

BULLYING

& the Bible

SIX LESSONS & DISCUSSIONS ABOUT BULLYING BEHAVIOR FOR TWEENERS AND TEENS (AGES 10-16)

Introduction

So much material is coming forth today about how to handle bullying. Everyone wants to help out! But the road to solving children's bullying problems will be a long one, full of twists and turns. Kids are getting different messages from different authorities. Schools are leery of teaching assertive behavior for fear it will turn to violence, and most cannot talk about God being the Great Protector. Private psychologists and even pastors, however, are becoming aware that assertive behavior is a key preventative to victimization. And because much of the material is new, it will change from year to year, depending on what worked and didn't work.

God never changes

We feel that a Biblical foundation on bullying will be a strong foundation. Psychology findings change, electronics has changed the nature of friendships, and ways to bully or be bullied have increased. Two things that don't change are (a) God's word, and (b) human nature, which hasn't changed an iota since Biblical times. God's word speaks loudly and clearly on the subject of bullying, and the stories are relevant to cyber-bullying, school yard bullying, and neighborhood bullying. Kids will feel a connection to the superheroes of God's word, watching how their situations apply to today.

Lessons Included:

- 1. Joseph**
- 2. Moses**
- 3. David**
- 4. Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego**
- 5. The Adulterous Woman**
- 6. Jesus**

Teaching about bullying to ‘tweeners and teens

One of the earmarks of becoming a ‘tweener (ages 10-13) is the process of distancing oneself from parents and authorities, with a greater attachment developing on peers. The age is fraught with anxiety in parents as they realize that their ‘tweeners are actually more willing to learn about acceptable behavior from friends than from parents. This passage, sometimes known by psychologists as “detachment,” carries on through high school years. We are putting older kids’ mindsets to their full use!

Rather than wrestle with what kids naturally want to do, we have designed discussions wherein they will be learning from each other with just a bit of guidance from the teacher. While there is little to teach in these lessons, the job of the teacher will be to facilitate, to guide where the conversation is going.

Our definition of bullying

Due to government web sites, there is some meeting of the minds on the definition of bullying. We have referred to them, and for the purpose of these lessons have come up with the following definition that includes a spiritual element:

Bullying: Negative verbal or physical behavior that is done (a) directly to a person or person’s property, (b) with the conscious intention of either upsetting the person or manipulating the person’s behavior, which (c) God would not approve of.

A person’s property would include their social media pages and what appears in a person’s phone as a text or voice message.

Some national definitions encompass exclusive actions such as shunning or not including a student in social groups or school activities. We don’t contain exclusion in our bullying definition, as the vast majority of exclusion has nothing to do with power, manipulation or meanness. Exclusion is often a matter of personal taste or even territoriality, which is selfish but not aggressive.

Many definitions currently include the “love of power” as a bullying criterion. But some psychologists are already starting to object, noting that certain types of bullies do not see themselves as powerful but are trying inappropriately to feel less impotent; others do not realize they are bullying and may feel that they are “righting wrongs” or simply “getting even.” Regardless, this definition will suffice for our lesson purposes.

What we hope kids learn

Each of the lessons we have designed focuses in on one Bible character who experienced bullying and one theme that is often present in bullying situations of today. Your students will be amazed to see how “some things never change!” Bullies in the Bible are very similar to what kids often see or even face down in school. The lessons will help kids

- **recognize many of the emotions and behaviors that lead up to bullying, giving them a chance to nip things in the bud;**
- **recognize bullying tendencies, both in others and in themselves**
- **use Biblical guidelines and the latest advice from professionals in handling bullying situations**

Easy format! No materials required!

One great thing about our lessons is that they don't have to be presented in order. They also can be used sporadically, in the absence of a teacher or between lesson series. However, teachers who want to use all six in a series will find that they flow nicely, one into the next, with the same format used in each.

Another easy advantage is that there are no materials lists or materials required. Because these lessons are based on discussions, you can relax during your prep time.

How each lesson is set up

Our lessons will encompass an hour's time. Each is broken down into four parts:

- **Lesson Capsule:** The intro will give the teacher an at-a-glance capsule of what the lesson will cover and what students should learn.
- **Top of the Lesson Attention Getter: (10 seconds)** Repetition helps kids learn. Ask everyone to repeat together the definition of bullying, which will be included in each lesson
- **Intro Material Presented by the Teacher: (3-10 minutes.)** This introduces the bullying theme and the scripture reading for students, showing them how an ancient Biblical story is very relevant to today. Some scripture readings are longer than others, depending on the length of the story in the Bible. For shorter stories, there will be a longer intro to be read, giving students about the same amount of time to gear up for their discussions
- **Scripture Reading: (3-10 minutes)** Students can break out into small groups at this point, or if your class is small, involve students by having them read the scripture aloud. Because students do so much aloud reading in school (and it sometimes doesn't thrill them), you can make the scripture reading more intriguing by finding a YouTube cartoon that tells the story, or, if you are a

very animated teacher, you can “story tell” using modern language, making it sound like it happened yesterday.

- **Discussion Question: (40 minutes)** The discussion is the meat of the lesson, which will get kids thinking and applying ancient stories to situations they’ve either seen or been involved with concerning bullying. The objective of the teacher will be to keep the discussion moving at a good pace and now allow for too much digression. We suggest that you arrange it so that students take turns, going around the table, answering questions. If someone is stumped, move to the next person.

Also to help, we’ve used the following prompts:

Short-Answer Questions Keep Students’ Thinking on Track: Most of our questions are designed for short, yet thoughtful answers. Answers may be two or three words long, yet they may encourage students to think in a different direction than they are used to. The questions are meant to be “little leaps” to rearrange thinking. Students should be encouraged to spend no more than a couple minutes on each.

Questions requesting examples from students’ lives will make Bible stories relevant: Other questions require students to give examples from their own lives of things that have happened. Try to have one student only answer a question like this. If he or she does not have an example from his own life, then call on the next student.

This Week in Prayer: 5 minutes. To reinforce what is learned, we are providing take-home assignments for kids to do during their quiet time. While not all students are given to quiet time, it is good preparation for their walk as Christian adults, encouraging them to keep in touch with Jesus every day. You should encapsulate or have a student read through the material for This Week in Prayer before closing and ask if there are any questions.

Our Vision for Kids Concerning Bullying

We want kids to understand a little better the behavior of bullying as well as the behaviors leading up to it. We want kids to understand that they all have the susceptibility to behave in these ways themselves! Therefore they should forgive others and be merciful in judgment.

When facing down bullies, we want our kids to be confident—not that they could win a battle with a bully, but that their God is faithful and just and helpful to those who call upon him.

We are confident these lessons will help...enjoy the time and great discussion with your students!

Target #1: Joseph

Top of the Lesson Attention Getter

Ask everyone to repeat together the definition of bullying we are using. (Write it down for them to read if you're not using the lessons in order. If you are, they will get better as the weeks progress!)

