

Peacemaking for Preschoolers

by Tara Klena Barthel

One of the most common questions I hear at women's retreats is this: "At what age should we start teaching our children the *Young Peacemaker* materials?" By looking at Corlette's (wonderful!) course, it may be easy to think that age 7 or 8 is appropriate because by then, most children are able to read and complete the fun activity booklets. However, I strongly believe that the best age to start training children in peacemaking is no later than preschool. Otherwise, we inadvertently train them to be tiny peace-fakers and peace-breakers rather than peace-makers! In this workshop, we will discuss how to teach and reinforce peacemaking in the lives of very young children.

WHY PRESCHOOLERS?

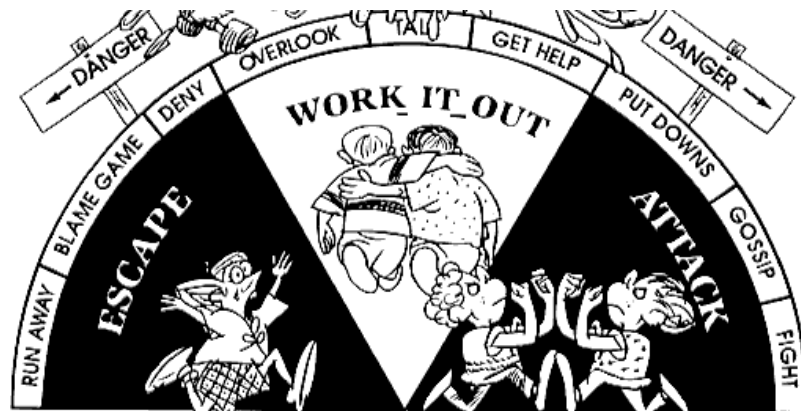
PREPARING TO SERVE THIS AGE GROUP

- Our own lives
- Authority, submission, and the respectful appeal
- Practicing with "hypotheticals"
- The hope of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

"What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures." James 4:1-3

A GREAT STARTING POINT:

THE YOUNG PEACEMAKER (“YP”) SLIPPERY SLOPE¹



WHEN—*NOT IF*—OUR KIDS FIGHT

- Setting clear expectations—with *the parents and the children*—as to what behaviors will be expected, tolerated, rewarded, or punished (and what the rewards and punishments will be)
- Teaching and encouraging “work it out” options; being available to help (mediation training)
- Pursuing peace *with the parents* when there are conflicts among the children

“As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” Ephesians 4:1-3

¹ *The Young Peacemaker* is © Corlette Sande and the biblical peacemaking principles are © Ken Sande/Peacemaker Ministries. All are used with permission.

GET THE LOG OUT OF YOUR EYE

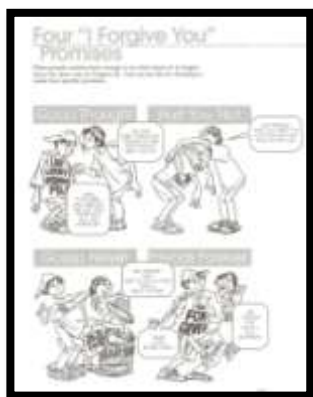
THE YP FIVE A'S OF CONFESSION



“You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.” Matthew 7:5

GO AND BE RECONCILED

THE YP FOUR PROMISES OF FORGIVENESS



“Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.” Ephesians 4:32

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND FURTHER REFLECTION

1. Read John 17:20-23, Ephesians 4:1-3, Matthew 5:9, and John 13:35:

²⁰ “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²² I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— ²³ I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” John 17:20-23

¹ As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. ²Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. Ephesians 4:1-3

⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God. Matthew 5:9

³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. John 13:35

In your own words, describe what these passages say about our *relationships*. How do your attitudes, words, and actions show that you prioritize the unity and love described in these passages? In what relational areas do you need growth and change? How about your children? Could your children, right now, explain why reconciled relationships are so important?

2. Look again at *The Slippery Slope* of conflict. Where do you tend to fall on the slope? When conflicts arise, are you an avoider or do you jump in and engage? How about your husband? Your children? How might *The Slippery Slope* help you all prayerfully to discuss your responses to conflict (and the likely results)? How might *The Slippery Slope* help you to change and better promote peace and unity?
3. Are these biblical peacemaking principles new to you or have you studied them in the past? Do you use these terms in your day-to-day life? Do you talk with your children about James 4:1-3 idolatry and “monster wants”? Are you helping your children learn how to make confessions (Matthew 7:5) and grant forgiveness (Colossians 3:13)? Would you like to do this more? If so, what steps are you going to take to study and apply these biblical peacemaking principles more in the future?

4. A.W. Tozer said, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” What five words come quickly to your mind to describe God?

What are the first five words your children would use to describe God?

Read Psalm 103:1-14:

Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!

²Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,³ who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

⁶The LORD works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed. He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel. The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. ¹⁰He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.



¹¹For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; ¹²as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. ¹³As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. ¹⁴For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust. Psalm 103:1-14

List out all of the descriptive words for God found in that psalm. What can you do this week to remember the character of God and help your children to do the same? How will this help you to be a better peacemaker?

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- Tara Barthel and Judy Dabler, *Peacemaking Women*
- Elyse Fitzpatrick, *Give them Grace*
- Ginger Plowman, *Don't Make Me Count to Three*
- Corlette Sande, *The Young Peacemaker*
- Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker* and *The Peacemaker Student Edition*
- Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding a Child's Heart*

Thank you so very much for the privilege of serving you at this event! I count it a great honor to learn with you and I hope that we will stay in touch:

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Tara Barthel, a former director at Peacemaker Ministries and “recovering lawyer,” currently serves her family as a homemaker while regularly mediating and speaking at conferences and retreats. Tara has produced one video series (*Living the Gospel in Relationships*), and coauthored two books (*Peacemaking Women* and *Redeeming Church Conflicts*). Tara is currently enrolled at Reformed Theological Seminary where she is pursuing a Master’s Degree in Religion. Tara and her family are members of Rocky Mountain Community Church (PCA) in Billings, Montana.