

W O M E N A N D P E A C E M A K I N G — A
J O U R N E Y O F G R A C E
by Tara Klena Barthel

*“Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way.
The Lord be with all of you.” 2 Thessalonians 3:16*

THE GOSPEL — OUR
FOUNDATION FOR PEACE
by Tara Klena Barthel

Although, as Christian women, we readily confess that we are “saved by grace,” many of us struggle to believe that God’s love, mercy, and delight are *actually and consistently* towards us. We sense His pleasure when we are “being good,” but we usually have a vague sense that no matter how hard we try, “we’re never quite good enough.” This crushing burden brings conflict to our relationship with God, others, and within. *But there is hope!* In this first session, we remember anew God’s grace for us through the gospel of Jesus Christ, and from that place of abundant love and safety, learn together how we are called to give that same grace to others as peacemaking women.

REMEMBERING THE GOSPEL

“Almost every person in the world longs for peace within. But there can be no peace within unless there is first peace with God and peace with others “as far as it depends on you” (Rom. 12:18). (p.16 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). We must first remember who God is and what *He* has done before we ever try to change.
- Generally, we give grace to others to the extent we experience it ourselves. If we are living in a “works” mentality towards God, we are probably living in a “works” mentality towards others and ourselves (Matthew 18:23-35).
- Our reconciled relationship with *God* is what makes reconciled relationships with *others* and peace *within* possible (2 Peter 1:9, Isaiah 26:3-4).

“At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.” Titus 3:3-5

GROWING IN GRACE

Perfect and Growing in Perfection

“Our brothers and sisters in Christ, though imperfect themselves and growing in sanctification, help us to remember the height from which we have fallen (Rev. 2:5), the home to which we are headed (John 14:2), and the great and glorious love of God (1 John 3:1).”
(p. 23 of *Peacemaking Women*)

- Remember your testimony—*from where have you come?* Remember the gift of salvation by faith through grace—*we can never be good enough!* That’s why Christ came and lived the perfect life we could never live and died the death we deserved (Romans 5:1-11, Hebrews 4:14-16).
- Don’t forget the doctrines of *justification* (2 Cor. 5:21, once and for all, already perfect) and *sanctification* (Phil. 2:13 & 1:6, Rom. 8:29, an ongoing process until we reach Heaven, growing in perfection).

“By one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.” Hebrews 10:14

WHOLLY DEFINED BY THE GOSPEL

Not For But From

“Nothing brings greater peace to the Christian than the sure knowledge that God is near, cares deeply, and he is a safe refuge where we can find rest.” (p. 317 of *Peacemaking Women*)

- As we grow in grace, we learn to be *wholly defined by the gospel*—not *for* God’s acceptance and love, but *from* His acceptance and love. We preach truth to our “sticky brains” of unbelief and move from a mere *confessional* theology to a *practical* theology.
- David Powlison reminds us, “People change when biblical truth becomes more loud and vivid than previous life experience.” *Biblical theology is the application of the whole of Scripture by the whole person to the whole of life* (see 2 Timothy 3:16).
- Remember! God calls us His beloved because it *delights* Him to do so (Eph. 1:5). Why does God love us? *Not* because of what we *do* but *because we are His*. *Nothing* can separate us from the love of God (Rom. 8:38-39, Isaiah 49:16).

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

(LIMITED NUMBER OF DISCOUNTED COPIES MAY BE AVAILABLE AT THIS EVENT):

- Tara Barthel, *Peacemaking Women—Biblical Hope for Resolving Conflict* (book); *Living the Gospel in Relationships* (eight-part video series); various teaching CDs (including *Healing the Conflicts between Mothers and Daughters* and my testimony CD—*The Grace of God that Brings Shalom*).
- Patricia Miller, *Quick Scripture Reference for Counseling Women*
- Tripp & Lane, *How People Change*
- Edward T. Welch, *Depression—A Stubborn Darkness: Light for the Path* and *Running Scared—Fear, Worry, and the God of Rest*
- Paul Tripp, *A Quest for More*
- CCEF booklets on various topics: Forgiveness, Depression-The Way Up When You Are Down, Suffering—Eternity Makes a Difference, Why Me?

