

BULLYING

Darren Wright

“In the Habit” session for use with devozine meditations for September 22–28, 2014.

MAKING THE CONNECTION

“If you type *anti-bullying* into Google, you’ll never be at a loss for resources that explore the issue of bullying. There are videos, teacher resource packs, government funded resources, essays, personal stories, music. I don’t know why you need me to put anything together for you to discuss this particular issue. But then again—what about the time that Jesus was a bully? Have you ever worked through that?” —Darren

MEET THE WRITER

Darren Wright is a Uniting Church Education Worker serving in the Riverina Presbytery in New South Wales, Australia, as the Presbytery Youth and Children’s Ministry Worker. Darren has previously worked in congregational ministry, high school chaplaincy, and local government as a youth worker. He’s also been a petrol station attendant, a supermarket employee, a dairy manager, and a furniture sales person. His interests include music (Moby, Radiohead, Ben Harper, The National, Muse, All India Radio), film (*MegaMind*, *Harry Potter*, *How to Train your Dragon*, *Scott Pilgrim*), TV (*Chuck*, *Doctor Who*, *Big Bang Theory*, *Community*), theology, pop-culture, working with young people in at-risk areas, and the connections between church and theology and pop culture. Check out his blog at www.digitalorthodoxy.com.

PLUGGED IN

If you want to develop this session in other ways, here are a few resources that may be of help.

Books

- + *Bully For Them: Outstanding Australians on Hard Lessons Learned at School*, edited by Fiona Scott-Norman (<http://www.affirmpress.com.au/bully-for-them>). Twenty-two of Australia’s most talented and successful people talk about what it was like for them to be bullied.

- + *Willy the Wimp*, by Anthony Browne (<http://www.amazon.com/Willy-Wimp-Anthony-Browne/dp/1406318744>). This book is a charming allegory about being yourself. Children and adults alike will adore Willy and his earnest attempts to improve himself. It also has the potential to be a great discussion starter for conversations about media advertising, popular image and bullying. Also check out the video “Willy the Wimp, by Anthony Browne: School Animation” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O1Wou6mDra8>).

Other Resources

- + “Bullying. No Way!” an Australian schools education resource (<http://bullyingnoway.gov.au>)
- + “StopBullying.gov,” resources from the United States anti-bullying campaign (<http://www.stopbullying.gov>)
- + “It Gets Better Project” (<http://www.itgetsbetter.org>). The project’s mission is to let lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth know that it gets better and to inspire the changes needed to make it better for them. The project’s videos have a lot of anti-bullying content and are well worth exploring. [Check out these “It Gets Better” compilation videos: Celebrities Against Bullying (<http://youtu.be/LHesl-9Nun4>), Australian Comedians against Bullying (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DExEIBa9_VM&feature=youtu.be)]
- + *Consume: A youth magazine promoting positive health, love, and acceptance* includes “Bullying: Sarah’s Story,” beginning on page 60. (<https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/70155429/Consume%20Magazine%20Issue01.pdf>)
- + The Blob Tree (<http://www.blobtree.com/pages/frontpage>) offers great conversation starters. Blob Bullying (<http://www.blobtree.com/products/blob-bullying-1>) provides opportunities to explore feelings with and experiences about bullying.
- + *Bully* (2011) is a feature documentary directed by Lee Hirsch. It is suitable for students in grades 10-12.
 - Documentary and Resource Kit (<http://www.thebullyproject.com>)
 - Teacher Resource (<http://goo.gl/YBUf5O>)
- + Prayers on Bullying (<http://goo.gl/Iw5mau>)

Videos

- + “Caught in the Crowd” (<https://myspace.com/caughtinthecrowd/videos>) is a great collection of videos created for the song “Caught in the Crowd” by Katie Miller-Heidke.
- + “Bullying—Stop It” (<http://youtu.be/FYVvE4tr2BI>)

- + “Cyber Bullying Virus” (<http://youtu.be/vmQ8nM7b6XQ>)
- + Bars & Melody: Simon Cowell’s Golden Buzzer Act/Britain’s Got Talent 2014 (<http://youtu.be/g3Rf5qDuq7M>)
- + “Anti-Bullying Learning and Teaching Resource,” by the Catholic Education Office, Wollongong (http://youtu.be/EA5C-1N_r1w)
- + Bullying (<https://vimeo.com/37626534>)
- + “Take a Stand: Anti-Bullying Video” (<http://youtu.be/OcgAF8GcBIw>)
- + “Ronan’s Escape: Short Film on Bullying” (<http://youtu.be/6XLcfdkkHQE>) is an emotional short film (16 minutes long) that tells the story of a 14-year-old boy who is bullied at school. Ronan’s story is a tough one with very little dialogue and a suicide scene at the end, so be aware that this particular video will bring up tough emotions and conversation.
- + “Stop Bullying” (<http://youtu.be/wNQHKDhokjY>) is a fun music video put together by children from the Yuendumu community in the Northern Territory of Australia.
- + “Anti-Bullying Ad” (<http://youtu.be/nWJut7KQhI4>)
- + “One Direction Discuss Bullying” (<http://youtu.be/5T-ZXjnLhHQ>)

STUFF YOU WILL NEED:

- a candle and matches
- Post-It notes
- pens
- Bibles or copies of the scripture reading: Mark 7:24–30
- a computer or iPad with a speaker or a television
- a copy of the “Big Bang Theory” episode “The Speckerman Recurrence” (<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2119890/>)
- video file of “Caught in the Crowd” by Kate Miller-Heidke (<https://itunes.apple.com/au/music-video/caught-in-the-crowd/id307576642> or <http://youtu.be/GIDarYJHCpA>)

CHECKING IN

Make the space a welcoming place. Light a candle in the center of the space. Welcome people as they arrive, and invite them to sit around the candle.

Distribute Post-It notes and pens. Ask group members to write on each note one way that they have experienced bullying. Invite them to place the notes near the candle and, as they feel comfortable, to tell the group about their experience.

Offer this prayer from **devozine**:

“God, we pray for all your children who carry the scars of bullying and abuse. Comfort them, heal them, strengthen them, give them peace, and work through us to answer this prayer. Amen.”

Show the clip from *The Big Bang Theory* episode “The Speckerman Recurrence” (Season 5 Episode 11) in which Penny realizes that she was a bully at school (approximately 4:24–6:26) and she works through this realization (approximately 11:00–12:35)

Invite discussion:

When have you been the bully?

How did you realize that you had bullied someone?

How did you feel?

How did you work through the experience?

EXPLORING THE WORD

Scripture: Mark 7:24–30

Distribute Bibles or copies of Mark 7:24–30, and ask group members to follow along as you read the story of the Syrophenician woman.

Invite discussion:

What is your initial response to the story?

In what ways does it surprise you?

How do you feel about Jesus’ calling someone from a different culture a “dog”?

Does the idea of Jesus calling someone a name unsettle you? Why?

How does the woman confront Jesus? How does he respond?

Do you think the woman changed his mind? Why? Why not?

When have you bullied someone? Did the person you were bullying stand up for himself or herself? How did you feel?

Have you bullied someone without intending to?

Play the music video “Caught in the Crowd,” by Katie Miler Heidke.

Invite discussion:

Have you been in the position to confront a bully but haven’t done so?

How did you feel?

SHARING IN PRAYER

Invite the group to reflect on their conversations during the session.

Then ask each person to take a couple of the Post-It notes from around the candle and to say a prayer about each of the stories or words written on them.

TAKING IT FURTHER

Encourage group members to use the song “Caught in the Crowd” to create their own music videos. Or suggest that the group create its own anti-bullying campaign video.

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