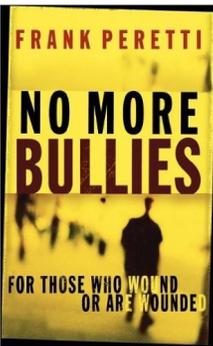


f e a r s w e f a c e

The Fear of Ridicule

The fear of ridicule is related to getting bad criticism, of not projecting a good enough image. Most people have had “stage fright” at some time. We don’t want the audience mocking us with laughter or, in the worst cases, booing.

But ridicule also takes on a very nasty and dangerous form called “bullying.”



Popular Christian author Frank Peretti describes, in excruciating detail, the abuse he endured in childhood in his book *No More Bullies: For Those Who Wound or Are Wounded*. His story puts human flesh on the current rise in school bullying.

When the moist gym towel snapped, it caught the prepubescent boy between the legs. Frank was the smallest and weakest boy in the locker room, and his tormentors laughed when he cried out in pain. Raising a knee to protect his groin, Frank slipped, falling toward a bench of amused onlookers. Impulsively pushed away, he fell, naked, into another wet body.

“Get off me, you fag!” barked one.

Another demanded, “Hey, squirt, you looking for trouble?”

Peretti asks, “Where does it start? At some point in a child’s life he becomes the inferior one, the different one, the ugly one, the fat one. For whatever reason that shapes the way he interacts. He becomes retiring, quiet—either that, or overly compensating and defensive. It’s like painting a sign around your neck: ‘Beat up on me because you’ll get away with it.’ You begin to expect to be treated that way, and the other kids pick up on that like an animal smelling prey.”

For Discussion

Why is it so easy—so much a part of human nature—to be mean to somebody else? What does it do for us?

“THE FEAR OF RIDICULE” TAKING STRIDES - FEAR SERIES - AUGUST 31—SEPTEMBER 6, 2015

Encounter

Read God's Word so that He can speak to you.

1 Peter 3:8-16; 4:1-6

Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened." But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do-- living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.

Explore

God's Word by asking questions of what you saw.

The notes that follow may help you think through these questions.

1)

Bullying involves

Aggressive behavior intended to cause harm or distress (not accidental)

Ongoing, repeated

An imbalance of power, physical or otherwise—it targets the small, the weak, those who look or act a little different from the crowd, those who have difficulty making and keeping friends

- What are some of the ways that bullying is expressed?
- What are the symptoms of a victim of bullying? In other words, what things might you see if your son or daughter were the victim of bullying?

Explore (cont.)

2)

A victim of bullying is often reluctant to tell anyone for fear that nobody will do anything or of retaliation. How can you encourage a possible victim of bullying to talk about it? What questions might you ask? How would you ask them?

3)

What would you do if you are told your child is the perpetrator of bullying?

4)

The most common cause that creates a bully, is some abuse or unresolved pain that has distorted the bully's self-image and understanding of how to relate. One of the most powerful things a bully can have that will change his/her actions is someone who will come alongside to change his/her heart and self-image. That involves giving and modeling the strength of acceptance, love, humility and forgiveness (1 Peter 3:8-9). How do the relationships between mom and dad and parents to children create bullies or change bullies?

5)

Targets of bullying are often seen by bullies as weak, without power. Learning to fight is not the kind of strength that heals—it only creates your own aggression. Rather, it is strength of character and internal confidence that removes the fear of ridicule and the power of bullies.

- What is the strength of character described in 1 Peter 3:8-16? Where does it come from? How do you develop it?
- What is the confidence of acceptance and self-image described in 1 Peter 4:1-6?
- How can parents and other adults help children see and develop this strength and confidence?

6)

1 Peter 3:8-9 says that when we are hurt, we are to return the opposite. What does that look like when there is bullying?

- How is it possible to do this? How do we learn to do this? How might you help your child?

Notes on the Passage

(Adapted from Dr. Thomas Constable Bible Study Notes)

3:8 - "Harmonious" implies cooperation when there are individual differences. These differences can have a pleasing rather than an irritating effect. We should be able to work together—as the different parts of an athlete's body work together—to reach our common goal victoriously.

