

[**Author Note:** Begin this message by inviting several students up on stage to win a prize. The prize can be anything: candy, gift card, maybe even a cowbell.]

Who can do the best cow impression? *[select a winner]*

Now, who can do the best impression of a stupid cow? *[select a winner]*

[**Author Note:** At this point, I told a story about my first experience with a bully. You could share your own testimony of being bullied, or maybe even speak with a student ahead of time who wants to share a short testimony. Don’t underestimate the power of letting students speak to students.]

I want to tell you about my first bully. I was just a young, redheaded first grader. I had my Superman lunch box, Ninja Turtles backpack, and jeans with elastic around the ankles. In a word, I was “cool.” I got on the bus for the first time and sat down among a sea of kids who I didn’t know at all.

Within five minutes of the ride to school, an older fourth grader sat down beside me. Now, I don’t remember this kid’s name, so we’ll just call him Mr. Jerkface. At first, I thought Mr. Jerkface wanted to be friends, so I stuck out my hand. “Hi, I’m John.” “Yeah,” he replied, “I don’t really care what your name is. What do you have in your lunch box?”

I immediately wanted to cry, because I knew what was going on, but there was no one on that bus who even knew my name. So, I gave the kid my sandwich. Every day for two weeks, I gave that kid my sandwich. Until one day, my mom caught on to what was going on. See, she knew the kid and was friends with his mother.

One day, my mom and Mr. Jerkface’s mom came on the bus together and chewed out that kid so bad in front of everyone. He cried in embarrassment. I smiled in victory. I know when you’re older, having your mom fight your battles is kind of lame, but I was only in first grade. My mom was my hero. It was like watching Wonder Woman step on to your bus.

Today, bullying is different. Really, really different. In fact, because of this technology-driven world, bullying is becoming kind of a huge deal.

Before cell phones and social media, if you wanted to be a bully, you needed to have the guts to get away with something on the back of a bus or during lunch. But, now, all you need is your thumbs.

What does bullying look like IRL—in real life? What does bullying look like online?

Believe it or not, online bullying has actually been called, by experts, the worst kind of bullying, because it’s done online where it’s permanent and public for everyone to see. And because it’s so easy to do and so anonymous, it fuels a bully’s desire to do it.

You know, I have to admit that it was pretty cool to see my mom go Wonder Woman on Mr. Jerkface, to see and hear what she thought of someone who would pick on her son. But I also have a heavenly Father, and you have the same heavenly Father. And today, I’m going to ask you a question that maybe you’ve never wondered before … what does God think of bullies?

**The world “bully” doesn’t appear in the Bible.** Instead, in the Old Testament, God likes to use the word “ba’ar” when he’s talking about someone who is acting like a bully. “Ba’ar” means “fool, brutish, a total lack of reason, understanding or judgement or”—(and this is my favorite part)— “like cattle or stupid.”

Here are two passages that use the word “ba’ar:”

**Proverbs 12:1**

*“Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid.”*

Isn’t it true that bullies don’t like to be told they’re doing wrong? I know Mr. Jerkface didn’t like it! I mean, have you ever seen a bully get corrected? What do they immediately do? They deny it! Or, they say something stupid like, “Well, he started it.”

And bullies don’t love knowledge. They don’t want to know about you, learn your name, learn your interests, or anything about you. And they definitely don’t care to learn more about God. And usually, bullies are trying to get something, like a sandwich, that they didn’t earn or deserve. They don’t have the discipline to work for something or try to make friends. They hate discipline.

The truth is, bullies are usually acting out their insecurities and their failures when they’re attacking someone.

**Psalm 73:22**

*I was brutish and ignorant; I was like a beast toward you.*

This verse is the psalmist Asaph speaking to God after he had become very bitter with life to the point of acting pushy and arrogant toward God.

You know, another funny thing about bullies is that they attack people who have done nothing to hurt them or deserve it. In fact, if you’ve ever been bullied, you’ve probably wondered that very thing or even said that very thing: “Why are you doing this?”

The truth is, even though it seems like they’re attacking you, bullies are really acting out toward God. They’re attacking God’s image. That’s what sin is. Sin is a direct attack on God’s commands and God’s image. It might hurt man, but it’s against God.

So, what sin am I committing if I bully someone? I’m breaking the whole thing! Jesus summed up the commandments into two great commandments. He said, “First, Love God with all your heart, soul and mind. And second, love your neighbor as yourself.” When someone bullies they’re not just hating their neighbor, they’re also hating God.

**Imagine a Stupid Cow**

So, what have we learned? We’ve learned that when the Bible wants to describe a bully, it uses the word “ba’ar” to describe someone who is acting arrogantly and ignorantly and brutishly like a wild beast or cow. So, basically when we’re talking about bullies, what we need to imagine is a stupid, dumb cow trying to attack God.

