

20. Peer Group pressure

Principle: Even though we may be part of a group doing wrong, God holds us each individually accountable for our part in it.

Key Scripture:

Genesis 3:12 The man said (to God) , "The woman you put here with me--she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

Genesis 3:17 To Adam he (God) said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' 'Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.

Exodus 32:1-6 When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, "Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him." Aaron answered them, "Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me." So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the **shape of a calf**, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt." When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of **the calf** and announced, "Tomorrow there will be a festival to the LORD." So the next day the people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings. Afterward they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.

Exodus 32:21-24 He (Moses) said to Aaron, "What did these people do to you, that you led them into such great sin?" "Do not be angry, my lord," Aaron answered. "You know how prone these people are to evil. They said to me, 'Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him.' So I told them, 'Whoever has any gold jewelry, take it off.' Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this **calf**!"

Proverbs 1:10 My son, if sinners entice you, do not give in to them.

1 Corinthians 10:13 **No temptation** has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

Comment on Scripture

Personal accountability always applies. In the account of Adam and Eve falling for the Satan's temptation (ie God didn't really mean they would die if they ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil), each was held accountable for their part in the act. Even though Eve made the first move into sin, Adam went along with it and was clearly still held equally accountable by God. There were even consequences for the serpent (Gen 3:14). Even someone like Aaron, who had seen the miracles God performed as part of the Exodus from Egypt, still succumbed to pressure to commit the ultimate sin against God. His attempt at justifying his involvement in this event typifies the fallen nature response to such error – telling lies in an attempt to lessen his accountability. (I believe it was only Moses' pleading with God that saved Aaron from the full strength of God's wrath - Ex 32:32). God promises that none of our temptations are unique to us and that he will always provide a way through or out of them if we want to take the option.

Application in daily life??

- ♦ Teach our children that peer group pressure is always going to be a force in their lives – even as adults - so the sooner they learn to deal with it the better.
- ♦ Teach our children that being enticed into wrongdoing by a group does not lessen the error or sin (and therefore the consequences).
- ♦ We each need to learn to stand firm against peer group pressure to do wrong - and stay true to our own convictions. This can often be a lonely experience but God will honour it! Especially praise our children when they do it.

- ♦ Even when it seems easier to go silently along with a crowd that is leading your group into error or wrong-doing, we are obliged to speak our objection, and if not listened to, we should clearly separate ourselves from that action.

Our example? Are we teaching our children how to respond positively to peer group pressure in a way that allows them to remain true to their convictions and handle the consequences?