

# Story: Bully's Progress

May 17, 2026

1 Peter 4:12-14, 5:6-11

John 17:1-11

He was a year or so old, and he wore the red and black of an adult 'apapane. He still thought of himself as young and growing and learning, and truly he was all of those things.

He was also the target of a bully in his generation and his neighborhood, and that wasn't such a good thing.

There are, I'm afraid, bullies among the 'apapane sometimes, as there are among the i'iwi and the 'amakihi and, as I'm sure you know, among human beings. Like other bullies, this 'apapane bully didn't have much if any real reason to dislike our young and learning 'apapane. He'd just taken it into his head that this was a good bird to pick on, and pick on him he did.

The bully would squawk at him when he saw him, and he'd call him names which I'm not going to repeat, because I don't want you to go up to the mountain forests and start bullying 'apapane. Sometimes the bully would dive at him while flying, and sometimes he'd dive at him when he was quietly perched in a tree. Worst of all, if the bully found him feeding on an oh'i'a lehua, he'd land next to him and startle him away from his meal.

That's pretty much what you're seeing in the photo, isn't it?

Our young and learning 'apapane didn't really know what to do about it. Not all, but all too many of the other birds in his flock and neighborhood seemed to egg the bully on. When he squawked, they'd stay silent. When he called him names, they'd laugh. When he swooped, they'd giggle. And when he drove him away from a meal, the most they'd do was cluck softly. The thing they simply wouldn't do was help.

"What am I to do?" he asked his auntie one day. "Nothing stops this bully. Not soft chirps, and not loud protests. He's pecked me more than once, and I've never pecked back, and if I even show signs of it he pecks harder. Nobody helps. Why? And what can I do?"

Auntie said, "I've seen more than a few bullies in the flocks, and there's always someone they pick on worse than anyone else. It's always bad and it's always wrong. I'm really sorry it's you.

"The other birds, I'm sorry to say, are afraid of the bully. They know that if it's not you, it's going to be somebody else, and that somebody will be one of them. It's not very caring and it's not very brave, but it's what a lot of birds do."

“So what do I do?” asked her nephew.

“You continue to be a kind, sensible, and caring bird,” said Auntie. “You help your flock to find food and sing songs and keep away from predators – even the bully. It takes time, and sometimes a long time, but the flock usually realizes that they are a flock, and a bully is just a bully, and when they realize that, the bully loses his hold on everyone, including you.”

“So I just wait?” asked our young and learning bird.

“You wait, and you show the rest of the flock what a good ‘apapane is,” said Auntie. “One of these days they’ll choose you.”

It took longer than it should have, but Auntie was right. The bully lost his power in the flock, and they stopped giggling and they stopped allowing him to pick on the other birds.

Among people, bullies can seem awfully strong, and they can be. Most of the time, communities figure it out and act to end the bullying, but it can take much longer than anyone thinks it should. We are also held in the heart and mind of God, who tolerates no bullying at all. So summon all your courage and summon all your heart, and remember that God wants you to be the best person you can be, and not to be like those who bully you.

by Eric Anderson