

Peer Pressured?

Lesson Overview

From time immemorial, we humans have experienced peer pressure from the people around us—or from our self-imposed desire to fit into what we think people around us want. Today media, the arts, entertainment, celebrities, schools and even elected officials magnify the pressure to conform to the world's thinking and practice. The world's thinking doesn't come at our children from just one direction—they're bombarded with mixed messages from all directions.

While some voices may decry violence and recoil in horror at student shootings and terrorist acts, down at the corner store shelves overflow with violent games and entertainment. While we might hope that Christian parents keep their children away from these violent products, other parents have different standards and it's probably wise to assume that our children have been at least somewhat exposed to them. While some groups might measure acceptance by cool clothing, other groups are given over sex, drugs and gang activity. In this kind of unstable, capricious, shifting people-pleasing environment, God wants his people to stand up with integrity and stand out from the crowd. Kids need to know today's Power Point: ***God helps me overcome peer pressure.***

Peer Pressure isn't new. Kids can take courage from the example of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These young men overcame the pressure to conform to the king's customs, trusted God and stuck fast to their faith. Their specific temptations were different from what kids face today—but the truth of the Power Point is as firm as ever: ***God helps me overcome peer pressure.***

Just as Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego overcame the pressure to conform to the king's customs that violated their faith, kids can be encouraged by their example. The temptations of today may be different than what the four Israelites faced years ago, but the truth of the Power Point is as helpful today.

Going Deeper

Browse a popular pre-teen magazine prior to meeting with your children. (Bookstores, libraries, and grocery store aisles are good place to find these.) Make notes related to the popular trends, quotes, and written and unwritten expectations put upon the children and pre-teens that read these kinds of magazines. Share your insights.



Power Point

God helps me overcome peer pressure.

Scripture Memory Verse

Don't be like the people of this world, but let God change the way you think. Then you will know how to do everything that is good and pleasing to him.
—Romans 12:2

Bible Lesson

Daniel and his three friends withstand the pressure to disobey God.
—Daniel 1:5-21

Everything You Need

Note: For a listing of basic supplies to keep on hand, see page 13.

Game #1: 1 medium-sized rubber ball.

Game #2: Large cardboard box, bag of various toys, prizes, household items.

Praise and Worship: *Bible & Praise* DVD.

Lesson Introduction: Sunglasses, hat.

Scripture Memory Verse: Lesson 5 Scripture Memory Verse from *Leader Resources* CD-ROM, poster board, markers, adult helpers.

Bible Connection: Lesson 5 Bible Connection video segment from *Bible & Praise* DVD.

Bible Story: Bibles, costumes for Helpers 1 and 2. (Any humorous or Bible-times costume will do.)

Object Lesson #1: Play dough, gingerbread-man cookie cutter and table.

Object Lesson #2: Thin piece of lightweight, bendable metal and two pairs of pliers, table.

Today's Life Story: Lesson 5 Today's Life Story from *Leader Resources* CD-ROM.

Welcome

Start your service with high energy as you welcome the kids and open in prayer. See page 18 in this *Leader's Manual* for helpful welcoming tips.

Game #1

Bounce Pass

Review Questions

(Ask the following questions to help children review last week's lesson. Choose one boy and one girl who answer the questions correctly to help you choose teammates for Game #1. They each choose three additional teammates for two teams of four.)

- ▶ Where did Joshua and Caleb go? (*Canaan.*)

- ▶ Name three fruits found in this land? (*Large grapes, pomegranates, figs.*)

Props: A medium-sized rubber ball.

Participants: Eight children.

Playing the Game

Have all of the participating children hold hands and form a circle. Have children drop their hands to their sides and take one step back. Explain that they are now a team. Encourage them to work together as a team as they participate.

Explain that this game involves something called a bounce pass. Ask children, do you know what a bounce pass is? (*It is when the ball bounces one time before another person catches the ball.*) Bring the medium-sized rubber ball into the circle and hand it to someone. Invite the child to bounce the ball to another child in the circle. Explain that everyone needs to be ready to catch the ball at all times because you won't know when the ball is going to come to you. Allow the children to practice a few times bouncing the ball one time across to various children in the circle.

When all the children have practiced, play for real. Mention that we are attempting to get to 20 points! Award 1 point each time a ball is successfully bounced to another child. After the team reaches 20 points have the rest of the audience cheer for the team—they're all winners.

