

Sticks and Stones . . .

I'm not sure when it began, but the last several years we have seen an explosion of name-calling. Social media is probably the main culprit in giving people freedom to chunk labels and names like snowballs at people they don't even know, with no concern of consequences.

It's no longer a matter of normal human interactions to disagree with someone; now it's about demonizing them. And dragging them through the mud. And judging their character and reputation.

- Refuse to subscribe to progressive ideologies? You are hateful.
- Dare to criticize someone's position? You're a bigot.
- Talk about God's plan for marriage as only between one man and one woman? You're homophobic.
- Stand up for common sense in insisting that boys can't become girls and girls can't become boys? You're transphobic.

This kind of name-calling has become personal. The Southern Poverty Law Center, having discovered a cash cow in declaring organizations hate groups, declared Probe Ministries a hate group because we (mainly me) agree with God's design for sexuality and gender. In agreeing with scripture that homosexual behavior violates God's command and is thus sin, we are called hateful. For years, I have vetted my articles on LGBT by sharing them with friends who no longer identify as gay or lesbian, to make sure they are not only accurate but also kind and compassionate.

But when our neighbor learned that Probe was on the SPLC's hate group list, he told my husband that I was hateful.

"Sue? Hateful? C'mon, you've known her for years. Do you honestly think she's hateful?"

I'm grateful that he gave it some thought, and the next week he retracted his assessment. That was nice; his name-calling wasn't hurtful to me. Kinda crazy, but not hurtful-because I knew it wasn't true. He was just being consistent to his leftist beliefs.

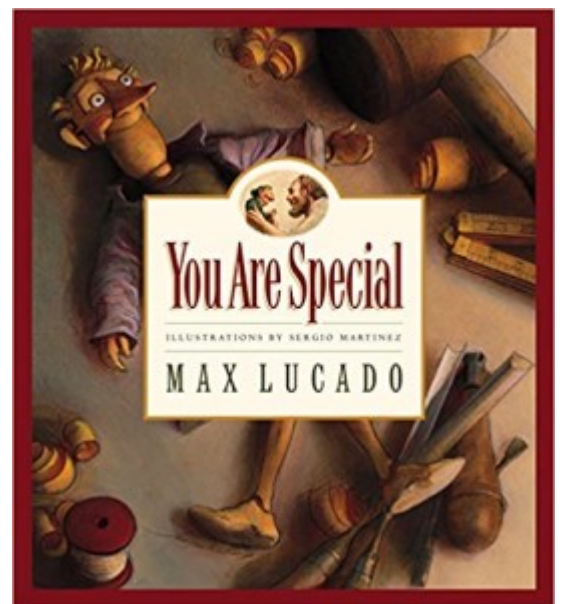
In addition to being called hateful, I've received a number of ugly emails declaring me ignorant, foolish, biased, an idiot, and some disgusting sexual slurs as well. In each case, the writers felt free to unleash their hostility and judgmentalism on me, a total stranger.

We've all heard the old rhyme, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me," right? Of course, it's a lie. Name-calling DOES hurt, especially from people close to us, who should be protecting our hearts rather than trying to inflict pain.

But it doesn't necessarily have to.

I was thinking about why these names slide off me the way hair slides off a plastic cape during a haircut.

The best explanation, I think, is found in my favorite children's book, Max Lucado's *You Are Special*.



It's about a group of wooden people called the Wemmicks who all day, every day, go around giving each other gold star stickers or gray dot stickers. Punchinello, who can't seem to

get anything right, only gets gray dot stickers.

But one day he meets a girl who doesn't have any gold star OR gray dots. It's not that people don't try to give her stickers-they just don't stick.

Punchinello asks her why, and she says, "It's easy. Every day I go to see Eli the woodcarver. I go and sit in the workshop with him."

Punchinello goes to see Eli.

"Hmm," the maker spoke thoughtfully as he inspected the gray circles. "Looks like you've been given some bad marks."

"I didn't mean to, Eli. I really tried hard."

"Oh, you don't have to defend yourself to me, child. I don't care what the other Wemmicks think."

"You don't?"

"No, and you shouldn't either. Who are they to give stars or dots? They're Wemmicks just like you. What they think doesn't matter, Punchinello. All that matters is what I think. And I think you are pretty special."

Punchinello laughed. "Me, special? Why? I can't walk fast. I can't jump. My paint is peeling. Why do I matter to you?"

Eli looked at Punchinello, put his hands on those small wooden shoulders, and spoke very slowly. "Because you're mine. That's why you matter to me."

Eli explains to Punchinello why the stickers don't stick on his friend:

"Because she has decided that what I think is more important than what they think. The stickers only stick if you let

them. . . The stickers only stick if they matter to you. The more you trust my love, the less you care about the stickers."

As Punchinello walks out the door, Eli reminds him, "You're special because I made you. And I don't make mistakes."

Punchinello thinks, "I think he really means it."

And then a dot fell to the ground.

For 50 years I have been spending daily time with my Maker, listening to what He says is true about me: I am His beloved child in whom He is well pleased. I am His redeemed daughter, a princess warrior, His workmanship, gifted with supernatural enablings to fulfill the works He gave me to do. My heavenly Father loves me the same way He loves His Son; His Son loves me so much He died for me and rose from the dead to make me His bride.

Being loved and cherished like that, no wonder the stickers of labels and names slide right off me.

If you struggle with what other people think of you, immerse yourself in what your Maker says is true about you. My favorite list, "I Am a Child of the King" by Dr. Ed Laymance, can be found [here](#).

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