**Let’s apply this to bullies for a moment.**

It’s completely possible that some of you have been bullied. But, it’s also possible that some of you have BEEN bullies. If you have, or if you are right now, I want to speak to you a warning from God’s Word. You need to repent and come to Christ. You should know you are not on God’s side with this one. Look with me at Proverbs 6.

**Proverbs 6:16–19**

*There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.*

In this passage, God says seven things that He hates so much that they make him want to vomit.

**“Haughty eyes”** - This is a phrase that describes someone who is full of pride and arrogant, thinking that they are better than someone else. Experts who have studied bullying tell us that this is basically the heart of bullying—it’s trying to claim dominance over someone else.

**“Lying tongue”** - When it comes to cyber bullying, this is usually what takes place first: a lie is said about someone else to garner response.

**“Hands that shed innocent blood”** - You might be saying, “Wait a minute … just because I bullied someone doesn’t mean I killed them!” But, Jesus did talk about the spirit of the law, and how hating someone is basically murdering someone in your heart.

**“A heart that devises wicked plans”** - In cyber bullying, there is even more thought being put into hurting another person, because the bully has to actually plan out what they’re going to say, post, share, etc. Cyber bullying is almost never “off the cuff.”

“**Feet that make haste to run to evil”** - Or another way of putting this could be, “Fingers that make haste to post evil.”

“**A false witness that breathes out lies”** - Yeah, that’s just lying again. That’s how much God hates it. Double vomit for lying!

“**One who sows discord among brothers”** - Nothing does this like cyber bullying. At school, people have to actually be at the event or fight or on the bus in order to rally to a side and pick a team. Online, anyone can log on at any time of day, read some comments, and join in on the hate. Words and names can spread so quickly to others.

So if you are bullying someone, in whatever form, know that you are perfectly fitting the description for what God hates! Don’t be a stupid cow that God hates so much He wants to vomit (God’s words, not mine). Instead, repent to God and ask forgiveness.

God has a rich history of taking bullies, like Saul/Paul, and turning them into servants for Himself. There’s a famous hymn that says, “O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood, To every believer the promise of God; **The vilest offender who truly believes**, That moment from Jesus a pardon receives.” For even the vilest and cruelest bully, there’s love and redemption in God. But that doesn’t come without repentance, that doesn’t come without admitting your sin and turning to Christ, submitting to Him.

Listen, if you are a bully and the Spirit is convicting you and showing you that, you need to know something. We love you. I mean, you might be willing to stick our head in a toilet or whatever, but we still love you. We love you so much that we want you to experience God’s love, not His judgment.

[**Author Note:** If you know that you actually have bullies in your group, definitely be careful about how you present this. Remember that the gospel is all about presenting the law AND grace. God has lots of grace for bullies, even the worst bullies.]

**How to Deal with a Bully**

Alright, so that was a warning to bullies. But what about for those of us who have been bullied or are suffering through that right now. What do we do? How do we handle people like that in a way that honors God?

Well, first off, don’t call them a stupid cow! God’s Word has already done that. Let God’s Word do the name calling, not you.

First, Let Jesus be your defender, and run to Him.

**Proverbs 18:10**

*The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe.*

The name of the Lord is a strong tower. Pray first, and remember what we talked about last week—what you’re worth is determined by God and no one else! Don’t fight fire with fire! Jesus told Peter that those who live by the sword die by the sword. When it comes to dealing with bullies, it’s the same thing. You don’t need to sink to their level.

Second, I know it sounds crazy, but love them!

**Matthew 5:43–44**

*“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”*

When you fight hate with hate, or vulgar language with more vulgar language, all you do is throw more fuel onto the flame. Instead, do the exact opposite! Loving them is going to take all of the wind out of their sails. It’s going to empower you and deflate them.

It might seem crazy, but if a bully insults you online, just take a minute and think about something positive to say about them, and post that in response.

And finally, pray for them. You’ll find that it’s pretty hard to hate people you’re actively trying to pray for.

**Challenge: Jesus’s Anti-Bullying Campaign: LOVE BULLIES!**

I actually heard of a student at a youth group who started inviting bullies he knew at school to his youth group. The student’s mom thought he was crazy, but he replied back to her, “Mom, think about it. Of all the people that need to be at church, they need to be at church!” I want to challenge you to love a bully this week. Post something nice about them online, send them a kind text, or even invite them to church.

[**Author Note:** At this point, I actually showed a clip from Brooks Gibbs about how to deal with bullies. It’s a little funny and illustrates the power of fighting bullies with love. I prefaced this by pointing out that this is a secular guy who is showing this. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDjNcgb74zE>]

Let’s pray.

**Possible Discussion Questions**

1. What sort of bullying do you see the most of? Why do you think that kind of bullying is so popular?

2. What did you think of Brooks Gibbs’ advice for dealing with bullies? Do you think that would that work? Have you ever tried to show love to a bully?

3. Be honest—no judgement here, but have you ever been a bully before? What made you do it? What made you stop?