Name: _____

Case Study #2: "Cancel" The Bully @ Every Day School: *How do you treat someone who is unkind but has a following?*

The Scenario

Mark is a popular 8th grader known for being funny and athletic. He has lots of friends, and people generally like him and think he's fun to be around. Among some people at the school, especially younger students, Mark is known for being mean and often makes fun of people's clothes, excludes classmates from sports games, and uses social media to mock students and teachers. Teachers have called his parents multiple times, but there hasn't been a change.

One afternoon, a video surfaces on a school group chat showing Mark knocking a stack of textbooks out of a 6th grader's hands in the hallway, laughing as they scatter, and walking away.

Within an hour, the video goes viral across the school. Maya is another 8th grader who has felt bullied by Mark in the past. Normally, others don't listen to her when she complains about Mark. People frequently tell Maya that she should just take a joke and not be so sensitive. But this time, her video is seen and reposted with the caption: *"Mark is a horrible person. We need to stop talking to him. #CancelMark."*

By the next morning, the judgment is absolute. Students refuse to sit next to Mark in the cafeteria. People hiss "bully" when he walks by, and he is kicked out of the 8th grade group chat. Mark tries to explain to his friends that the 6th grader is his younger cousin, and they were joking around after a family argument, but no one will listen to him. A couple of people stand by Mark, but since the video got shared by some girls in the popular group, many people now think Mark is a "bad person" who deserves to be excluded.

Discussion Questions

1. Actions vs. Identity

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- Is there a difference between *doing* a bad thing and *being* a bad person?
- When Maya labeled Mark a "horrible person," did she make a fair ethical judgment based on the video? Why or why not?

2. The Ethics of "The Judge"

- Maya wanted to defend a younger student, which is a good intention. Did her method of publicly judging Mark match her good intentions?
- Does punishing or shaming someone online make the person doing it "good," or can it create a new cycle of harm?

3. Framework: Ethics of Care

- How does a lack of full context (not knowing the 6th grader was his cousin) affect our ability to judge fairly?
- If Mark *was* actually bullying a stranger, would completely ostracizing him be the right ethical consequence, or would it prevent him from learning and changing?

What do you think is a Central Ethical Dilemma?

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