

Dealing with Bullying—How We Respond as Christians

Saint Louis, MO—Very few weeks go by when our newspapers, news broadcasts, and Twitter feeds aren't filled with stories of bullying in schools, on the Internet, and even at home. As this issue grows, people across the country are working together to put an end to bullying. In fact, October is [National Bullying Prevention Month](#).

Instituted by [Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights \(PACER\)](#), National Bullying Prevention Month is a time when communities can unite nationwide to raise awareness of bullying prevention through events, activities, outreach, and education.

As communities unite, [Concordia Publishing House \(CPH\)](#) the premier publisher of the [Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod](#) is reaching out and discussing with parents, teachers, and Christians across the country the two ever-foreboding questions: “Why does bullying happen?” and “How do we, as Christians, respond?”

“Bullying is an evil in our children’s lives,” said Pam Nummela, an editor at CPH. “Bullying is about devaluing people who God loves, and it shows that sin and evil do exist, even in young children.”

In fact, the statistics show that about 160,000 children miss school every day out of fear of being bullied. Even worse, around 90 percent of children in 4th through 8th grade reported themselves as victims of some kind of bullying ([Bullying Statistics, http://www.bullyingstatistics.org/](http://www.bullyingstatistics.org/)).

Although 90% may seem shocking, the statistic implies that almost every student has experienced bullying at some point.

“Often students would rather live with the bullying than get labeled as a tattler or face future ridicule from peers,” said Rev. Edward Engelbrecht. “Parents, teachers, and friends need to give children encouragement to speak up for themselves, since many are afraid of having others view them as weak or as tattlers.”

According to Christian parenting experts at Concordia, not only do adults need to encourage victims to speak up, they also need to address the children who are doing the bullying themselves.

“Parents don’t want to admit their kids are capable of bullying, or, they would rather believe that the issues are innocuous,” said Peggy Kuethe, an editor at CPH. “That’s just not the case. Whenever one person acts with dominance over another there is hurt.”

Although acknowledging that your child might be a bully is a difficult pill to swallow, Kuethe reminds parents that children have been picking on one another for generations, since Cain and Abel and Jacob and Esau. It is a result of our sinful nature.

Nonetheless, bullying is an issue that cannot be swept under the rug.

“Adults need to apply a firm yet ultimately merciful hand in dealing with these situations,” said

Engelbrecht. He added that “often times bullies are bullies because someone has or is mistreating them.”

For this reason, Concordia Publishing House’s experts recommend addressing negative behaviors in a Christ-like way—focusing on repentance, forgiveness, and ultimately, the fact that it is perfectly okay not to follow the ‘in crowd’ into negative behaviors.

“We’re all subject to temptation, especially when we follow that pack mentality,” said Kuethe. “That’s why it is so important to use these issues as a learning experience.”

“We need to share the message of Christ with these children—the message that there’s always an opportunity for repentance and forgiveness.”

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More Information:

For resources that can be used to address bullying, visit cph.org. There you can find [God, I Need to Talk to You About...Bullying](#) (a forgiveness based book for 4 to 8 year olds), [Battered and Bullied](#) (a downloadable Bible study for young adults) and [Long Distance Diss](#) (a downloadable Bible study for young adults about cyberbullying).