



Christian Education Network of the ELCA

"... that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love ..."
Colossians 2:2

To my dear friends in Christian Education,

In the wake of this week's political tweet storm, I frequently hear the question, "What are we to tell our children?" I'm reminded of a time when I was in second grade and some kids were really mean to me. My dad scooped me up in his arms and told me the way we deal with hurtful words is to look for ways to be good and kind. He assured me I was right to speak up because those words were harmful. He also said I shouldn't respond by doing or saying something I knew was wrong, because that would hurt others, including me, and I was responsible for my words and actions.



"Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought of what is noble in the sight of all."
Romans 12:17

As an adult, I recognize this teaching from the Book of Romans in the Bible. As a Christian missionary, I saw this concept practiced in all moral world religions, and am fully convinced we won't overcome the universal pain and suffering that exists with more hostility. Holding people accountable for their words is a good thing, and when we do so kindly it can lead to positive change.

"Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly, do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord. No, if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." Romans 12:14-21

Teaching tips: It is so important to be age appropriate when teaching from the Bible. When teaching young readers about the "burning coals on their heads", I say good can be so strong it makes the bad ideas go away from inside a person's mind. And, it is ok to "never avenge ourselves" because God is smarter than we are, knows the whole story of a person's life, and will always do the right thing. What we do and say matters.

As an adult, I recognize there are times when people are willing to even lay down their lives to protect others and a way of life. But that is not what we are dealing with, is it? I am suggesting this teaching could be a way to respond to a "tweet."

Love you,

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