

Issue at Hand

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Bullying is an intentional, unprovoked, repeated action by one person to hurt or domineer a weaker person. Bullies often think of themselves as superior to the person they are attacking. A 2013 study conducted by UCLA in a public middle school uncovered some chilling facts about bullying. Middle school students who bully more are described as *cool* by their peers. Would this be true in a Christian school as well?

Throughout the history of mankind since the fall of Adam and Eve, violence, whether through deeds or speech, has been regarded as macho, something to attain, something to give you power over another person. This violence has also been boasted about. Wicked Lamech boasted to his wives, “hearken unto my speech: for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt” (Gen. 4:23). As if his boasting wasn’t depraved enough, he even taunted God: “If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold” (v. 24).

Today, the violence of bullying exists in homes and workplaces. Bullying happens in schools, public and Christian. Bullies come in all ages, male and female. Bullies use many means to accomplish their goal of dominating another person. Sometimes physical abuse is the method, whether a violent, even bloody assault at one time or the daily slapping, spitting, and tripping of the victim. Bullying is also manifest in words. Sometimes the victim endures a barrage of insults day after day. Other times the words are written in notes passed around the classroom, sent as text messages, scratched into the wall of the bathroom stall, or posted on social media. No matter their form, they are meant to hurt, cut down, and kill.

Maybe you have witnessed bullying at school or elsewhere. You probably noticed that the victim didn't go on the defensive because most victims do not. So did you do anything about it? Did you make their unspoken voice heard? Did you defend the victim or did you join in? Keep in mind that helping a victim of bullying must go further than just "telling off" the bully. Helping ought to include befriending the victim. Through this action we show an awareness of how we ourselves have been befriended by God through Jesus Christ.

Thanks be to God that there is comfort for the victim of bullying. God promises to "give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways" (Ps. 91:11). He also says of the one in need of help, "He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honor him" (v. 15). Further, Psalm 68:6 states, "God setteth the solitary in families: he bringeth out those which are bound with chains." The emphasis of these words is, according to John Calvin, "That we ought to comfort ourselves under the worst afflictions, by reflecting that we are in God's hand, who can mitigate all our griefs and remove all our burdens." This is true comfort for the believing young person who is bullied.

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