

Bullying Bible Study



★ AMERICAN CHARACTER BUILDERS ★

WHAT'S THE RISK OF BEING BULLIED AT SCHOOL?

- Bullying begins in elementary school, peaks in middle school and falls off in high school. It does not, however, disappear altogether (The Facts about Bullying, 1997)
- 61.6% of students who are bullied are picked on because of their looks or speech (U.S. News & World Report, May 7, 2001)
- Of the students who are bullied, 55.6% report being hit, slapped, or pushed (U.S. News & World Report, May 7, 2001)
- In a 1994 survey, it was reported that 22% of all teenaged students had been in a fight in the past year; 34% of those fighting were boys while only 11% were girls (Harvard School of Public Health)



Tami Johnson, writer from Birmingham, AL is a wife, and mother of three grown sons. Tami has written materials for Lifeway, reThink's 252 Basics curriculum, and numerous churches. She enjoys teaching children, teenagers and 'sharing the journey' with their parents.

Tami writes from her desire for today's students to experience the true wonder of discovering that God's Word is written for them! 'Mission accomplished' when students read the Bible and encounter the One who loves them enough to rescue them over and over again!

On 'free days' you may find Tami hiking the Smoky Mountains or riding the waves in the Gulf of Mexico.



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Prior to beginning the Bible study, briefly review with your group “Bullying”- a pamphlet produced by American Character Builders.

Highlight the pamphlet’s definition of a bully: “A bully is someone who hurts another person on purpose.” Give some examples of bullying and ways to help as outlined in the brochure.

BULLYING IS NOT SOMETHING WE LEAVE AT THE SCHOOLHOUSE DOOR. UNFORTUNATELY, WE BULLY OUR FAMILY, THE STORE CLERK WHO WON’T TAKE OUR RETURN, THE FAST-FOOD WORKER WHO DIDN’T GET OUR ORDER OUT FAST ENOUGH OR THE ‘GEEK’ AT THE ELECTRONICS STORE.

Study

IN PREPARATION FOR THE “STICKS AND STONES” ACTIVITY LATER IN THE SESSION, AS STUDENTS ARRIVE, INSTRUCT THEM TO CHOOSE A ROCK AND WRITE ON IT WORDS OR BEHAVIORS THAT COULD MAKE SOMEONE FEEL BAD OR HURT THEIR FEELINGS. SEE ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS FOR FURTHER DETAILS.

There is no doubt that bullying is a huge social problem. Much is being done in our country today to address it. Experts on all fronts are attempting to stop the madness of name-calling, verbal assault, sexting, electronic harassing of others via the web and social media and face-to-face conflicts. In a recent school survey, over 80% of students said they had bullied someone, been bullied themselves, or stood by and watched someone else get bullied. Where do *you* fall in that statistic?

As Christians, what should our response be to the problem of bullying? What do we do? Where can we go to get our answers?

As with any problem we encounter in life, for a believer, our answers are found in the truth of God’s Word, the Bible.

“Why turn to an old, ancient manuscript to deal with a current day, ‘hot-button’ issue?” you may ask. Maybe you think, “Certainly the Bible doesn’t address bullying.” Oh, but it does. Listen to this:

“Don’t be selfish; don’t try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don’t look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others too. You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.” *Philippians 2:3-5 (NLT)*

WE ARE IN GOD’S FAMILY TODAY BECAUSE GOD CONSIDERED US MORE IMPORTANT THAN HIMSELF! WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN OUR ‘WORLD’- OUR HOME, OUR SCHOOL, OUR GROUP, IF WE TRULY FOLLOW HIM AND DO THE SAME?

EVERY DAY WE’RE TAUGHT AND LURED BY THE WORLD INTO A LIFE OF SELF-CENTEREDNESS. THIS IS NOT GOD’S WAY. HE CALLS US TO LIVE A LIFE OF GOD FIRST, OTHERS SECOND, “ME” LAST. THAT’S THE MESSAGE OF PHILIPPIANS 2:3-5

“...Don’t get involved in foolish, ignorant arguments that only start fights. A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone...and be patient with difficult people.” *2 Timothy 2:23-24 (NLT)*

“Make allowances for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you and you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. And let the peace which comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace... “
Colossians 3:13-15 (NLT)

The Bible has *much* to say about how we should treat one another. Obviously, God knew treating others as more important than ourselves would not be easy. God saw early on, how our evil hearts would treat someone who is different than us. Remember the story of Cain and Abel? (Genesis 4) Jealousy crept into that family relationship because two brothers approached a situation very differently. So one attacked the other. It didn't end well.

