## **Sticks and Stones**

Bruce Sutchar February 27, 2015



Maybe when they teach kids that "sticks and stones will break your bones, but names will never hurt you," they were actually trying to teach kids to stick up for themselves in order to prevent them from getting hurt from bullies. When I went to school there was not much talk about "bullies" outside of the school yard. Today, it is a major issue in our schools.

We only had one bully in our school. I remember that during a birthday party he got into a fist fight with one of the other boys in the school yard. We were all cheering because the other boy was winning, but suddenly he started

to fight dirty. He was kicking and clawing and eventually won the fight.

For myself, I made the stupid decision to bet against him in the World Series. I told my dad what I had done and even though my team was winning 3-1 my dad told me to call off the bet. Reluctantly I followed his direction. However my team lost the next 3 games and then suddenly the bully was asking me for his money, the amount of which he inflated 100%.

For several weeks he tormented me during recess everyday, morning and afternoon. I remember him calling me a "welch" ...which referred to someone who didn't pay his debts. It was embarrassing because everyone else probably thought I really didn't pay him. Finally my dad came to the school yard during recess one day and that was the end of that.

Sometimes kids are just bullied by older kids. They may be kicked off the baseball field, by an older group of boys and so on and so forth (growing up male I have little insight into instances of female bullying). My young brother was the only one that I knew who had a solution for this. He had a group which included man, many friends. If the big kids came and kicked them off the field they would just continue to run around and disrupt the big kids' game until they gave the field back—strength in numbers!



*I know that kids have an incredible ability to be mean to each other.* We used to have a foursome when I was in elementary school. One leader, two lieutenants and a caboose. I know that whenever three were gathered they would leave the fourth one out. It caused a lot of pain to whoever got left out. Kids haven't changed much, but I guess times have changed.

While walking down the street the other day I was solicited by a young man collecting signatures to stop bullying. And sadly, we all have the stories (some within our own church) about teenagers who committed suicide because they were the victims of bullying.

I bring this up because I recently received the meanest spirited letter that I have ever gotten. It was from someone with whom I have been close friends for nearly 40 years. He is having some difficulty

in his family, so I sent him an email and offered what I thought was comfort and consolation. He responded by accusing me of interfering in his life (even though our sons are best friends and our wives are good friends). He then enumerated all the reasons that he no longer calls me on a regular basis.

I know that when people are having financial difficulties or going through some negative mood swings, that they may choose to be alone. Often, rather than reaching out to their friends for help, they tend to want to self-medicate and feel more comfortable in isolation.

Words have tremendous power. A few choice words from a mentor may encourage someone to accomplish feats they never believed possible. As parents we all struggle with how to discipline our children. "Talking to you is like talking to the wall," or "No matter how much good you do, people always remember the bad," are parental words that a child may keep locked near his heart for the rest of his life. On the other hand "thank you" and "please" can have a dramatic impact when used correctly.

One Wednesday night, a pastor led a bible study entitled, "Forgive, Forget and Forego." He said that many people can forgive and forget, but if they don't forego (give up/relinquish/surrender/sacrifice)

they will never really let go of the incident in their hearts and could conceivably carry it with them forever.



So, *Mr. Sticks and Stones*, we will recover from the broken legs (one of our brothers was hit by a train in the midst of our Chicago Snowstorm on Super Bowl Sunday—he survived, but currently is sporting two broken legs); Derrick Rose (Chicago Bulls) will recover from the torn meniscus in his knee; Patrick Kane (Chicago Blackhawks) will recover from his broken collar bone. Many athletes extend their careers through Tommy John surgery, and many elderly people who used to fall, break their hip and never recover, are now happily living extended lives

But *Mr. Words*, you are the one with the power. My bible says that Jesus was the word made flesh (John 1:14). Yes, it is words that have the power to encourage us to move mountains and dream the impossible dream. It is words that inspire young people and give them encouragement: words from past visionaries such as John Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X and Moses Maimonides. Sadly it is also true that words can bring people down to the lowest depths of their soul.

We are so blessed to have Father's words on our prayer tables. Words we can read every day to inspire us to be the best person that we can be and to overcome, every time evil may confront us. While Satan continues to be the ruler of this world (I Cor: 2:8) bad things will continue to happen to good people. So yes, words will and do hurt us, but as Father has said so many times (and even Joel Osteen repeated last Sunday), "we need not wish that the bad things would go away, we need to be strengthened by them every time by overcoming and bringing victory. And we should be thanking God for the opportunity to overcome evil."\*

\* In the case of graduating from the family sphere to the clan sphere, a person must pay the debt of sin both for himself and for the ancestors of his clan. Heaven allows evil spirits to torment him as punishment for this sin. If he willingly endures the suffering given by the evil spirits and overcomes it, he will have successfully paid the indemnity through this condition and thus be entitled to enter the higher sphere of benefit at the clan level.

[Exposition of the Divine Principle, Chapter 5, Resurrection, Returning Resurrection 2.3.3]