

BULLYING

■ by Doug Van Til, MSW, Licensed Clinical Social Worker



Part I: A Christian Perspective

For good reason much is being written and talked about in regards to the problem of bullying. As we begin a new academic year, I'd like to say a few things about this pervasive, progressive, and insidious problem. Whether bullying occurs in the school setting, the home, or the "streets", I think we can agree the problem needs to be recognized and confronted as serious enough to require vigilant, corporate, and sustained effort on many fronts.

But first let me propose a Christian perspective and response to bullying attitude and behavior. The Christian shouldn't be shocked that their son or daughter might be guilty of the problem because they know that fallen man is by nature a sinner. We are all prone to commit injustices and omit mercy in both individual and relational contexts. People are capable of mistreating other people implicitly and explicitly at many different levels because we're all sinners prone to self-centeredness, abusiveness, and distortion of proper social behavior. It's important that we recognize these assumptions so we can more honestly identify bully tendencies and behavior in ourselves and others. As we look at our various roles relative to the problem of bullying, we need to realize and accept the magnitude of responsibility that we all have to prevent, remediate, and repair the damage that comes from bullying. Parents, siblings, extended family, teachers, classmates, friends, and colleagues are a few of the relational groups that have both a role and responsibility that can be part of the problem however must be part of the solution.

Christians who seek to be motivated as well as motivate others to prevent and stop bully behavior should be reminded that the very character of God and therefore His expectations for His people is to "do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:8. "This is what the Lord Almighty says: administer true justice, show mercy, and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or fatherless, the immigrant or the poor." Zechariah 7:9.

Schools and families can and must promote and model the type of culture taught and modeled by Jesus. They can teach, indoctrinate and inoculate against a culture of mistreatment and abuse of power or influence. Schools and parents need to be equally responsible for identifying and rectifying bully behavior in their students. Parents and the adults in school have to understand that bullying takes many forms on a continuum of subtlety and blatancy in both an individual context and a social context. ■

In Part II of this article, to be published in the Nov|Dec PRESSING ON issue, I will suggest some more specific guidelines and strategies toward preventing and changing behavior of bullies and victims.



Doug Van Til is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with extensive experience in the school system. He enjoys working with children, adolescents, and adults in our Crete location.

Article taken from the Sep|Oct 2012 issue of *PRESSING ON*, a Publication of Chicago Christian Counseling Center
Chicago Christian Counseling Center has locations throughout Chicagoland and Northwest Indiana

www.chicagochristiancounseling.org

800.361.6880 | info@chicagochristiancounseling.org

[facebook.com/ChicagoChristianCounseling](https://www.facebook.com/ChicagoChristianCounseling) | Text CCCC to 22828 to join our email list

Promoting health and wholeness through professional counseling, consultation and education from a Christian perspective.