



Making Peace With Bullies



Bullying is becoming pandemic. Most bullies back down when faced with opposition. Not everyone is bullied, though. The majority of students are on the sidelines, quietly rooting for the bullies to get their comeuppance, yet they don't do anything about it. They need to be encouraged to stand up for those who are being bullied. A group of "anti-bullies," or peacemakers, has the power to put a stop to bullying. We are called upon to be peacemakers (Matthew 5:9), which means we need to get up and play an active part in making peace and ending injustice. Bullies, once they've gained power over their victims, will not stop bullying unless met with a greater force than their own. Teaching our children to not be bullies isn't enough. We need to teach them to actively say no to bullies and to try to influence their peers to do likewise. They can become a cohesive force standing up against the bully.

Parents need to teach their children that good will triumph over evil, but in order for that to happen we must take action. When we teach our children that it is a part of their Christian duty to stand up for the oppressed, then we are empowering them to actively participate in the kingdom of God. When they stand up against a bully, things may not go well for them the first time, but they will feel good about themselves knowing that they did the right thing. Others will see their act of love and courage and think to themselves, "I can do that, too!" Then the next time bullying happens, instead of just one good person standing up in opposition, there will be two or three. Before long, the opposition makes the bully's task too difficult. It isn't worth it. Hopefully, the bully will feel the need to become one of the good guys. The balance of power can be transferred from the bully to the empowered group of good kids.



In today's social media world, the threat of bullying has gone viral in ways we never experienced growing up. Physical and verbal bullying haven't changed much over the past thirty years, but now the Internet adds a new dimension of bullying abuse in cyber bullying. Boys are exposed to online content that values physical and verbal aggression (cell phone videos of bathroom fights at school, "roasting" other boys by insulting them, etc.), while girls are subjected to body shaming comments that stem from unrealistic beauty standards they are exposed to on social media platforms. Because of this exposure, behaviors are changing. If you don't want to participate in a bathroom fight or a roasting session, you are verbally bullied until you do



or until another victim has been found. And if you do participate, the loser is then mocked online, which only leads to further social anxiety. If you don't have the newest shoe style or look a certain way, then you are excluded from friend groups and become the victim of online chats that spill over into verbal bullying at school the next day.

Cyber bullying can be ended the same way as physical and verbal bullying, by the uninvolved bystanders choosing to take the side of the peacemakers. When more people are actively opposing the wicked behavior than are promoting it, the behavior will eventually stop. It's not easy to be the one brave soul to stand up in the face of wickedness. But as we teach our children to let their lights shine, we must also pray that others will come to see their good works and join them in standing up for what is right.