As followers of Christ, God calls us to be different. We live in this mixed-up, crazy world, trying to figure out who we are, who everybody else is, and how to best get along with one another. Often times we struggle to figure this out on our own. But God has already spoken His truth into this problem in the pages of the Bible.

Let's look at three incidents from the New Testament that will give us insight into what Christ expects of every believer as we encounter people that He created to walk alongside us here on earth. Listen to these stories straight out of the Bible. If you change the names and maybe tweak the circumstances just a little, you'll probably recognize that these scenarios have played out somewhere in your own surroundings.

1. Luke 19:1-10 (NLT)

Jesus entered Jericho and made his way through the town. There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector in the region, and he had become very rich. He tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree beside the road, for Jesus was going to pass that way.

When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. "Zacchaeus!" he said. "Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today." Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy. But the people were displeased. "He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner," they grumbled.

Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, "I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!"

Jesus responded, "Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost."

WE MAY NOT UNDERSTAND SOMEONE OR LIKE HOW THEY LOOK. WE MAY NOT APPROVE OF WHAT THEY'RE DOING OR HOW THEY'RE LIVING, BUT WHEN WE REALIZE HOW MUCH GOD LOVES THEM, WE CAN BEGIN TO LOVE THEM TOO.

"THE LOWER VALUE WE ATTACH TO PEOPLE, THE EASIER WE CAN 'JUSTIFY' DISHONORING THEM WITH OUR WORDS OR TREATING THEM WITH DISRESPECT."
- GARY SMALLEY

Zacchaeus was a dishonest tax collector— a thief despised by everyone who knew him. But Jesus noticed him. Jesus accepted him. Jesus knew his name. Jesus was even willing to have dinner with him. Jesus' friends made fun of him for hanging out with 'Zach'. Jesus went anyway.

If we would just begin here, accepting others as Jesus did, taking time to even know their name and perhaps enter their world to learn what they struggle with or what drives them to do what they do, most bullying would never occur.

Are you willing to accept the 'different' person at your school— to hang out with the 'social outcasts'— even if it may make you susceptible to ridicule *yourself*? Jesus was willing.

STOP AND PRAY FOR SOMEONE YOU NEED TO ACCEPT SO YOU CAN OFFER THEM THE LOVE OF CHRIST.

2. John 8:1-11 (NLT)

Jesus returned to the Mount of Olives, but early the next morning he was back again at the Temple. A crowd soon gathered, and he sat down and taught them. As he was speaking, the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They put her in front of the crowd. “Teacher,” they said to Jesus, “this woman was caught in the act of adultery. The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?”

They were trying to trap him into saying something they could use against him, but Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust with his finger. They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, “All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!” Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust.

When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, “Where are your accusers? Didn’t even one of them condemn you?” “No, Lord,” she said. And Jesus said, “Neither do I. Go and sin no more.”

The ‘woman caught in the act of adultery’ was not unlike any of us. She was a sinner. So are we. She fell short of God’s standard. So do we. Remember Romans 3:23? Not *one*, not *some*, not just ‘*them*’, but *all* have sinned. When you’re tempted to look at a person or a group and say “Yea, but they...”, remember, *you are a sinner*. We all have issues. We all make bad choices.

WRITE A NOTE OF ENCOURAGEMENT TO SOMEONE YOU HAVE PREVIOUSLY BULLIED. BE SINCERE. ASK GOD TO HELP YOU SEE SOMETHING GOOD HE CREATED IN THEM. EASY? NO, BUT VERY IMPACTFUL.

