

*With flattery he will corrupt those who have violated the covenant,
but the people who know their God will firmly resist him.*

Daniel 11:32

This is one of those 'parent expressing concern' emails¹. I'm putting forward my position because I think this is an issue that will escalate long before it is resolved.

My daughter was sharing her anecdotes last night from the church picnic in the park.

At one point she referred to how one of the boys made a joke that a group of girls 'were real terrorists' (in play, precipitated by lolly chase game). This is not the first time I have heard my daughter recount other stories where children whose behaviour is a bit over the top are 'real terrorists'.

Up to now, I have bitten my tongue. But, on reflection, I now think this might not be the best strategy. To be honest, I'm not sure what is.

For my own family, I spoke to my daughter this morning and asked her to refrain from making joking comments that someone 'is a real terrorist'.

My rationale, as explained to her, is as follows:

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- Terrorists are people who plan, premeditate, prepare and then commit murder of other people in cold blood. Terrorists are people who do mental, spiritual, and emotional hyperboles to justify the legitimacy of their killing of innocent people. They deliberately destroy infrastructures that have been built with collaboration and co-operation for the benefit of the broader community.

- These people are the worst form of humanity.
- It should be the greatest insult in the world to be called a terrorist. This label should be reserved for the most cold-blooded, premeditated kind of murderers.
- When we joke that someone is 'a real terrorist'. We take away the significance of being called a terrorist.
- If it is okay to be called a terrorist, then maybe it is okay to behave like a terrorist.

No, most children and adults would not make this hyperbole. But then most children and adults do not 'grow up' to become a terrorist.

My personal position is that the label terrorist should only be used for the most cold-blooded, premeditated kind of murderers. To call someone a terrorist is

¹ The original email was written in March 2004.

to state that they have placed themselves outside of the decent bounds of humanity. That they have become so personally corrupt that they are abhorred by all decent humans.

Therefore I have asked my daughter to refrain from using the word terrorist lightly.

I do not know how, whether, if the school system should be addressing this issue. I do know that I consider 'terrorists' to be unholy and outside of the grace of God. I consider the current trend of terrorism to be in the class of Hitler's Holocaust, Pol Pot's attempted genocide of his own people, and the Church during Christianity's own Dark Ages. In all three examples, leaders of these movements used religious/philosophical models to justify their dehumanization of others and the subsequent torture (physical, emotional and spiritual). The history of the Taliban in Afghanistan has followed the same trend, and anyone who subscribes to this or any other similar belief system is of the same ilk.

I'm sorry that this is a passionate email. It is just one of those times that to say nothing is to imply condoning of such people. I do not condone such people, and can not rest in myself, if I do not attempt with every cell of my being to slow or reverse the horrible trend that is developing. By doing this email I can look in the mirror and know that I am not fearfully or blindly accepting terrorism's encroachment. Today I have done one thing to make a stand. Small though it might be.

Many small drops over enough years can erode away the largest rock.

With respect and faith I entrust you to discuss and consider how your and other schools should deal with this issue.

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