

**Purpose** To encourage class members to live righteously despite worldly pressures.

- Preparation**
1. Prayerfully study 1 Samuel 8; 1 Timothy 4:12; Alma 5:57; Doctrine and Covenants 3:5–8.
  2. The week before the lesson is to be given, make a copy of the story about Erroll Bennett and give each numbered section to a different class member. Ask these class members to prepare to tell their sections of the story in their own words.
  3. Materials needed:
    - a. A pen or pencil and a piece of paper for each group in the group activity (see page 156).
    - b. A set of scriptures and a scripture marking pencil for each class member. Continue to encourage class members to bring their own scriptures to class each week.

*Note to the teacher* We left our heavenly home to live on this earth and to progress according to the plan of salvation. While providing us with this opportunity, the world also presents us with many challenges, temptations, and pressures. Teenagers, particularly, are faced with great pressures from a worldly society. As they learn to deal with challenges according to gospel principles, they are strengthened and continue their eternal progression. Help class members understand that it is of eternal importance that we learn to be in the world but not of the world.

**Suggested Lesson Development**

**Recognizing Worldly Influences**

Chalkboard discussion

Remind class members of the previous lesson on the Word of Wisdom.

- Has anyone you know ever tried to convince you to disobey the Word of Wisdom? Have you ever felt pressure from friends or acquaintances to do other things that you knew were wrong?
- What arguments do people often use when they are trying to persuade others to do something wrong?

List class members' answers on the chalkboard (leave this list on the chalkboard for the group activity in the third section of the lesson). You may want to use the following examples to stimulate class members' thinking:

1. "No one will know."
2. "Everyone does it."
3. "Just once won't matter."

- Why are these arguments so often effective?

Point out that we all want to be liked and accepted. This is not wrong, but the desire to be liked and accepted can lead us into trouble if we want to be accepted by other people more than we want to be accepted by the Lord.

Explain that part of living on this earth is learning to deal successfully with unrighteous influences. It is easier to deal with these influences when we recognize them and understand the results that yielding to them can bring.

### **Peer Pressure and the Desire to Be like Others**

Teacher presentation

Explain that influence to do certain things often comes from our peers—people around our own age and in circumstances similar to ours. This kind of influence is often called “peer pressure.” Peer pressure can be positive or negative, depending on whether your peers are influencing you to do righteous or unrighteous things.

Point out that sometimes our peers make a deliberate effort to influence our behavior, and sometimes we are influenced by our peers simply because we want to be like those we admire. Either way, we need to consciously consider what we are being influenced to do and whether or not these are right things to do.

Scripture story and discussion

Explain that Satan has used negative peer pressure and the desire to be accepted as his tools throughout the ages. In Old Testament times the children of Israel experienced a desire to be like other people around them. Discuss with class members the situation found in 1 Samuel 8.

To answer the following questions, have class members find and read the indicated scriptures. You may want to have class members take turns reading the verses aloud while the rest of the class follows along.

- The children of Israel asked the prophet Samuel to appoint a king to rule over them. Why did the children of Israel want a king? (1 Samuel 8:4–5; they wanted to be “like all the nations.”)
- What did Samuel do when the people asked for a king? (1 Samuel 8:6.) What did the Lord tell Samuel to do? (1 Samuel 8:7, 9; he told Samuel to explain to the people what life would be like if they had a king.)
- What did the Lord, through Samuel, tell the Israelites about the results of having a king? (1 Samuel 8:10–11, 13–18.)
- Would you want a king if you knew he would enslave your children and take your property? Do you think the Israelites changed their minds about wanting one? (1 Samuel 8:19–22.)
- Why do you think the Israelites still wanted a king, even after they were told how bad life would be under a king?

Explain that the results Samuel prophesied did come to the children of Israel. The first few kings that ruled over them helped them to become a strong nation, but later kings enslaved them, took their possessions, and eventually contributed to the downfall of the entire nation.

