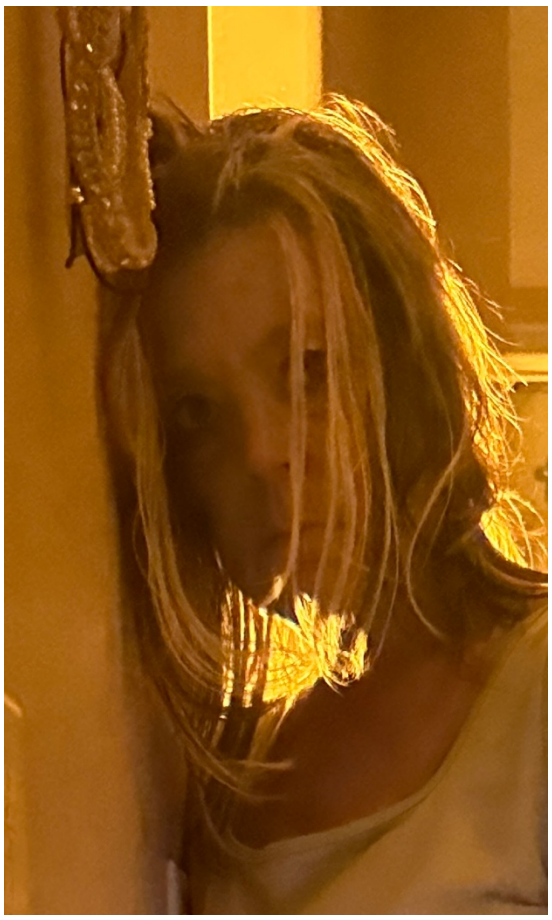
SCHOOLED: Back to Basics—Peer Pressure



My then six-year-old granddaughter came home from school one afternoon, quiet and aloof. When asked, she declined to talk about it, so we offered her an icy cold glass of chocolate milk. See, this was 'comfort food' to her. But rather than accepting excitedly, she again declined. And when asked why, she said in almost a whisper, 'I won't be having chocolate milk anymore. It made me fat, the girls in my class told me. Now I'm fat!' she wailed. I was mortified. She is 6! She is tiny! I didn't want this for her—EVER! And certainly not at 6, I thought frantically.

Gosh, I had my own love-hate relationship with **peer pressure**. Who doesn't succumb? Even a tiny, beautiful, brilliant, active 6-year-old can be caught in a lethal trap of peer pressure which can change the trajectory of a person's life. It did mine.

Peer pressure led me down many roads; none of them productive, successful, or beneficial. It danced and taunted well beyond its expiration date. It lit up the first joint for me. Peer pressure beckoned me to go drinking with the crowd. It continued to hand me the cigarettes long after I should have quit. Peer pressure stared in the mirror at its reflection and reminded me I needed *to lose weight, try harder, do better,* and for years, peer pressure whispered in my ear, *'You're fat!! You need to lose weight. You're ugly. You are boring. You're pathetic. You are a sad excuse for a human being.'* It offered to sharpen the knife when I thought I should die, and for years, it told me I would never be good enough, skinny enough, pretty enough, fancy enough, special enough. It told me I would never overcome my drug-addiction and I wasn't capable of sobriety; that I wasn't worth any effort. Peer pressure cuddled up next to me like a bestie when I was surrounded by competitive voices, and so very insecure, constantly cackling in my ear about all my downfalls, but never came around when I was hurting and needed a friend.

Praise God! He pursued me with grace not pressure. Once I got away from the crowds, the groups, the clicks…once I silenced the voices from those old friends named Peer Pressure…once I allowed the Lord to excavate my soul…once I listened instead to the voice of my Father whispering kindly inside of me…it was then that I saw clearly. It was almost as if, like a snake, I slipped out of a skin I had grown comfortable in. When belief could begin.

My Father told me I was enough. He helped me be real and I realized outward beauty is only skin-deep. He told me I was made for more, that I could overcome, that I did matter, that I do have great worth. He told me that if I was the only person on the planet, He still would have given His Son to cover my debt, to ransom me. With great love, He redeemed me, meaning He gave His only Son, Who's perfection offset my badness, Who made amends for my wrongs. Not only that, but He made up for my disgrace; He exchanged His crown for my shame; His blood bought me back from the enemy.

Peer pressure will always exist. It is age-old and is not a respecter of persons. It is more prevalent than ever with the hold social media has on everyone today. As a Christian, however, I can let my platform witness for Him, because, in Him, I am no longer a nobody. I am Child of a King!

Hebrews 12:1, 'Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us.' (NLT)