The good news is that if you have accepted God’s gift of salvation through His son, Jesus Christ, you are a *forgiven* sinner. That gift is available to *everyone*. God paid a high price for you and everybody you’ll ever meet. His son was killed on a cross as the payment for our sins. He was then raised from the dead and lives today so we can have a relationship with Him. When you truly realize what Jesus sacrificed for *you* and for *everyone* you encounter, you can’t help but treat them as someone highly valuable to God.

“HONOR MEANS DECIDING TO PLACE HIGH VALUE, WORTH, AND IMPORTANCE ON ANOTHER PERSON BY VIEWING HIM OR HER AS A PRICELESS GIFT AND GRANTING HIM OR HER A POSITION IN OUR LIVES WORTHY OF GREAT RESPECT.”
—GARY SMALLEY

Are you willing to admit you’re not without sin and stop expecting others to be? When confronted by Jesus, the accusers in this story had to drop their stones, and walk away.

Jesus stood up for this woman. He didn’t just allow her to be harassed. Who will you stand up for?

TRYING TO PROTECT OUR OWN ‘GOOD NAME’ OR SELFISH INTERESTS, OR STATUS IN THE GROUP CAN CAUSE US TO ATTACK OTHERS.

3. Luke 10:30-37 (NLT)

Jesus replied with a story: “A Jewish man was traveling on a trip from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road. By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side. Then a despised Samaritan came along, and

when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, 'Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I'll pay you the next time I'm here.' Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?" Jesus asked. The man replied, "The one who showed him mercy." Then Jesus said, "Yes, now go and do the same."

A man was bullied. He was robbed, beaten, and left to die. One passerby ignored him. One went to look, but then refused to get involved. But one stopped. He felt compassion and 'went over to him'. He saw the wounded man's need and took care of him. He bandaged the man with cloth from his own bag. He took him somewhere to get more help. He even paid money to help the man recover and get on his feet again. It cost him, but he was willing to get involved.

What about you? Who are you willing to help, no matter the cost?

Are you afraid of getting labeled? Are you afraid of getting dirty? Are you too busy? Jesus wasn't. He looked at each person He encountered as a person highly valued by God. So should we. A person's eternity is much more important than us being right or accepted as 'cool' or winning some 'status' among our peer group.

PRAY THAT GOD WILL CONVICT YOU IF YOUR ATTITUDES AND SPEECH ARE HURTING SOMEONE.

How do *you* treat the people you encounter? How do you treat people who look different, talk differently, or act differently? Do you help meet their needs and love them to Jesus or do you ridicule them toward others who will accept them but may not truly care about them? You've got the best news to share– the redeeming love of Jesus! But to earn the right to share it, we must treat others with respect. James 3:9 says, "We bless our Father with our tongue and curse people who are made in His likeness." If those around us hear us doing this, we lose our influence. If you truly love Jesus, love those

He died for. We should want every person to know the life-changing love of Jesus Christ.

When you realize what Christ did to forgive you, you will treat the person next to you very differently. God created them with just as much care as He did you. He loves them. He *died for them*. How do you think He feels when you belittle, condemn, and mistreat His special creation? Look into the eyes of the people in your life. See them as God sees them– a person of high value; a person He loves and seeks to forgive, no matter what.

GOD CALLS US TO BE DIFFERENT! DON'T BELIEVE IT? FOR A WAKE-UP CALL, READ JESUS' SERMON ON THE MOUNT FOUND IN MATTHEW, CHAPTERS 5-7. JESUS SAYS THINGS LIKE:

- LOVE YOUR ENEMIES.
- THINKING ABOUT SINFUL THINGS IS JUST AS BAD AS DOING THEM.
- DON'T LOVE MONEY.
- IF SOMEONE ASKS YOU TO GO ONE MILE, BE WILLING TO GO TWO.
- MARRIAGE IS FOREVER.

THAT'S NOT THE WAY MOST OF THE WORLD ACTS. BUT THAT'S THE LIFE HE CALLS US TO LEAD.

WHEN WE REALIZE THE HOLINESS OF GOD, WE QUICKLY REALIZE HOW FAR SHORT WE FALL. WHY DO WE EXPECT OTHERS TO MEASURE UP TO OUR 'STANDARD' WHEN WE FALL SO SHORT OF GOD'S STANDARD?

