

Bullying

By Jack Greenoe

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments:

Assignment One

Read the comments related to Matthew 5:9 in the section **It's in the Book**. Especially note the comments on how God expects people called by His name to treat other people. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: Are selfishness and revenge godly concepts? Do disciples pursue their selfish goals and ambitions to the point where they will injure or intimidate others to accomplish them? (That is bullying.)

Assignment Two

Read the comments related to Matthew 5:39 in the section **It's in the Book**. Jesus said, "But I say to you, do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." Prepare to share your answer to the following question: Why did God call His people to be characterized by peace rather than violence?

Assignment Three

Matthew 5:44 says, "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." When you hear the word *enemy*, does a particular person's name enter your mind? Perhaps this is someone who didn't physically abuse you but created a considerable hardship for you. Before your group meets, write that person a note or have a face-to-face conversation. Express the fact that you have obeyed God and thus have forgiven him or her. Prepare to share a report about this when your group meets.

Scripture to Memorize

So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. Matthew 7:12

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will understand that attitudes or actions that threaten or harm someone physically or mentally or damage someone's reputation should be considered bullying and should be addressed like any other sin.

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It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

A guy you know opens up about his childhood. "My big sister was better than me at everything except sports. To make things worse, when she turned twelve, she had a major growth spurt and towered over the boys in her own class, much less me in the second grade. By the time I passed her in height, she had gone off to college and the 'rivalry' was over. But in those early years, she was a threat to me. She used it to get her way on things." As you listen, you think, *Disciples of Christ should never intimidate, but love.*

Blessed are the Peacemakers

Read Matthew 5:9 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 9. peacemakers. The Greek word for *peacemakers* is a compound of the word for "peace" and the word for "to do" or "to make." Generally, we think *peace* means "the absence of conflict." However, from a Christian perspective, it has more to do with the internal satisfaction and tranquility that comes from understanding eternal security. The knowledge that death, the worst thing that can happen to an unbeliever, transports the soul of a Christian into eternity in the presence of God creates an incredible amount of calmness. **sons of God.** The issue of making peace is not reserved for judges, military leaders, and politicians. Anyone who claims to follow the teachings found here in the great Sermon (Matthew 5–7) has the responsibility of making peace, perhaps because disciples understand peace better than unbelievers do.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now share answers to these questions: Are selfishness and revenge godly concepts? Do disciples pursue their selfish goals and ambitions to the point where they will injure or intimidate others to accomplish them?

Discussion Questions

1. If Christians are not to be involved in bullying, does peacemaking stop there? How can Christians be peacemakers with other people who are not bullying them?
2. Does being a peacemaker mean one can never disagree with someone else?

On Your Own

Since God speaks through His Word, find several Bible verses that describe the peace of God. List them below.

Turn the Other Cheek

Read Matthew 5:39 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 39. resist the one who is evil. Improper reading can cause a problem here. The prohibition is more against “fighting back” than simply resisting evil. But it is important not to read this too literally. You can take a stand for biblical, ethical positions that are not popular in the culture, and your reactions may be strong. At the same time believers are not to “fight fire with fire.” We fight hate with love. Do not confuse this with an inability to protect yourself and your family or stand for your convictions. **turn to him the other also.** To the first century Jew, being hit in the face was the ultimate insult. Imagine having something happen that humiliates you or causes a loss of dignity. Jesus says not to retaliate to something like this.

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now share an answer to the question: Why did God call His people to be characterized by peace rather than violence?

Discussion Question

What is the difference between self-defense and bullying?

On Your Own

The model for not fighting back was Jesus. Reflect on the trials and physical abuse He endured during the crucifixion. Whatever trial you experience cannot compare to His. He never complained and never even defended Himself. He knew the mission and He endured it. Philippians 2:8 says, “And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

The next time you endure bullying or intimidation, what do you want to remember about His suffering for your sake? Write a few thoughts about this below.

Love Your Enemies

Read Matthew 5:44 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 44. love your enemies. This notion is unique to Christian ethics. This concept is so difficult to perform without supernatural power that scholars who comment on the Sermon on the Mount often refer to it as “ideal” and almost impossible to achieve.

However, Jesus did not duck the issue or lower the bar. At the beginning of His earthly ministry, He gave clear teaching on interpersonal relationships.

Jesus noted that the Pharisees said we should love our neighbors, but Jesus taught to love even our enemies. The word for “enemy” should not be restricted to someone from a different country, team or even religion but should include anyone who is hostile to you. This could be a

much taller sister, a teammate, a boss, a parent—anybody. Loving someone who is hostile to you requires the type of love God has for people who come to Him seeking forgiveness. We forgive since we have been forgiven. **pray for those who persecute you.** Here it gets even tougher. People who are hostile naturally expect hostility to be returned. A powerful Christian witness results when believers pray for hostile people.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now share a recent story of offering forgiveness to an “enemy.” (A response of forgiveness can be a great testimony to the power of God in someone's life.)

On Your Own

The Bible begins and ends discussing peace. When God created a man and a woman in the garden of Eden, there was peace before they sinned. Revelation ends with a time of peace when a new heaven and a new earth are created, sin has been removed, and peace is everywhere.

Consider what your friends think about you. Are you someone with a reputation of peace and forgiveness or of bullying and intimidation? Write your answer below.

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below, and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Prayer

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally, and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

At Home: Nail It Down

Bullying is the furthest thing from a biblical ideal for Christ followers. Jesus is the Prince of peace (Isaiah 9:6) and the Lamb of God (John 1:29). Granted, He did overturn tables in the temple where certain Pharisees were profiting from foreign currency exchanges and selling less-than-faultless sacrifices, but His goal was not extortion. He was preserving the sanctity of the temple.

Near the end of His days on earth, He became the perfect, sinless sacrifice whose death would provide a pathway for forgiveness of sin. At the beginning of His public ministry, He instructed His followers to be peacemakers, to turn the other cheek and to love their enemies. In short, disciples are to treat others the way they want to be treated.

Disciples must understand God's love for them so they can model that love to other people. In relationships with family and friends, not everyone will love disciples. Some will be hostile toward disciples because they are either physically bigger or in a position to abuse their authority. Some people will bully just because they enjoy it.

Disciples should never abuse others physically or with their authority. Notice that Jesus did not say "if" His followers would experience hostility; that's understood. Not only do disciples have a calling not to be hostile to others, but Jesus instructs them to respond to hostility with humility, love and forgiveness.

Follow up Question

How can bullying be physical, verbal, emotional or intellectual?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.