- Are we ever like the Israelites, rejecting the counsel of the Lord’s servants so we can be more like everyone else?
- What can we learn from the Israelites’ experience?

Emphasize that unrighteous influences can be powerful and can have devastating consequences. In order to progress in life, we must learn to know when we are being pressured in the wrong direction and how to resist that pressure.

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### Resisting the Pressures of the World

Discussion

Point out that while our peers often have great influence on how we think and act, pressure to do wrong things can come from other areas as well.

- What other people or things may influence us to do things we know are wrong? (Answers may include famous movie, music, or sports personalities; songs or literature that are against Church standards; or advertising that entices us to sin.)

Scripture discussion

Have class members read and mark Alma 5:57. Explain that this verse is part of Alma’s teachings to the people in Zarahemla who wanted to be followers of Christ (“the good shepherd”).

- What do you think Alma meant when he told the people to “come ye out from the wicked, and be ye separate, and touch not their unclean things”?
- How can we live in today’s world and still follow Alma’s counsel?

After class members have had time to discuss this question, explain that today it is not possible or desirable to isolate ourselves completely from all people who do not believe as we do. But by maintaining our standards and striving to live righteously, we can withstand worldly pressures and exert a positive influence on those around us. A phrase often used to describe this situation is being “in the world but not of the world.” This means that we live in the world, but we do not live according to worldly standards and beliefs.

Group activity

Explain that one way to increase our ability to resist worldly pressures is to prepare our resistance ahead of time. Divide class members into small groups and give each group a pen or pencil and a piece of paper for making notes. Assign each group one or more items from the list of arguments you put on the chalkboard at the beginning of the lesson. Have group members work together to develop ways they could respond if someone used these arguments to try to persuade them to do something wrong. When all groups are finished, have each group share its responses with the other class members. (See the third enrichment activity for a variation on this activity.)

Discussion

- What has helped you do the right thing when you have felt pressure to do otherwise?

Story

Explain that as we strive to resist worldly influences, we should remember that God desires our success and stands ready to help us. Have the class member who was given the first part of the Erroll Bennett story tell it now:

1. Erroll Bennett's father was upset when he heard that Erroll planned to be baptized into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He demanded:

“Have you gone mad? You'll have to give up everything—*everything* you've worked for. . . . If you do this, I don't want to know you. Take everything in this house that belongs to you and don't ever set foot across this door again.’

“It was not the first time . . . that deep parental misgivings have been a barrier to embracing the gospel. But there was more to this opposition than objections to new religious doctrines. For Erroll Bennett, joining the Church could well mean the end of his spectacularly successful career as the top soccer star in Tahiti.”

Erroll Bennett and his wife had been introduced to the Church by a friend. They recognized the truth of the gospel and decided to be baptized. Erroll knew that as a member of the Church he would need to keep the Sabbath day holy, but all of his soccer league's games were played on Sundays. Erroll was a very valuable player, and when the league president heard that Erroll was going to join the Church, he called the stake president to ask if Erroll could get some kind of special permission to play on Sundays. The stake president told the league president that the decision about whether or not to play on Sundays was up to Erroll.

#### Discussion

Ask all class members:

- How do you think Erroll felt about the pressure he was receiving from his family, teammates, and league officials? If you were Erroll, what would you do?

#### Story continued

Have the assigned class members tell the second and third parts of the story:

2. Erroll again spoke to his father regarding his decision to join the Church and again was rejected, but Erroll's commitment to the Church was strong. He decided to seek counsel from the friend who had introduced him to the Church. This friend told him about priesthood blessings, and another friend gave Erroll a blessing that promised that his problems would be resolved and his father would accept his baptism.

“The next day, Erroll again drove out to his father's home. As he approached the house, he could see his father standing by the gate to the front garden. There were tears in his eyes. ‘I want you to forgive me, Erroll,’ he said. ‘I couldn't sleep last night for thinking about it. . . .’ Then he continued: ‘You know that thousands of people will be disappointed in you. It will mean the end of your career if you won't play on Sundays. You know that [the league president] isn't going to change the entire [soccer] league schedule just to accommodate you. Still, this is your decision. . . .’”