Let's face it, it's hard to like everybody. But as believers we are *commanded* to love one another. Our love for one another should be an overflow of our love for Jesus Christ. There's no question some people are difficult to like and interact with. But truly loving them should not be difficult when we realize what Christ did for us— when there's no way we deserved it! "We love, because He first loved us." (1 John 4:19).

We need to demonstrate honor to each person God has chosen to place on this earth, whether or not *we* think they deserve it. That's not our call! What an opportunity God gives us! He calls *us* to demonstrate His unconditional acceptance by loving and accepting others *through* their failures or in spite of their differences.

As Christians, we shouldn't be constantly comparing ourselves to others— trying to see who's 'best'. We don't need to be concerned about whether we are as rich, as cool, as smart, or as strong as the next guy. When we elevate ourselves, we have nowhere but down to look at others. When we view others as 'beneath' us, we are in immediate danger of bullying them.

This is what the Lord says: "Don't let the wise boast in their wisdom, or the powerful boast in their power, or the rich boast in their riches. But those who wish to boast should boast in this alone: that they truly know me and understand that I am the Lord who demonstrates unfailing love and who brings justice and righteousness to the earth, and that I delight in these things. I, the Lord, have spoken!" *Jeremiah 9:23-24 (NLT)*

If we as believers boast in knowing the Lord who "demonstrates unfailing love and who brings justice and righteousness to the earth," our hearts will refuse to belittle others or participate in bullying in any form.

Rather than trying to 'measure up' or be at the top of this world's standards, what we should be looking for is evidence that our lives are filled with the Spirit of God Himself. Listen as one of the greatest Christians who ever lived (the Apostle Paul) describes a Spirit-filled life and see if this sounds like *your* character:

"But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control." *Galatians 5:22 (NLT)*

Would your friends say these qualities describe you?

Verses 25-26 go even further: "Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. Let us not become conceited, or provoke one another, or be jealous of one another." (Do you think maybe Paul had read that Cain and Abel story?)

DO YOU THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK? HAVE YOU EVER ASKED GOD TO HELP YOU CONTROL YOUR TONGUE? ASK GOD TO HELP YOU SAY THE RIGHT THINGS. REMEMBER, YOUR TONGUE HAS JUST AS MUCH POWER TO BLESS AND ENCOURAGE AS IT DOES TO TEAR DOWN. WHAT IF YOU WERE KNOWN FOR THE POSITIVE THINGS YOU ARE ALWAYS SAYING TO OTHERS?

JESUS WAS ONCE TEACHING HIS DISCIPLES ON MATTERS OF THE HEART. (MATTHEW 15) THE PHARISEES WERE CONDEMNING THE DISCIPLES FOR NOT FOLLOWING THE RELIGIOUS TRADITION. BUT JESUS SAID IT'S NOT WHAT WE DO (OR DON'T DO) ON THE OUTSIDE THAT DEFILES US. IT'S THE OTHER WAY AROUND. IT IS THE CONDITION OF OUR HEART THAT CONTROLS HOW WE ACT- THE CHOICES WE MAKE- WHAT WE DO AND SAY. SO IF YOU WANT TO KNOW WHY YOU ACT A CERTAIN WAY, CHECK YOUR HEART!

WORDS ARE POWERFUL. TAKE THEM SERIOUSLY! OUR WORDS ARE A REFLECTION OF WHAT'S INSIDE!

We can research, analyze and try to remedy the problem of bullying through many avenues, but when we read the Bible, we quickly realize that bullying is a *spiritual* problem. To try to address it any other way is futile. It's like trying to put a band-aid on a growing cancer. How we treat one another is a matter of the heart. So we must dig past the outside layers of our actions and deal with the condition of our heart.

WHEN WE TRULY HAVE A SENSE OF WONDER AND AWE THAT GOD WOULD LOVE US, FORGIVE US, AND ACCEPT US, ONLY THEN CAN WE EVEN BEGIN TO LOOK AT OTHERS WITH THE SAME LOVE AND COMPASSION.

“A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. What you say flows from what is in your heart.”
Luke 6:45 (NLT)

The attitudes and actions of a bully have no place in the life of a Christ-follower. If you feel tempted to bully someone, stop. Remember the compassion and acceptance God has shown you. That is the first step toward respecting those around us. We have been the recipients of *great mercy*.