BULLY: Joseph's big brothers

THEME:

Recognizing JEALOUSY can prevent bitter feelings, which can lead to bullying.

LESSON

CAPSULE: This lesson on bullying that spawns from jealousy is a bit challenging, because it asks students to recognize jealousy in their own hearts and even bullying potential inside of themselves. Encourage them with the fact that God doesn't want to condemn—he just wants to help clean up!

Bullying: Negative verbal or physical behavior that is done (a) directly to a person or person's property, (b) with the conscious intention of either upsetting the person or manipulating the person's behavior, which (c) God would not approve of.

Introduction *(to be read before scripture verse)*

Much of bullying starts at home with older sisters and brothers picking on a younger one. Today's world sees a lot of divorce and remarriage with children involved. Because of blended families and some of the insecure emotions feeding in from step-sibs and half-sibs, rivalries can flair up easily.

With the early descendants of Father Abraham that we're looking at today, blended family strife was due to one man having several wives. Don't think these half sibs couldn't be just as jealous and inspired to bully as some of today's kids. In fact, the older brothers of Joseph get the Bad Guy Bullying Award of History.

Here's something that may surprise you: **Bullies generally do not view their behavior as bullying.** And often, like Joseph's sibs, they think they are "evening the score" or "seizing back power that they rightfully deserve." They, and bullies of today, may be able to see and even admit to some bad behavior on their own parts, but if jealousy is at the root, bullying will feel strangely like justice. This is a very deceiving feeling that we can learn to recognize and, therefore, not give in to!

Let's look at Joseph's story and then see if we can't pick out some of our own behaviors that came to the surface in this story.

Scripture: Genesis 37

² Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them.

³ Now the father, Jacob, loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made an ornate robe for him. ⁴ When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.

⁵ Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. ⁶ He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: ⁷ We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it."

⁸ His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.

⁹ Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."

¹⁰ When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, "What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?" ¹¹ His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

JOSEPH SOLD BY HIS BROTHERS

¹² Now his brothers had gone to graze their father's flocks, ¹³ and Father Jacob said to Joseph, "As you know, your brothers are grazing the flocks. Come, I am going to send you to them."

So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan.

¹⁸ But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him.

¹⁹ "Here comes that dreamer!" they said to each other. ²⁰ "Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams."

²¹ When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue him from their hands. "Let's not take his life," he said. ²² "Don't shed any blood. Throw him into this cistern here in the wilderness, but don't lay a hand on him." Reuben said this to rescue him from them and take him back to his father.

So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the ornate robe he was wearing— ²⁴ and they took him and threw him into the cistern. The cistern was empty; there was no water in it.

²⁵ As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt.

²⁶ Judah said to his brothers, “What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? ²⁷ Come, let’s sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood.” His brothers agreed.

²⁸ So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.

²⁹ When Reuben returned to the cistern and saw that Joseph was not there, he tore his clothes.

³⁰ He went back to his brothers and said, “The boy isn’t there! Where can I turn now?”

³¹ Then they got Joseph’s robe, slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. ³² They took the ornate robe back to their father and said, “We found this. Examine it to see whether it is your son’s robe.”

³³ He recognized it and said, “It is my son’s robe! Some ferocious animal has devoured him. Joseph has surely been torn to pieces.”

³⁴ Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son many days. ³⁵ All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. “No,” he said, “I will continue to mourn until I join my son in the grave.” So his father wept for him.

³⁶ Meanwhile, the Midianites sold Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh’s officials, the captain of the guard.

Discussion

Identifying Joseph's brother's feelings

1. What were Joseph's brothers jealous of? Was it a gift from one parent (the coat) or was it something bigger? (verses 3-4) Why did Joseph's dreams make his brothers feel insecure? (see verses 5-8)

Identifying our own feelings

You might think that what happened to Joseph could not happen today because people were "such barbarians" back then or something. Actually, the family was extremely wealthy and the sons well educated for that era. (Look at how quickly they recognized symbolism in verses 7-8 and 10).

We've all felt jealousy at times. Like Joseph's brothers, we may have even wished a sibling/step sibling / half sibling had never been born or lived somewhere else! You may not have siblings, or if you do, you may not experience sibling rivalry. If you don't, either think of a close friend or cousin, or help others in your group sort out their feelings about their siblings:

2. Have you ever felt that your parents treated one of your siblings in a more privileged way? If so, which sibling? How did it make you feel?
3. Did you ever want to get even with that sibling? If so, what did you do?

LOOKUP: James 3:15

LOOKUP: Proverbs 27:4

Identify bullying that starts with jealousy

4. There are boys and girls in school who are, plain and simple, just naturally beautiful. Do people treat them any differently? If so, how? What are people likely to say about them when they're not listening? Something bad or something good?
5. Have you ever seen someone in school who comes from a very wealthy family and they live in a nice house...maybe with a pool or boats or things most families can't afford? What are people likely to say about a person like this when he or she isn't listening?

Both gossiping and bullying are attempts to "take away" from someone something that God either gave as a gift or allowed a person to have. If a kid is wealthy, naturally beautiful, or

talented, other kids can feel some drive to make sure that he can't enjoy it. Generally, words like "snob," and "stuck up" are used liberally.

6. Have you ever heard those words applied to anyone in your school? Do you *really* think it's true? If not, why not?

LOOKUP: Exodus 20:17

Gossiping and bullying

7. Oftentimes, jealousy will not turn into bullying; it will simply remain at the gossip stages. What are some differences between gossiping and bullying? How are gossiping and bullying alike?

LOOKUP: Proverbs 16:28

8. Why is it often hard for kids to be happy for a child who has something they don't?

A bullying test

9. Have you ever found yourself saying mean things fairly consistently to a classmate or sibling because they deserved it? If so, what did the person do to deserve it?

10. To check yourself, ask what the person did

LOOKUP: Romans 2:1

a) directly to you or to your property,

b) with the conscious intention of upsetting you or manipulating you.

Sometimes the answer is a roundabout version of "Well, he [or she] isn't doing anything intentionally or directly to me, but still..." Surprise: You might be bullying! If any feelings of jealousy were present, watch out!

Fixing the Problem: Focusing on God's design for us instead

11. God makes us all different. He also encourages us toward individual paths that will help us and others most in our world. Therefore he often gives us different experiences and different gifts.

LOOKUP: Jeremiah 29:11

12. How are you different from your siblings in your personality?

13. Why might God have given you the place in birth order that he did? How can your birth order help make you the person he intends you to be?

This Week in Prayer

This list will help release you from any feelings of jealousy, and it will also help kids who have been victims of jealousy, gossip and bullying! Keep it and use it during prayer time:

- 1. Be honest. Put down the names of anyone for whom you have felt jealous. It's pretty tough, but guess what? *Pray for these people.* Watch your heart change toward them and God open his heart to YOU!**
- 2. Write down what you perceive to be your special gifts from God (music or sports talents, socializing talents, insight talents, academic talents, etc.)**

Pray for God to show you how he can use those gifts and talents in a big way in your future.

