

## **Peacemaking for Families Book Guide**

### **Chapter 1: Marriage Means Conflict**

When you were a child, how did your parents typically respond to conflict? (Refer specifically to one or more of the responses on the slippery slope, pages 7-8.) How have your parents' responses to conflict carried over into your life?

If someone were to ask your spouse which of the slippery-slope responses to conflict you typically use, what would he or she say? What would your children say?

Think of a recent conflict with your spouse or children that you did not handle as well as you wish you had. Describe the progression of the conflict, referring to the responses on the slippery slope. How do you think your spouse or children felt as a result of your various responses? How did they react to your responses?

When you are in a conflict with people outside your family, do you respond differently than you do with your family? If so, why? If your family notices a difference, how do you think that makes them feel?

As your children watch your example, are they learning to respond to conflict as peacemakers, or are they learning to be "peacefakers" or "peacebreakers"? What do you want to do in the days ahead, with God's help, to be a better example to them?

### **Chapter 2: Getting to the Heart of the Conflict**

When you are in conflict with a family member, what desires do you typically have that you feel are not being met?

In order to identify desires that may have turned into demands, ask yourself these questions:

What am I preoccupied with?

(What is the first thing on my mind in the morning and the last thing at night?)

How would I complete this statement:

"If only \_\_\_\_\_, then I would be happy, fulfilled, and secure?"

What do I want to preserve or avoid?

Where do I put my trust?

What do I fear?

When a certain desire is not met, do I feel frustration, anxiety, resentment, bitterness, anger, or depression?

Is there something I desire so much that I am willing to disappoint or hurt others in order to have it?

How are you judging those who do not meet your desires? Are you feeling indignation, condemnation, bitterness, resentment, or anger?

How are you punishing those who do not meet your desires?

How can you cultivate a more passionate love for and worship of God?

### **Chapter 3: A Biblical Framework for Peacemaking**

How do you usually view conflict? Do you see it as an inconvenience, a danger, or a chance to get your way? How does your view of conflict affect your response to conflict?

Have you ever thought of conflict as an opportunity? How would this view of conflict affect your response to conflict?

How can you glorify God through conflict? Be practical and specific.

How can you serve your family through conflict? Be practical and specific.

How can you grow to be more like Christ through conflict? Again, think of practical, concrete steps you can take.

### **Chapter 4: Confession**

Your answers to these questions may be based on an actual conflict in your marriage or other relationship, or a hypothetical conflict.

What are some ways that we may try to “wriggle out of” making a confession?

Why is confession an important first step in the resolution of a problem?

Why is speech so important? Give examples of some of the following types of speech:

- a. Reckless words
- b. Grumbling and complaining
- c. Falsehood
- d. Gossip
- e. Slander
- f. Harsh or abusive speech
- g. Hurtful criticism
- h. Speculating on your spouse’s motives

Review the “Seven A’s of Confession” on pages 52-59. Which of these are easiest for you? Which are the most challenging? Are all seven of them necessary for every act of confession? Why or why not?

### **Chapter 5: Confrontation**

How was confrontation handled in your household when you were growing up?

When is it a good idea to overlook a problem? When is it not a good idea?

What are some practical ways you can build up your spouse, even during a confrontation?

Which listening skills do you have a hard time with: waiting, attending, clarifying, reflecting, or agreeing? Share some things you will do or say to overcome these weaknesses.

If you're married, what can you do and say that would clearly communicate your love and concern for your spouse?

What is the best time and place to talk with your spouse about difficult issues?

How can you demonstrate to your spouse that you believe the best about him or her?

### **Chapter 6: Forgiveness**

Review the four promises of forgiveness on pages 84-85. Have you been able to carry out these four promises after conflicts with your spouse or other family members?

If you are having a hard time forgiving your spouse:

- a. Is it because you are not sure he or she has repented?
- b. Do you think he or she must somehow earn or deserve your forgiveness? Are you trying to punish by withholding forgiveness? Are you expecting a guarantee that the offense will not happen again?
- c. How did your sins contribute to the conflict? How can you imitate God's forgiveness?
- d. Read Matthew 18:21-35. What is the point of this passage? How does it apply to you?

How can you demonstrate forgiveness or promote reconciliation in thought? word? deed?

### **Chapter 7: Negotiation**

How do you tend to negotiate: competitively (seeking primarily to get your own way) or cooperatively (looking out for others' interests as well as your own)?

How can you prepare to negotiate a reasonable agreement in your present situation?

How can you affirm your concern and respect for your spouse?

Seek to understand the interests of both you and your spouse by answering these questions:

- a. Which issues need to be resolved in order to settle this conflict? (What positions have you and your spouse already taken on these issues?)
- b. What are your interests in this situation?
- c. What are your spouse's interests in this situation?

What are some creative solutions or options that would satisfy as many interests as possible?

What are some ways that these options can be evaluated objectively and reasonably?

### **Chapter 8: Teaching Children to Be Peacemakers**

Do you feel that you have set a good example of peacemaking for your children? Why or why not?

If not, what can you do to change things from now on?

Identify some practical times and ways that you can take the following key steps to teaching peace to your children?

- a. Remind them regularly of who they are in Christ: forgiven and redeemed!
- b. Minister to their hearts, seeking to help them identify and renounce the idols that may rule their hearts.
- c. Provide regular, systematic instruction, primarily by your example and also by using stories, movies, and the normal conflicts of family life as teaching opportunities.
- d. Provide your children with opportunities for social interactions where conflicts can arise and you can help them practice peacemaking skills.

What can a parent do if the children are older and have developed sinful conflict resolution habits?

### **Chapter 9: Making Peace with Children**

Discuss each of the following steps to conflict resolution, especially as they apply to children. What are the risks involved if we don't follow them? What are some practical ways to carry them out?

- a. Glorify God.
- b. Get the log out of your own eye.
- c. Go and show your children their faults, always ministering the gospel.
- d. Go and be reconciled.
- e. Use conflict to teach godly negotiation: making respectful appeals and looking out for the interests of others.

### **Chapter 10: Conflict between Adult Family Members**

Discuss the following steps to conflict resolution, especially as they apply to conflicts between adults. What are some practical ways to put these into practice?

- a. Glorify God.
- b. Get the log out of your own eye.
- c. Go and show your brother his fault.
- d. Go and be reconciled.
- e. PAUSE (**P**repare, **A**ffirm relationships, **U**nderstand interests, **S**earch for creative solutions, and **E**valuate options)

### **Chapter 11: Getting Help for a Troubled Marriage**

What are some action steps that you can take if you believe your marriage may be in danger? How could you encourage your spouse to cooperate with you?

What role can (and should) the church play in helping troubled marriages?

How is God honored when we make an effort to save our marriages?

### **Chapter 12: Insurance Policies for a Healthy Marriage**

How can you nurture your marital relationship at all four levels: spiritual, intellectual/recreational, emotional, and physical?

What are some practical ways you can strengthen your personal peacemaking skills?

What does a peacemaking church look like? How can you encourage your church to become a peacemaking congregation, if it is not already?

How can you be an influence for peace in the lives of others?