

Bully for you!

This unit explores bullying. There were bullies in the Bible and, sadly, there are still bullies in society today. This unit helps participants think about bullying that continues to exist and inspires us to keep working on this difficult issue. These stories are used:

1. **Samson and Delilah** (*The Family Story Bible*, p. 100)
2. **David and Goliath** (*The Family Story Bible*, p. 109)
3. **A mean trick on Jesus** (*The Family Story Bible*, p. 218)
4. **Saul learns about Jesus** (*The Family Story Bible*, p. 274)
5. **You are God's temple** (1 Corinthians 3:10-17. This story doesn't appear in the *The Family Story Bible*).



Session 1

Samson and Delilah

Session focus:

The Bible has stories of bullies in action. The story about Samson is one of them. We can learn from reflecting and acting on this story.

Gathering to hear the story

Before you begin this unit, take time to think through some of the issues which may arise. Has someone in your group been bullied? Has someone acted like a bully? Does someone have painful memories of someone they love being treated badly?

Before people gather, find scenes or settings in magazine pictures that show where bullying can happen — school, workplace, church. As people of different ages gather, talk about the pictures and the kind of bullying that might go on in each place.

Telling and talking about the story

Explain that your group will examine Bible stories that say something about bullying and how we can help to overcome it. Read the story “Samson and Delilah,” p. 100, from *The Family Story Bible*.¹⁶ Before reading this story, remind people that, in addition to bullying, this is a Bible story with a lot of violence and killing. Ask listeners to keep this question in their mind — Who is the bully in the story?

To talk about the story, use questions like these:

- Who exactly are the bullies in this story?
- Samson still calls on God for help even in one of his darkest moments. What does that say about Samson’s faith? About the source of his strength?
- The story says that Samson was hated, not so much because he was strong, but because he used his strength to kill a lot of Philistines. What do you think about the suggestion that, if you believe in God and stay close to God, it is acceptable to kill other people?
- Do you think you would have the faith to pray for God’s help if you were being bullied?

Exploring the story

There are lots of ways to explore this story. Below are some suggestions. Prepare at least two so people can choose one that most interests them.

¹⁶ This story is found in Judges 16.

- **Drama:** Is this a good story to make into a drama for young children? Why or why not?
- **Art:** Using photos and articles from magazines and newspapers, make a collage on a sheet of poster board. Add a title like, “Bullying *must* stop,” or “This is a no bullying zone.”
- **Sculpture:** Divide into groups of three people. Using the words from Barbara Coloroso’s book, do “frozen tableaux” of three people — a bully, a bullied person, and a bystander.¹⁷ Show your tableau to others.
- **Creative writing:** List characteristics of a bully. If you need help with this, see page 45. Alternatively, you may write a prayer of confession on teardrop shapes. Use the prayer with your group.
- **Music:** Sing together “Jesus, you help,” #122, or “Forgive our sins as we forgive,” #125 in *Life Songs*.
- **Food:** Prepare and share foods that make us strong — protein foods (meat, nuts, cheese, eggs) and fruit and vegetables. As you eat, talk about the challenge that Christians have to use their strength to express God’s love and goodness.
- **Maps and patterns:** Invite a teacher to come as a guest. Ask him/her to describe patterns that they have seen on schoolyards or in sports class that would be classified as bullying. Ask what strategies have been helpful to stop bullying behaviour in these situations. Alternatively, youth and adults who can purchase the Barbara Coloroso book mentioned in the footnote can make a commitment to read the book and do a book report at a subsequent meeting.
- **Serving others:** In Barbara Coloroso’s book, she makes a distinction between “tattling” and “telling.” Children should not tattle on each other, but if someone is being hurt and bullied, they should tell an adult so the adult can help. Help children make this distinction by creating a chart entitled, “The difference between tattling and telling.” Add this information:
Tattling: If it will only get another child *in* trouble, don’t tell me.
Telling: If it will get you or another child *out* of trouble, tell me.



Making the story part of your life

Talk about things you learned today about bullying. Use a guided meditation to close this session. Invite people to sit comfortably with their hands in their laps and eyes closed. Read the following slowly and quietly:

There are dark storm clouds in your day. The wind is strong and pushes you in ways that you do not want to go. But wait ... step through here.

Step through a gateway into God’s garden. Your friends are in the garden, waiting for you, smiling and happy. There are beautiful flowers and grass-green trees. A stream murmurs as it passed over rocks. Every thing is calm and peaceful. There are animals in the garden, too — a lion and a lamb. But they do not bother each other and they do not bother you. Everything is quiet and calm. You are in a world that God has created. It is full of warm sunshine and the air is clear. A soft breeze makes the leaves rustle over your head. You know that you are close to God. Everything is calm, peaceful and still. This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. Amen.