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

1. How did you first become acquainted with the gospel? What are some of your favorite passages in Scripture that remind you of the riches of your salvation? Why are they precious to you? How does the cross of Jesus Christ offer you proof of God's love for you? Read Ephesians 5:2, 25 and Revelation 19:6-9. How much does Jesus love his bride? Do you believe that as a member of his church, Jesus loves you this much?
2. Read Genesis 37-50, 2 Corinthians 1, and Romans 8:28-29. Do you believe that God is truly sovereign, purposeful, and has a good and holy reason for everything he does? What about the pain and suffering you have experienced in life? Do you doubt God's goodness and care for you? Meditate on Psalm 23. Write a paragraph to reflect on God's sovereignty and goodness in the specific areas of your life.
3. Do you ever struggle with a vague sense that you are not good enough no matter how hard you try? What comes easier to you, believing that God delights in you or that he is disappointed in you? Do you feel closer to God when you are doing good things? Do you feel that God loves you more when you do righteous acts? If so, why do you think it is that you try to earn God's love and approval instead of relying solely on Christ? The truths of the Gospel of Grace: justified and being sanctified, forgiven and adopted, delighted in and beloved, are key to being wholly defined by the Gospel. Read Galatians 4:6-7 and 1 John 3:1. Write out a paragraph on what it means to trust in Christ alone rather than on your own performance.
4. Read Psalm 27:10 and Hebrews 13:5. What comfort do you find in knowing that even though people may reject you, God *never* will? Pray through Psalm 119:33-40.

BIBLICAL (AND PRACTICAL!) HOPE FOR RESOLVING CONFLICT¹

“How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! ... For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.” Psalm 133:1,3b

WHY DOES UNITY MATTER?

“If you are a Christian woman, you are called to be a peacemaking woman. This is not our idea. It is Christ who compels us. The admonition to “go and be reconciled” is the call to reflect the very heart of God in our lives.” (p. 17 of *Peacemaking Women*)

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

HOW DO WE RESPOND TO CONFLICT?

THE SLIPPERY SLOPE



¹The majority of this content is copyrighted by Peacemaker Ministries (www.Peacemaker.net). It is presented by adjunct instructor Tara Barthel (www.tarabarthe.com) under a custom teaching license.

A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

GLORIFY GOD

How can I please and honor God in this situation?

“The gospel says that God loves us and accepts us because of Jesus. In response, we live boldly as every aspect of our lives becomes a response to God’s grace. Even conflict, a universally dreaded human experience, becomes an opportunity to respond to the glorious grace of God in our lives.” (p. 95 of *Peacemaking Women*)

- **Trust & obey** God (John 14:15-31, John 19:21)
- **Serve** others (Romans 15:1-3)
- **Grow** to be like Christ (Romans 8:28-29)

“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” 1 Corinthians 10:31

GET THE LOG OUT OF YOUR OWN EYE

How can I show Jesus’ work in me by taking responsibility for my contribution to this conflict?

THE SEVEN A’S OF CONFESSION

“Confessing what we view as a small contribution to the problem can be painfully difficult when we feel that the other person has sinned greatly. But the gospel makes us joyfully free to root out and admit our weaknesses and inadequacies because we know that we are safe and secure in the hand of God.” (pp. 96-97 of *Peacemaking Women*)

“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

GENTLY RESTORE

How can I lovingly serve others by helping them to take responsibility for their contribution to this conflict?

“The grace of God is what enables us to minister truth, mercy, hope, and love to our brothers and sisters in Christ through biblical confrontation. We confront because we are compelled by love.” (p. 98 of *Peacemaking Women*)

ELEMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE CONFRONTATION

- Pray
- Choose the right time and place
- Have a charitable presumption
- Talk in person whenever possible
- Plan your words and anticipate likely responses
- Use a gracious tone of voice and friendly body language
- Be objective (avoid “always, ever, never” and other hyperboles)
- Use the Bible carefully (tool of God’s grace, not a club!)
- ALWAYS hold out hope—the Gospel

“Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently.” Galatians 6:1

GO AND BE RECONCILED

How can I demonstrate the forgiveness of God and encourage a reasonable solution to this conflict?

