

Classroom Guidance Newsletter Lesson Six: Bullying

Dear Parents,

In Lesson Six, the students learned about bullying. We can look to the Bible to guide us how to make wise choices when dealing with bullies. When Jesus was slapped on the face by the guard of the High Priest, He did not turn His face so the guard could slap Him again. Instead, Jesus responded, "If I said something wrong, testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?" (John 18:19-23) Jesus not only defended Himself with words, He confronted the bully and demanded an answer for His unjust treatment. He wants His followers to not return an insult for an insult. Jesus does not want His followers to be neither motivated nor consumed by revenge when something wrong like bullying is done to them. You can stand up for yourself while at the same time not hurting or demeaning another person. When you stand up for or help someone who is being bullied you honor God and His love for justice. You use your voice to defend the timid and encourage the weak, the way the Apostle Paul tells people of faith to do (1 Thessalonians 5:14). You show the kind of courage and love that Jesus showed.

The students were taught what bullies do, how bullies make you feel, and why bullies behave that way. They also gained knowledge of how bystanders can be an important part of the solution. Strategies to handle bullies were practiced and reinforced through role plays. Emphasis was placed on making choices that are pleasing to God and that will keep the students, themselves, safe and out of trouble.

What Bullying Looks Like During the Elementary School Years

A student is being bullied when he/she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more students. In bullying situations, there are always three key elements present: 1) Imbalance of power, 2) Intent to harm, and 3) Repeated behavior.

There are many different types of bullying:

- Physical- harm to someone or their property.
- Verbal- taunting, teasing, or threats.
- Relational Aggression- harm to someone's self esteem or group acceptance.
- Cyberbullying- using technology to intimidate or harass another person. To read more about cyberbullying, click the link below:

www.westlakechristianschool.org/userfiles/Guidance_Newsletters/Cyberbullying.pdf

Important Facts to Know

- Bullying is not normal play and not a normal part of growing up. Confusion about the difference between conflict and bullying can fuel this myth. While occasional peer conflict is inevitable, bullying is not inevitable. It should always be avoided. In a conflict, both sides have equal power to resolve the problem. But bullying involves the intentional, one-sided use of power to control another. It has harmful, long-lasting consequences.
- Bullying won't go away by itself and usually becomes more serious if ignored.
- Bullying can leave physical and emotional scars.
- Bullying behavior interferes with a child's learning.
- The number one reason kids don't report bullying is that they believe adults won't help stop the bullying.

Gender Differences in Bullying Behavior

- Both boys and girls bully.
- Boys tend to use methods such as hitting, fighting, and threatening. These face-to-face behaviors are easy to observe.
- Girls do bully using physical and verbal attacks, but they often use behind-the-back methods that are harder to see. These more subtle behaviors include getting peers to exclude others, and spreading rumors and gossip.

- It's important to remember, though, that boys *and* girls use both face-to-face and behind-the-back bullying methods.
- When boys engage in bullying behavior, they tend to bully girls as much as boys, while girls tend to bully mostly girls.
- Bullying behavior by boys can easily extend into sexual harassment, especially at the middle and high school levels.

Signs Your Child May Be Being Bullied

- Frequent requests to stay home from school.
- Frequent unexplained minor illnesses.
- Sleeplessness or nightmares.
- Lack of enthusiasm for hobbies or friends.
- Declining school performance.

Signs Your Child May Be Bullying Others

- Frequent name-calling.
- Regular bragging.
- A need to always get his/her own way.
- A lack of empathy for others.
- A defiant or hostile attitude; easily takes offense.

Tips for Kids to Respond to Bullying

- Plan ahead of time what you will do and/or say if you are confronted with bullying behavior.
- Report the bullying to a trusted adult and keep reporting until the bullying stops.
- Stand up to the bully (if it is safe) by using an assertive response such as, "That's bullying. I want you to stop!", then get away.
- Try different techniques by changing the subject, distracting, and using humor.
- Leave the area. Don't stand there and take it.
- Stay with a group of people.
- Remind yourself that no one should be bullied and you are not to blame.

The Role of Bystanders and How They Can Help

Bystanders see, hear, and know about the bullying. They may feel powerless or fear being bullied next. They may feel sad or guilty about the hurt others experience. Additionally, bystanders may see those who bully succeed at getting what they want and be tempted to take part themselves.

However, bystanders should immediately stand up for the victim by:

- Letting the person who is doing the bullying know that the bullying behavior is not okay.
- Not laughing if someone is being bullied.
- If it is safe, telling them to stop or walking away and reporting the bullying to a trusted adult.

Bullying Resources

<http://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/schooling/bullying.aspx>

<http://christian-parent.com/stop-bullying/>

<http://ruthwillms.blogspot.com/2008/02/what-does-god-have-to-say-about.html>

http://www.cbn.com/family/parenting/coughlin_bully1.aspx

Sincerely,
Heidi Jolliffe
Classroom Guidance Coordinator