¹⁷ *The Bully, the bullied, and the bystander*, Barbara Coloroso, Harper Collins, 2002

Session 2

David and Goliath

Session focus:

*David faces and defeats a big bully.
He knows God is with him.*

Gathering to hear the story

Before people arrive, find pictures of cartoon or comic book bullies like Binkie Barns from the cartoon *Arthur*, Flats the Flatfish from *SpongeBob*, the Joker from *Batman*, Voldemort from the *Harry Potter* movie/books, Darth Vader from *Star Wars*. As people gather, identify the bullies and talk about the traits of bullies. (See page 45, Maps and patterns.)

Telling and talking about the story

Explain that you will continue to think about bullying. The story for this session is about a huge bully — Goliath. Read the story “David & Goliath,” p. 109, from *The Family Story Bible*.¹⁸

To talk about the story, use questions like these:

- What was David’s main weapon for defeating Goliath?
- Do you have to be a big person to stop a bully?
- Have you ever been bullied?
- How did you get out of this bullying situation?
- Do you think that it was right for David to kill the bully?

Exploring the story

There are lots of ways to explore this story. Below are some suggestions. Prepare at least two so people can choose one that most interests them.

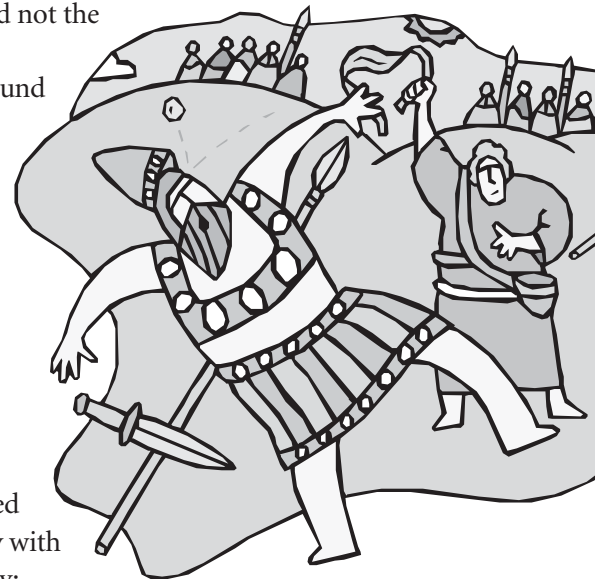
- **Drama:** Do role plays based on one or both of these scenarios:
 1. Andrew was born with a speech impediment. Although he is a good student in school, he is consistently teased about his speech by one of his class mates. His class mate and two or three other boys begin to follow Andrew home from school, never actually touching or hurting Andrew but imitate his speech patterns. You are following this group of boys and are troubled by their behaviour. You decide to confide in your teacher. Role play the conversation between you and your teacher.

¹⁸ This story is found in 1 Samuel, with portions from chapters 16, 18 & 19.

2. You have known Sarah for 10 years since you started school together. Lately, she has been acting very strange, often ignoring you and hanging out with more popular girls. Yesterday you found out that Sarah has been gossiping about you in a chat room on the Internet.

This upsets you and you decide to talk this over with your dad. Role play this conversation.

- **Art:** Make a “comic” strip. Fold legal size paper in quarters or eighths and draw the story of David and Goliath. Use word balloons to express the bullying component. Can you put this cartoon in your church newsletter?
- **Sculpture:** Provide modeling clay and invite people to create something that expresses their reaction to this story.
- **Creative writing:** Invite participants to create a prayer journal. This can continue for the following sessions. If desired, prior to the session, provide pages with titles for the journal. Here are suggestions for page titles:
 - When I am frightened
 - When I’ve noticed God in my life
 - When I’ve noticed God in nature
 - Times when I tried to help someone
 - Things I try not to do.
- **MUSIC:** Sing “God be with you,” #112, *Life Songs*.
- **Food:** In the story, David’s father sends him to the field with some food for his brothers. Talk about what David might have packed — a stew? Fruit or nuts? Bread? Pack a lunch like David did, take a short trip (to another room) and enjoy your picnic with David’s brothers. To increase the drama, dress for dinner by wearing biblical-style clothes.
- **Maps and patterns:** Make a list of the characteristics of a bully. Here are some as outlined by Barbara Coloroso:¹⁹
 - find it hard to see a situation from the other person’s vantage point
 - are concerned only with their own wants and pleasures and not the needs, rights, and feelings of others
 - tend to hurt others when parents or other adults are not around
 - like to dominate other people
 - like to use other people to get what they want
 - view weaker siblings or peers as prey
 - use blame, criticism, and false allegations to project their own inadequacies onto their target
 - refuse to accept responsibility for their actions
 - lack foresight
 - crave attention.



Making the story part of your life

Talk about things you learned today about bullying. Use a guided meditation to close this session. Invite people to sit comfortably with their hands in their laps and eyes closed. Read slowly and quietly:

It is a cold and windy day. Everything is grey . . . grey . . . grey. But wait . . . step through here.

