

Love Cares for Others— at School, Too!

While there were no yellow school buses or huge brick school buildings or backpacks and schoolbooks in Jesus' time like we have today, the Bible still teaches us, even in our time, how to treat others at school. The first commandment that Jesus taught is to: Love your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind, and the second commandment He taught is to love your neighbor as yourself. (Matt. 22:38,39)

Who is your neighbor? The people who live in your house? The people who live next door to you or in your neighborhood? Yes, they are your neighbors. But all people that you come to know are your neighbors. Even at school. Jesus teaches: "Love your neighbor as yourself." We want to treat everyone as we want them to treat us. That is called the Golden Rule.

We want to show love and care and compassion to all our classmates at school, whether they look the same or different from us, whether they come from the same or different backgrounds and cultures than we do, or whether they dress differently or have some physical or mental challenges that may look different to us. All people are God's creation and are made in His image. All people have an undying soul.

God's Word does not give us permission to say unkind things or to make fun of others or to tease or bully our classmates. The Bible teaches us: Love does no wrong to a neighbor (Rom. 13:9-10) and love is not rude to others (1 Cor. 13:5). At the elementary school where I work, we spend a lot of time talking about character traits like honesty and kindness and respect—for ourselves, for others and for school property. In this way the Bible teaches us to "be an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12). A child of God wants to be patient, kind, respectful, honest and work hard at school. We want to reach out to those who do not have a friend to be with and offer a helping hand when help is needed.

Because we are not perfect, we may sometimes do the things we should not do or we say the things we should not say, causing hurt or offense to others. The Bible teaches us to take care of offenses that we have caused. If we have done wrong, it is good to go to that friend or teacher and apologize for what we have done wrong and make things right. We can also take care of these matters at home with mom or dad or another believing friend and hear the freeing gospel message: "All your sins are forgiven in Jesus' name and blood." What is forgiven on earth God also forgives in heaven! The gospel then gives us strength to battle against sin and to care for our friendships and be respectful to others, even at school.

Remember that you are a child of God. That does not make you a better person than others, but you have the joy and peace of having your sins forgiven! The light of the Holy Spirit shines from you to those around you. One sister has written beautifully in a song of Zion these words: "We little ones are teaching; we shine as little lights and bring His gospel message into the world's dark night" (SHZ 442:4). Do not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ. It is the power of God to salvation to every one that believes (Rom 1:16). Be at school with confidence and joy! Jesus is with you. He will help you. He will give you strength to care for relationships at school, too.

Kathy Waaraniemi

Things to Visit About:

1. How should we treat those who are different than we are?
2. If you go to school with many believers, how can you include others in your friendships?
3. Have you ever been teased because of your faith? Explain how that felt.
4. What kinds of experiences have you had with friends at school?