



1st TYPE

The first type I call **acquaintances**. They are people that you know. They may be fellow students at school in your same class or activity. Or they may be acquaintances of your family, or on your sports team. You may not feel very close to these people, and it is probably a very superficial relationship. You know it's the type of relationship of "Hi, Sally, how are you doing?" and see ya tomorrow" type of thing. Just someone you know and meet perhaps every day, but you do not actually sit and speak to this person on a personal level. It's just basically an exchange of greetings, or a working relationship. That means you just happen to work with this person and you may only speak to them concerning your work. So, these are just acquaintances or work mates. We cannot really call these types of people friends, but more preferably to call them acquaintances or colleagues.

2nd TYPE

The second type may be **a friend that harms you**. This type of friendship is one that wants to take from you all the time. Whether it is money, prestige or many other things. They may also be harmful in that they give you wrong advice and teach you to solve your problems in a wrong or evil way. They may be leading you to the path of death, whether spiritual or physical death. They may lead you to do things that are against your conscience or against your faith. Deep inside of you, you know that it is wrong and will get you in trouble. They may pressure you to smoke or have a boyfriend or to steal.

Look at the example of Job and his friends in the Old Testament. Job calls his friends, "miserable comforters", because instead of assisting him to get over his distress, they make him more uncomfortable by their words. We also see the example of Rehoboam, who took the advice of the young men instead of the elders, and it brought about the division of the tribes of Israel.

If we look at some statistics of teen behaviour, it reveals that: 66% lied to a parent, teacher or other adult, 60% lied to their parents, 45% watched MTV at least once a week, 36% cheated on an exam, 25% smoked a cigarette or other tobacco product, 1 out of 9 got drunk, 1 out of 10 used illegal drugs.

A lot of this behaviour is influenced by peer pressure. Young people face severe peer pressure to act in certain ways, to talk in certain ways, to dress in certain ways, to join certain groups, and to try certain things.

Any deviation from what is considered the "normal" or popular thing to do can result in ridicule and rejection. If someone does not have a boyfriend/girlfriend they may be considered abnormal or gay.

What are the effects of peer pressure?

Experimentation: The teen may be asked by his friends to try something and is told that it won't hurt him.

Fear and frustration: He may be afraid because deep inside of him he knows that it is wrong. It frustrates him because he wants his friends to accept him.

Depression: Repeated attempts at conformity (to fit in) results not in fulfilment but frustration and loneliness.

Confusion: Between peer values and family and religious values.

Negative peer pressure involves a choice of what to:

1. Act like
2. End up like
3. Feel treated like by this group or others.

Peer pressure promises acceptance and approval to young people, but it is an empty promise. These type of friends are not real and true friends. Peer pressure is natural and understandable. It can be positive or negative. It is unavoidable, not only do young people face it every day, but their parents, teachers and others do too. Our Lord Jesus Himself was faced with peer pressure, yet without sinning. The Bible says that He was, "tempted in every way, Just as we are -- yet without sin." In Romans 12:2 St. Paul tells us, "and do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

3rd TYPE

So who are my *true friends* then? This is what we want to concentrate on. There is a nice saying which says, "tell me who your friends are and I will tell you who you are." Your friends reveal you, and your personality. Unfortunately sometimes people will judge us by the people that we hang around with. If we have friends that are into crime, drugs and raging, then people will automatically assume that we are the same because we hang around all the time with such people. You may say. "they are just friends, I don't do the things that they do." It may be so, but the question is for how long? How strong are you, what type of personality do you have, are you strong enough to resist all temptation? Do you have the ability to lead such people to repentance or will you eventually give in and follow them?

A true friend is one that gives and not takes. Good friends challenge each other to goodness. A true friend shows continual loyalty as was the case with David and Jonathan in the Old Testament. Jonathan helped him even at the cost of Saul's anger and Jonathan's own claim to the throne (1 Samuel 18:1 - 23:15-18). True Friends are also willing to sacrifice and persevere with each other, "Greater love has no one than this than to lay down one's life for his friends." (John 15:13) Even if their friends do something wrong, they are willing to forgive them, lead them to repentance, and teach them in humility what is right, without hurting their feelings. Our Lord goes to the stage of laying down His life for his friends on the cross. He also said to His disciples, "I will no longer call you slaves but friends." Barnabas was a faithful friend to the apostle Paul and was there to sponsor him when the early Church held St. Paul in suspicion. The faithful friendships between these people in the Scriptures brought blessings beyond measure. Barnabas launched St. Paul into a ministry that spread the gospel through the Roman Empire.