

HEADS OR TAILS

*If you fully obey the Lord your God ...
[t]he Lord will make you the head, not the tail.*

—Deuteronomy 28:1, 13

INTRODUCTION

Everybody's talking about peer pressure these days. How strong it can be, and how to handle it when it hits you. And it's true: the ways other kids your age think and behave can have a powerful influence on you. Too powerful, if you're not careful! So it's important to make sure you don't let negative peer pressure from other kids lead you down the wrong path.

But peer pressure can work both ways, can't it? It can be good as well as bad, right? Maybe it's time to start focusing more on the *positive* peer pressure that *you* can exert on your friends and classmates. When you boil it down, peer pressure is really just a game of follow the leader. Someone's going to be the leader, and someone's going to be the follower. In this case, the Bible says, it's better to be the leader. And God can help you do that!

Today's devotion is based on Deuteronomy 28, verses 1 and 13, which says, "If you fully obey the Lord your God ... [t]he Lord will make you the head, not the tail." The devotion is called "Heads or Tails."

DEVOTION

Tonya was excited to be one of two students chosen to wear the school mascot costume during assembly on Friday. She wasn't so thrilled about being the back part of the horse. But she was a good sport. At the rehearsal on Wednesday, Mrs. Deacon helped her and Brandi zip the two halves of their costume together. "Okay in there?" Mrs. Deacon asked.

Her voice sounded muffled to Tonya. "I guess," she answered. She couldn't see. All she could do was follow Brandi around. When Mrs. Deacon finally unzipped them, Tonya said, "Whew! Thanks, Mrs. D. It was getting hot in there." Climbing out of the costume, she saw her dad waiting. "Bye, ya'll. Gotta go."

Driving home, her dad asked, "Who was the other girl in the costume?"

Tonya replied, "That's Brandi. She's pretty and popular, but she's not very nice to people. I wouldn't want to follow her around in real life, like other kids do."

Sometimes it's tempting to follow people who don't set a good example. But you don't have to do that to have friends! If you live according to God's rules, some people will follow *you*. They'll copy your example. You can lead others toward righteousness if you obey God instead of giving in to peer pressure..

WORDS TO TREASURE

Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong.

—Exodus 23:2

QUESTIONS

1. Who is going to have an easier time handling negative peer pressure: someone who has no clear sense of right and wrong, or someone who knows God's rules and is determined to live by them? Why?
2. Which of these two people is going to have a better chance of being a leader who puts positive peer pressure on his or her friends and classmates and steers them toward doing what is right? Why?
3. Which of these two people is going to be happier and have more self-esteem? Which of them has the best chance of living a successful life? Why is that?
4. What should you do if you've been hanging around with the wrong crowd, letting them pressure you into wrong attitudes and behaviors? What would make it easier for you to change your ways and start living the way God wants you to live?

Answer: Stop hanging around with those kids and find some friends who know and follow God's rules. This is easier said than done, but it is possible—and it's worth doing!

5. Besides setting a good example through your words and actions, what else can you do to influence other kids to stop doing wrong and start doing right?

Answers: Probably the best thing you can do is pray for them. You can also look for opportunities to share with them what the Bible says about living the way God wants people to live.

Consider spending some time playing a game or doing an exercise to help children memorize the "Words to Treasure" Scripture verse.