- 3. Write down anything you really enjoy doing as a hobby, such as reading, painting, building, caring for pets, etc.) Often we can tell some things about God's will for our lives just by the things we enjoy doing.**

Pray for God to use those gifts and talents in a big way in your future.

Pray for God's help to turn your focus from others onto yourself—and the wonderful life He has in store for you!

LOOKUP: 1 Corinthians 12:4-6

LOOKUP: Psalm 91:14-16

Target #2: Moses

BULLY: Pharaoh and his buddies in charge of Egypt

THEME: FEAR attracts bullying behavior;
ASSERTIVE ENERGY repels it.

LESSON CAPSULE: Authorities are beginning to realize that bullying often happens to kids who do not have enough assertive energy. In this lesson on the burning bush, Moses sounds a lot like a kid who wants to take on a popular bully but is afraid he won't have enough assertive energy to keep from getting devoured. Kids will get to see how faith and assertive energy are closely tied together.

Top of the Lesson Attention Getter

Ask everyone to repeat together the definition of bullying we are using. (Write it down for them to read if you're not using the lessons in order. If you are, they will get better as the weeks progress!)

Bullying: Negative verbal or physical behavior that is done (a) directly to a person or person's property, (b) with the conscious intention of either upsetting the person or manipulating the person's behavior, which (c) God would not approve of.

Introduction *(to be read before scripture verse)*

If you look on certain Christian web sites, you'll see some surprising new advice about bullying. The advice is to have "assertive" energy when being bullied. "Assertive" means "having faith instead of fear." "Assertive" does not mean "aggressive."

Truthfully, some authorities think it is a mistake to teach assertive behavior to stop bullying. That's because "assertive" and "aggressive" are often too closely linked in kids' minds. Assertive behavior can turn aggressive when we're not properly trained. Aggressive behavior means people can get injured, and it generally means we are out of God's will. As well, assertive behavior is based on faith, which is not a concept that teachers are allowed to approach in public schools.

Assertiveness begins with an attitude. The words spoken or your posture and body language--these come with the right thoughts almost automatically. The attitude is "I will not be bullied. God is bigger than this, so I am not going to be fearful when I have to stand up for myself."

Moses was definitely scared out of his mind when God first told him to take on Pharaoh. You can tell, just by the comments he's making to God in the scripture story for today about the Burning Bush.

Likewise, a Christian Sunday school teacher had a problem with girls while she was in eighth grade. She had been raised to “turn the other cheek.” However, the bullying got so bad that girls actually picked her up by the arms and legs in the school yard, to carry her out back and beat her up. A teacher who just happened to be walking to his car stopped them. But he wouldn’t be there tomorrow. The girl finally decided, “enough.”

She said to them next time, “Look. I don’t want to fight you, but I’m ready.” The biggest girl stared, as if sizing up her honesty, and when she saw the sincerity in the victim’s face, she laughed and said, “We were only joking around!” That ended her problems. The Sunday school teacher said she would have hated to fight and wasn’t sure what she would have done. But she was sure that God would have guided the situation, and that assurance gave her assertiveness.

While soft spoken, that woman was of good height and build, which may have helped her. We all have our own situations, our own gifts and our own types of bully to face down. But we all have the same God, too. What we need to know is Jesus’ words in Luke 12:6-7: “Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”

Let’s look at Moses’s story and see how we can apply to us what God is telling him.

Scripture: Exodus 3:10-15; 4:10-14

¹⁰ So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.”

¹¹ But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”

¹² And God said, “I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.”

¹³ Moses said to God, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?”

¹⁴ God said to Moses, “I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I am has sent me to you.’”

¹⁵ God also said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites, ‘The Lord, the God of your fathers —the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob —has sent me to you.’”

¹⁰ Moses said to the Lord, “Pardon your servant, Lord. I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue.”

¹¹ The Lord said to him, “Who gave human beings their mouths? Who makes them deaf or mute? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Is it not I, the Lord? ¹² Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say.”

¹³ But Moses said, “Pardon your servant, Lord. Please send someone else.”

¹⁴ Then the Lord’s anger burned against Moses...

Discussion

Identifying Moses' feelings

1. Why was Moses afraid of Pharaoh? Was it Pharaoh's wealth, or Pharaoh's power, or some combination of those two things? Was he afraid these guys could kill him?
2. "Shy" is one word historians have used to describe Moses. What are some other words that might describe him?

Identifying our own feelings

1. Is there a group in school that makes you feel shy? What are they like in your eyes?
2. Have you ever been picked on by a group in your school or neighborhood? What happened? How did it make you feel?
3. How were those kids different from you?

LOOKUP: Isaiah 41:11-13

Identify bullying that starts with jealousy

Paul Coughlin, Founder of The Protectors, the faith-based answer to adolescent bullying, said in a recent article, "Some Christians tell their children that they are being bullied because of their faith. Yet in reality, few kids are bullied due to their faith, or for that matter because they are overweight or wear glasses, which are two other popular myths. The main reason children are bullied is because they are non-assertive."

4. From today's reading, what does assertive mean? What's the difference between assertive and aggressive? How does faith play into the definitions?

Mr. Coughlin said he has given his own children permission to "return action" on any bullies who hits them first. Just the knowledge that they can hit back does something to their confidence level and how they present themselves.

LOOKUP: 2 Timothy 1:7

5. **What can this knowledge do to help? How is confidence tied to faith?**
6. **How many fights to you think this knowledge may have actually prevented in Mr. Coughlin's kids' lives?**

Identify fears and replacing them with faith

7. **Why are most "popular" crowds also considered very "powerful" crowds? How do people get the feeling of having power over others?**

The Pharaohs had learned, hundreds of years before the Burning Bush scene, that they could bully the Hebrews, the descendants of Abraham, because the Hebrews thought of themselves as weak. They had low self-esteem.

8. **How were the Hebrews like so many kids today?**

Egyptian Pharaohs drew power off the Hebrews' weaknesses for four hundred years until the Egyptians were a lot stronger and the Hebrews kept growing weaker. This is what happens when bullies continually harass you and you allow it. They take power from you. They feed their strength on the weaknesses of others. They feed off of fear.

9. **Have you ever sensed a mean person feeding off your fear? What could you do to change it?**

10. **Assertive does not mean aggressive. It does not mean passive. If passive is a zero and aggressive is a ten, assertive is halfway between. It takes practice to keep from going from zero to ten. Practice below making some assertive statements for those who may have picked on you already or for those whom you are afraid of. Write what you plan to say or what you would have said, if it already has happened:**

LOOKUP: Luke 12:11

This Week in Prayer

This list will help release you from any feelings of powerlessness and replace those feelings with assertiveness.

