



# FROM BYSTANDER TO DISCIPLE

*7 ways to take action to stop bullying*

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**BULLYING SITUATIONS INVOLVE A BULLY, A VICTIM,** and often bystanders. A **BYSTANDER** aids the bully through acts of omission or commission. A bystander *looks away* or *actively encourages* the bully or personally *adds* abusive behavior. A bystander *overlooks* or *ignores* injustice, meanness, and cruelty.

It is easy to understand why we might act like a **bystander**. We want to mind our own business; we don't want to appear as a "goody-goody." We might want to be well thought of by the bully — or avoid being the next object of the bully's attention! We get afraid that others will turn on us; we may get hurt (physically or emotionally), or branded, or isolated. Wanting to be considered part of the "in crowd," we might laugh, cheer on the bully, add cruel words, or even kick, push, or physically attack the victim.

It is easy to understand these human reactions. Nevertheless, they are wrong: they are cowardly; and they fail to recognize what Jesus wants: "Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40).

A **DISCIPLE** hears the voice of Christ: "Do to others as you would have them do to you" (Luke 6:31). A disciple understands Jesus' message of love (*compassion, empathy, support*) and puts love into action. A disciple

is an *active witness* who stands up for peers and speaks out against injustice and cruel acts. A disciple will *not* condone or tolerate cruel behavior when he or she observes it or has firsthand knowledge of it.

Try these seven ways to practice discipleship when you see bullying happen:

1. Seek advice from a trusted adult. Explain that you are merely seeking advice and you do not want the adult to intervene.
2. Make meaningful, supportive eye contact with the victim.

## Student Questions:

- Recall a past instance of bullying that you witnessed. Reflect on the ideas in this newsletter.
- If you had a "do over," how would you handle yourself?
- How would you approach the bully?
- How would you tend to the victim?

3. Silently stand next to the victim.

4. Be assertive, calm, and confident — but not arrogant. Stand tall, make eye contact, address the bully by name, and express your position calmly and respectfully. Some suggestions for what to say:

- "There are more respectful ways to handle this disagreement."
- "Quit before this becomes a problem that you don't need."
- "Hey, guys! Give him a break. We all deserve a second chance."

5. Invite the victim to come with you to do an activity, take a walk, or share lunch.

6. When alone with the victim, express empathy: be willing to listen.

7. Privately talk to the bully and ask if there is any way that you can help heal the situation. **□**

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