3. Erroll received pressure from family and friends until the day he was to be baptized. “‘I remember my feelings on that day,’ Brother Bennett now says. . . . ‘We had gone through a lot of pressure, and we knew what we had to do. Yet somehow I felt I needed a final confirmation, a last indication from the Lord that all was well and that we should proceed.

“‘I remember going up the side of the mountain near my home where I like to jog, and privately pouring out my feelings to my Heavenly Father. I asked

for confirmation, perhaps some message that I was about to take the right step. Halfway down the mountain on the way home, I offered the same prayer again.

“As I drew near my home, there was a car parked outside. It belonged to Gabriel Vaianui, a member who had been [less active] for about ten years, attending church only intermittently. Gabriel had been at the market and had overheard someone say that Erroll Bennett had decided not to join the Mormon Church after all. He had then driven over to my home immediately to find out for himself.’

“Erroll recognised Brother Vaianui as the messenger he had sought and promptly asked him, ‘Gabriel, should I be baptised today?’ Without hesitation, the answer came: ‘Erroll, whatever you do, you must be baptised. Do not turn your back on the Church.’”

Erroll was very grateful for this counsel. He said, “It was just what I needed—that little extra to give me the courage I lacked.’”

Chalkboard discussion

- How did Erroll find the courage to resist outside pressure and do what was right?

List class members’ responses on the chalkboard. The list may include:

1. He sought help from priesthood leaders and followed their counsel.
2. He asked for and was given a priesthood blessing.
3. He prayed earnestly.
4. He stayed in tune with the Holy Ghost so he could recognize the answer to his prayer.

Point out that each of us can follow Erroll’s example when we feel pressure to do something wrong. God will help us resist the pressures of the world.

Story concluded

End the discussion by noting that sometimes standing up to the pressures of the world can have surprising results. Have the assigned class member tell the conclusion of Erroll Bennett’s story:

4. “The baptisms went ahead as scheduled, and afterwards Erroll Bennett had time to think. . . . It was no good agonizing over an elusive compromise. . . . He wasn’t going to play on Sundays. The following day he would talk to [his team president] and withdraw from active soccer, leaving his position open to some other hopeful.

“[The president’s] reaction was a surprising one. ‘Hold off for a few days,’ he said. ‘Wait until after the meeting of the league later this week.’

“When Erroll heard the news a few days later, he could hardly believe it. [The team president] had advised league officials that the Central club had decided not to play on Sundays. . . . A vote was then called for, and the decision was unanimous. From now on, all Honours Division games would be played on weekday evenings” (Michael Otterson, “Erroll Bennett, Tahitian Soccer Star: His Courage Changed the Rules,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1982, 15–17).

Point out that things turned out well for Erroll Bennett, but Erroll made his decision to be baptized without knowing how things would turn out. He decided to do the right thing no matter what the personal consequences might be. Remind class members that choosing the right will lead to eternal blessings, even if the immediate situation does not turn out the way we want.

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### Setting a Good Example

Scripture discussion and story

Explain to class members that as they face worldly influences, they may have to deal with feelings of loneliness and rejection. But they can ease these feelings by seeking ways to exert “positive peer pressure,” influencing their friends to do what is right.

Have class members read and mark 1 Timothy 4:12.

- How can you be “examples of the believers”?

Discuss with class members ways they can set good examples, helping each other and their other friends to live according to the Lord’s standards. You may want to have a class member read the following description of how some Latter-day Saint students dealt with unrighteous pressures:

“I was one of four LDS students among 1,055 in our high school and we found the only way to avoid Friday night loneliness was to provide a fun alternative to the drinking and carrying on of many of our fellow students.

“We invited friends to come to our house to make root beer and doughnuts from scratch, as well as pizza, sweet rolls and candy. We’d play games, both indoors and out, dance, sing and even had pie-eating and pyramid-building contests.