- 1. Be honest. Put down the first names of anyone who has made you feel powerless or weak. This next thing is pretty tough, but it's a blessing: *Understand that God loves you both.* Regardless of the situation, how does your equality in God's eyes take the edge off your fears?**
- 2. Look back on the list you made last week of your special gifts from God (music or sports talents, socializing talents, insight talents, academic talents, etc.) Thank God for them again and ask him to help you build your self-esteem and therefore your assertiveness energy.**
- 3. Pray again for God to show you how he can use those gifts and talents in a big way in your future.**
- 4. Look back again on your list of anything you really enjoy doing as a hobby, such as reading, painting, building, caring for pets, etc.)**
- 5. Pray again for God to use those gifts and talents in a big way in your future. How does relying on God like this make you stronger?**
- 6. Write down what you perceive to be your special gifts from God (music or sports talents, socializing talents, insight talents, academic talents, etc.)**

Pray for God to give you assertiveness energy so that you can get to your own Promised Land, just like the Hebrews, and live at peace with yourself and others!

LOOKUP: 1 Corinthians 12:4-6

LOOKUP: Psalm 91:14-16

Target #3: David

BULLY: Goliath

THEME: FEAR eats FAITH AND ASSERTIVE ENERGY, both of which are needed to stop bullying.

LESSON CAPSULE:
Everyone loves the story of David and Goliath, because we all have “Goliaths” in our lives. Sometimes “our Goliath” is an illness or a personality weakness we have to do battle with. But often for school-kids, it is a bigger, louder, stronger kid—a power bully. This study of David’s means of defeat will enable kids to apply his tactics to their own lives. They’ll also receive a great lesson in talking to God about important things like this.

Top of the Lesson Attention Getter

Ask everyone to repeat together the definition of bullying we are using. (Write it down for them to read if you’re not using the lessons in order. If you are, they will get better as the weeks progress!)

Bullying: Negative verbal or physical behavior that is done (a) directly to a person or person’s property, (b) with the conscious intention of either upsetting the person or manipulating the person’s behavior, which (c) God would not approve of.

Introduction *(to be read before scripture verse)*

When we think of bullies in the Bible, probably the first one to come to mind would be Goliath, whom David took down as a teenager. We remember Goliath’s big mouth, his terrifying threats, and his massive stature. Being approximately nine feet tall, Goliath may have been from a subculture that no longer exists but where people grew bigger than others. He may also have had the hormone imbalance which is known today as “giantism,” meaning he didn’t stop growing when others did. The point is that he was terrifying to look at, just like some of the bigger bullies today.

The result is what we imagine when we think of the traditional bully: Some loud, huge person making threats at smaller, weaker people. King David could have easily been slaughtered by Goliath, except for one thing: He had had a lot of opportunities, while being a lonely shepherd, to walk along and think of the bigness of God and the importance of the God of Israel. How do thoughts help defeat a bully? Let’s see:

He felt one thing that the other Israelis failed to think about. He knew that God had chosen the people of Israel to be his chosen people—or his “best-friends crowd”—on planet Earth. Just like you would feel if someone were hurling insults at your friend, David felt defensive when Goliath was hurling insults at God’s best friends. He knew God would not fail him in standing up for his best friends.

David was not scared of Goliath's size because he knew God was far bigger. He knew that if he showed no fear toward the bully that was tormenting God's people, then God would bring some good things to pass. God even fixed it so that David would not have to get into a brawl with Goliath. David didn't even come close enough to touch him. Basically all he did was not show fear, which bullies like Goliath feed off of, and he used the simple talents that he knew God had given him personally.

Let's look at the story and be thinking of some of our own gifts and talents, which we can put to use in our assertive energy.

Scripture: I Samuel 17:2-55

² Saul and the Israelites assembled and camped in the Valley of Elah and drew up their battle line to meet the Philistines. ³ The Philistines occupied one hill and the Israelites another, with the valley between them.

⁴ A champion named Goliath came out of the Philistine camp. His height was six cubits and a span [about 9 ½ feet]. ⁵ He had a bronze helmet on his head and wore a coat of scale armor of bronze weighing five thousand shekels; ⁶ on his legs he wore bronze greaves, and a bronze javelin was slung on his back. ⁷ His spear shaft was like a weaver's rod, and its iron point weighed six hundred shekels. His shield bearer went ahead of him.

⁸ Goliath stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why do you come out and line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not the servants of Saul? Choose a man and have him come down to me. ⁹ If he is able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects; but if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us." ¹⁰ Then the Philistine said, "This day I defy the armies of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other." ¹¹ On hearing the Philistine's words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified.

¹² Now David was the son of an Ephrathite named Jesse, who was from Bethlehem in Judah. Jesse had eight sons, and in Saul's time he was very old. ¹³ Jesse's three oldest sons had followed Saul to the war. ¹⁴ David was the youngest. The three oldest followed Saul, ¹⁵ but David went back and forth from Saul to tend his father's sheep at Bethlehem.

¹⁶ For forty days the Philistine came forward every morning and evening and took his stand.

¹⁷ Now Jesse said to his son David, "Take this ephah of roasted grain and these ten loaves of bread for your brothers and hurry to their camp. ¹⁸ Take along these ten cheeses to the commander of their unit. See how your brothers are and bring back some assurance from them. ¹⁹ They are with Saul and all the men of Israel in the Valley of Elah, fighting against the Philistines."

²⁰ Early in the morning David left the flock in the care of a shepherd, loaded up and set out, as Jesse had directed. He reached the camp as the army was going out to its battle positions, shouting the war cry. ²¹ Israel and the Philistines were drawing up their lines facing each other. ²² David left his things with the keeper of supplies, ran to the battle lines and asked his brothers how they were. ²³ As he was talking with them, Goliath, the Philistine champion from Gath, stepped out from his lines and shouted his usual defiance, and David heard it. ²⁴ Whenever the Israelites saw the man, they all fled from him in great fear.

25 Now the Israelites had been saying, “Do you see how this man keeps coming out? He comes out to defy Israel. The king will give great wealth to the man who kills him. He will also give him his daughter in marriage and will exempt his family from taxes in Israel.”

26 David asked the men standing near him, “What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?”

27 They repeated to him what they had been saying and told him, “This is what will be done for the man who kills him.”

28 When Eliab, David’s oldest brother, heard him speaking with the men, he burned with anger at him and asked, “Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the wilderness? I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle.”

29 “Now what have I done?” said David. “Can’t I even speak?” **30** He then turned away to someone else and brought up the same matter, and the men answered him as before. **31** What David said was overheard and reported to Saul, and Saul sent for him.

32 David said to Saul, “Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him.”

33 Saul replied, “You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a young man, and he has been a warrior from his youth.”

34 But David said to Saul, “Your servant has been keeping his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, **35** I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. **36** Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. **37** The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.”

Saul said to David, “Go, and the Lord be with you.”