Game #2

Mystery Box

Review Questions

(Select one boy and one girl who answer the following review questions correctly to be participants in Game #2.)

- ▶ What did the 10 spies tell Moses and the Israelites about the land of Canaan? (*The walls were too high; the people were too big and strong.*)
- ▶ What was last week's Power Point? (*I will do God's work in our world.*)

Props: Large cardboard box, bag of various toys, prizes, household items.

Participants: Two children.

Playing the Game

Prior to playing this game, find common objects that would be easy for a child to describe. Keep these items in a large bag so the children cannot see what these objects are. Bring in a large cardboard box that will easily hold the items. Invite the 2 children who answered the review questions correctly to come forward. Sneak one of the items from the bag into the box without the audience seeing what it is.

Show the girl volunteer what item you have placed in the box. Encourage the audience to ask “yes” or “no” questions to try to guess what the object is, such as “Is it blue?” “Is it a toy?” “Does it bounce?” etc. Allow the girl to answer “yes,” or “no” depending on the question asked. If the object is guessed right away, sneak a new object into the box and continue. If it takes awhile for the children to guess correctly, encourage them to ask, “Are we getting warmer/colder?” (*Reply: yes or no*) when questions are asked. If no one guesses what the object is for quite awhile, the leader should give a hint to the audience. Continue with the girl and then allow her to sit and have the boy take over. Play until a few objects have been guessed correctly.

Praise & Worship

Lead the children in a powerful time of entering God’s presence using the worship songs from the *Bible & Praise DVD*.

Lesson Introduction

Props: Sunglasses, hat.

Preparation

Choose a child for the Lesson Introduction skit. Dress this child in the sunglasses and hat and have him return to his seat.

Presentation

What is peer pressure? (*Peer pressure is when people around us try to persuade us to act or think in a certain way, usually a negative or destructive way.*)

In addition, our culture pressures us to conform to it through “cool sites” on the internet, magazines, movies, celebrities, newspapers, radio and TV.) What kinds of bad things might your peers want you to do? (Experiment with drugs, try smoking, use curse or swear words, disobey teachers or parents, etc.) Why is it hard sometimes not to do what the other kids do? (They might make it seem fun, you might be the only one who doesn’t wear certain clothes or talk a certain way.)

Who is happy when you reject negative peer pressure? (*God, Jesus, your parents, your siblings, your teachers, your pastor or church leaders, other Christian friends.*) Is it more important to please your peers who come and go, change their minds, and move out of town or people who you admire that you see every day or live with? (*The first and most important thing is to please God. We are to be God-pleasers, not seeking after the approval of people [see Gal. 1:10]. After God, we are to honor our parents, who nurture and protect us, who know and love us, and who imperfectly do their best to seek our best. And after our parents, we are to respect and honor the most important people in our lives, like siblings and teachers.*)

What God and your family, siblings, teachers, pastor or church leaders think of you is much more important than what a group of kids at school or in the neighborhood think of you. If people are trying to get you to do something, a good question to ask is, “Would Jesus approve? Would my parents? How about my teachers or relatives?” If the answer is “no,” well...it isn’t something worth following or doing, is it? (*Call up the child wearing the hat and sunglasses. Whisper the following things to the child and have him ask them of the large group one at a time. Allow the large group to respond with “yeah!” or “no way!” depending on their answer.*)

Would you...lie, smoke, break school rules, help your friend pick up his books, go to the school nurse with someone who is hurt, cheat on a test, clean up toys, etc. (*After you have gone through a few options, allow the child to remove his sunglasses and hat and return to his seat.*) **God helps us overcome peer pressure.** Let’s see what the Bible has to say about peer pressure.

Scripture Memory Verse

Don't be like the people of this world, but let God change the way you think. Then you will know how to do everything that is good and pleasing to him.
—Romans 12:2

Props: Lesson 5 Scripture Memory Verse from *Leader Resources* CD-ROM, poster board, markers, adult helpers.

Preparation: Use a marker to write the verse on the poster board.

Practice it

(Divide the children into two groups by having them number off 1, 2, 1, 2. Have the 1's go to one side and the 2's go to another side. Have one adult helper direct the 1's and another adult helper direct the 2's.) Have both groups read the verse aloud first. Next have the 1's shout, **"Don't"** and have the 2's say, **"be like the people of this world."** Then have the 1's say, **"But let God change the way you..."** Have the 2's shout, **"think."** Finally have the 1's say, **"Then you will know how to do everything"** and have the 2's say, **"that is good and pleasing to him."** Invite both groups to shout the reference, **"Romans 12:2"** together. If time permits, switch roles.

