



## CHANGE YOUR MIND

### Handling Peer Pressure

Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2025

John 1:19-28

In this six part series we are looking at the beginning of John's gospel and how this can transform your mind. Today we see the beginnings of John the Baptist's public ministry, the pressure he came under and, most importantly, how he handled that pressure in a world that expected him to conform to the status quo. And this is all wrapped up in your identity – how you see yourself.

1 So let's jump into verse 19,

Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"

When you go back some 1300 years, to the time of Moses, the nation of Israel had been split into 12 tribes named after the sons of Jacob. The Levites were set apart for ministry to God. The priests led the worship in the temple and performed the daily sacrifices. The Levites, in general, then had other small roles to keep the temple running the way it should. You didn't choose to become a Levite, you were born as one and God had spoken this clearly through the law He gave to Moses.

Now when specially chosen people, who have been doing things the same way for 100s of years because God said so, **come up to you and ask "Who are you?"**, you know it's a loaded question. There is a pressure inside the question which means you had better not upset them. And they were not asking John for his name and ID!

3 Moving onto verse 20 we see John's initial response,

He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ."

John's first reply is a lot like ours when we are under pressure. Our instinctive replies under pressure tell others who or what we are not. Perhaps, in the hope this will be enough to make the pressure go away.

4 However, this bunch of priests and Levites are not taking that for an answer, and so they go again in verse 21,

And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.”  
“Are you the Prophet?” and he answered, “No.”

5 Now Elijah was promised to come and the Jews always believed this to be the physical reappearance of the prophet himself. But in Luke 1:17 and angel describes it differently to John’s father, Zacharias,

He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

6 So not THE person **but a person who operates in the same spirit and power of Elijah**, who in the end was a lone figure speaking truth to Israel when they did not want to hear it.

7 ‘The prophet’ is most likely a reference to the words of Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15,

“The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear,

Again John’s reply was a simple “No”.

8 However, the stakes are being raised. These priests and Levites are under pressure themselves, from the Pharisees (v24). Now God had given Moses 613 laws in the Torah. But the Pharisees decided in their earthly wisdom to add probably over 1500 additional laws to keep the original laws. **These Pharisees were a powerful but crushing influence on Jewish life at the time of Jesus.**

Now just as the pressure on John increases, he flips from just saying who he IS NOT, to saying who he IS in verse 23,

9 He said: “I am ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Make straight the way of the Lord,” ’as the prophet Isaiah said.”

Mic drop! (Enough said!)

John declares who he is according to what God has said.

Now let’s step aside briefly and think about peer pressure in your world today. People might make false accusations, tempt you to join their shady activities, join in with a little light drug-taking, have just one sip, don’t tell the boss about the problem, cover for a lying co-worker so they don’t lose their job.

10 And our hope is that there is a magic word or one-liner to make these pressures go away. **There isn't. Peer pressure, like a shadow, does not go away.** It just morphs into rejection.

Peer pressure never goes away because this world does not change.

11 So here's what you do – follow John's example, tell them who you are. **And the reason most people cave under peer pressure is because they do not know who they are.** Who you are is not a feeling, it is a fact – as stated by God.

If you are a believer today. If you have been saved by the blood of Christ. If you have been washed in the crimson flood. If you have been forgiven by the Maker of all things.

Then He says – you are alive! You are His child, you are accepted, you are adopted, you are forgiven, you are redeemed, you are no longer walking in darkness, you are no longer ruled by disobedience, you have His Spirit dwelling in you, you have been pulled out of the pit of sin, your feet have been set on a Rock and you no longer belong to you, you are His forever!

12 **Until you know who you are in Christ, you will never be certain of who you are before people.**

13 Now the pressure comes again – I told it doesn't go away. Verse 25,

And they asked him, saying, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"

Why do you do what you do? Who's authority? (we didn't say you could!). Who do you think you are? Who told you, you could that?

14 And then John with a confidence that could only come from knowing who he was said this in verses 26-27,

John answered them, saying, "I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. <sup>27</sup> It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose."

Essentially John worshipped Jesus. He declared Jesus. He spoke the truth. He spoke grace. He spoke with humility. Under the greatest pressure he looked most like Jesus. Is that you? When this world squeezes you into conformity what comes out?

15 You say it's hard because you're a people pleaser. No you're not. You're trying to gain (or keep) acceptance of others. You're trying to avoid rejection.

Peer pressure mostly hinges on acceptance – whether you will or whether you won't be accepted or rejected by certain people or groups. Peer pressure really is an issue of acceptance, but our response to peer pressure rise and falls on our sense of identity.

16 You will never be able to resist the lure of acceptance by others until you have accepted who God has said you are. **You cannot build your identity on occasional times with Jesus.** Or as Charles Spurgeon – the Prince of preachers – put it,

‘No man who merely skims the book of God can profit from it.  
We must dig and mine until we obtain the hidden treasure.’

17 And so let us urgently set in motion some decisions that will change your mind, that will be opportunities for repentance,

- As a Christian, who God says you are is not your new default setting, it is your only setting.
- When under pressure do not try to win their acceptance or friendship (James 4:4, ‘Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.’)
- When you wake up not in the mood for this world and its pressures, you need to talk with Jesus.
- Get digging in His word today. As you read, stop, meditate, pray, seek the Spirit's instruction and teaching.