



[Matthew 10:34-39](#)

(34) "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. (35) For I have come to *"set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law";* (36) and *"a man's enemies will be those of his own household."* (37) He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. (38) And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. (39) He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.

New King James Version

Evaluate yourself against these pressures:

Peer Pressure

Teens tend to be idealistic, and this is good. They often resolve to be serious, "hit the books" and spurn the drugs, sex, smoking, drinking and "hanging out" that they have seen others doing. But if the "right" fellow or girl appears, or if the teen is recognized by the "right" clique, his desire to be accepted by them pressures him to adjust his ideals to conform to them. His ideals or convictions are merely preferences.

A minister may search the Bible for [truth](#) and find something interesting that he believes and resolves to do and teach. When he tells his fellow ministers about what he has found, they may say to him, "I don't say you're wrong in this, but don't you think you should tone it down a bit? Make it less offensive, and then maybe we can cooperate with you and work on some of your objectives."

At first he may strongly defend his belief, but little by little, as he sees the reaction of his peers, he may begin to bend. He believes it and resolves to do it, but if he changes, his belief is a preference.

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If the Word of [God](#) tells us to change something, we must change it! But we must *be very careful* about things previously proved from God's Word, believed, put into practice and then changed when some form of pressure is brought to bear!

Family Pressure

This is perhaps the strongest pressure. When [Jesus](#) advises His disciples about counting the cost of commitment to Him, every person He mentions is a family member. "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple" ([Luke 14:26](#)).

Usually no one can motivate you like a deeply loved mate. A husband may resolve to commit himself to a strong belief, but on telling his wife, she replies, "Please don't, honey. Do you realize what this will do to us and our family?" His resolve begins to melt because he knows he will feel responsible if, because of his belief, he inflicts discomfort or pain on an innocent bystander.

Fear of Lawsuits

Living in perhaps the most litigious society ever on the face of the earth, we are aware of the expense and hassle of going to court, even for the innocent. We may say, "I'm all for this, but I'm not going to get sued over it! You can't ask me to be sued—that's going too far! The news media will make me out to be a villain. They'll publicly hang me! At the very least I'll lose my hard-earned reputation, maybe my job and all my property because of attorney and court costs." This daunting pressure causes many to change their beliefs.

Jail

You may have never really been in a jail, but they are not pleasant places. Most prisoners want to get out as quickly as they can. In fact, some will risk life and limb to escape, knowing they will probably be unsuccessful. If they do make it out, they will most likely be apprehended and returned to "serve" even longer sentences. Jail is very damaging to a person's liberty and reputation.

Most people who go to jails never get past the visitor's area. I have been into the deepest bowels of several maximum security prisons to visit violent inmates on death row. They are horrible places.

In contemplating what it would be like to be in prison, remember that virtually every

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move an inmate makes is programmed by his captors. You would be isolated from your dearest family members and friends. You are told when to get up, when to eat, when to exercise, when you can read, watch TV, bathe or shower, and occasionally even when you can talk, go to the bathroom or sleep.

Additionally, the people around you have made a living of not playing by the rules. You would be stuck on their turf. Some are quite violent. It is a crazy, frightening environment for one accustomed to the comforts and control of home.

Would you really be willing to go to jail for your [faith](#)? Even when no one seems to understand why you would do such a thing? Would the pressure of facing jail make you change your beliefs? If so, your beliefs are preferences.

Maybe some of you men are saying to yourself, "Yes, I'd go to jail." But would you be willing to stand by and watch your wife go to jail? Some have faced that. Would you then pressure her to change her mind?

Do your beliefs mean so much to you that both you and your wife would go to jail, knowing your children would be taken by the state and raised by foster parents you do not even know?

The Pressure of Death

This final test is obvious, yet some have learned through experience that there is a fate worse than death. When a person's resolve over a belief fails, his guilt can be crushing. [Luke 22:34](#), 59-62 shows Peter in such a circumstance.

Do you see the common factor in these? ***What does your belief mean to YOU?*** What are you willing to sacrifice in exercising your belief? If you feel you should do something but have the right not to do it, it is merely a preference.

A belief that is ***God-ordered*** is a conviction. It is not merely a matter of resolve or dedication, but a matter of believing with all our heart that God requires it of us. If we hold our beliefs as God-ordered, we will withstand all the above tests.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:
[**Are Your Beliefs Preferences or Convictions?**](#)

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