Understand it

What does this verse have to do with peer pressure? (It tells us not to be like the people of this world and tells us how we should act instead.) Why is it wrong to be like the people of this world? (When world is used here it means loving things on earth more than spiritual or heavenly things. The world in itself isn't bad but it is the world's negative influences, like peer pressure, that this verse is talking about.) What kinds of things are good and pleasing to God? (Praying, telling the truth, worshiping God, obeying parents, reading the Bible, etc.)

Live it

(Encourage the children to shout the word, "Don't" aloud a few times. Ask if that was hard to do. Next have the children shout, "No!" aloud a few times.) Was it hard to say those words? (Allow responses.) Saying "No!" is the first step.

Next, we have to follow through with our actions. Sometimes, it's not that easy to refuse peer pressure. But God promises to help us do right. Remember our Power Point: **God helps me overcome peer pressure.** He will show us what to do that is good and pleasing to Him. We don't have to say, "Yes," to sin. We can always try to say "No!"

Bible Lesson

Daniel and his three friends withstand the pressure to disobey God.
—Daniel 1:5-21

Bible Connection Option

Use the Bible Connection DVD segment before your Bible Lesson as a way to introduce the point of today's lesson.

This a monologue of three kids, telling their story individually in a flash-forward style. Each scene reveals more about each child's story and the stories are edited together toward the end. It starts with Karl, who is 10. He grows up to steal a car when he's 17. Next is Sarah. She is 11 and reveals her friends will heavily influence her in her teen years. Last is Josh, who is 12 and has two seriously mean sisters and who have learned to follow their parent's example. Josh mentions a secret that he kept from his parents. Karl mentions he learns to steal in the fifth grade, Josh reveals he secretly became a Christian in eighth grade, and Sarah is smoking when she is 16. She admits to being a Christian, but doesn't attend church much or read her Bible. Karl admits he was negatively influenced by his friends and Sarah tells she has "school friends" and "church friends" who didn't get along with each other, but who were also not that different from one another. Josh tells about how he met a kid who told him about Jesus. Finally, Karl and Sarah both said "no" to going to a Christian event, while Josh said "yes." Karl laments not having good influences and making poor choices, while Sarah admits she found her walk with God when she became 18. Josh is thankful for the positive influence that brought him to God.

Ask the questions below to discuss the DVD segment.

- ▶ What did Karl do when he was 17? (*Steal a car.*)
- ▶ Who said “no” and who said “yes” to the Christian youth event? (*Karl and Sarah—no; Josh—yes.*)
- ▶ Who returned to following God at age 18? (*Sarah.*)

These three kids’ stories show the powerful impact negative peer pressure can have on our life. Karl got into trouble and was in jail for stealing. Sarah made poor choices and didn’t start making good ones until she was an adult. And Josh didn’t allow his difficult family background to influence him, rather he became a Christian and had **God’s help to overcome peer pressure**. Today, we will look at the story of four men who were faced with the pressure of going against what they knew was right. Let’s discover what happens.

Bible Story

Props: Bibles, costumes for Helper 1 and 2. (Any humorous or Bible-times costume will do.)

Preparation: Beforehand, write down the lines of Helper #1 and #2 (see below) on a piece of paper for them to read aloud during the skit. Select two children to be helpers for the Bible story and dress them in a costume.

Presentation

(Mention that today’s Bible Lesson is from Daniel 1:5-21. Explain that Daniel and his three friends Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were being trained by King Nebuchadnezzar to work in his royal court. All of the young Hebrew men were given certain foods and drink but these foods were not foods the Hebrews were supposed to have. Instead of giving in to peer pressure and eating the foods or drinking the drink that was forbidden, Daniel and his friends came up with a proposition for the king. Invite the helpers to come forward and give them their papers with their lines to read for the skit.)

Helper 1: The king gave the young men a certain amount of food and wine everyday. That was the same kind of food that the king ate.

Leader: However, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego dared to be different. They would only eat the foods that God commanded His children—the Hebrews—to eat. Let’s see how they handle the pressure.

Helper 2: Daniel decided not to eat the king’s food and wine because that would make him unclean.

Leader: A brave move! And, God gave Daniel favor with the king’s officer in charge of feeding the trainees. Daniel guaranteed that he would be in better shape and look better too, if the officer would allow Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to eat the diet that God commanded them to eat.

