

BIBLICAL HOPE (AND HELP) FOR WOMEN WITH POWERFUL PERSONALITIES

by Tara Klena Barthel (www.tarabarthel.com)

Gifted, educated, and passionate women often are misunderstood and can easily find themselves isolated, lonely, or embroiled in a variety of relational conflicts. The very strengths that help us to motivate and lead others can also be our downfall relationally. If you, or someone you know, struggles to relate well with people and develop deep friendships, this workshop is for you. Grounded in biblical truth and fueled by the gospel, we will consider how best to serve these precious women with grace, truth, and redemptive time.

WHEN OUR GIFTS ARE OUR DOWNFALL

“Every woman I have ever known with strong leadership gifts and a powerful personality—including myself—has experienced *conflict*. Our strengths can be our greatest weaknesses, and strong women seem prone to attract attacks and cause offenses.” (p. 238 of *Peacemaking Women—Biblical Hope for Resolving Conflict*)

- We have clarity and insight on *tasks* but are sometimes blind and ignorant when it comes to *relationships*. We sacrifice *people* on the altars of our *tasks* (James 4:1-3).
- Instead of using our quick minds and verbal prowess to build others up (Ephesians 4:29), we “accomplish much,” but fail to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:31).

OUR HOPE IS THE GOSPEL

“Only God’s love and grace working in us can enable us to live lives of obedience that bear good fruit. Only as we remember the gospel—that we have been forgiven all our sins—will we [live effective and productive lives] (2 Pet. 1:9).” (p. 22 of *Peacemaking Women*)

- The law is good (1 Timothy 1:8), but only the *gospel* changes our hearts (Luke 6:43-45, Romans 8:1-39). Remember ... *not for but from!*
- As God sanctifies us, we learn to *live wholly defined by the gospel* (Ephesians 1:5, Romans 8:38-39, and we *give grace to others* just as we experience it ourselves (Titus 3:3-8, Matthew 18:23-35).

LEARNING TO USE OUR GIFTS WITH GRACE

“The indwelling Christ enables our relationships to be filled with love (1 John 4:15-16). Love grows in us as we live in God and God lives in us. He grows us and he grows our love for others. God is making love complete among us (1 John 4:16-17). Take confidence in him and prayerfully seek to have all of your relationships model his love.” (pp. 131-132 of *Peacemaking Women*)

- Turn to Christ! And *away from* perfectionism and the false worship of making desires—even *good desires*—into idolatrous demands (1 Thess. 1:9-10).
- Pray for the grace to *value relationships* (John 17:20-23, Matthew 5:23-24). Remember—there are only *two tasks on our tasklist*.
- Develop understanding and grow in humility by *slowing down* (Ferrari & Model T) and becoming an *observer of people and the world* (1 Thessalonians 5:14). Change to serve others (from mountain *climber* to mountain *guide*, cf Romans 15:2-3a, Colossians 4:6).

DEVELOPING REDEMPTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

“Reconciled relationships—relationships of *shalom*—entail much more than merely the absence of conflict. They reflect the positive qualities of love, kindness, trust, and compassion. Without intimate friendships and redemptive relationships, our lives can feel like a wasteland.”
(p. 121 of *Peacemaking Women*)

- Glorify God by praying for and working hard to *grow friendships* and build relationships in the Body of Christ (Romans 15:7, Hebrews 10, 1 John 4:7-8, 1 Corinthians 12).
- Difficult people? Rest in God’s love as you pursue genuine unity by learning and applying biblical peacemaking principles (www.Peacemaker.net). But if you have to ... *destroy ‘em!* (Romans 12)
- Enjoy who God made you to be and enjoy the people around you! You are *delightful* when you are yourself ... *with grace*. (And don’t forget the *three qualities of God’s character that are essential ingredients for lasting change*.)

Tara Barthel (www.tarabarthel.com), a former director at Peacemaker Ministries and “recovering lawyer,” currently serves her husband, Fred, and toddler, Sophia Grace, as a homemaker while regularly mediating and speaking on peacemaking. In between chasing Sophie and her Golden Retriever, Tara coauthored her first book: *Peacemaking Women—Biblical Hope for Resolving Conflict* (Baker Book House Co., 2005).