

Special points of interest:

> Positive Perspectives  
on Peer Pressure

# AVOIDING THE PITFALLS OF FALSE FLATTERY.

By Rick Boxx

Many years ago, I worked for a person that was a master in flattery. At first, it felt good to receive his words of praise, but I soon realized that what he said in public was often very different from what he said in private. Before long I found myself doubting *everything* he said.

In this age when self-esteem is often viewed as being of utmost importance, flattery has become confused with genuine encouragement. The American Heritage Dictionary defines flattery as "insincere praise." Legitimate praise is encouraging and uplifting, while false praise deceives people.

In the Bible's Old Testament, Proverbs 26:28 says "A lying tongue hates those it hurts, and a flattering mouth works ruin." Encouraging words produce lead-

ers and inspire followers, but flattery destroys confidence and demeans the recipient. It also hurts the flatterer by destroying his or her credibility and integrity.

Studies have shown that the great majority of people have a need to hear words of affirmation and expressions of encouragement – even when their outward behavior might seem to indicate otherwise. But there is a difference between recognizing this need – and seeking to meet it with honesty, and attempting to take advantage of this need through flattering but misleading statements. Flattery may sound good at first, but eventually people will recognize it for what it is and resent it.

What has been your experience at work – is encouragement openly and honestly

expressed, or is flattery utilized, perhaps in an attempt to manipulate and persuade people to align in a certain way? Personally, do you promote flattery, perhaps to win someone's favor, or do you strive to communicate sincere encouragement? Again, the Bible speaks to this: "Put away perversity from your mouth; keep corrupt talk far from your lips" (Proverbs 4:24).

A workplace with integrity reflects truth, not falsehood. When you praise someone, search your heart – are your words sincere? Do you genuinely mean what you are saying? "Flattery may get you anywhere," as the saying goes, but what does it leave in its wake? Initially positive feelings are soon replaced by feelings of betrayal or disillusionment, the cost is obviously far too high.

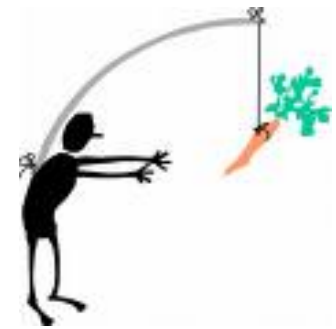


**“The key involves our motivation for what we say.”**

Poet Ralph Waldo Emerson may have lived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but his observation continues to hold true today: “As soon as honeyed words of praise are spoken for me I feel as one who lies unprotected before his enemies.” To put his statement in more contemporary terms: “Be careful. If someone says nice things to your face, they may be preparing to stab you in the back!”

ciation are not only desirable but also necessary. Our world is saturated by negativity; we need words that are positive and lift us up, bolstering our sagging spirits. But these words should be sincere and heartfelt. *“He who loves a pure heart and whose speech is gracious will have the king for his friend”* (Proverbs 22:11).

This is not to say that we should not express thoughts of affirmation or praise to others. The key involves our motivation for what we say. Commendation for a job well done and words of appre-



**POSITIVE PERSPECTIVES ON PEER PRESSURE-** Robert J. Tamasay

As I was growing up, I was often reminded me of the dangers of “peer pressure” – being influenced negatively by individuals that habitually made poor decisions and practiced unacceptable behavior. “You should not hang around with someone like that,” my parents warned me. Peer pressure, it seemed, was a bad thing.

Years later, however, I realized that peer pressure can also be a good thing. It depends on who you choose to associate with. This is true for every area of life – work, play, health, even spirituality. For instance, during my 10-year newspaper career, it was extremely helpful to spend time with people that I admired as writers, editors and

photographers. I tried to emulate some of their skills, and they encouraged me and provided helpful feedback. If you desire to build a successful career, whether in sales, management, law, accounting, education or medicine, it would be good to spend time with people that have established strong track records in that field.

## Positives on Peer Pressure Continued...

When I was learning to play tennis, it became obvious I needed to play against people that were better than I was. I could watch their techniques, and their play challenged me to raise my level of performance. While I have never truly excelled at the sport, competing with better players has motivated me to do better. This principle would apply whether your interest is in painting, golf, gardening, stamp collecting, hiking, music, cooking or some other hobby.

Recently I read an article reporting that a strong, positive social network is conducive to better

physical and emotional health. People living in isolation and loneliness, according to a study, had a nearly 400 percent higher risk of early death. Conversely, people who had the support of peers – spouses, companions, friends, confidants and coworkers – were far better equipped for overcoming severe health problems. Since we all are multi-faceted beings, tapping into the positives of peer pressure also benefits us spiritually. Over the past 30 years it has been my privilege to enjoy the friendship of many men and women that have been very devoted to living out their faith in God.

They have demonstrated that the spiritual journey is not just acquiring information and knowledge, but also learning how to integrate beliefs and values into the way we conduct our lives every minute of every day.

This is why the Bible states, *“Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another...”* (Hebrews 10:24-25). Here are some other thoughts on peer pressure from the Bible:



***“A righteous man is cautious in friendship, but the way of the wicked leads them astray”***

## Choose The Right Peers

We undoubtedly will be affected to some extent by those we associate with – therefore we need to be selective about the people that occupy our time. *“A righteous man is cautious in friendship, but the way of the wicked leads them astray”* (Proverbs 12:26).

## Choose The Qualities we want our friends to Have.

What traits are you looking for when you form a friendship? Just as paint will rub off when it is wet, the character qualities of people we associate with will rub off on us – for good or for ill. *“He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm”* (Proverbs 13:20).

## Choose the qualities you would like others to see in you

Since we are bound to be influenced by the company we keep, if we determine in advance the characteristics we want to cultivate in our lives, we can choose our friends and close associates to help us in developing those qualities. As someone has said, "It's hard to soar like an eagle when you spend your time with turkeys." *"A violent man entices his neighbor and leads him down a patch that is not good"* (Proverbs 16:29).



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