THE FOUR PROMISES OF FORGIVENESS

“Conflict is painful. Will we strive for unity and harmony? Or will we live in conflict or worse yet, the apathy of denial? The gospel message of reconciliation is our mandate to show the world Christ. Our conflicts provide opportunities for us to impact the world by prayerfully, humbly striving to be reconciled inasmuch as it depends on us (Rom. 12:18).” (p. 101 of *Peacemaking Women*)

“Make very effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” Ephesians 4:3

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

(LIMITED NUMBER OF DISCOUNTED COPIES MAY BE AVAILABLE AT THIS EVENT):

- Tara Barthel, *Peacemaking Women* (book); *Living the Gospel in Relationships* (eight-part video series); various *teaching* CDs (including *Mediating the Miserable Christian Marriage*, *Peacemaking for Preschoolers (and Their Mothers!)*, and “*But How Can I Submit When I Know He’s Wrong?*”).
- Jeff Hamling, *Peacemaker Clubs—Vacation Bible School*
- Dave Harvey, *When Sinners Say “I Do”*
- Lane & Tripp, *Relationships—A Mess Worth Making*
- Alfred Poirier, *The Peacemaking Pastor*
- Corlette Sande, *The Young Peacemaker*
- Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, *The Peacemaker Workbook*, and *Guiding People through Conflict*

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

1. Have you ever known a truly peaceful woman? Describe her countenance. What were her words like? How did you feel in her presence? Do you think her life was free of all conflicts? Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-10 and John 16:33. In this life we have troubles and conflict. Write out three promises from Scripture as to how you can be a woman at peace, even amidst the storms of life.
2. List the relationships in your life that are conflicted. Review the 4 G’s and read Proverbs 15:1 and Romans 12:21. Explain in your own words how Christians are called to respond to conflicted relationships, especially when people wrong us. Have you responded to these conflicted relationships in a biblically faithful way?
3. How do you usually respond to conflict as described on the Slippery Slope of Conflict? How do your responses to conflict encourage truly reconciled, redemptive relationships? In what ways do your responses exacerbate conflict and fail to evidence grace, mercy, and love? How is God calling you to respond in a new way to the conflicts you face?
4. Think of a person that you feel has wronged you. List out the ways he or she has wronged you. On another sheet of paper, list out your wrongs against this same person. Which was easier to do? What might this reveal about your heart? Read Matthew 7:1-5 before you answer.
5. Peacemaking is hard work. Even with the best of intentions, sometimes conflicts can worsen and we need to get help to work them through. Read James 5:19-20, Hebrews 3:12-13, Romans 15:14, and Proverbs 15:22. If you have made every effort to resolve a conflict privately, who can you turn to for help? Do you know someone who is currently in a conflict? Have you helped them to faithfully obey Scripture and be reconciled? Should you? Will you?

LASTING PEACE THROUGH HEART CHANGE

WHAT IS RULING OUR HEARTS?

We act and speak the way we do because of what is in our hearts (Luke 6:43-45).

“We must understand that our relational conflicts and lack of internal peace reveal with great clarity the condition of our hearts.” (p. 20 of *Peacemaking Women*)

- I would be completely content or happy in my life if only ...
- All I want is ...
- I get most sad and depressed when ...
- I feel hopeless when ...
- Sometimes I dream that ...
- I just want to avoid ...
- Don't ask me to give up my ...

“Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.” 1 John 5:21

OUR RELATIONSHIPS REVEAL OUR IDOLS

All sin is summarized as idolatry (Ephesians 5:5-6, Deuteronomy 4:23).

“A heart that hungers after idols is a heart without peace. ... Idolatrous living robs us of *shalom*—that sweet relationship with God, others, and ourselves.” (p. 60 of *Peacemaking Women*)

- When the desires of our hearts are elevated to demands (James 4:1-3) and our demands are not met, *how do we respond?*
- Do we live to impress others and gain their approval? Are we bound by the *fear of Man* (Prov. 29:25, Jer. 17:5-8)? Or do we rightly worship *God* alone?
- Any motivation for living other than finding our satisfaction in God will eventually bring emptiness and despair *because idols never satisfy.*

“What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?” James 4:1

WHAT ARE WE CALLED TO DO?

- Know God through His Word (Isaiah 62:4-5, 1 Corinthians 1:30), identify your idols, turn away from them, and replace them with rightful worship of God (1 Corinthians 10:13-14, Jonah 2:8).
- Have specific Scriptures to battle your temptations against your specific idols (Titus 2:11-12, 2 Peter 1:3-4).
- Get help within the covenantal Body of Christ (Rom. 12:4-5, 1 Cor. 12:12-26) to lay hold of *Christ*—which (to paraphrase John Calvin) means to lay hold of *His promises*.