Step through a gateway into God’s colour garden. It is a garden shimmering in light. Over here is deep purple periwinkle nestled in a bed of shining greenery. Over there are primroses in every shade of the rainbow — yellow, violet, blue, red. There are peach-leaved bellflowers and dusty millers with their lamb’s ear leaves and soft pink flowers. Everything is calm, peaceful and still. . . . Gone are all the cold greys. Welcome the vibrant colours in the Creator’s paint box. This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. Amen.

¹⁹ *The Bully, the bullied, and the bystander*, Barbara Coloroso, Harper Collins, 2002, p. 20

Session 3

A mean trick on Jesus

Session focus:

Some bullies try to trick Jesus, but he has a wise answer that shows God's love.

Gathering to hear the story

Before people gather, find a picture of Rosa Parks on the bus. (It is easy to find stories and pictures of Rosa Parks on the Internet. Just type in Rosa Parks in a Google search. Alternatively, find a library book on the civil rights movement.)

As people gather, determine and discuss who is in the picture. For what is she famous?

Telling and talking about the story

Explain that, together, your group will examine another Bible story that depicts bullying. This story looks at how Jesus outwitted some bullies who were trying to trick him into saying something against the law. Read the story "A Mean Trick on Jesus," p. 218, from *The Family Story Bible*.²⁰

To talk about the story, invite people to break into small intergenerational groups and use questions like these:

- Who is the real 'bad guy' in this story?
- Does Jesus have to do anything violent, like throw stones, in order to defeat these bullies?
- Is it possible to defeat bullies today through peaceful methods?
- Describe how the woman must have felt at the end of this story.
- Do you think you would have had the courage of Rosa Parks or Jesus?

Exploring the story

There are lots of ways to explore this story. Below are some suggestions. Prepare at least two so people can choose one that most interests them.

²⁰ This story is found in John 8:1-11.



- **Drama:** Look at the pictures of the three men from the storybook, p. 218. Describe what each might be thinking.
- **Art:** In the story, the Pharisees walk away, and the woman is instructed by Jesus to go away, too, but to try to grow in God’s way. Make “sand footprints” and when they are dry, put them on a bulletin board with the caption, “Walk in God’s way.” To make the footprints, trace your foot on a piece of construction paper. Cut out the footprint and tape it to a larger piece of construction paper. Using a brush, spread white glue around the edge of the footprint. Sprinkle sand on the glue and remove the top footprint.
- **Sculpture:** Make an inukchuk. This human-shaped Inuit landscape marker is an excellent image for reminding us that humanity is at the heart of even the most forbidding landscape. Search for images of an inukchuk on the Internet (at www.images.google.com) or in the library. Make your inukchuk from small stones, or use air-drying clay.
- **Creative writing:** If you began a prayer journal last week, continue to write in it. Alternatively, write a thank you note to Jesus from the woman he saved.
- **Music:** Sing “God gave me a life to live,” #98, or “I am thanking Jesus,” #101, *Life Songs*.
- **Food:** Enjoy a simple snack of fruit and cheese.
- **Maps and patterns:** Using a Bible dictionary, find out what you can about the Pharisees. Who were they? Why were they trying to trick Jesus?
- **Serving others:** Explore community groups who work with restorative justice. Alternatively, download stories from the Centre for Restorative Justice website — www.sfu.ca/crj/.

Making the story part of your life

Talk about things you learned today about bullying. Ask group members what they would like included in a prayer, then close with prayer.

Session 4

Saul learns about Jesus

Session focus:

A bully joins the People of the Way.

Gathering to hear the story

Before people gather, find one or two pictures of Scrooge from Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. As people gather, form pairs of different ages and talk about what makes Scrooge a bully at the beginning of the story. Does he change? What causes him to change?

Telling and talking about the story

Explain that, together, the group will hear a Bible story about someone who started out as an intense bully but ended up as a fervent disciple of Jesus. Read the story "Saul Learns about Jesus," p. 274, from *The Family Story Bible*.²¹

To talk about the story, invite people to break into small intergenerational groups and use questions like these:

- What do we know about Saul when this story begins?
- What changed him?
- Have you ever bullied anyone?
- Have you ever had a similar experience, one that dramatically changes your worldview and behaviour — for the better?

Exploring the story

There are lots of ways to explore this story. Below are some suggestions. Prepare at least two so people can choose one that most interests them.

- **Drama:** Role play one or both of these scenarios.
 1. You have a younger brother and it always seems to you that your parents favour him and let him away with doing things that you can't do. Sometimes you are so angry at him that you want to really hurt him. One day, when the two of you are alone, you pinch him very hard, and he screams in pain. This incident scares you and you decide to tell your older sister. Role play this conversation.

