

BULLYING – A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

“Any one who claims to be in the light, but hates his brother is still in the darkness.” 1 John 2:9

The Bible warns us that: ***“Envy rots the bones”*** Proverbs 14:30 and ***“Pride only breeds quarrels”*** Proverbs 13:10

The Word of God warns us of ***“The ruthless...mockers...with an eye for evil...”*** Isaiah 29:20

The Bible tells us of Esau who held a grudge against his brother Jacob (Genesis 27:41), and of Joseph’s brothers who hated and bullied their younger brother to such an extent that they betrayed him and sold him into slavery to Egypt. ***“They hated him and could not speak a kind word to him”*** Genesis 37:4.

The Lord Jesus taught: ***“The world hates Me because I testify that what it does is evil.”*** John 7:7

“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated Me first.” John 15:18

“Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.”
1 John 3:15

The Bible records cases where permissive parenting enabled bullies to rise up, such as Eli’s sons, Jacob’s sons, and King David’s son, Absalom. King David’s great love for his son, Absalom, led him to overlook the many failings and weaknesses of Absalom, dealing graciously with him, even after his crime of murdering his half-brother. Meanwhile, Absalom’s hatred for his father stirred up such dissension that it resulted in intense conflict and even dragged Israel into civil war. Many thousands died in the ensuing conflict (2 Samuel 18:7 – 8).

Almost as hurtful as the cruelty of bullies, is the sense of betrayal, which many feel when those that they thought were friends remain silent and inactive on the sidelines. Like the priest and the levite who walked by on the other side of the road, while the man remained bleeding on the ground, all too many friends and fellow students choose to keep their distance, or stand silent and inactive on the sidelines (Luke 10:30 – 33).

This is the very opposite of loving our neighbour as ourself and doing unto others as you would have them do to you (Luke 6:31).

There are always bullies and I had my share of taunts, teasing, being kicked, tripped, poked with injection needles while at school assembly, and being beaten black and blue by gangs at school. Now that I have children of my own, I have to help them handle the inevitable bullies they face as well. What has always concerned me is the unwillingness of many parents and teachers to recognise, or deal with, their children or students who are vicious bullies.

“Fear of man will prove to be a snare...” Proverbs 29:25

“Do not be afraid of any man...” Deuteronomy 1:17

“But the cowardly...shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” Revelation 21:8

Educationists are reporting that violence amongst school children is increasing. Many teachers are complaining about the violent character and destructive habits of so many of the children they are assigned to work with. As one put it: ***“They come saturated with the popular culture, foul mouthed language, resentful attitudes toward anyone in authority and arrogant disdain for learning. Their parents give them no support...”***

As Norman Cona, the headmaster of Thembaletu High School in George said: *“Not a day goes by when a fight doesn’t break out. Children no longer respect their parents, teachers, one another or even animals.”*

Dr. Harriet Klopper, a criminologist in Pretoria, has concluded that the media is playing a key role: *“It is estimated that children see more than 8,000 murders and 100,000 violent acts on T.V. before they reach high school.”* Up to 80% of computer games aimed at youngsters between the ages of 8 and 14 realistically portray blood, beheadings, mutilation and death in graphic colour, with all of the associated sound effects. *“And heroes who die in these games come to life again, which teach children that violence has no consequences.”*

Do you approve of adultery and fornication? Would you enjoy watching criminals beat their victims senseless? Could you regard graphic violence or brutal murders entertaining? Would you want your children to learn from immoral or occultic teachers?

Of course not! We would be indignant at any such suggestion.

Yet, how often don’t we spend time unthinkingly watching such evils on T.V? And how often do our children sit in front of the T.V and watch such vile and violent programmes? Have you noticed how many of the children’s cartoons depict graphic violence, immorality and occultism?

Which of us would allow a stranger to come into our home and rearrange the furniture? Yet, daily we allow strangers on the television, or through magazines and music, to reorganise our thoughts. Strangers have become the greatest influence on the mental and emotional development of our children – through T.V. And superficial, sensational and immoral material predominates in the modern entertainment industry. It is producing an increasingly selfish, superficial, mindless and immoral society.

All of this is most valid and needs to be faced up to and dealt with, along with the violent videos, computer games and angry, rebellious, aggressive rap, rock, and hip hop *“music.”* One also needs to look at the role of the state schools themselves.

“A tree is known by its fruit” (Matt. 12:33). By the time the average child completes high school, they will have spent 15,000 hours in school, watched between 15,000 to 30,000 hours of television and listened to over 10,000 hours of music.

