

Preschool bully

"I'm not your friend."

The words no mother ever wants to hear when dropping her child off at preschool. Collin, who is easily excited, called out to another classmate near the door. "Hey, Derrick," he said, unzipping his coat.

"Go away," Derrick said.

"Check out my lion shirt!"

"Go away. I'm not your friend."

"Yes you are," a confused-sounding Collin responded, even though Derrick had already left.

My heart broke for him, partly because he didn't realize what had transpired. How could someone not like Collin? He's bright and warm and entertaining. Sure he can be a little loud and slightly bossy, but why did this boy deliberately try to hurt my baby's feelings?

"Unfortunately, that's how the world is," my mom explained when I brought it up to her. "We can't protect them from everything. Their little hearts are going to break sometimes."

I supposed she was right. I'm sure I break Collin's heart when I take the iPad away or tell him it's time to leave a birthday party. But, this is different. It's an attack upon his sense of self-worth coming from another four-year-old.

"Maybe Derrick is just a mean kid or maybe he had a bad morning. Collin is always a sweet kid. Not all children are sweet," my mom added.

Collin is extremely outgoing and loves to share and give out hugs. Derrick and some of the other preschool boys are more into play-fighting, and that's just not Collin's thing. They like the latest action figures; Collin likes cars. They dress like little adults; Collin still looks like a little kid. And that's okay.

This morning when I dropped Collin off, Derrick made a comment I couldn't hear about Collin's snow monster shirt. I heard their teacher quickly shush Derrick. Collin ran back out to give his brothers and me a kiss. And I was happy for the sweet, innocent boy I have.



I'm still not sure to handle the Derrick situation. As long as Collin is unaware of what's happening, I will keep quiet. I may alert the teachers, but don't see the sense in contacting Derrick's parents. When his feelings start to hurt, I will talk to Collin about how he's wonderful just the way he is and that not everyone in the world will be his friend and that that's okay. As he gets older, the conversation will change,

but the sentiment will stay the same.

When asked what he'd say to those who doubted his success, Russian figure skater Yevgeny Plushenko said, "thank you."

We can't allow the haters we encounter triumph over our spirits. Jesus tells us to turn the other cheek. That's exactly what we'll do.