



A Valentine FOR THE BULLY

Could I really be kind to someone who was so mean?

By Emily Stone Barton

As a sophomore in high school, I felt like I was starting to understand who I was and who I wanted to be. I felt pretty good about myself. I had friends and participated in several activities. Even in gym—a class I usually dreaded—we were playing volleyball, something I wasn't half bad at.

One day we were playing an intense game of volleyball. My team was doing OK, but sometimes my teammates would run into each other because no one called for the ball. I tried to encourage them by saying, "Call it!"

One girl on my team got annoyed and told me to stop. I told her I was just trying to help the team, but she still wasn't happy. And she started finding ways to make me miserable.

She spent the next several months openly criticizing me, saying mean things, and bumping into me in the hallway. My emerging self-esteem quickly took a tumble. And because this young woman didn't hang out with a good crowd, I was scared of what she and her friends might do to me. I didn't know what to do except to avoid her when possible.

One night I was in my room alone, crying and praying about what to do. I felt like I should read my scriptures. I opened up to **Matthew 5:44**: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." That night I prayed for the strength to be kind and that her heart would be softened.

After my prayer, I noticed the Valentine's Day candies I'd purchased to give to my friends. I immediately knew what to do.

The next day, I went to class with my bag of valentines. I handed a few to my friends and then walked over to the young woman, placed one on her desk, said, "Happy Valentine's Day," and walked away. My heart was racing as I sat down at my desk.

She never did say thank you, and we did not become best friends. But the teasing stopped. With the help of the scriptures, my prayer had been answered.

I know that as we strive to love, serve, and pray for our enemies, the Lord will bless us. **NE**

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