



THE
HIDDEN
MESSAGE

By Brad Wilcox

(Based on a true story)

He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city (Proverbs 16:32).

The boys in the back of the bus chanted mean words as Amanda and her brother Hyrum stood to leave. The chanting wasn't loud enough for the bus driver to hear, but the other kids heard and started to laugh and point.

Amanda's face reddened. She could feel the anger rise within her. Those older boys were always making trouble. She turned around and told them to stop it, but they laughed and continued saying

mean things. Hyrum nudged her to keep moving toward the exit.

When Amanda and her brother finally got off the bus, Amanda thought the teasing would stop. Instead the older boys kept yelling through the windows. Amanda wanted to yell mean things back, but Hyrum whispered, “Just keep walking.”

When the bus was finally out of sight, Amanda turned to her brother and exploded. “Didn’t those boys make you mad?”

“Of course they made me mad,” Hyrum said. “But they act worse if we show how much it bugs us.”

“It *does* bug me. We should tell Mom and Dad,” Amanda said.

“We will as soon as we get home,” promised her brother. “Did you know this sort of thing happened to me last year? When I was in middle school and you were still in fourth grade, some boys at school were saying rude things to me. Mom told me to hear the hidden message.”

Amanda wrinkled her face. “What hidden message?”

“Those boys are saying one thing with their mouths and hands, but Mom says the real message they’re sending is they don’t feel good about themselves. So they try to feel more powerful by being mean to others. My teacher said the same thing. She said people who bully others are really insecure.”

“I guess those guys are really, *really* insecure then!”

“Yeah, I guess so,” Hyrum said. “They announced it to the whole bus!”

Amanda thought about Hyrum’s words as they turned onto their street. Hearing the hidden message may not have changed the situation, but it helped her not feel so angry about it. “Come on, I’ll race you to the house!” she challenged her brother, and she sprinted down the sidewalk. She wasn’t going to let the boys ruin the rest of her day. ◆



WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE BEING BULLIED:

1. Tell the bully to stop. In a firm voice, tell him or her never to treat you that way again. Do not try to hurt the person back unless you have no other way to protect yourself.
2. Tell an adult right away. This is especially important if someone hits, pushes, or threatens you. Some people won’t stop bullying until they know an adult is watching. Talk to your parents about what is going on.
3. Try to stay in safe places. As often as possible, make sure you are near other children and adults who know you.
4. Pray to feel Heavenly Father’s love. You are an important child of God, and you deserve to be treated with love and respect! Heavenly Father knows what you are going through and will strengthen you as you turn to Him.
5. Remember that this bullying won’t last forever. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland said, “Every one of us has times when we need to know things will get better. . . . To any who may be struggling to see that light and find that hope, I say: Hold on. Keep trying. God loves you. Things will improve” (“An High Priest of Good Things to Come,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 36).
6. Put on spiritual armor. What can you do to strengthen yourself before you leave home each day? Praying, reading scriptures, singing Primary songs or hymns, and reading uplifting books and magazines can help you throughout the day.