Helper 1: After ten days the young Hebrew men looked very healthy. They looked better than all of the young men who ate the king’s food.

(Helpers exit.)

Leader: The officer could see that what Daniel had told him was correct and he allowed the Hebrew men to continue to eat their chosen diet. The children of God did not compromise. They stood firm and saw victory over peer pressure.

After three years of training, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were the leading young men in the king’s palace. They were wiser and healthier than all the rest and the king gave them the very best jobs in the palace.

How did Daniel and his three friends face peer pressure? (*Invite responses.*) What was the end result of these young men doing what God said to do instead of what everyone else was doing? (*Daniel and his friends obeyed God and were blessed by God by being in the best shape of all. As a result of their obedience, they went on to become some of the highest-ranking men in the king’s court!*) Just as God blessed Daniel and his friends, He also will bless you when you stand firm against peer pressure. **God helps us overcome peer pressure.** God will be faithful to help you do what’s right.

Object Lesson #1

Props: Play dough, gingerbread-man cookie cutter and table.

Preparation: Place the play dough and gingerbread-man cookie cutter on the table.

Presentation

(Hold a large clump of play dough in your hands and begin to shape it into a ball.)

God has created you and I and He offers a great plan for our lives. Let's say that this ball of play dough represents you and me, God's creation. Your enemy would love to ruin that creation and he will try to attack you through others' influencing you to do wrong. Maybe you've experienced peer pressure that says you have to listen to a certain kind of music to fit in. *(Press your thumb into one side of the play dough ball.)* The world says you have to wear certain clothes to be popular. *(Press your thumb into the other side of the play dough ball.)* The world says that you have to speak a certain way or participate in certain activities to belong. *(Place the ball of play dough on the table and flatten it out.)* Do you want the world to keep shaping you? Do you want to give into peer pressure and be just like everybody else?

(Use the cookie cutter to cut a gingerbread-man figure from the flattened play dough and hold it up.) Do you want to be just another stamped-out, cookie-cutter person and miss out on all that God has for you? *(Begin to roll the gingerbread-man figure into a ball.)* Or, do you want to become all that God created you to be? Let Him shape you and don't give into peer pressure. **God helps us overcome peer pressure.**

Object Lesson #2

Props: Thin piece of lightweight, bendable metal and two pairs of pliers, table.

Preparation: Put the piece of metal and pliers on a table so children can watch you work.

Presentation

(Ask the children what kinds of things they feel pressured sometimes to do. Mention that although these things might seem tempting and some of them might even seem O.K. to do [say this only if it applies] it's important to remember that we can be shaped either by God, the Bible and its values or we can be shaped by "the world"—things that just aren't going to last for eternity. God wants to shape us. In Jeremiah 18:6b it says, "Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand...." If God is the one bending and molding us we'll be sure to turn out just right. If our peers are the ones with all the molding and influence, we may end up going the wrong direction, away from the things of God.)

God helps me overcome peer pressure is our Power Point today. We must stand firm in the face of peer pressure...but our enemy has a trick to slowly get us off of our firm stand. He knows that if he can bend us, he can break us. Let me show you what I mean.

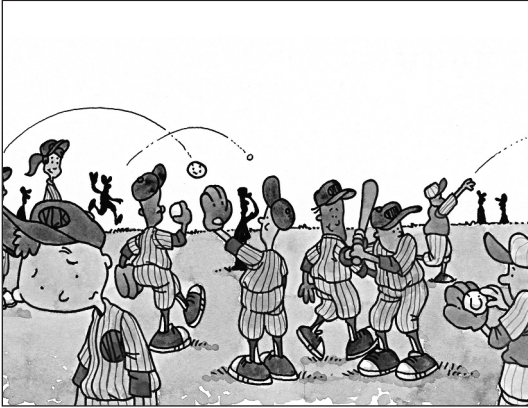
(Use the two pairs of pliers to hold the piece of metal. Start bending and folding the metal back and forth to weaken the center section of the metal. It should form a "score" that will easily break.) My piece of metal is strong, but I can weaken it. When the metal is constantly bent, the portion that is at the center of the bending becomes weak. The term that is used to describe this action is this; "the integrity of the metal is compromised." If our enemy tries to bend us, can our "integrity" be "compromised"? *(Continue bending the metal until it breaks.)*

Boys and girls, don't bend because bending can break you and keep you from all that God has for you. Stand firm and ask the Holy Spirit to give you strength. Don't give in to peer pressure. Don't compromise and do what others want you to do—follow God's perfect plan for your life.

