



**Thesis:** God cares deeply for the outsider.

**Objective:** To encourage students to proactively identify and care for the outsiders in their community.

**Scripture:** Psalm 68:5-6, Isaiah 56:3-8, Deuteronomy 24:19-22, Deuteronomy 10:17-19.

### **Series Introduction:**

Today we begin a four-part series called *Bullies: A Call to Kindness*. Over the next few weeks, we are going to look at what it means to be genuinely kind and caring for the people in our midst, as well as how to navigate difficult situations in which people are not kind or caring to you. The traditional picture of a “bully” is the big, mean kid on the playground who inflicts physical pain on a small, unpopular kid. And while this type of bullying certainly still exists, bullying has taken on a lot of different forms over the years. Bullying can take place over the internet, on people’s phones, through rumors, through unkind words, and yes, physical bullying also still persists! In most bullying situations, there are a handful of different players: The person who is vulnerable to being mistreated (what we will call the outsider), the bully, the victim (the person actually being bullied) and the bystander (or the person who sees it all happening but is not involved). My guess is, sadly, every single one of you have probably played one or more of these roles over the last few years. [**Teacher’s Note:** If you have a story about how you handled (or wish you had handled) a bully in your life, this would be great to add to the introduction.]

**Transition to week 1 Message:** Tonight, we are going to focus on what Scripture has to say about the outsider.

### **Body:**

The Bible has tons to say about the outsider! Most of the time, the outsider in Biblical terms is referred to as the widow, the fatherless, or the foreigner. These categories represented the people in the world who were most vulnerable. They had the least amount of power and money, which meant

they were unable to advocate for themselves. Widows and orphans were often in great danger, as husbands were typically the ones to provide for the family. Without a husband or father, a family would be extremely vulnerable. The foreigner (or sometimes the Bible says “alien”) is also a very vulnerable category. In Biblical times, people didn’t just move for the sake of moving. It wasn’t like you got a job in a different part of the country and decided to move your family. Usually, if you had to go to a new land, it was because of some tragedy or serious situation. This means that in addition to being in a new and unfamiliar land, foreigners were also likely coming *from* some very difficult circumstances. And when they arrived in a new place, think of all the obstacles they would face. They likely did not know the language. They likely had no family or tribe to help them. They likely had very few possessions. They likely looked different and had different customs. Everything about them was different, and their challenges were immense.

So what does Scripture say about the types of people who live on the fringe of society and culture? Scripture is clear that while these types of people may be on the outside of society, they are *very close* to the heart of God! God put special instructions into the Law (which was the way Israel was commanded to live) to make sure outsiders were cared for and not neglected. And this is really important! This would have been *unheard of* in Biblical times. People didn’t just go out of their way for others out of the kindness of their hearts. For the most part, people operated with very little regard for other people, and vulnerable people were often used by powerful people to get ahead. In fact, when Israel was not following God’s Law, they themselves slipped into the practice of taking advantage of the vulnerable people in their society. The fact that God goes out of *His* way to show care for culturally *weak* people gives us a glimpse into God’s character. So, what does Scripture specifically say about God’s concern for the outsider? **[Teacher’s Note: Depending on the culture of your church, it may be worth mentioning that this is not a political talk. The following is meant to highlight God’s heart for the outsider—not comment on which complex policies and solutions are right for our current cultural moment. Use your discretion as to whether this needs to be stated.]**

### **God cares deeply for the outsider:**

We see a few different passages to show the heart of God towards vulnerable people. Psalm 68:5-6 is a great example.

**Psalm 68:5-6 (NIV):** *A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families, he leads out the prisoners with singing; but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land.*

This is a really great example because it not only shows that God cares about the vulnerable, like the fatherless, but that He will step in and play the role of father, or provider, to those in need! He cares so much about them that He will personally intercede on their behalf and play that important role for them!

Isaiah 56 also paints a really beautiful picture of the heart of God and His desire to include others into His family and His plan. This passage is all about bringing traditional “outsiders” into the family of God! **[Teacher’s Note:** Feel free to edit this passage if you feel it is too long. Also, depending on the age of your group, you may be interested in avoiding addressing the eunuch.] Listen to what it says:

**Isaiah 56:3-8 (NIV):** *Let no foreigner who is bound to the Lord say, “The Lord will surely exclude me from his people.” And let no eunuch complain, “I am only a dry tree.” For this is what the Lord says: “To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose what pleases me and hold fast to my covenant—to them I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that will endure forever. And foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant—these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.” The Sovereign Lord declares—he who gathers the exiles of Israel: “I will gather still others to them besides those already gathered.”*

Some of this might be a little confusing, but basically God is saying that vulnerable people—the foreigner, and the eunuch—can be accepted into God’s family (a eunuch was someone who could not have children because of the role they played in the King’s court). And not only can these people be accepted, but they can have the same status as Israel if they keep the covenant. This is amazing! This means that someone with no *status* (an outsider) could have *status* in the kingdom of God. In fact, God says they will have an everlasting name that is even better than having children.

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