If you are *being* bullied, find your worth in Christ alone. When you do, the words of a bully will fall meaningless and lose power. Don't be afraid to ask for help and support but find your security in Christ *alone*. He created you. He loves you. He *treasures* you.

IF YOU HAVE EVER BEEN BULLIED AND GOD BROUGHT YOU THROUGH, USE THE EXPERIENCE TO HELP OTHERS. GOD EQUIPS US TO BE ABLE TO BRING HIS COMFORT TO OTHERS WHO MAY GO THROUGH SIMILAR EXPERIENCES. “HE COMFORTS US IN ALL OUR TROUBLES SO THAT WE CAN COMFORT OTHERS. WHEN THEY ARE TROUBLED, WE WILL BE ABLE TO GIVE THEM THE SAME COMFORT GOD HAS GIVEN US.”
2 CORINTHIANS 1:4

“ALL TOO OFTEN, THE CONTROVERSIAL NATURE OF ISSUES GRAB THE SPOTLIGHT-BUT THERE ARE HURTING PEOPLE LIVING IN THE SHADOWS WHO NEED PRACTICAL HELP AND COMPASSIONATE ENCOURAGEMENT.”
-CHAMBERS, A BULLYING VICTIM (FACEBOOK)

Pray:

“God, thank you for giving us clear teaching in your Word about how we are to treat one another. Forgive us for the times we have looked with disrespect on one of your children. Forgive us for fighting for *our* rights and plotting to get even because of our self-centeredness. God, continue to build the character of Christ in us. Fill us with the strength of the Holy Spirit so we can be like Jesus and not seek to retaliate when someone wrongs us. Look at our hearts and show us any hatred hidden there. Remove it and clean us up so we can show others the way to the unconditional love of Jesus Christ.”

GOD CREATED FEELINGS. HE UNDERSTANDS US. HIS PRESENCE WITHIN US IS OUR GREATEST SOURCE OF HELP IN DEALING WITH OUR FEELINGS AND DOING THE WISE THING.

PRACTICALLY, HOW CAN YOU HELP?

- INTERVENE DIRECTLY, BY SAYING, “STOP!”
- PROVIDE SUPPORT TO THE PERSON BEING BULLIED.
- DON'T JOIN THE BULLYING IN ANY WAY.
- ALERT AN ADULT.

You may choose to break here and lead the students to participate in several of the provided activities. If so, come back here to end the session with this passage.

2 Corinthians 5:14-21: (NLT)

“Either way, Christ’s love controls us. Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life. He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them.

“So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now! This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ.

“And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people’s sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. **So we are Christ’s ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, ‘Come back to God!’** For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.”

REMEMBER,

- **GOD CALLS US TO BE DIFFERENT.**
- **GOD CAN USE YOU TO STOP BULLYING AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE.**
- **BE A LEADER. SHOW THE LOVE OF CHRIST.**

This is our calling– to be God’s representatives to a hurting world. So, what kind of representative are you? How can we bully or mistreat others and still have a voice to fulfill this mission?

