

Sin Craves Approval

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In a short video highlighting the dangers of drug abuse, a boy says to his friend, “I feel bad about smoking pot. But I’ll feel less bad if you do it with me.”

That line embodies an important source of peer pressure: we think we’ll feel better about doing wrong if someone else is doing it, too. Peer pressure is often applied by a person who is wrestling with his own conscience. The classmate pushing you to try drugs (including alcohol and tobacco), the co-worker trying to get you to lie or steal, the friend trying to pressure you into sexual immorality — that person may just be trying to make himself feel better. He doesn’t want to be the only one guilty of bad choices. The more people he can persuade to make the same mistake, the less uncertainty and regret he will feel about his own (at least, so he hopes).

As Philip Johnson wrote, “When our consciences accuse us and we are unwilling to repent, all we can do is to smother our knowledge with rationalizations and recruit others to vice... Just as misery loves company, sin craves social approval” (*Objections Sustained* 180).

“My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent. If they say, ‘Come with us...,’ My son, do not walk in the way with them” (Proverbs 1:10-15). God warns me not to let others pressure me into sin. Besides keeping myself out of danger, there’s another value in it: I just might make someone else re-think his own choice. Sin craves approval. By refusing to give it, I can take away someone’s excuse and force him to confront his own conscience. Maybe I’ll even earn his respect. And, hopefully, I’ll get a chance to talk to him about a better way.

“Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them” (Ephesians 5:11).