38 Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. **39** David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them.

“I cannot go in these,” he said to Saul, “because I am not used to them.” So he took them off. **40** Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd’s bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.

⁴¹ Meanwhile, the Philistine, with his shield bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David. ⁴² He looked David over and saw that he was little more than a boy, glowing with health and handsome, and he despised him. ⁴³ He said to David, “Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?” And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. ⁴⁴ “Come here,” he said, “and I’ll give your flesh to the birds and the wild animals!”

⁴⁵ David said to the Philistine, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. ⁴⁶ This day the Lord will deliver you into my hands, and I’ll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. ⁴⁷ All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord’s, and he will give all of you into our hands.”

⁴⁸ As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. ⁴⁹ Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground.

⁵⁰ So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand he struck down the Philistine and killed him.

⁵¹ David ran and stood over him. He took hold of the Philistine’s sword and drew it from the sheath. After he killed him, he cut off his head with the sword.

When the Philistines saw that their hero was dead, they turned and ran. ⁵² Then the men of Israel and Judah surged forward with a shout and pursued the Philistines to the entrance of Gath and to the gates of Ekron. Their dead were strewn along the Shaaraim road to Gath and Ekron. ⁵³ When the Israelites returned from chasing the Philistines, they plundered their camp.

⁵⁴ David took the Philistine’s head and brought it to Jerusalem; he put the Philistine’s weapons in his own tent.

⁵⁵ As Saul watched David going out to meet the Philistine, he said to Abner, commander of the army, “Abner, whose son is that young man?”

Abner replied, “As surely as you live, Your Majesty, I don’t know.”

Discussion

Identifying David's feelings

David loved God a lot. Probably the biggest secret to a successful life is understanding how passionately God loves us and loving Him back. David went on to be King of Israel, and God called him "A man after My own heart." His love for God is something we should all work toward, as there is no meaning in life outside of this.

1. **How do you think David got to know God so well? Beyond listening to stories about Him and studying the scriptures, what else did David have lots of time to do while tending sheep?**
2. **David was less afraid of Goliath than the soldiers were, even though he was smaller and younger. He compared killing Goliath to something he had already done, some experiences he already had. What was it? (verse 34-37)**
3. **When David was attacked by the lion and the bear that were after his father's sheep, do you think he was scared? Why did he seem less scared of Goliath?**

Identifying our own feelings

4. **Have you ever been threatened by a big, loud or strong person? If so, what happened (don't use names if you are talking in a group). How did it leave you feeling?**
5. **Have you ever loved a friend or sibling so much that when somebody picked on them, you automatically felt horrible? If so, what happened (again try not to use names). What did you end up doing?**
6. **Have you ever seen a bully threaten or attack someone you didn't know all that well or weren't related to? How is that experience different than being attacked personally or having a loved one attacked?**
7. **If you didn't try to help the victim, what were you afraid of? If you did try to help the person, what happened?**

LOOKUP: Matthew 24:45

LOOKUP: John 15:12-13

Fixing the Problem

- 8. If we can come to love God as much as King David did, we will find incredible power unleashed in our lives. What prevents a lot of people from loving God that much?**

Sometimes people are afraid to draw close to God because they are afraid he will “ruin their fun.” A girl may be afraid God will tell her not to go out with a boy she likes, or a boy might be afraid God would tell him not to watch his favorite TV shows, etc.

- 9. Proverbs 29:18 states, “Without a vision, the people perish.” What does that mean? How does it relate to things you want now, if you’re not giving much thought to your future?**
- 10. Who do you think is happiest: The girl in daily training with a strong desire to be an Olympic champion in four years, or the girl who just got a new outfit at the mall? Why? Who has the best shot at long-term happiness based how they spent today?**
- 11. What’s your vision for your own future? How can God help you get there? How can a “vision” for your life help you feel less bad about somebody who is bullying you?**

LOOKUP: Psalm 37:4

Replacing fears with faith

12. David loved God. Obviously, you can't love someone you don't know very well. How often do you read, watch, or listen to stories about God's power and His concern for you? How often do you talk to Him? How often do you listen for His voice when you are praying?
13. What are some steps you can take to know God better? What is likely to happen in your life if you take those steps?
14. It is said that David's greatest tools in taking down Goliath were faith over fear, combined with his personal talents as a protector of sheep. What personal talents do you have which, when combined with faith over fear, could silence a bully? (Are you...funny, loud, determined, persistent, nice, diplomatic, friendly, brutally honest...? Do you take karate; are you very tall; do you have a scary glare...? This may take some thought, but everybody has some communication talents.)
15. People get bullied all the time. Why doesn't God just automatically stop it? What valuable lessons can we learn from bad experiences? Where would David be if Goliath hadn't antagonized the soldiers?

LOOKUP: Matthew 13:54-58

LOOKUP: Proverbs 29:25

This Week in Prayer

If we lack the faith to believe in God's power, He doesn't hold that against us; he wants to help straighten it out, that's all. Therefore he is very glad when you bring your concerns to him.

This week, if you're having trust issues, honestly talk to God about why you might not trust him for things, whether it's protection against a bully or something else. Some people find it helps to make a list and then present God with the list. If you're honestly looking to increase your faith, you will not offend him by being a list like this before him!

Write down any reasons you may have for not trusting him—anything from the possibility of him ruining your fun to the fact that you've been bullied before. Just spill it out in writing:

LOOKUP: Psalm 4:8

LOOKUP: 2 Timothy 1:7

Next, listen for his voice. Be patient. And what's important in bullying is also ironically important in faith: Do not be afraid. As Apostle Paul says in Hebrews 4:16, "So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most." Write down any answers you feel you may have gotten from God:

LOOKUP: Psalm 91:7-10

LOOKUP: Jeremiah 29:11

- 1. Be honest. Put down the first names of anyone who has made you feel powerless or weak. This next thing is pretty tough, but it's a blessing: *Understand that God loves you both.* Regardless of the situation, how does your equality in God's eyes take the edge off your fears?**
- 2. Look back on the list you made last week of your special gifts from God (music or sports talents, socializing talents, insight talents, academic talents, etc.) Thank God for them again and ask him to help you build your self-esteem and therefore your assertiveness energy.**
- 3. Pray again for God to show you how he can use those gifts and talents in a big way in your future.**

4. **Look back again on your list of anything you really enjoy doing as a hobby, such as reading, painting, building, caring for pets, etc.)**
5. **Pray again for God to use those gifts and talents in a big way in your future. How does relying on God like this make you stronger?**
6. **Write down what you perceive to be your special gifts from God (music or sports talents, socializing talents, insight talents, academic talents, etc.)**

Pray for God to give you assertiveness energy so that you can get to your own Promised Land, just like the Hebrews, and live at peace with yourself and others!