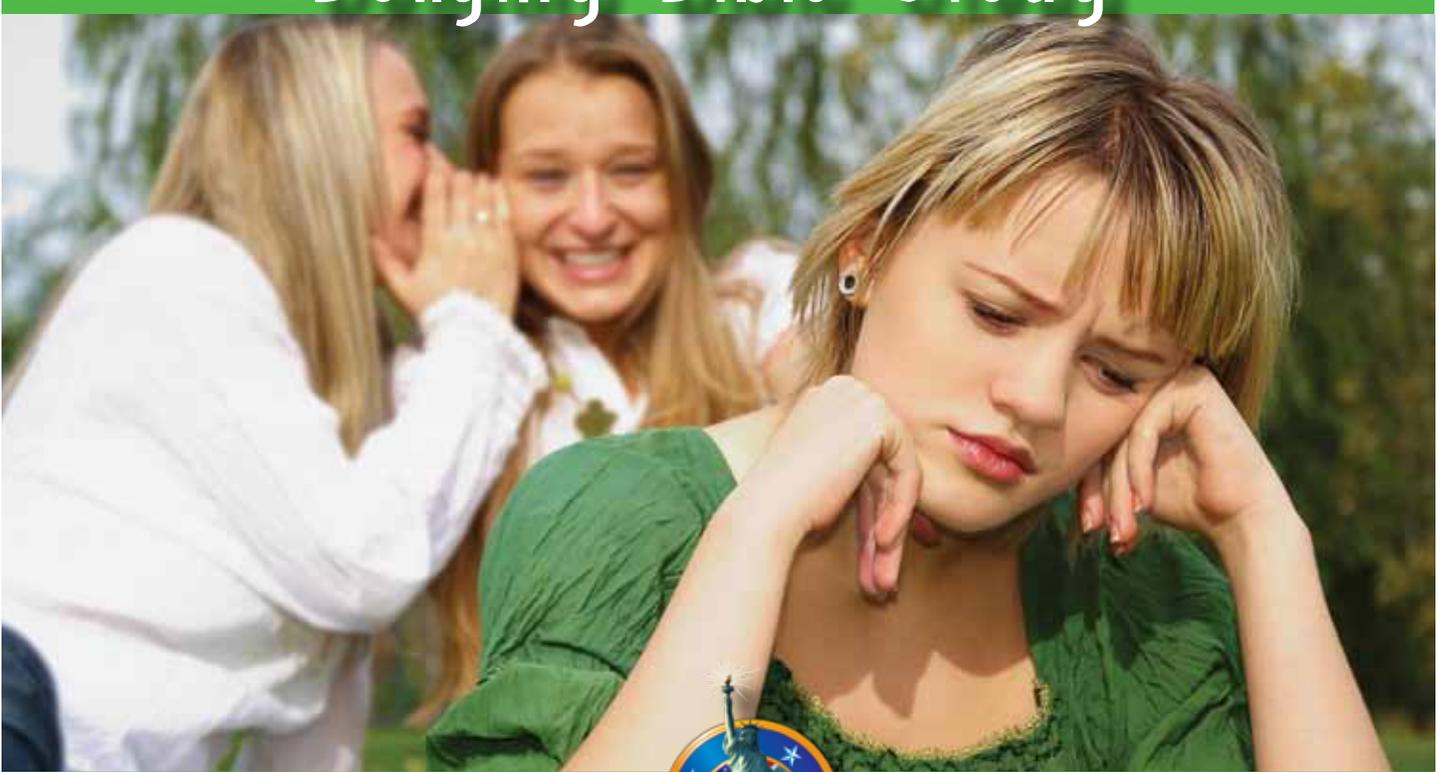
“And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.”
Colossians 3:17 (NLT)

As believers, we must stand strong on God’s principles found in the Bible. At the same time, we must not ignore the *people* caught up in the issues of our day who desperately need a Savior– our

Savior, Jesus Christ. Ask God to help you see each person with *His* eyes. Remember, He sees all the way to the heart.

GOD COMMANDS US TO PRAY FOR OUR ENEMIES. WHEN YOU SINCERELY BEGIN TO PRAY FOR YOUR ENEMIES, YOUR WILL REALIZE YOUR OWN HEART BEGINS TO CHANGE. YOU CAN’T HATE AND PRAY AT THE SAME TIME. IT MAY BE HARD TO IMAGINE, BUT AS YOU CONSISTENTLY PRAY, EVEN FOR SOMEONE YOU THINK YOU HATE, GOD WILL GIVE YOU A LOVE FOR THEM. AND THE REALLY COOL THING IS, AS GOD BEGINS TO RESHAPE YOUR HEART, THE OTHER PERSON WILL SEE IT AND MAY CHANGE HIS ATTITUDE TOWARDS YOU. GOD WANTS TO WORK IN THEIR LIVES TOO! BUT WHETHER THEY LET HIM OR NOT, GOD CAN WORK A MIRACLE IN YOUR LIFE AND WILL USE YOUR ATTITUDE TO SHOW THE WORLD WHAT A DIFFERENCE HIS LOVE CAN MAKE!

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