



## Bullying

Being picked on or made fun of can lower your self-esteem and make you feel unworthy. Maybe you feel like no one cares. But Jesus Christ was also ridiculed and understands what you're going through. He can give you strength to help you overcome this situation. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 12:10 that when we are weak, He makes us strong.

## Worth in Christ

God created each person unique, with different talents, personalities and desires. We are not mass produced, but carefully made by the God of the universe. He knows us by name.

Just think of it: You are God's masterpiece! Your life is not worthless, no matter what others say or how they treat you. Your life is a gift from God. He knew you before you were even born. Psalm 139:13-14 says, "You created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful."

God values you. And He doesn't show favoritism (Acts 10:34). He loves you and cares how you feel. 1 Peter 5:7 says, "Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you." If you have trusted in Jesus Christ as Lord, you are called a child of God. 1 John 3:1 says, "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!"

## Why Bullies Bully

Some people—children, teenagers and adults alike—pick on others because of things going on in their own lives. They might envy you or even resent you for something beyond your control. They might have a difficult situation at home and target you to fulfill a need to be in control. Perhaps they are not treated well, either, or have a negative view of themselves. Maybe they receive little attention from people around them. It could be that the person or people making your life miserable are simply trying to take the focus off of their own problems. Some bullies bully others to gain attention, status or approval from their peers.

While these things might not be the case, keep in mind that you might not be the only one facing a hard situation. While there's no excuse for bullying, recognizing a motive might help you respond in the best way.

## Response

While the word “bully” does not appear in the Bible, the idea of treating others in a brutish or disrespectful way does. Christians can even be a specific target of bullies since trying to live like Christ is often countercultural.

Matthew 5:39 says, “Do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.” However, this doesn’t mean you can’t ask for God’s defense or stand up for yourself.

When responding to a bullying situation, remember that the Bible tells us to treat others fairly and with respect. Matthew 22:39 says to love others as yourself. And Romans 12:18 advises, “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.” When faced with someone talking bad about you, making fun of you or putting you down, do not seek revenge but respond in love. Matthew 5:44 says to “love your enemies,” and Matthew 5:9 says peacemakers will be blessed. Luke 6:28 even says, “Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.”

How you treat others reflects your relationship with God since He created and values everyone. When you respond to bullies in love, they notice and might even change their attitude toward you. Proverbs 15:1 says, “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”

At the same time, if the bullying is negatively affecting you—mentally, emotionally or physically—do not allow yourself to remain in danger, but seek support from a trusted adult or authority figure. Remember that our strength comes not from ourselves, but from God who cares about us and gives us hope. Let that give you confidence to endure. Psalm 34:4-5 says, “I sought the Lord, and He answered me; He delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to Him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame.”

Sometimes, it’s wise to even flee from a bully. Out of jealousy, King Saul in the Bible chased David, and David fled (1 Samuel 19-24). Fleeing from a bully isn’t cowardly; it’s often the best choice when we can’t protect ourselves. Ask God for wisdom in how you should respond, and trust Him to bring justice.

If it is a fellow Christian who is wronging you, Matthew 18:15-17 says to point out the wrongdoing to the person. If that person doesn’t listen, ask one or two others to approach him or her with you. If that doesn’t change anything, bring the issue to your church.

Regardless of the situation, we can find comfort and protection in God. Psalm 46:1 says, “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.” Let His strength encourage you today.

## Protecting Others

Ephesians 5 and 6 calls husbands to defend their families and businesses. And it’s up to parents to try to protect their children from danger.

If your child is being bullied, don't assume it will just go away. It might help to role-play how your child can respond so that he or she feels prepared to face the bully. Keep the line of communication open with your children, and don't hesitate to get another adult or school administrator involved to help resolve the issue.