"Sympathetic" means suffering with another by entering into, and sharing the feelings of others, rather than by having compassion on another person from a distance. It implies bearing one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2).

"Brotherly" looks at the special love that unites believers (cf. 1:22; 2:17). "Kindhearted" means feeling affectionately, compassionately, and deeply for someone else. The person who is "humble in spirit" is willing to put someone else's interests and needs before his or her own (cf. Phil. 2:3-4). This would apply to God's purposes as well, not just the needs of other people.

9-12 - We should return positive, good deeds ("giving a blessing") for evil ones (2:23; cf. Matt. 5:9; Rom. 12:9-18; 1 Cor. 4:12; 1 Thess. 5:15). The basis for this response to others, even our enemies, is the mercy we have received and continue to receive from God. God blessed us when we were His enemies (Rom. 5:10). This springs from an attitude of forgiveness. It has its focus on God and the promises of His Word. Instead of reacting in anger, we respond with forgiveness. The consequences of taking this approach in interpersonal relationships are: getting a blessing, having a full life, and walking with God (vv. 9-12).

13-14 - If God will punish those who do evil (v. 12), "who" will "harm" those who do "good"? God will certainly not, is the implication, and under normal circumstances no other person will either. Nevertheless, people are perverse and we do experience *suffering* for doing good ("for the sake of righteousness") sometimes. In such cases, we need to focus our attention on the *blessing* that will come to us for enduring persecution when we do good (cf. Matt. 5:10; Luke 1:48). Peter quoted the Lord's exhortation to Isaiah, when the prophet learned that the people of Judah and Jerusalem would not respond to his ministry positively (Isa. 8:12-13). God promised to take care of Isaiah, and He did.

15 - Rather than being fearful, we should commit ourselves to Christ by purposing to continue to live for Him. We should also have the *reason* we are living as we do on the tip of our tongues ("ready to make a defense"), so that whenever an opportunity arises, we can explain why we behave as we do (cf. Acts 22:1; 25:16). Our inquisitive questioner may not ask about our "hope" *per se*. Nevertheless our "hope" is the root cause of our behavior, and should be the subject of our answer. We should give this answer ("defense") with a *gentle spirit* to those asking, and in a *reverent spirit* toward God.

16 - A "good conscience" is possible when we know our suffering has happened in spite of "good behavior," not because of bad behavior (cf. 2:19; 3:4, 6).

4:1 – Jesus committed Himself to accomplishing God's will, so believers must commit themselves to the same purpose (cf. 3:15). Since, in our union with Jesus, we have been identified with His death and resurrection, we must put sin behind us and live a clean life (cf. Rom. 6:1-11).

Notes on the Passage (cont.)

2 - "Time in the flesh" refers to one's mortal lifetime on earth, not to carnal living (cf. 3:18; 4:6); Peter was therefore urging his readers not to live according to the "lusts of men" during their remaining "time in the flesh" or lifetime.

3-4 - Note the prominence of sexual and alcohol related activities here (as in Rom. 13:13-14; Gal. 5:19-21). This verse, along with others (e.g., 1:14; 2:10), suggests that Peter was writing to a predominantly Gentile audience. Some of the persecution Peter's readers were experiencing was due to their unwillingness to continue in their old lifestyle with their unsaved friends ("they are surprised that you do not run with them . . .").

5 - Peter reminded his readers that God would condemn their unsaved friends' behavior ("they will give account to Him"). Consequently they should not return to it. The Judge was already "ready" to "judge" the physically "living" and the physically "dead" (cf. Dan. 3:15 [LXX]; Acts 21:13; 2 Cor. 12:14). Peter viewed those who slander Christians for their lifestyles as really slandering God, who called us out of darkness into the light.

6 - Christians had "preached" the gospel to other people who had become Christians, who had already died. Even though these brethren had experienced judgment for their sins by dying physically, they lived on in a new spiritual sphere of life since they were believers (cf. 3:18). Physical death is sin's last effect on believers during their earthly lives.

Going Further

One thing we can do to train ourselves to remember, is to memorize a part of what our Father has said to us. The Holy Spirit can use this to change our thinking so that our "heads" are more like Jesus.

This week, memorize 1 Peter 3:9 .