Today's Life Story

Go With the Game Plan

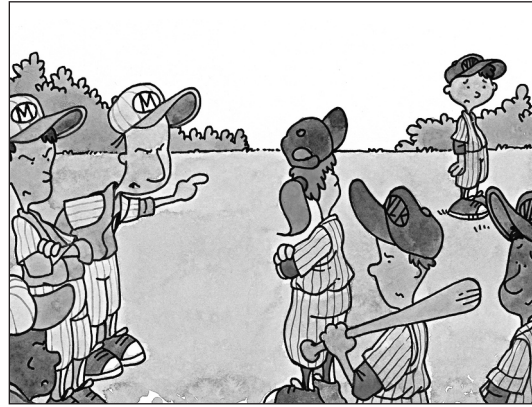
Illustration 5-1



► It was game day for Victorious Life Kids and they were facing the McWhiner's team. Although it seemed like most of the whining was coming from the VLK players. The kids were still angry at Mark about losing their last game. Not that they lost, but *how* they lost. During that game, Mark was pretty cocky, guaranteeing a win if he pitched. That was bad enough, but then when coach Clarke called Henry to pitch instead of Mark, Mark tripped Henry as he jumped off the bench—and he fell and sprained his wrist. Some of the kids accused Mark of deliberately trying to hurt Henry, but Mark said it was an accident. “But I guarantee a victory!” Mark shouted to the bench as he began to warm up. But he pitched terrible and the VLK kids lost badly.

As the Victorious Life Kids warmed up, their spirits began to improve—except for Mark's spirit. Most of the VLK players still weren't even talking to him. Mark knew that tripping his teammate on purpose so he could pitch instead (and lying about it) was a bad thing to do. He also remembered that Coach Clarke had told the team to forgive him and to focus on today's game. But everyone was remembering Mark's bad decision and he could feel their coldness.

Illustration 5-2

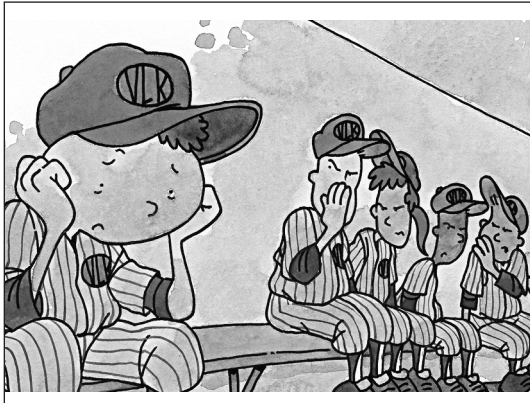


► Rumors of what Mark had done spread among the other team's players. Things got worse on the field as the McWhiner's players teased the Victorious Life Kids players about their last game. One of the McWhiner's players yelled, “Why do you even have Mark on your team? He shouldn't be allowed to play! We wouldn't let anyone who thinks he's better than anyone else be on our team!” Another suggested they should rename their team “Mark's Team,” since he thought he was the best player.

Some of the VLK players didn't know what to think and other teammates were supportive of Mark in their hearts. They believed that Coach Clarke knew best and that Mark should be forgiven and should not be thrown off the team. Mark was feeling worse and worse with every word.

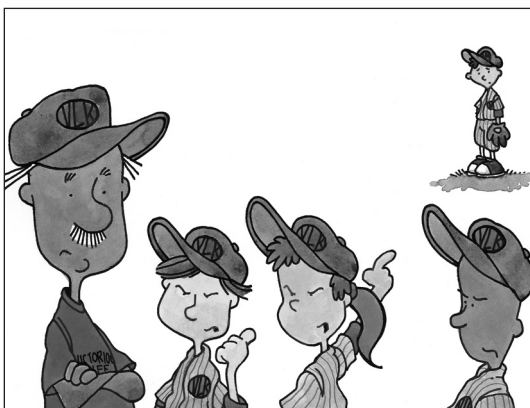
Boys and girls, you may face a time like Mark is facing. We are all sinners and at times our wrong doing can create a big mess. If you find yourself facing something like this, know that you are not alone. Jesus is beside you. He will forgive and help you overcome anything that you face.