“I turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he has raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues me from the coming wrath.” 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10

“To be peacemaking women, our hope is to rest in God’s grace as we turn from these false gods. This is a lifelong battle. It is our ongoing calling to turn away from idols and turn toward the Lord. This is one of the foundational aspects of our sanctification and conformity to Christ.” (pp. 60-61 of *Peacemaking Women*)

REDEMPTIVE RELATIONSHIPS AND LASTING PEACE

- Because God ministers His grace primarily in three forms: His Spirit, His Word, and His Church (the covenantal Body of Christ), pray for the grace to *value relationships* (Matthew 5:23-24, 1 John 4:7-8).
- Grow in humility and love by *delighting in the differences among God’s people and setting aside self to serve others* (1 Thessalonians 5:14, Romans 15:2-3a, Colossians 4:6,). Not “Jesus Plus Anything”—*just Jesus*.
- Don’t forget the *three qualities of God’s character that are essential ingredients for lasting change—grace, truth, and redemptive time!* This is all “beyond our abilities and into the realm of grace” (Susan Hunt).

“My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love ... in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” Colossians 2:2-3

“Friendships of *shalom* provide safe harbors for our hearts when the storms of life come. True friendship is a reflection and foretaste of heaven.” (pp. 122-123 of *Peacemaking Women*)

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

1. Read Jeremiah 17:9, Proverbs 20:5, Luke 24:25, Romans 10:10, Hebrews 4:12, and 1 John 2:16. What does Scripture say about the nature of our hearts?
2. List three things that you have longed for in life that you thought would satisfy you, but left you feeling empty after receiving them. Why did these things not satisfy? How did you respond when your longings were realized, but your experience was one of further dissatisfaction?
3. We do things for many reasons: to avoid pain; to achieve pleasure, comfort, joy, meaning, or happiness. To help discover what you value and what rules your heart, complete the bulleted questions under “What is Ruling Our Hearts.”
4. From the above answers, what desires can you identify that motivate you to do the things you do or feel the way you feel? Read Luke 6:43-45, Deuteronomy 6:5, 1 John 2:15-16, and Jeremiah 17:5-8. Write a paragraph about what your desires reveal about who or what you worship, trust, and love.
5. Are you convicted that you may be struggling with an idol? Name this idol and make a list of the consequences you have experienced or might experience in the future because of it. How would your life be different if you were to turn away from this false god? Read 2 Chronicles 14:2-6. What did King Asa do to gain peace and rest? Read 1 Samuel 7:3 and 12:20-25, Matthew 6:24, and 1 John 3:10. What is God calling *you* to do?

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

(LIMITED NUMBER OF DISCOUNTED COPIES MAY BE AVAILABLE AT THIS EVENT):

- Tara Barthel, *Peacemaking Women—Biblical Hope for Resolving Conflict* (book); *Living the Gospel in Relationships* (eight-part video series); various teaching CDs (including *The Root of Conflict—Our Idolatrous Hearts* and *Oceans of Emotions—Effectively Ministering Peace to Women*).
- Paul David Tripp, *War of Words: Getting to the Heart of Your Communication Struggles*
- Edward T. Welch, *Addictions—A Banquet in the Grave: Finding Hope in the Power of the Gospel*
- Edward T. Welch, *When People Are Big and God Is Small: Overcoming Peer Pressure, Codependency, and the Fear of Man*

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:

Blog: www.tarabarthel.com

FaceBook: *tara.barthel*

Tara Klana Barthel (www.tarabarthel.com) formerly served as the Director of the Institute for Christian Conciliation, a division of Peacemaker Ministries. As such, she oversaw the delivery of all conciliation services and advanced conciliator training. Currently, she serves her family as a homemaker while regularly mediating, speaking, and writing on biblical peacemaking. Baker Book House Co. published her first book in 2005: *Peacemaking Women—Biblical Hope for Resolving Conflict* and her first video series was released by Peacemaker Ministries in 2007: *The Peacemaking Church Women's Study—Living the Gospel in Relationships*. Prior to joining the staff of Peacemaker Ministries, Tara worked as an attorney and business consultant in Chicago. Tara, Fred, and their daughters Sophia and Ella are members of Rocky Mountain Community Church (PCA).