LOOKUP: 1 Corinthians 12:4-6

LOOKUP: Psalm 91:14-16

Target #4: Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego

BULLY:

Nebuchadnezzar

THEME: IF YOUR SAFETY IS SEVERELY THREATENED, you need to tell an authority.

LESSON

CAPSULE: We'll start off with what some consider the most important lessons when facing bullying: Getting help from authority. A lot of kids don't understand how adults are now trained to help...or how to help adults help them. This lesson of three guys who had their lives threatened by King Nebuchadnezzar will show both.

Top of the Lesson Attention Getter

Ask everyone to repeat together the definition of bullying we are using. (Write it down for them to read if you're not using the lessons in order. If you are, they will get better as the weeks progress!)

Bullying: Negative verbal or physical behavior that is done (a) directly to a person or person's property, (b) with the conscious intention of either upsetting the person or manipulating the person's behavior, which (c) God would not approve of.

Introduction *(to be read before scripture verse)*

Today, we'll be looking at three guys—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who were thrown into a hot furnace for not doing what the powerful king ordered, something they knew was wrong.

Don't be alarmed by their weird names. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego have a lot in common with kids today, who are often under total peer pressure to drink, do drugs, shoplift, become sexually involved, lie to parents, cheat on tests, etc. You can feel like you're "under heat" if a friend says, "Do this, or nobody will like you..." Or "Why do you have to be such a teacher's pet?" Or "you're so boring, nobody will hang out with you." This type of manipulative pressure can precede bullying and taunting.

The king had ordered everyone to bow down and worship an idol. We live in a country where there are a thousand different beliefs, so we might not "get" how sickening this order is. It's a little like being forced to cheat on a boyfriend or girlfriend when we feel seriously in love with that person. It's a little like being forced to say horrible things about your mom or dad when you love them. Take those two things and multiply them by a hundred, and that's how sick and

disgusted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were made by this king. They refused.

Peer pressure is hard enough. Peer pressure becomes bullying when it comes with a threat that makes you feel endangered if you stand up for yourself. Bullies take lunch money, scatter school books, throw things, hurl insults, and the underlying threat is that if you do anything about it, you'll feel even "more heat." School, or anywhere there's large groups of kids, can feel like our "fiery furnace" sometimes.

You'll find when you stand up for what's right that your rewards will be phenomenal. In that huge kingdom where Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were under such pressure to conform, there were enough people to fill New York, Detroit, and Chicago. A hundred years after, probably nobody on earth remembered any of their names. Three thousand years later...every Christian in the world knows those three names, which might be weird, but hey: They will never be forgotten by mankind.

When God goes with you into your fiery furnace, you won't burn up; you'll come out as gold—something better, more useful and indestructible—with rewards that last for eternity. The biggest bullies will not touch a hair on your head.

Scripture: I Samuel 17:2-55

³ King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, sixty cubits high and six cubits wide, and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. ² He then summoned the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials to come to the dedication of the image he had set up. ³ So all the provincial officials assembled for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and they stood before it.

⁴ Then the herald loudly proclaimed, “Nations and peoples of every language, this is what you are commanded to do: ⁵ As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. ⁶ Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.”

⁷ Therefore, as soon as they heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp and all kinds of music, all the nations and peoples of every language fell down and worshiped the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

⁸ At this time some astrologers came forward and denounced the Jews. ⁹ They said to King Nebuchadnezzar... “There are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up.”

¹³ Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego... “Is it true that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? ¹⁵ Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?”

¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, “King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. ¹⁷ If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. ¹⁸ But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”

¹⁹ Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual ²⁰ and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. ²¹ So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. ²² The king’s command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, ²³ and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.

²⁴ Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, “Weren’t there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?”

They replied, “Certainly, Your Majesty.”

²⁵ He said, “Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.”

²⁶ Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, “Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!”

So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, ²⁷ and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them.

²⁸ Then Nebuchadnezzar said, “Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king’s command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. ²⁹ Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way.”

³⁰ Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

Discussion

Identifying Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego's feelings

1. Were these guys under peer pressure? If so, for what?
2. Trends change but human nature does not. Name calling was as big a trend 3,000 years ago as it is now, even if the names were different. If it were modern times, what names do you think people would have been calling these three?
3. The people bowing down to Nebuchadnezzar's idol can be compared to the powerful or even popular crowds of today. They were buddying up to the most popular person, the King. Why weren't these people asking any questions or putting up any fuss when the king put peer pressure on them? Did they realize they were being peer pressured?
4. Did you think Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego share our fears of being seriously hurt by a bully (in this case, King Nebuchadnezzar)? Why was it important to them to stand up for what's right? Did they know God would save them? (verses 17 & 18)

Identifying our own feelings

5. Have you ever felt pressured to do something you didn't want to because everyone else was doing it? If so, what was it and what happened?
6. Have you ever been picked on and just let it go, because you were afraid of the consequences if you stood up for yourself? If so, when?
7. Have you ever said something mean, threatening or insulting because you knew you could get away with it? If so, when?

LOOKUP: Luke 4:36

LOOKUP: 2 Corinthians 10:4

Fixing the Problem

- 8. Going to an authority figure is very hard for kids sometimes. However, if you feel like your health, well-being, or even your life has come under threat, you can't fool around. You need to tell a more experienced person. Try to name three authority figures you might trust, including a parent or school employee:**

Kids are quick to sense that if an authority figure intervenes, it could make the problem worse. However, many times this is a false perception. Bullies want easy targets. If they realize the support system around the victims is not going to make bullying easy, they will likely stop.

- 9. It helps, when approaching authority figures, to understand that you will be working with them, not just “telling” on a bully. You will need to provide the most helpful details in order for them to help you. Call on someone in your discussion group who has been bullied. Ask them to use the following Who/What/When/Where/Why statements to help authorities best help you:**
 - **WHO** were the bullies?
 - **WHAT** have they been doing to you? (Is the behavior ongoing? Is it deliberate and a result of someone wanting to appear more powerful than you?)
 - **WHEN** did this bullying take place? (How many times? Note the closest approximate of time/day/date with each...)
 - **WHERE** did the bullying take place (school bus, particular class, corridor, etc.)
 - **WHY** did it happen—not necessarily meaning what did you do to make the problem worse, but what can authority figures do to help you be safer? Could you go with a buddy? How could you avoid the problem area? Should the problem area have better supervision? What are some solutions you would like to see as part of this?
- 10. Sometimes, like with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, we have to go directly to God for our help. Imagine yourself taking the problem in your hands, then putting it in a basket held by Jesus. You're putting the problem in his hands. Name what you think he is willing and able to do for you:**

11. Psalm 91:4 says, “He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge.” Imagine God’s protection all around you, like the wings of a giant eagle. Or some people think of a giant plastic bubble, and they’re inside. The bubble is the Holy Spirit. Words bounce off of it instead of jabbing at you like darts. Do these images help you feel safer? If not, think of some other images that make you think of God’s protection.

