



Do you know what it is like to be bullied, and the damage this can do? I do know what it's like, and I'd like to share my experience of this with you. I grew up in Sydney, and my parents were very religious, and so we all went to church every week. This meant that I grew up believing in God, but not knowing God, and what He had done for me.

Right from birth, I was a severe asthmatic, and the smallest, and weakest child in my grade right through Primary School. I was also very shy, and insecure, and never able to really fit in, so for most of Primary School I was a loner, having few friends, and at times, none at all.

All of this made me easy prey to every bully who came my way, who saw it as their right to beat me by punching and kicking me whenever they wished, usually with a group of spectators laughing, and cheering them on. I soon learnt not to strike back, because my feeble efforts only resulted in making my tormentors annoyed, as in their eyes I had no right to strike back – and so, the result was that I got an even worse beating.

There were a few rare occasions when someone would feel sorry for me, and step in and help me, but most of the time no-one tried to stop the bullies, or help me in any way.

I became convinced that I was just worthless, and I would always be a no-hoper, a real nobody, and there were many in the school that were only too happy to help to convince me of this!! The only real friend that I had, the only that I believed really cared about me, was my mother – and I believed that I was a burden to her, because I was often sick with asthma and she spent a lot of time looking after me, many times sitting up with me for almost the entire night.

All of this made me very angry inside – angry with the bullies, angry with the teachers, angry with my family, angry with the world – and especially angry with God.

I felt that the LORD had given me a pretty raw deal; why did I have to suffer like this?

I believed that:

IT'S NOT FAIR!!

And I would then ask myself:

What did I do to deserve this?

Everyone else I knew was healthy, and could do all the normal things, but I couldn't; why was I being picked on? What had I done that been so wrong? **WHY ME?** I believed that God was so unfair!!

All of this caused a lot of anger and frustration in me, but it was not very evident on the surface, because I just suppressed it, and it continued to build up inside me.

My High School years were an "improvement", because I had a few friends and I was subjected to more verbal abuse than physical abuse. A so-called wise man once said that "names can never hurt you" – well they DO hurt – and sometimes even worse than physical abuse.

I only ever truly fought back once, in my later years at High School, when I was well and truly used to the constant taunts and beatings at the hands of the bullies; not a week of my school life had passed, when I hadn't been either verbally or physically abused, or both. In my primary school years, I had been physically assaulted almost every day.

When I was in year 9, one bully finally pushed things too far, and I just snapped – or should I say, exploded; I'd finally reached breaking point. He was much bigger than me, but I was in such a rage when I attacked him that he was unable to defend himself; he wasn't able to hit me even once, and I hit him many times.

It wasn't just him that I was punching; in front of me, I saw the face of every bully who had ever beaten me, or tormented me, over all my years in school, and I took it all out on him.

The bully was taken to hospital for medical treatment, but there was no permanent damage; just extensive multiple bruises and swellings.

Even though I had a real hatred of all bullies, and he was no exception, I didn't feel proud, or happy at what I had just done; I actually found myself feeling sorry, and even, in a small way, feeling sympathy for him – because I knew what it was like.

The only good thing to come out of the incident, and the one thing that I was pleased about, was that I was never bullied in the school again.

After I left school, I successfully completed Tertiary studies, but I found that even there, I was still insecure and lacked self confidence, which meant that I did not achieve to the best of my abilities.

At the same time I joined a church youth group, and made a few friends there, and then I really started to “come out of my shell.” I tried turning back towards God, trying to seek Him to help me, but I couldn't find Him, because this was not a church that was truly honouring the LORD.

I got my driving licence and a car, and I found something that I could do well, and that was high speed driving, and I found that this was one way to get rid of my anger and frustrations – and I spent a lot of time racing around the streets at high speed, especially late at night. It was only due to the long-suffering LORD in His mercy, that preserved me and the other drivers on the road all those times, and I give Him the praise for the protection that I neither deserved, nor appreciated. I also had a motorbike, and I rode that the same way as I drove my car.

I also became a heavy drinker, and used this as another means of dealing with my frustrations.

I still felt very insecure, but I found that I could hide this by developing a sarcastic, “tough guy” front, but this was only a cover, a shell, because all the anger, and frustrations were still there, but it didn't show as much as it used to. This didn't fix my problems, it just hid them for a while, and they just got worse.

It finally came to a head at someone's house one Saturday night when I was 19 years old. I couldn't cope any more; I'd finally reached breaking point. The “tough guy” who used to boast that he could take anything that anyone could dish out, and give back better, was finally beaten.

I immediately left in a very upset state and raced away in my car at high speed, and ended up at a lonely spot. I tried to think of an answer, a way out of all this mess, a way to solve my problems, but I couldn't think of one. I tried to find some meaning in my life, some purpose to it, something that I

could point to that said that I mattered – and I could not find anything. This wasn't living, it was merely existing, and I couldn't see any purpose to it, so I decided the best thing for me to do would be to just end it.

I had a sharp knife in my hand, and was literally one heartbeat away from slashing my wrist, when The LORD intervened in His own way, and stopped me. There was no doubt then, or later, that it was The LORD who preserved me that night, and I knew that my anger, my frustration, my resolve to take my life had all vanished and had been replaced with – nothing; no feelings, no emotions – just nothing; just an empty feeling.

The only thought I had was that God had just stopped me from ending my life, and I should have shown my gratitude by turning to the LORD – but I didn't. Instead I thanked Him by just turning my back on Him again, because I still blamed God for all the problems in my life, and I was not ready to forgive God!! **What arrogance, for me to think that God needed to seek forgiveness of me.**

I was still very insecure, as I found out late one night one year later. A group of us had been in the city near Watsons Bay, and ended up The Gap. My insecurity, and the desire to just end it all came flooding back to me in a big rush and I was on the point of jumping when once again The LORD intervened and stopped me. I now realised just how vulnerable I was, and I knew I desperately needed help, so I tried to find it, and the answers that I needed, by searching in all the wrong places.

First, a workmate told me about a group that he said had all the answers I needed, so I decided to give them a try – and that's how I got involved with Scientology. I left them after 3 months, because I became convinced that they were even more mixed up and confused than I was!

So I kept searching, and another workmate said I was very tense, and needed to relax, and suggested I try learning meditation like him. He told me about the place he had learnt it from, so I went there and learnt the technique of Transcendental Meditation, or TM. I used this technique for about 3 years, and every time I did it, it gave me a sense of peace, but it was nothing like the true peace that comes from knowing Christ as my Saviour.

One night, there was a family crisis, and I really needed help, so in desperation I called out to God, and asked Him to help me, but I didn't really expect that He would hear me, let alone help me, after the way that I had turned my back on Him. I was about to learn what a merciful, and loving Saviour that God is.

The LORD sent a Christian into my life, another one of my workmates, and I noticed that he had a true sense of peace about him. He began to talk to me about God, and I began to think that maybe what he had was genuine, and I wanted to hear more.

In my final year of High School, the Gideon's had visited our school and distributed copies of the New Testament. Some of the boys in the school immediately took up a collection of as many of them as they could, then the next day they placed them all into one big pile – and burnt them.

I had refused to give them my New Testament, and I remembered that I still had it in my drawer at home, and so finally 15 years later I began to read it for the first time.

My Christian workmate invited me to come along to his church, and I began to understand, for the first time in my life, what God had done for me, and realised that only through God could I find the answers I needed. I knew that I had finally found the place where I could find the answers I was

