

## **An Introduction to Bullies and the U.S. Constitution for Young People**

by Ronald W. Kirk

As a long time teacher, I know how hard it is to get peoples' attention—young people especially. Things like America's early history, Pilgrims, Founding Fathers and Constitutions and such may not make much sense to those who live on the Internet, Ipods, video games, texting, hanging out or whatever. Do I really have to listen to another geezer talking at me?

Let's give this a try. Have you ever had trouble getting along with other people? Have you ever had a bully pick on you? Have you ever been hurt or troubled by others for apparently no good reason? No one likes being picked on by a bully. And by the way, why are there so *many* of them?!

Bullies have always been one of our biggest problem. This is so because of a problem deep inside every one of us. This problem is known as sin. Sin is something powerful and selfish. It controls us from birth.

When we were babies, we cried if we didn't get our way instantly. We cried for no reason! We always wanted something. When we grew a little older, if we had a toy and our friend had a toy, we would want both toys! We would try to take them, and we would even hurt our own friend, or brother or sister, just to get our own way, to get that toy. We always wanted attention. Attention might not make us happy, but we wanted it anyway.

Some of us had wise parents. They gently corrected us, little by little. Sometimes they even punished us to help us learn a better way. Jesus gave us the better way: Love God and love your neighbor. We *love* by doing things for the good of the other person. It is the exact opposite of selfishness.

When we started becoming wise ourselves, we realized that as more people did good to each other, the happier we were. (If you haven't learned this yourself, it is true. God designed the world so that it is comfortable when many people are loving, and it is very bad and uncomfortable when people are selfish.)

Interestingly, people without wise parents, tend to grow up with that in-born selfishness stuck in them. The longer they allow sinful selfishness to grow, the meaner it gets. People who continue to harbor their own sinful selfishness become worse and uglier in their conduct. They become greater and greater bullies as they try to satisfy that something missing in their lives. They think controlling other people and taking things away from them will make them happy, but it never does. They actually become more and more miserable. Many of these people become thieves and murderers. They destroy other peoples' lives and their own.

Some of these selfish people learn how to control other people using authority. Authority is power to make others do something, or stop them from doing something. For example, bad parents might selfishly use their children as servants. Do this, and do that, they say. Good parents do some of this, too, to teach children how to be responsible for their own actions—self-governed and loving. But some parents bully their children just to make themselves comfortable. They teach their children to become selfish in the same way. The children think, okay, I have to *take* the good stuff from others when I can get it. They grow up that way, always hardening their hearts, and if Jesus does not come into the picture, they will get worse and worse. They will hurt others. They will hurt themselves. And they will likely help to make bullies of other people.

This is the way of the world, young people. It has been so since Adam, all of history.

God's work throughout history has been to help people get along with Him and each other. He does this in two ways. First, He gives us rules to live by. The more people who follow those rules, the better life is for you and for me. These rules are found in the Bible. The Ten Commandments and Jesus' Two Commandments are at the basis of these rules. The whole Bible teaches us that many other good rules grow out of these basic ones.

The second thing He does for us is to make new inside, in our hearts. He makes us *capable* of living well, of being loving and not bullies. He then sends us His Comforter, the One Who Comes Alongside to Help. His Holy Spirit makes us *able*

to love, to be unselfish, to treat others well, and to be happy with who we are. God Himself fills up the empty place in our hearts that we have been trying to fill the wrong way since we were babies. If we had wise parents, they trained our minds and hearts, our habits and manners to receive this gift of life, for when the time came, to fill us up with it.

Okay, but what does this have to do with the United States Constitution? I'm glad you asked. That means you are still listening!

