



Key Scriptures: Romans 12:1-2, 1 Samuel 16:1-7, Proverbs 29:25

Main Point: We all want to belong, but God cares way more about the condition of our heart than how well we fit in.

Materials Needed: pressure cooker (optional), notecards, pens

Welcome

Good evening [your youth group]! I'm so pumped to be with you guys tonight! For those of you that are new here or are visiting with us, we're glad you're here. We hope you have enjoyed your time with us so far and hope that you come back every opportunity that you have.

If by some off chance you have no idea who I am, my name is [your name] and I'm the [your position] here at [your church] and it is an honor to be able to bring tonight's message to you! I hope you came ready and willing to let God speak some truth into your life tonight!

I'll warn you right off the top that tonight I'm going to be asking some pretty thought-provoking questions and I want you guys to participate. Don't be shy! I know this is church but you're allowed to talk in church!

If you would, pray with me as I ask God to bless our time together.

[Teacher's Note: Pray that God will use you to speak into your teenagers the things He wants them to hear. Pray that they will have ears that are ready to hear and hearts that are ready to soak up His Word.]

Introduction

Now, before we hop into the lesson, I want to kick things off with a couple of questions, something that will help break the ice and get us all thinking. If you're comfortable, raise your hand if the question applies to you.

Who here has ever felt like they had to do something, say something, or even wear something just because everyone else was doing it?

Who here has ever done something you regret just because you were worried about what people might think of you if you didn't?

Who here has ever felt that strong pull to *not* do something you knew was right, because it would make you stand out (not in a good way)?

Would anyone be willing to share an example of an experience you've had in the past?

[Teacher's Note: Allow for various responses. It is important that you make sure you or the other students do not judge the student who is sharing their experience either by what you say or how you act in response to their sharing. Keep comments and side conversations to a minimum to prevent this from happening.]

Thank you for sharing your experiences with us. Those really are tough situations to find yourself in.

Today, we begin our *Under Pressure* series where we will focus on being confident and Christ-centered in a very pressurized world. Over the next few weeks, we're going to be looking at peer pressure. We will see exactly what it is, how we can be anchored in our identity in Christ, how we can say no with grace, and how we can instead be a positive influence on those around us.

When you hear the term 'peer pressure,' what pops into your head?

[Teacher's Note: Allow for various responses.]

A lot of times, we just think about the bad stuff, like someone pushing you to do something wrong. But peer pressure is actually any influence, good or bad, that people your age (your peers) have on you.

I want you for a minute to think about a pressure cooker.

[Teacher's Note: If you have one at home, bring it to your gathering with you. Bonus points if you start cooking something inside of it an hour or so before hand. You can show the teens how you release the pressure, etc. This allows them to use two senses that they don't typically use to learn spiritual principles by hearing the steam and smelling the food. You might also tell a funny cooking story from your own life.]

A pressure cooker is a pot that cooks food super-fast. The pot builds up a lot of steam and pressure inside, raising the boiling point of water. This is what allows the food to cook in a fraction of the time that it might take on the stove or in the oven.

Sometimes, life can feel just like that; outside pressures building up, pushing us to act a certain way. And that will be our focus for the next few weeks, so buckle up!

Lesson

So, there are all kinds of peer pressures these days. Some of them happen in real life and others of them happen online, in the brutal world of social media.

Let's brainstorm a little bit here. What are some places or situations where you feel peer pressure?

[Teacher's Note: Allow for responses. Here are some examples if the conversation needs jump starting or you don't have much preparation time:

-School: What to wear, what music is cool, which groups to hang with, even stuff about homework (like cheating, or not trying too hard).

-Friends: Trying new things (good or bad), gossiping, how you talk, what you do for fun.

-Sports/Clubs: Pressure to win, how to act on the field, fitting in with the team.

-Family: Sometimes even relatives your age can make you feel pressured to act a certain way.

-Online/Social Media: FOMO (fear of missing out), everyone's 'perfect' online life, chasing likes, trending challenges, getting canceled, online bullying.]

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