LOOKUP: Psalm 36:7-9

LOOKUP: Psalm 25:1-3

This Week in Prayer

This list will help release you from any feelings of powerlessness and replace those with feelings of protection.

- 1. Kids often become targets because they stand out too much: too loud, too quiet, too insecure, too skinny, too tall. There are good ways to stand out, bad ways to stand out, and ways that we cannot help. Make a list of the good ways you stand out. Thank God for them and ask for his protection over these gifts:**
- 2. Ask the honest question, though it may not be easy: Are there any bad ways you stand out? Too loud, too busy vying for attention, cry easily when hurt, etc. Make a list of these things and ask for God's daily wisdom for how you can change them.**
- 3. Make a list of things you might not be thrilled with about yourself but that you really can't help, such as some physical traits. Write these things down. Ask for God's guidance in showing you how these things are good and not bad.**
- 4. Understand that Jesus likes you right where you're at. He's not waiting for you to be perfect before he protects you from mean people and bullies. Make a list of people who have hurt your feelings. Put the list in the imaginary "Jesus basket" and imagine him taking it away. Do it every time you feel anger rising toward the people who were mean. See what God does with the relationships between them and you.**

LOOKUP: Psalm 25:8-9

LOOKUP: Psalm 27:1-3

Target #5: The Adulterous Woman

BULLY: The crowd that dragged her before Jesus and threatened to stone her.

THEME:
Recognizing
HYPOCRISY can
often prevent
bullying.

LESSON

CAPSULE: A child psychologist recently said, "If we could get kids to recognize hypocrisy in themselves and those who are intimidating others, it would stop the majority of middle school and high school drama."

While not easy, kids can be taught to look inward before passing judgment on others. This lesson, focusing on the crowd surrounding the adulterous woman, will help.

Top of the Lesson Attention Getter

Ask everyone to repeat together the definition of bullying we are using. (Write it down for them to read if you're not using the lessons in order. If you are, they will get better as the weeks progress!)

Bullying: Negative verbal or physical behavior that is done (a) directly to a person or person's property, (b) with the conscious intention of either upsetting the person or manipulating the person's behavior, which (c) God would not approve of.

Introduction (to be read before scripture verse)

What does the word "hypocrite" mean? Generally speaking, a hypocrite is someone who judges other people very harshly but feels it's okay when he or she does something wrong.

Hypocrisy has started wars. It has gotten people killed. In many bullying situations, there are people involved who are being hypocritical but don't realize it.

Here's a great example of hypocrisy:

Jana posts innocently on her social media page just before a thunder storm, "I hate rainy weather!" Lo and behold, among later replies she finds from a friend Leandra, "that's because you're so sunny and perky."

In a recent conversation, Leandra had said to Jana with annoyance, "You're so...cheerful! Can you just let me complain about my problem and not tell me, la la, how everything will work out?" Therefore, Jana knows this post is an intentional dig...and it's in plain sight for anyone who can see the thread. She feels hurt, even a little embarrassed.

Jana was allowed to have a social media page so long as she followed one rule of her mother's: Never put anything negative in writing. About anyone. But Leandra surely was being ignorant. She deserved some return fire.

Jana posts back, "I'm not sunny and perky. It's just that some people are storm clouds."

Fifteen people "liked" Jana's post, which made her feel great. Leandra's dark moods had gotten on a lot of people's nerves, not just hers, she realized.

But now Leandra is on the defensive. She posts back a couple solid examples of Jana not really listening to a serious problem when Leandra was in need of a friend. She called Jana "shallow," and "perfect, in her little fairy tale existence," and 22 people "liked" that post.

Infuriated, Jana posted back, hinting at the problem Leandra had initially confided to her, which was very private and involved Leandra's father being charged with a crime.

Jana is now entrapped in a serious social media war that involves friends of both her and Leandra, from several different states. She receives bullying threats from Leandra's older cousins who want to meet her after school and "talk to her."

Where did Jana go wrong? Didn't she only respond to negativity? Didn't she keep herself from starting it? Why is it "hypocritical" to return fire, when someone has insulted you publically?

Jana's and Leandra's situation is why 1 Peter 3:9 reads, "Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing." There is no other way to stop a war, whether in the social media, the school yard, or the battlefield among nations.

Leandra was wrong initially. Whether Leandra's hurt from her home problems clear her from guilt is an unanswerable question. We can only worry about Jana, the Christian. To return evil for evil is "hypocrisy." Many nations do not live by Christ's statement of "turn the other cheek." They live by "an eye for an eye," which is what Jana allowed to happen.

Let's look at some people from Jesus' day, who wanted to stone (kill by hurling stones) a woman who had cheated on her husband. The fact that the would-be stoners were probably gossipers, idolaters, liars, cheaters, haters, back biters and/or instigators did not cross their minds. They were hypocrites. How can we plan not to do similar things?

Scripture: John 8:1-11

³ But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

² At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. ³ The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group ⁴ and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” ⁶ They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. ⁷ When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” ⁸ Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

⁹ At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. ¹⁰ Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”

¹¹ “No one, sir,” she said.

“Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

Discussion

Identifying the feelings of the angry mob

Adultery is a serious crime, because it is a crime against your own marriage partner. It is not punishable by law today, but people still cringe when they hear a partner “cheated,” which is what adultery is. They think of the terrible hurt and betrayal felt by the partner.

- 1. Do you think any people in the angry mob may have found out their own partners had cheated at one time or another? (Hint: Adultery is like stealing or cheating: It’s bad but happens all too often.) If so, how might their own experiences have affected their feelings toward the adulterous woman?**
- 2. Do you think anyone present in the angry mob might have cheated on a partner at one time or another? (Use the same hint as above.)**
- 3. Jesus said in Matthew 5:28, “I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” “Lustfully” means wanting to have a romantic encounter. How many in the angry mob might have committed adultery in their hearts?**

Identifying our own feelings

- 4. Unfortunately, people often see their own hurtful actions as justified, whereas other people’s are not. How does this “blindness” hurt others?**
- 5. People in bullying mobs often feed off each other’s feelings. The people may be quite kind and nice in a one-on-one conversation, but in an angry crowd, they let their ugly side come out. Why does this happen?**
- 6. Have you ever seen a group of kids pick on or bully one kid? If so, what happened? How did you feel about it? (Be honest!)**

Fixing the Problem

It's like Jesus said in Matthew 7:3-4: "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? ...You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

- 7. Think of someone who has really hurt you. What did they do that hurt?**
- 8. Now comes the hard part. Think of a time when you have done that very same thing. Is your first impulse to want to make up excuses for yourself? Warning: There are no excuses for hypocrisy. Sticking to your beliefs, no matter what is done to you is the only way to keep peace. Jesus said it. It's the truth.**
- 9. Threatening is bullying. Have you ever been threatened? Tell or write what happened.**
- 10. Have you ever threatened to hurt someone, either physically, mentally, or by getting a group of people against him or her?**

Understand: Jesus recognizes hypocrisy is a real problem for mankind. He wants to work with you, no matter how hypocritical you have been. He didn't die on the cross so that he could ignore us or feel like we're not worth it.

