

## JACK'S CORNER

In lieu of my regular format, I would like to offer the following thoughts and observations about girls--how they damage each other, and what can be done. Over the years, I have been both saddened and angered by the damage girls inflict on each other. They damage primarily through relationships. The effects are long-term and devastating. We at SOTHCS need to take special notice of this problem. Being a relatively small school, girls are often "stuck" with the same group of girls year after year. We need to be vigilant about recognizing and addressing this issue.

Let me back up and give what I believe is the theological reason for this damage. **Girls (or women) find their greatest fulfillment in opening themselves up to relationships.** This is how God made them, and it is wonderful! **They want to believe they are desirable, valuable, and beautiful on the inside, and every girl is!**

Girls crave relationship; they want to give their hearts, but therein lies a great risk. In a fallen world, if they open up to the intimacy of relationship, there is both ecstasy and agony—the joy of acceptance and the heartbreak of rejection. Their longing to be desirable, valuable and beautiful is a good longing, but how this longing is pursued and experienced is often far less than good. They are torn by feelings of ambivalence about relationships. They learn how to control relationships to stay as safe as possible. This control can be overtly aggressive or completely passive, but the goal is the same: safety and acceptance.

**Deep inside, most girls don't really believe they are desirable, valuable and beautiful.** Instead of giving the beauty of their inner selves, they settle for keeping themselves safe and giving a counterfeit. Instead of finding their value, acceptance and beauty in their relationship with Christ, they try to find these things in other relationships. Nothing, of course, will perfectly satisfy like Christ.

How do girls damage?

1. They use the power and attractiveness of intimacy to keep each other in line. Girls long for intimacy, even when it is destructive...even when the friendships are not healthy.
2. There is a "bonding" that happens when girls unite against another girl. This bonding is emotionally attractive to the girls involved. They will sacrifice integrity to gain this bonding and ensure their own safety. Even if they really don't want to, they will join in the attack. They gather allies and form cliques to increase their power and individual safety.
3. Their methods are generally covert and involve "looks", the "silent treatment", rumors, threats, and put-downs. Girls don't feel very comfortable in expressing anger, so they use subterfuge.
4. Because emotions are so intense, they are reluctant to forgive and move on. Incidents are prolonged, amplified, reinterpreted, and reformed into

issues far larger and far more emotionally charged than they ever were to begin with.

5. They tend to “feed” on the emotional excitement, intrigue and passion of an attack (false, destructive intimacy).

What can we do?

1. As a school, church, and concerned adults, we need to acknowledge this kind of behavior as aggression and bullying. Although it is not so overt like a couple of boys “slugging it out”, it is usually far more damaging, primarily because of the relentless and lengthy nature of the attack.
2. We can expose and talk about such behavior at home and in the classroom, so girls can better recognize the situations, learn what to do, and seek help when needed.
3. We can teach assertiveness skills so girls can better handle these types of situations by extricating themselves, and/or by keeping the situations from escalating.
4. We can teach friendship skills so girls can find new friends and/or develop healthy relationships.
5. We can spiritually equip our girls by helping them develop an inner strength that comes from a security of knowing they are well loved, valued, honored, desirable, and truly beautiful in Christ. This happens by our example, our prayers, our biblical instruction, and godly involvement in their lives.

Ultimately, this problem is spiritual in nature. Such behavior is not “normal” or part of some developmental process. It is not excusable (“Girls are just like that.”) or tolerable. It is mean and hurtful. It is emotionally and spiritually damaging. Our young women are priceless; we must not let them remain perpetrators or victims. (If you would like to read more about how girls hurt girls, read: *Odd Girl Out* by R. Simmons.)

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