a teenager. She said, "A teenager is someone going through the 'terrible-twos' in a bigger body." On occasion, there will be a "battle of the wills"—the parents must win!

Our peers often influence attitudes toward sex. Fornication is a sin (Gal 5:19). Fornication includes premarital sex, homosexuality, and all sexual intercourse apart from marriage. It is a sin against our own body (1 Cor 6:18). Sexual fulfillment is to be found in marriage. "Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Heb 13:4).

If you avoid sexual immorality, you will not have to worry about: **1)** A guilty conscience. Your conscience will not bother you when you do what is right. **2)** Your parents finding out. **3)** The many sexually transmitted diseases that are running rampant in our nation. **4)** Pregnancy out of wedlock.

It is so easy to pick up the language of the world. The apostle Peter was identified as a follower of Christ by his speech (Matt 26:73; Mark 14:70). "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one" (Col 4:6). Our Lord reminds us that "by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned" (Matt 12:37).

Choose your friends with care—they have so much influence on your life! Choose Christians who will "refresh" you (2 Tim 1:16) and "stir up love and good works" (Heb 10:24). The

prophet Amos asked, "Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?" (Amos 3:3). □

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"Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man do not go, lest you learn his ways and set a snare for your soul" (Proverbs 22:24-25)

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## Choose Your Friends With Care



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# Choose Your Friends With Care

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A *peer* is defined as “a person who has equal standing with another, as in rank, class, or age.” Among the many definitions of pressure, we find “to force, as by overpowering influence or persuasion.” *Peer pressure* is then the persuasion exerted by our friends and neighbors and those of our age or social circles.

Peer pressure is blamed for nearly every social ill of our day. “Notes Alan Morris, chief of the adolescent unit of the Illinois State Psychiatric Institute in Chicago: ‘Some kids, especially younger adolescents, have an exquisite sensitivity to what their peers think. They won’t go to school if their shoelaces are the wrong color.’ But the group’s influence is often treacherous. Explains young Edwards: ‘It’s peer pressure and wanting to be accepted by your friends and trying to prove yourself in the best way you know how, which is being violent.’ Gangs allow even the most cowardly and impotent to feel brave and powerful. And they override inhibitions and diminish any feelings of guilt. Violence becomes contagious. Some youngsters revel in the mayhem; others, too weak to break away, become trapped and are swept along.” (*Time Magazine*)

Peer pressure is blamed for the increase of sexually transmitted diseases among teenagers. “A 1988 study of sexually active college students found that 46.3% of the women and 62.7% of the men reported having had unwanted intercourse. Peer pressure, coercion, intimidation—all led students into situations they later regretted.” (*Time Magazine*)

Alcohol abuse is the number one health

problem among American teenagers. According to a recent study at George Mason University, alcohol is a significant factor in 41% of all academic problems and 28% of all college drop-outs. It comes as a surprise to no one that peer pressure is blamed.

The problems teenagers face today are not new. Over 2,500 years ago, Socrates wrote, “Our youth now love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority; they show disrespect for their elders, and love chatter in places of exercise. They no longer rise when elders enter the room. They contradict their parents, chatter before company, gobble up their food, and tyrannize their teachers.”

Though sin might come in better-wrapped packages today than a generation ago, modern teenagers face the same temptations their parents and grandparents faced (1 John 2:15–17). Not only is sin the same as it has always been, so is the means of overcoming sin and temptation.

The first chapter of Proverbs contains Solomon’s wise counsel for his son. Solomon instructed his son on how to overcome peer pressure (Prov 1:8–19). Let us notice what Solomon said.

In Proverbs 1:11, a young man is invited to join a gang. There is a natural temptation to go with the multitude. Solomon said, “My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent” (Prov 1:10). We have a choice about whom we choose as our friends. It will not always be an easy choice—that is what “peer pressure” is all about. Without your consent, the temptation cannot take effect, and

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without your permission, the temptation can do no real harm. “He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed” (Prov 13:20).

Solomon also said, “My son, do not walk in the way with them, keep your foot from their path” (Prov 1:15). It is not enough to “Just say no” when sin first appears. Your friends can wear your resistance down. Solomon knew that if his son walked with evil men, he might resist sin for a while but would probably yield in time. It is sad to be in a situation where you have no friends. However, it is worse to have the wrong kinds of friends than no friends at all. “Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man do not go, lest you learn his ways and set a snare for your soul” (Prov 22:24–25). “Do not be deceived: evil company corrupts good habits” (1 Cor 15:33).

Solomon’s son, Rehoboam, divided the nation of Israel after the death of his father. Rehoboam had the opportunity to bind the people of God together. However, he forsook the counsel of his elders and yielded to peer pressure. He caused the ten northern tribes to revolt and follow Jeroboam (1 Kgs 12:4–11).

Our friends can influence us in many ways, for good or bad.

Our peers usually influence the clothing we wear. While it is not wrong to wear T-shirts, blue jeans, and tennis shoes, immodest apparel is sinful (1 Tim 2:9–10). In this text, the word propriety means “modesty...rooted in the character.” R. C. Trench defines the word “moderation” as “that habitual inner self-control, with its constant rein on all passions and desires, that hinders temptations from overcoming the checks and barriers that *aidos* (modesty) opposes.”

When a man looks upon a woman with lust in his heart, he has sinned (Matt 5:28). When a woman dresses in a way that causes unlawful sexual desires in men’s hearts, she has also sinned.

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