

# Peer Pressure

by John Wesley

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of resisting peer pressure and staying true to our values and principles, even in the face of potential persecution.*

**Scripture:** Galatians 2:11

**Topics:** "Courage in Faith", "Peer Pressure"

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## Description

John Wesley addresses the issue of peer pressure through the example of Peter's actions in Antioch, where Peter initially associates with Gentiles but withdraws due to fear of the circumcision group. This hypocrisy not only affects Peter but also leads others, including Barnabas, astray. Wesley emphasizes the importance of maintaining purity of heart and the courage to stand firm in faith, even in the face of potential persecution. He highlights that the desire to please God must outweigh the desire to conform to societal pressures. The sermon encourages believers to seek strength from the Holy Spirit to resist peer pressure and uphold their convictions.

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## Transcript

"When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray." Galatians 2:11-13 This reading is very real isn't it? It contains all the elements that we've been looking at this week, namely purity, peacemaking and persecution and it contains some big names in the New Testament.

Paul, Peter, James and Barnabas are all there. Let's have a look at some of them and a look at ourselves. Some of them come through in shining colours and some of them don't; sounds just like us, doesn't it? Peter wants to be pure of heart, in other words, his outer actions matching his inner desires and motives. He knows what the right thing is to do and he does it, he eats with the Gentiles. Then certain men arrive from James and suddenly Peter is no longer doing what is right.

Because of his fear of the circumcision group he withdraws from the Gentiles, presumably refusing to eat with them any more. He wants to be in with the right crowd and in order to do that he does what is wrong. We call this peer pressure don't we, but isn't it surprising to see it amongst these people? This is what the fear of persecution can cause us to do and it's not just schoolchildren in the playground that succumb to it.

There is a ripple effect and soon others are following Peter, their leader, and even Barnabas is led astray.

Perhaps all of this is being done in order to "keep the peace" and make sure that "no one gets hurt." Paul will have none of it and so concerned is he with the purity of the early church and its teaching, that he confronts Peter and deals with the issue. Was he afraid of the circumcision group? We don't know, but what we do know is that it was more important to him to please God than to please people, even at the risk of persecution. Every one of us faces peer pressure almost every day in the area of purity and of peacemaking and face the prospect of potential persecution. Pray for strength and courage and remember that the same Holy Spirit who was with Paul is with you.

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