

Word One Bible Study

Presenting Positive Peer Pressure

by Kerry David Reese

Text: Mark 9:38-50 for the Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost, Lectionary Series B

OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

1. Discover the importance of cutting themselves off from all harmful negative influences that become damaging to their Christian faith and life.
2. Learn that they are called by God to render a positive Influence upon their family, friends and other people among whom they live.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Blindfolds

Various snack foods: one with salt and one salt-free

GROUP GUIDELINES

Divide the group into smaller clusters of 6-8 people. Select as leader in each group the person whose birthday is closest to the date on which your meeting is being held. The leader should keep the group focused on the Bible study and help everyone in his/her group get a chance to speak, stressing that no one shall be required to speak should they prefer to listen.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

Select two members from your small group to be subjects for a "taste test," assuring them that they will not have to eat anything "gross" or disgusting. Have another member of the group blindfold each participant while the leader goes to get samples of various foods that the youth leader has purchased prior to the meeting. The foods should be arranged in like pairs, one of the regular salted variety and its salt-free counterpart: for example, a salt-free potato chip compared to a salted one. Three or four of these food comparisons should be fed to the blindfolded participants, with a group secretary recording their personal preferences as to whether they liked the salted or the salt-free items they tasted. If your subjects preferred the salt-free varieties of everything they ate, disband and go for pizza. Your experiment is a bust. But if your subjects liked the salted foods better, breathe a sigh of relief and go on to make the point of the Bible study.

LOOKING AT GOD'S WORD

Read Mark 9:50.

1. Keeping in mind that Jesus is addressing those who believe in Him as their Savior and Master, describe what you think He might be saying when He instructs them to "have salt in themselves." (Leader can read this to small group)
2. As you answer, it is helpful to remember that salt has two main purposes.
 - a. First, it enhances taste. Ask your food tasters to describe the bland flavor of the food that lacked salt. What might this say about the affect we Christians are to have on those around us?
 - b. Second, note that salt had been used before times of refrigeration as a preservative against food decay. Meat was rubbed with salt to keep it fresher longer. What would this notion have to contribute toward understanding the role that Christians are to carry on among their Christian brothers and sisters? What effect are we to have on our world, beginning with those in our schools and neighborhoods?
3. Read more about Jesus' warning to His followers against losing their salty influence on the people around them in Matthew 5:13. According to this passage, what good is a person who stops being a positive influence on those around him or her?
4. Still worse is the danger in allowing those not guided by Jesus Christ to inflict their negative peer pressures upon us. Read Mark 9:42-48.
 - a. What is the final outcome of our lives if we allow ourselves to sin repeatedly against God without regard of the consequences?

- b. What strong words does Jesus speak against anyone who is responsible for leading someone away from the Christian faith and life (verse 42)? Note that a "millstone" was a heavy stone used for grinding grain into fine flour and came in two sizes. One size was for use by women in their homes and the other was so large it required a donkey to pull it around. Jesus is referring to the larger size.
 - c. If the final outcome of an unrepentant life of sin is the fires of hell, what does Jesus advise that we do with those influences that tempt us so strongly (verses 43, 45 and 47)? What are the implications of this toward people or things that we allow to turn us away from doing God's will? Name some of the powerful influences that you believe can have a negative effect upon people like yourself. What are some ways that we Christians can act and speak in order to counteract this negative effect?
5. As we work to bring positive peer pressures to bear upon the people around us, it is important to keep in mind that we are not alone. We are working together with all other Christians everywhere toward the same goal. Read Mark 9:38-41.
- a. How are we to regard anyone who is not against Jesus Christ? What is the other side of the coin, as found in Matthew 12:30?
 - b. In verse 41, Jesus mentions just one little way in which His followers can show their Christ-like compassion to others. Name several more ways that come to your mind.

REINFORCING WHAT HAS BEEN LEARNED

Spend some moments in silence. Pray that God will lead you away from those things that are hurtful to your faith and life and that He will help you to grow in serving Him by serving others in positive, helpful ways. Thank Him especially for forgiving your sins and giving you the promise of never-ending life in Jesus' name.

CLOSING

Join hands within your group and share sentence prayers together, bringing to mind some of the thoughts and needs that have occurred to you today.

Sing "Brothers and Sisters in Christ" LUYH p. 5 or "Go, My Children, with My Blessing" LUYH p. 46.

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