Illustration 5-3



► As the game began, the Victorious Life Kids were busy thinking about Mark instead of being attentive to the game. They were dwelling on the negative instead of the positive. Some of the players were even agreeing with the McWhiner's suggestion of throwing Mark off the team. They didn't like being called "Mark's Team," and if Mark wasn't on the team, no one could call them that again. One of the more sour VLK players whispered to the others, "Let's tell Coach Clarke how we feel, and see if we can get Mark off our team."

Illustration 5-4



► It was time for the Victorious Life Kids to take the field, but some of the players stopped to whine to Coach Clarke. One of them said, "Coach, I think we speak for the entire team. We're tired of being teased and being called Mark's Team." "Who is calling us that?" asked Coach Clark. One of the girls answered, "Everybody is! That's

all we hear from the McWhiner's team." Another VLK player added, "Yeah! Mark is making us look bad. You've gotta kick him off the team."

Illustration 5-5



► "Time out!" said Coach Clarke. He took the three players aside who were doing most of the protesting. "First of all, I am sad from what I am hearing. You're giving in to a bunch of name-calling kids. You're enemy is using this to fight against you and to fight against what is right. The Victorious Life Kids have a different game plan. We are called to do the right thing—always. We have a higher standard and we don't give in. We don't compromise."

Coach Clarke explained, "It's not always easy to forgive someone but, it is the right thing to do. Anyone can walk away from somebody and turn their back on them—but that's not the right way and that's not how we do things."

The kids could feel the truth of what coach was telling them and they knew in their hearts that they needed to really forgive Mark and to work with him to overcome what was in the past. They didn't know it then, but the VLK team needed Mark that day in a big way.

Illustration 5-6



► One inning later pitcher Patty had a throbbing pain in her right arm. Coach Nina ran to the pitcher's mound and Patty cried, "It's my arm, I can't throw another pitch." Coach Nina knew that Patty needed to come out of the game and Coach Nina motioned to Coach Clarke to call in another pitcher—and everyone knew that Mark would be called in to take Patty's position on the mound.

Even though Patty was in pain, she knew this was the right opportunity for Mark. She knew this was his time to overcome his past mistakes and help—rather than hurt—their team.

Illustration 5-7



► Coach Clarke and Coach Arnold turned to Mark and said, "We need you to pitch Mark." Arnold handed Mark the ball and Coach Clarke added, "We believe in you, Mark. This is your chance to do the right thing. Let everyone know that you can

overcome and help the team. Go out there and do your best!"

Mark smiled and jogged out to the pitcher's mound. Mark said a quick prayer, asking God to forgive his past actions and help him pitch as best he could. As he threw a few warm-up pitches, he felt confident. He was excited that his team had forgiven him and that they were supporting him now.

Illustration 5-8



► Mark did an excellent job of pitching—the McWhiners couldn't get a hit off of him. Mark's relief pitching helped the Victorious Life Kids win the game. The VLK players and coaches ran out to the pitcher's mound to celebrate the victory with their pitcher. Everyone was shouting and jumping and rushing to give Mark high-fives.

Coach Clarke asked everyone to calm down a bit so he could talk to the team. He told his players, "When you stick to the game plan and do your best it makes a difference. More importantly, when we follow the God's plan and do things His way, we will be winners in life. Don't give in to the enemy and don't give in to peer pressure—stand firm in God's ways!" Then Coach Clarke added, "Now let's go get some ice cream and really celebrate!" The VLK team was excited to have earned their first win.

Kids, it's important that you recognize that the Victorious Life team could have been defeated in their game. If they had listened to the words of

others and given in to peer pressure, then Mark wouldn't have been able to pitch the game—or do very well trying to pitch under all the pressure. This story helps us see how we can follow today's power Point: God will help us overcome peer pressure.

Closing Prayer

Believing that ***God helps me overcome peer pressure*** is something that can help you all of your life. Honoring God is more important than doing what your friends do. Resist negative peer pressure by relying on God.

Dear Jesus,

Please help us to follow you and not worry about what our friends are doing. It's not easy but it is what you call us to. We also know you will bless us when we obey your commands. Help us each day to remember that you are in control.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Small Group Lesson

Using the *God Encounters Small Group Lessons* (see page 10 in this *Leader's Manual*), divide your children into one of three elementary-age groups: ages 6-7, ages 8-10, ages 11-12. These groups allow deeper exploration of the Power Point and life application.

Instruct small-group leaders to hand out this week's Take-Home Challenge.