

# for Parents

February 12, 2007

## **Why we don't kick each other on the playground** (or anywhere else, for that matter)

*If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*

*Romans 12:18*

Those who know me well, especially as the father of four young men, would never accuse me of wanting to “sissify” young boys. To the contrary, I am an enemy of all the factors in our culture which contribute to this, and Christians have a lot to answer for when we perpetuate some of the myths of Christian culture that could only possibly appeal to the weak, the soft, or the feminized among us.

Recently several young men in our school, when reprovved for invading another child's physical space on our playground, have responded by saying that their (mom, dad, whoever) told them that if someone (hits, kicks, pushes) them, they should do the same back. To understand why this is not the message we wish you were giving to your sons, (or daughters, for that matter), please hear me out here.

Thirty-five years of playground monitoring have taught me several cardinal principles: (1) everyone always says the other guy started it; (2) most boys are looking for an excuse to be physical (that's why God created sports); (3) nothing short of a total ban on physical aggression will keep peace on busy school playgrounds.

What happens when these incidents take place? We don't automatically apply dire consequences to students who fail in this area. First of all, unless a teacher is a direct eyewitness, we hold both parties accountable for the conflict. We do question the students in an attempt to reconstruct what led to the conflict. Almost without exception, there is fault on both sides, and we proceed to apply the most appropriate consequences to each individual.

As far as prevention goes, we teach the students that they are free to escape most potentially harmful situations, at least on this playground. The first line of defense is for the student feeling threatened to say distinctly, and in no uncertain terms, “I don't want to play like that.” You would be amazed how many potentially harmful situations are avoided just by faithful students employing this common sense phrase.

Most people in our culture are sensibly opposed to the concept of talebearing (or being a “narc” in modern parlance), but we think it *is* appropriate for students to appeal to an authority when they feel threatened. The monitors on our playground are never so far away that they cannot quickly be summoned to resolve a conflict. There are dozens of more productive ways to end any conflict than resorting to physical aggression.

Please assist in maintaining a God-pleasing and God-honoring environment at Cornerstone Christian Academy by supporting (in your child's ears) our teaching of (1) verbally refusing to play with those who display inappropriate behaviors and words, and (2) appealing to an authority *before* resorting to physical contact which could be hurtful.