

What About ... Bullying

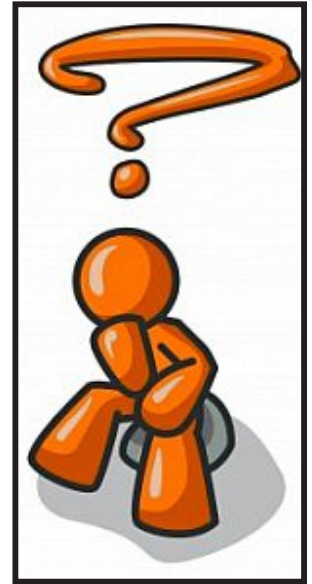
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Bullying is the act of intentionally harming others, through harassment, assault, or manipulation, which results in the victim feeling dejected, depressed, or fearful. According to “Facts for Families” publications: “Surveys indicate that as many as half of all children are bullied at some time during their school years, and at least 10% are bullied on a regular basis.”

Jesus said: *You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also (Matthew 5:38-41). But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you (Luke 6:27-28).*

We can assume that the application of these passages will be demonstrated for us in the life of Christ and the apostles.

- When the Pharisees attacked (Matthew 12:1-8; Luke 6:1-11), Jesus defended with Scripture (Matthew 12:7-8; Hosea 6:6). So Jesus verbally attacked the bullies, not for self-defense or revenge or justice, but to make a case for the truth.
- In Matthew 23, Jesus attacked the Pharisees, who were bullying everyone they could. Jesus used what some have called the roughest language ever recorded in all literature. Some of what He said includes: *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel*



around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves (verse 15) ... You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell (verse 33)? Jesus was not a passive victim. He was a target of bullying,

but not passively compliant.

- In Acts 4, the authorities told Peter and John (to put it in bullying terms): “Keep your mouth shut or we are going to beat up on you.” Peter responded with one of the classic statements of civil disobedience. *Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.* Also, Peter and John (and the early church) were in this together. Bullying is less likely, and less effective, when we have a network of friends.
- Paul continually defended himself against bullies. He did not use physical force. Physically, he turned the other cheek (being beaten, imprisoned, etc.). But that did not mean he stood by silently. He defended himself with reason, facts, sarcasm, and caused confusion and controversy among his would-be bullies.
- In 3 John 9-11, John did two things in response to the bullying of his friend Gaius: (1) He called attention to the actions of the bully and (2) he encouraged his friend Gaius for doing the right thing.

Therefore we can conclude:

1. **Don't respond to a bully physically.** Physically: *turn the other cheek.*
2. **Before you respond to a bully, be sure you are morally right and he or she is morally wrong.**
3. **If you are being bullied, talk about it.** It is not gossip. David wrote Psalms about it so everyone in Israel could read about it. The Apostle John said: *I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words (3 John 9).* Not talking about it is a form of running away.
4. **Help someone being bullied, but don't set up a retaliation situation.** *Turn the other cheek* is in the context of not seeking revenge or justice. Stand up for the truth, not to get even.
5. **Take charge of your own life.** For David, it was leading a renegade army. For Peter, it was starting the church. For Paul, it was bringing the Gospel to the Gentiles. Boldly pursue Godly objectives with a purpose (Proverbs 28:1; Philippians 4:8-9; Romans 14:8).
6. **Attack bullies forcefully.** Be forward, aggressive, with an in-your-face attack on bullies. Be sure of your facts, and be sure you are right. Then take those verbally, forcefully, and publicly to the bully.
7. **Resist bullies with a network of friends.** David had a band of mighty men. When Peter was arrested in Jerusalem, he had a network of friends supporting him and praying for him. When Diotrophes bullied Gaius, Gaius' friend, the Apostle John, wrote letters defending Gaius.