²¹ This story is found in Acts 9:1-19, 22:3-16, 26:4-18.

2. When you were a child, your parents spanked you when you did something naughty. You don't like the idea of hitting a child because they are naughty but sometimes you find yourself swatting your child when he is too unruly. You are upset with yourself and decide to talk this over with your wife. Role play this conversation.

- **Art:** Create a white-on-black chalk drawing. Depict the story of Saul in three or four scenes in white art chalk on black paper. The drawing will highlight the element of light in the darkness in this story.
- **Sculpture:** Using modeling clay, form the picture of Saul which the artist has depicted in the storybook on page 274.
- **Creative writing:** If you are writing a prayer journal, add more to it. Alternatively, write a letter from Saul/Paul to the family back home telling them what happened.
- **Music:** Sing "What does it mean to follow Jesus?" #165, *Life Songs*.
- **Food:** In the story Saul had not eaten for many days because he was blind and could not help himself. When Ananias came to visit and restored Saul's sight, Paul told Ananias that he was very hungry. What do you think Ananias gave him to eat? Perhaps bread, cheese and beans? Enjoy an "Ananias feast" of bread, cheese and beans.
- **Maps and patterns:** In a way, Saul was blind in two ways. He was physically blind for a few days and he was spiritually blind because he could not accept Jesus. Make two columns entitled "physically blind" and "spiritually blind." How can you help people who are physically blind? How can you help people who are spiritually blind?
- **Serving others:** When Saul's name was changed to Paul he became incredibly active in travelling and telling others that Jesus was the Christ, that Jesus was resurrected from the dead and that he had died to make things right between God and humanity. Talk about ways that you can share with others the good news of what Jesus has done. Could you give away Bible story books in your community? Could you invite someone to church?



Making the story part of your life

Ask: What is one thing you have learned about bullying? Invite people to share, but it is not necessary that everyone say something aloud.

Close with a circle prayer. Everyone holds hands and the leader invites the group to thank God for elements from Saul's story (God's love is for all; God's love can cause bullies to turn around). If someone does not wish to pray aloud, he/she simply squeezes the hand of the next person and that person continues.

Session 5

You are God's temple

Session focus:

You are God's temple and, together with God, you are building a strong and wholesome life.

Gathering to hear the story

Before people gather, collect some building blocks such as Lego and, as people arrive, invite them to build something, making sure that the foundation is particularly strong.

Telling and talking about the story

Explain that your group will end the unit on bullying by looking at a letter written to the early Christians from a former bully — the apostle Paul. This letter is not included in *The Family Story Bible*, but it can be read from the Bible. Find and read 1 Corinthians 3: 10-17.

To talk about the scripture, invite people to break into small intergenerational groups and use questions like these:

- What are your thoughts when you consider that these lines were written by a man who once persecuted Christians?
- Are there times when you find it difficult to believe that you are God's temple?
- Have you ever had an experience that makes it hard for you to act as if every one is holy?
- What can you do to help yourself remember and go through life fully convinced that these statements are true?

Exploring the story

There are lots of ways to explore this story. Below are some suggestions. Prepare at least two so people can choose one that most interests them.

- **Drama:** If you were going to present the scripture from this session (1 Corinthians 3:10-17) in visual form for your congregation, how would you do that? Brainstorm ideas. Inquire as to whether your group can make

a presentation on bullying to your congregation. Use the visual presentation as an example of the ideal that God has for us — we are to build our lives until we become a holy temple.

- **Art:** Use pictures from newspapers and magazines to create a large collage that illustrates the idea ‘You are God’s temple.’
- **Sculpture:** Using the building blocks (Lego), build a structure that does not have a solid foundation. What happens to these structures? Talk about how to change this. Ask: Have you met anyone who seems like this — without a solid foundation in their life?
- **Creative writing:** Add more to the prayer journal.
- **Music:** Sing “What does it mean to follow Jesus?” #165, or “The Great Commandments,” #172, *Life Songs*.
- **Food:** Prepare and serve food that makes for strong bones — milk products, salmon. Talk about what happens if people cannot or are unwilling to eat foods that help develop strong bones. If you have a chart of food guides for healthy living, show it to the group.
- **Maps and patterns:** If you have small children in your group, some may not know what a “temple” is. Using a Bible dictionary, find a picture of the temple which Solomon built. It was a massive building. Talk about the need for a strong foundation.
- **Serving others:** If this is your group’s last of the five studies on bullying, talk about what you can do to communicate what you have learned about bullying to others in your church or community.

Making the story part of your life

Take a few minutes and list all the things you have learned about bullying.

Close with prayer. Invite the group to thank God for the idea from Paul’s letter that everyone is God’s temple, worthy of compassionate treatment. God’s love is for all. Or contribute the name of a person, type of person, or group that needs God’s particular protection or reminder of God’s love.