The influence of parents and churches in the upbringing of most children today is declining at an alarming rate. The disintegration of many families, absentee parents and a general absence of discipline have created a vacuum. Violent and immoral films and videos, throbbing pulsating noise masquerading as *“music”* and pornographic magazines, websites and SMS sites are filling the void in the aimless and meaningless lives of all too many young people.

“Since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, He gave them over to a depraved mind...” Romans 1:28

What we see influences what we think and what we think influences what we become and what we do. Ideas have consequences. Actions flow from thought patterns. What form of education is molding your child’s thought patterns? What entertainment and news media is filling their minds?

“Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.” Ephesians 5:15 – 16

The selfishness and short sightedness of modern society is seen in litter strewn, graffiti vandalised communities. The filth, pollution and destruction of the environment in which our children play and grow up is also reflected in the self mutilation and body piercing of a growing number of confused young people. Pierced noses and eye brows, tongue studs and belly rings, along with acid rock and rap should be a wake up call to any parent. But, incredibly, all too many parents seem oblivious to the sullen, self destructive,

rebellious attitudes that go along with this kind of body mutilating, mind rotting and soul destroying sub-culture.

“Another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what He had done...they followed and worshipped various gods...they provoked the Lord to anger.” Judges 2:10 – 12

In the face of these threats to our young people, how have the schools responded? Have they taken the opportunity to shape minds, morals and characters to love their neighbour as themselves, doing unto others as they would want to be done unto? Are our schools teaching respect for God, respect for parents, respect for people and property?

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” Psalm 111:10

Or have our schools been pouring fuel on the fire by teaching that man is a product of evolutionary chance? By replacing Bible education with sex education, removing prayer and tolerating pornography? Teaching that violence is an acceptable solution to the problem of an *“unwanted pregnancy”* by killing the preborn baby through abortion? By promoting situation ethics, values clarification, alternative lifestyles, self-actualization and sexual experimentation? Effectively - to use and abuse others for our own convenience?

“The fool says in his heart, ‘there is no God’. They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good.” Psalm 14:1

In a sense, the violence confronting us in our schools today are an inevitable result of rejecting the truth of Creation, absolute standards of right and wrong, the Ten Commandments, the teachings and golden rule of Christ, and the meaning, purpose and ethical foundations that comes from Christian education.

Evolution, with its *“from goo to the zoo to you”*, *“from mud to monkeys to man”*, *“a whole of time and a whole lot of nothing made everything”* science fiction fairy tale with its *“survival of the fittest”* breeds bullies.

Educationalists today are saying *“At school kids should be taught exactly what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, how to treat others with respect and how to insist on their rights without infringing on the rights of others. All schools should have psychologists to help...kids who have become involved in crime or violence often need intensive, long term therapy...emotional intelligence tests...”* They are deluding themselves if they think that this can possibly work. It is secular Humanist education with its *“you come from nothing, you are going nowhere, life is meaningless. There are no moral absolutes”*, philosophy, cannot possibly even understand the problem of bullying, let alone deal with it effectively.

“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.” Colossians 2:8

Historically, only Christianity with its teaching on the inherent sinfulness of man can diagnose the problem, and prescribe the solution.

“These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates.” Deuteronomy 6:7 – 9

We as parents are responsible before God to disciple our children. From the time we wake up to the time we go to sleep the Word of God is to govern our conversation and our actions. At home, or on the road, we are to talk about God’s Word. We are to teach our children to memorise Scripture, especially the Ten Commandments. Everything we do with our hands, or think with our minds, is to be ruled by the Word of God. And our goal is to ensure that: ***“Your children and their children after them may fear the Lord your God as long as you live by keeping all His decrees and commands.”*** Deuteronomy 6:10

1. Are you doing everything possible to ensure your child, or children, are learning to love and obey God?
2. Are you disciplining your children, or grandchildren, by instruction and by example?
3. Do you regularly pray for your children?
4. Do you regularly pray with your children?
5. Are you regularly reading the Scriptures to your children?
6. Are you training your children in Bible memorisation?
7. Are you bringing your children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4)?

Nearly 500 years ago, the great German Reformer, Martin Luther, warned: **“I am much afraid that schools will prove to be wide gates to hell unless they diligently labour to explain the Holy Scriptures, engraving them on the hearts of the youth. I advise no-one to place his child where the Scriptures do not reign paramount. Every institution in which men are not constantly occupied with the Word of God must become corrupt.”**

“Know therefore, that the Lord your God is God: He is the faithful God, keeping His Covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love Him and keep His Commandments.” Deuteronomy 7:9

Dr. Peter Hammond is the author of *Biblical Principles for Africa* and *The Discipleship Handbook*.
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