“We found lots of our friends and their friends enjoyed this alternative ‘fun’ and we appreciated the opportunity to set a good example and be subtle missionaries” (Leslie E. Hartsock, in “How to Keep Standards Despite Temptations,” *Church News*, 30 Jan. 1982, 15).

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### Resisting Worldly Influences Brings Eternal Rewards

Scripture discussion

Explain that early in his service to the Lord, the Prophet Joseph Smith gave in to Martin Harris’s repeated requests to borrow 116 pages of the translation of the Book of Mormon. The Lord had instructed Joseph not to give these pages to Martin Harris, but Joseph continued to ask the Lord until He finally consented. The pages were subsequently lost. Have class members read and mark Doctrine and Covenants 3:5–8, the Lord’s counsel to Joseph Smith about being influenced by other people.

- What did the Lord tell Joseph Smith about “fear[ing] man more than God”? What did the Lord promise Joseph if he would be faithful?
- Why is it worth the effort to resist the negative influences of the world and stand up for what we believe in?

## Testimony

Testify that pleasing God is more important than pleasing other people. Pleasing God will bring eternal rewards, even if it brings a loss of popularity. You may want to share an experience in which you resisted worldly influences and kept the commandments of God.

Encourage class members to be in, but not of, the world and to set good examples for their peers.

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## Enrichment Activities

You may want to use one or more of these activities during the lesson.

1. Remind class members that peer pressure can be very subtle. Sometimes we are not specifically asked to do wrong things but are made to feel inferior or unpopular because we do right things. Read the following situations and have class members discuss how they would react if they were in these situations:

a. Joe and a friend are walking toward a group of boys who are looking at a magazine. When the boys see Joe coming, they hide the magazine and say, "This stuff is too rough for Joey! If he saw it he'd have to go confess to his bishop!" They all laugh.

- How do you think Joe feels? What could he do? What should he do?
- If you were Joe's friend, what would you say to Joe?

b. Michelle enters a classroom where some other girls are noisily laughing. She hears someone say, "She's so self-righteous. She dresses like her mother picks out her clothes." When the girls see Michelle, they suddenly become silent and look away.

- How do you think Michelle feels? What should she do?

2. Tell the following story to remind class members that they can set good examples for others:

"It had been a great year for me, and now my high school years were coming to an end. I was standing in a large group of noisy, excited [students] signing yearbooks when a girl I didn't know asked me if she could sign my book. I thought it was a little unusual, but I . . . handed [the book] over. She gave me a big smile and hurried off to a desk in one of the classrooms.

"That night as I was looking through my yearbook and smiling at all the things my friends had written, I came to a small paragraph that began, 'You don't know me, but I have been watching you all year.'

"I was shocked. I read that sentence over and over. I hadn't been living my life as if someone might be watching me. I had only been thinking of what a good time I was having. I read on. This girl . . . also wrote that she had noticed how active I was in seminary and that she was determined to be just like me.

"While I was proud she had chosen me to admire, what I mostly felt at that moment was a profound sense of relief that I had not unknowingly led her down the wrong path by my actions. . . .

“I never saw that girl again. But I have always remembered the moment she changed my life by asking to sign my yearbook. I have tried since that day to live each minute as though someone is watching—because someone usually is” (Kaye Garner, “Just Like Me?” *New Era*, Oct. 1995, 9).

Have class members silently consider the following question:

- If you found out that someone had been watching you and following your example, would you be pleased or embarrassed by the example you had set?
3. You may want to use the following group activity instead of the one on page 156:

Divide class members into small groups and give each group a pen or pencil and a piece of paper. Have each group write down one or two things their peers might do to pressure them to do something wrong (for example, a group of friends might try to convince them to see an inappropriate movie).

When each group has written down one or two examples, have the groups trade papers. Have each group look at the examples on their new paper and come up with ways a person in those situations could resist peer pressure. When the groups are finished discussing, have them share their suggestions with the rest of the class.

Remind class members that one way to increase our ability to resist worldly influences is to decide before we experience them how we will react to these influences.