- 11. Is there anything you would like to "confess" to him?**
- 12. Is there anyone you would like to forgive for being a hypocrite to you?**

This Week in Prayer

A lot of Christians state that a sign of growing in Christ is being able to say, “Every time I accuse somebody of something, I remember something I’ve done that’s kind of similar.”

It’s a tough assignment for teens and tweeners, but let’s see how you do: Look down this list and try to remember if you’ve ever been guilty of the any words listed there. If so, write down what happened in a line or two. (We’ve all done these things so don’t feel awkward):

1. **Lying**
2. **Teasing**
3. **Hitting in anger**
4. **Stealing**
5. **Cheating on a test**
6. **Yelling at parents**
7. **Feeling jealous**
8. **Gossiping**
9. **Seeking revenge**

Famous evangelist Corrie Ten Boom used to say, “God took all my sins out to sea, where he put up a sign, ‘No fishing allowed!’” Why would Jesus do this for people? What might he want in return?

Using the list above, think of different times where people have done these things to you, rather than you being the guilty one.

LOOKUP: Matthew 6:14 & 15

Pray very hard this week, and see if Jesus doesn’t help you forgive these people. See how much more of His forgiveness you are able to feel afterwards!

Target #6: Jesus

Top of the Lesson Attention Getter

Ask everyone to repeat together the definition of bullying we are using. (Write it down for them to read if you're not using the lessons in order. If you are, they will get better as the weeks progress!)

Bullying: Negative verbal or physical behavior that is done (a) directly to a person or person's property, (b) with the conscious intention of either upsetting the person or manipulating the person's behavior, which (c) God would not approve of.

BULLY: Jairus' Relatives

THEME: PEOPLE LAUGHING to get others to do what they want

LESSON CAPSULE: Kids don't like being laughed at. Laughing at others is a big part of a bully's M.O., and laughter hurts just as much coming from someone who is merely observing the bully session! This lesson shows how Jesus responded to being laughed at. It's a great example of how to get away from bullies and bad company in order to accomplish important life goals.

Introduction *(to be read before scripture verse)*

Jesus had come to Jairus's house for a very serious reason. Jairus's daughter had just died. Jairus had run for Jesus in hopes to bring the great healer before she died. People sent word that she was dead, but Jesus came with him anyway. Jairus thought he was out of hope.

So did the people in his household. When Jesus said that the girl was "sleeping," and that he could raise her, people did a really irritating thing: They laughed! Common sense would dictate that they may have at least held out hope for a healing instead of making a target out of someone claiming he could help (in a very big way)! But peer pressure is a tough thing.

When a remark is made that's so strange that people can't even relate to it, they get nervous. They get embarrassed. When people get nervous and embarrassed, weird things can happen. They laugh.

If you've ever been laughed at, you know what it feels like. Often, when laughter turns to bullying, it's because the bully is looking for something in particular. The bully wants to render the victim powerless and is using mockery to accomplish that.

In one school, a seventh grade girl was a very naturally gifted writer. She completed one assignment for English, which she thought was really fun: Put yourself in another person's shoes and write a story from that person's viewpoint. The girl picked her dog. Writing from her dog's point of view was so clever that the teacher decided to read it aloud to the class.

Afterwards, jealousy shone through because the girl had gotten some attention and had written something that nobody else could have. Some bullying started. Kids cocked their legs on the writer, asked if she had fleas, and laughed at her for a couple days. The girl finally decided, "Gee, it's better to write stupid stories than good ones; a B is better than an A because at least bad writing won't drive you mad."

This girl had been bullied because others were jealous of her talents. The bullies used laughter and mockery as a weapon to stifle her gift from God.

The same thing happened to Jesus. Let's look at his situation to decide what we should do when people laugh at us and try to manipulate our gifts away from us.

Scripture: Luke 8:49-56

While Jesus was still speaking, someone came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. “Your daughter is dead,” he said. “Don’t bother the teacher anymore.”

Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, “Don’t be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed.”

When he arrived at the house of Jairus, he did not let anyone go in with him except Peter, John and James, and the child’s father and mother. ⁵² Meanwhile, all the people were wailing and mourning for her. “Stop wailing,” Jesus said. “She is not dead but asleep.”

⁵³ They laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. ⁵⁴ But he took her by the hand and said, “My child, get up!” ⁵⁵ Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat. ⁵⁶ Her parents were astonished, but he ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened.

Discussion

Understanding the feelings of Jairus and his relatives

1. Why are most people scared of dying? How does fear of death add to grief when a person loses a beloved relative?
2. How were the people at Jairus' house feeling when the 12-year-old died? Had they ever seen anyone raised from the dead before? Why might they have been afraid that Jesus could hurt Jairus and his wife more than help them?
3. Why did the relatives laugh at Jesus? Did the laughter mean they were nervous, doubtful and confused? Or did they just want to be mean?

Identifying our own feelings

4. Have you ever lost a grandparent, sibling, favorite cousin, parent, or even a beloved pet? How did you feel? How do you think Jairus was feeling?
5. Have you ever been laughed at? What for? Do you think the laughers just wanted to be mean?
6. Laughing over nervousness is an explanation; it is not an excuse. Laughter hurts when it's mocking in nature. Jesus knew he was right and the people who were laughing were wrong. Did he mock them back? What did he do?

LOOKUP: 1 Peter 3:3

LOOKUP: Psalm 123:4

Fixing the problem: When it's best to just walk away

Jesus often “removed himself” from bad energy. Often, he would go off by himself to pray. If he were performing a miracle, he would sometimes take the sick person down the road so they could be by themselves. In the case of Jairus, the only people he allowed into the “miracle room” were the girl’s parents and his three closest disciples: James, John and Peter.

7. **What should you do if you find yourself around people who are taunting and teasing others? What are some of the ways their bad energy could affect you?**
8. **If people start taunting or teasing you personally, what’s the best thing to do? What did Jesus do?**
9. **Why might this be a great time to try out Jesus’ expression, “Turn the other cheek?” What are people often really feeling when they laugh at a victim?**
10. **Why was it easy for Jesus to ignore taunting? How did he feel about himself?**
11. **How can we improve our own self-esteem and be more sure of ourselves?**

LOOKUP: Psalm 1:1

LOOKUP: 1 Corinthians 5:33

This Week in Prayer

Let's work more on our own confidence level, understanding how Jesus' confidence kept him in a superior position.

Write down a list of your good traits. This can sometimes be hard at your age. If you're really struggling, invite a friend over and swap compliments. Tell the friend something you like about him or her, then have the friend reply with something likeable about you.

Every night while praying, thank God for each one of these traits, which are gifts from Him. See how empowered you feel.

LOOKUP: 2 Timothy 1:7

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