

Might is Not Always Right

The Australian Defence Force, with its proud history, has been entrusted with sophisticated weaponry with immense destructive power. One day our lives may depend on this military might used at the right time and in the right way.

Yet, over recent decades, our defence forces have been repeatedly embroiled in scandals involving the abusive practice of bullying. Some members of our disciplined forces are making a mockery of the freedoms they have sworn to protect.

In some units it is unwritten that a new soldier has to be embarrassed and degraded before he can be accepted. The prevalence of vulgar language, racial and sexual stereotyping and drunken misconduct only feeds the monstrous culture of bullying.

Bullying in the military has resulted in numerous suicides and scarred lives. Despite zero-tolerance policies, Parliamentary hearings, public exposure and shame, the bullying continues.

Jesus was Bullied

These are not the first soldiers to bully. When Jesus was handed over to be crucified, soldiers went far beyond the official flogging.

About 200 soldiers gathered around Jesus in the hidden confines of the Roman fortress.

They stripped Him, spit on Him and struck Him in the face. In response to His claim to royalty they put a purple robe on Jesus, set a crown of thorns on His head and put a staff in His right hand. Their mocking continued by kneeling before Jesus calling out to Him, "Hail King of the Jews", while repeatedly striking him on the head with the staff. Then after all this cruelty they dressed Jesus in His own clothes and led Him out to crucify Him.

What is Bullying?

Bullying is when people repeatedly and intentionally use words or actions against someone or a group of people to cause distress and risk to their wellbeing. People who do it, the perpetrators, usually have more influence or power over the other, or want to make others feel less powerful or helpless.

Bullying is not the same as conflict between people (eg. having a fight) or disliking someone, even though people might bully each other because of conflict or dislike.



Bullying can happen anywhere. It can be in schools, at home, at work, in online social spaces, via text messaging or via email.

It can be physical, verbal, emotional and it also includes messages, public statements and behaviour online intended to cause distress or harm (also known as cyber bullying).

Created in the Image of God

Everyone needs to understand that each person is created in the image of God and so has inherent dignity and worth. Therefore it is not alright to bully another person.

Every person contains within himself or herself the divine image and because of that he has an inherent worth that must deter us from allowing bullying to happen.

In his excellent book, *Created In God's Image* Anthony Hoekema explains it this way, "Even a person who is living a disreputable life, who has become an outcast from society, who has not a friend in the world - even such a person still bears God's image, and that image we must honour. Because everyone whom we meet is an image-bearer of God, we may not curse him or her (James 3:9), but we must love that person and do him or her good."

Calvin said, "The Lord enjoins us to do good to all without exception ... Scripture subjoins a most excellent reason, when it tells us that we are not to look to what men in themselves deserve, but to attend to the image of God, which exists in all, and to which we owe all honor and love."

We owe it to every person to do good to them, not on the basis of their character but because God has bestowed upon them His divine image.

This teaching, rightly understood, should destroy any thought of racism. It should also help people to see that there is an equality between the sexes. Men and women are both said to be created in the image of God. Any derogatory language should also be seen as completely out of bounds. Though Scripture does condemn a lifestyle or sinful action, it does not give people the right to demean those who bear the divine image.

The Word of God says "if you really keep the royal law found in Scripture "Love your neighbour as yourself," you are doing right. But if you show favouritism you sin ..." (James 2:8,9).

Father in Heaven, We thank You that You created man in Your own image and in doing so instilled in every human being dignity and worth. Though Your image has been marred and tarnished by sin every person is precious in Your sight. Your Word tells us the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. For our adversary is bent on destroying all who are made in Your image. In his fury, the devil stops at nothing to prevent humanity from entering into an eternal relationship with You. Help us to resist Satan's attempts to bully through intimidation and accusation. Thank You Jesus that You understand what it means to be bullied. Yet even though You were bullied to the extreme, You did not retaliate. Thank You that you also modelled reaching out to those who were the downtrodden, the outcast, the infirm and the lepers who were despised, ridiculed and bullied in their culture. Help us to be alert and keep watch for those who are being bullied and are fearful of seeking help. Help us to affirm the dignity and worth of those who have been degraded in their humanity that they might see they are precious to You their Creator. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen

About 'Image of God' Leaflets

In the Bible we read that God "*created man in His own image*" (Genesis 1:27). Many maintain that all human history revolves around this truth. The Judeo-Christian belief in the unique dignity of human beings is at the very foundation of Western civilisation.

The 2010 Canberra Declaration therefore states:

"We believe that all human life, being made in the image of God, has intrinsic and equal value from conception to life's natural end."

'Image of God' leaflets relate the doctrine of man as created in the image of God to various issues we face in Australia today.

The 21 leaflets in SERIES ONE are dedicated to Sophie Scholl who was martyred at the age of 21 in World War II for writing and distributing leaflets.

You can download other 'Image of God' leaflets at the Canberra Declaration website.

Please:

READ & SIGN

The Canberra Declaration
to Protect

- *Religious Freedom*
- *Marriage and Family and*
- *Human Life*
in Australia

Website: www.canberradeclaration.org.au

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and the Image of God