The world is full of bullies. They're everywhere! Sometimes they're us! It is hard not to be a bully! Sometimes bullies even have convinced their neighbors that God made them *head* bullies to tell everyone else what to do! In very ancient times, they called themselves gods, such as the Egyptian pharaohs and Roman caesars. Later in history, they said God gave them the *right* to bully other men, and so they became kings. Even Christians practiced these things. (People, all of us, are very slow learners. It is hard not to be a bully, even for the good guys.) These bullies keep reproducing themselves. Bullying was so widespread, that it took 1600 years, more than a hundred of your lifetimes so far. Finally, some good guys said to themselves, you know, I'm really tired of these bullies picking on us and ruining everyone's lives. They make it hard to serve God and to live the right way. They said to themselves, Dude! There has to be a better way!

Then those we know as our Founding Fathers, read their Bibles and said, you know, God did give a better way! Christians found the answers in the Bible. Then they formed an agreement, a Constitution, for getting along with each other better, a more perfect union.

First of all, they found that the best way to get along with their neighbors is to make an agreement or covenant. In a covenant, we say out loud what the rules of the agreement are, for the good everyone. Then we *all* submit to those rules. For example, you submit to school rules so that you can get a good education with accomplished skills. Then when you are grown, you can live prosperously and contribute goodness to others. If you won't abide by the rules, you can't get an education. Education needs your cooperation. Neither can those around you get an education if you are rebellious, because sinful bullying never stays put, but

spreads everywhere and affects everyone. It only takes one bully to spoil a classroom. (By the way, Christians try to help the bullies become better, if possible. Again, one of the ways to *help* the bully is to stop him from bullying.)

Using such an idea, the Constitution of the United States—our national covenant or agreement—was designed to make it hard for the bullies to take over. It has worked pretty well, though never perfectly. It is hard to live well and do the right thing. Sometimes it is hard to know what the right thing even is, because our hearts can deceive us. So, admitting the Founding Fathers and the Constitution were not perfect, we can say our national system for getting along with each other is the best that history ever knew.

Another important element of the United States Constitution is that freedom is good for us. If we don't hurt other people, the government should leave us alone. If we do hurt people, we need to be stopped. This is called justice. (There are right ways and wrong ways to stop bullies, by the way. Right ways are called *due process*. This helps stop new bullies from gaining power.) Another part is whatever we can do for ourselves in our homes and neighborhoods, shouldn't be done by people farther away. So, the Constitution says the leaders cannot do anything, except what the Constitution says they can do. Also, we break up power so that no one can grab too much of it. The more power a bully has, the more damage he does. Another idea of our national covenant, the Constitution, includes choosing wise representatives to rule.

Your hearing this lesson today is important because the bullies are back in strength. Many people make promises to take care of us if only we will let them be our head bullies. History says we can't trust those people. In the old days, they said, we need to bind the hands of the *tyrants* (another word for bullies).

So, if we are ever going to be free again, if we are ever going to stop the bullies from taking over, every one of us needs to know the good rules for getting along with each other. We need to learn how to use them in our homes and neighborhoods and schools. When we grow up, we need to be involved in our neighborhoods and communities, not to take over because we think we're smarter. That is what the bullies do. We need to know how to make good

covenants, with good rules, and we need the ability to control ourselves so that we keep our promises to do good to our neighbors.

Curiously, the only places in history where any amount of bully-control has had any amount of success is where godly people, those who believe in the God and His Bible, decide to live for Him and by His ways. The more people live to love God and love their neighbor, the more good comfort the people experience. The more the bullies control things, the worse things are.

I pray that any young person who reads this will make every effort to live well, Christianly and unselfishly, so as not to be a bully. (Remember how easy it is to be one!) I pray also that he will be like America's Founding Fathers, and be a part of the solution to keep the bullies from taking over. This means learning all the Good Rules for getting along with others. It means being involved in politics. We cannot be saved by politics—by bully-control—because sin is our basic problem and it is in all of us. We need God's Gospel plan first. But then, we can protect the life, liberty and property of ourselves and our neighbors, the life, liberty and property we need to do help the Gospel and the God's kingdom.

If the Foundations be Destroyed, what can the Righteous Do? (Psalm 11:3). We mustn't let that happen.