

# THE YOUNG PEACE MAKER

*Teaching  
Students to  
Respond  
to Conflict  
God's Way*

Intermediate &  
Middle School Level

Also Available  
**12**  
REPRODUCIBLE  
STUDENT  
ACTIVITY  
BOOKS

by **CORLETTE SANDE**  
Pictures by **RUSS FLINT**



# THE YOUNG PEACE MAKER



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CORLETTE SANDE



HEY, COACH,  
WHY DON'T YOU  
INVITE THE UMP  
TO YOUR  
PEACEMAKING  
CLASS?

illustrated & designed  
by **Russ Flint & Associates**

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**Blessed**  
are the  
peace-  
makers,  
for they  
will be  
called  
sons of  
God.

Matthew 5:9

I had only been on the telephone for two minutes when the screaming started in my living room. Megan, my four-year old, and Jeff, my two-year old, were launching into one of their regular battles. The shouting and crying went on for at least a minute, but by the time I got off the phone and into the living room, they were playing happily with their coloring books.

"All right," I demanded, "what's going on out here?"

Megan looked up with a serene smile and said, "It's okay, Mommie. We did peacemaking."

More suspicious than ever, I asked her to explain what had happened. "Well," she said, "I took Jeffrey's coloring book, and he started to hit me. So I hit him. Then he screamed, and I screamed. But then I said, 'Jeffrey, let's not fight. I'm sorry I took your book. Will you forgive me?' And he said, 'I give you, Megan. I'm sorry I hit you. Give me?' And I said, 'I forgive you,' and then we hugged and were friends again."

All I could do was drop to my knees, pull my children into my arms, and breathe a prayer of thanks to God. They were really learning how to be peacemakers! The principles I had been repeating to them for months on end were actually taking root. Yes, they fought again within the hour, but at least they were learning the basic principles they need to resolve their frequent differences in a constructive way.

That incident provided the final push I needed to pull this manual together. As a former school teacher and counselor, I had witnessed countless disputes in the classroom, on the playground, and in my students' homes. I had also seen how effective God's peacemaking principles could be in each setting, whether the students were in elementary school, junior high, or high school.

For example, one student learned to confess to stealing from a teacher and offered double restitution. Another student took responsibility for assaulting a principal and willingly accepted the resulting discipline. A third appealed successfully to her divorced parents to change a painful custody arrangement. And an entire class pulled together to forgive a rude and disruptive classmate and help him to develop better relationships.

Like dozens of others, these students learned to respond to conflict in a biblical manner. But for me the acid test was whether I could teach these principles to my own children. Although they, like their mother, are still not entirely consistent in this area, a positive pattern is definitely developing. Little by little they are learning to put off their natural reactions to conflict and replace

them with responses that promote peace and reconciliation. If they can do it, so can the children in your home or classroom. I offer you this material to speed that process.

Before you invest your time and energy in this material, you have a right to know the basic convictions that guided my writing. First, I believe that God's Word is totally reliable and amazingly practical. Thus, when the Bible commands our children and us to live at peace with others, it also provides detailed and concrete guidance on how to carry out that sometimes difficult task.

Second, I believe that conflict is not necessarily wrong or destructive. If we teach our children to respond to it in a biblically faithful manner, conflict can become an opportunity for them to please and honor God, to serve other people, and to grow to be like Christ.

Third, I believe that many of the conflicts students experience are caused or aggravated by sin. Like adults, children wrestle with strong desires that sometimes get out of hand. We can and should use appropriate discipline to help them learn self-control and proper outward behavior. But it is even more important that we help them understand the root causes of their conflicts (pride, selfishness, greed, unforgiveness, etc.) and encourage them to ask God to free them from these sinful attitudes. Since Christ alone can offer such freedom, the gospel is an essential part of true peacemaking.

Fourth, I believe that the most important skills of a peacemaker are repentance, confession, and forgiveness. As important as communication and problem-solving skills are, they cannot heal relationships that have been damaged by conflict. True reconciliation comes only when students

take responsibility for their wrongs, express sorrow for hurting others, and commit themselves to forgive one another as God has forgiven them.

I pray that this manual will help you to develop similar convictions and instill them in your students. Along the way you can help them to gain accurate insights into important peacemaking questions, such as:

- **What is at the heart of conflict?**
- **Is it possible to honor God in conflict?**
- **How can I take responsibility for my contribution to a conflict?**
- **How can I go and talk to someone if we are in a fight?**
- **How can we be friends again if there's a wall between us now?**

If you would like additional help in understanding God's answers to these questions, I encourage you to read *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict* (Baker Books, 2d ed. 1997), which was written by my husband, Ken Sande. Through his book you can learn even more about biblical conflict resolution and discover ways to be a positive example to your students. As you encourage and show one another how to be peacemakers, your home or classroom can increasingly become a place of peace.

May God guide you in your instruction and grant you and your students the blessings he has promised to peacemakers!

— Corlette Sande

**The most important skills of a peacemaker are repentance, confession, and forgiveness.**

## 1

### The Parent/Teacher Manual

Each lesson in the manual is divided into

# 6 lesson sections:

#### 1. Setting the Stage:

This section includes an introduction to the lesson, a review of previous concepts, thought-provoking discussion questions, and a short story to illustrate the principles in the lesson. (A cartoon version of the stories is included in the Student Activity Sheets for students' use.)

#### 2. The Lesson:

The lesson contains biblical principles of peacemaking needed to build the foundation for settling differences with others. If you teach all of the information in each lesson you will have accomplished the goals and objectives for that lesson. This section also includes optional role plays to reinforce these peacemaking principles.

#### 3. Wrapping It Up:

This section includes an encouraging summary of the lesson's principles and a closing prayer.

#### 4. Activities and Personal Application:

Each lesson has activities that are designed to help students apply the principles they have learned. Assign as many of these activities as you believe are appropriate to reinforce the information. These activities are available in a set of twelve comic book style Student Activity Booklets, which are reproducible (see page 6, Permission to Reproduce). There is one ten-page booklet for each of the twelve chapters.

#### 5. Dig into the Word:

You will find a list of relevant Bible passages and applicable Bible stories at the end of each lesson. These passages reinforce the biblical foundation for the lesson.

#### 6. Lesson Summary:

This section includes the Bible memory verse, the key principle, and a summary of the main points of the lesson.



## 2

### The Student Activity Books

The Student Activity Books are divided into

4 sections:



#### 1. Story:

A cartoon version of the story from each lesson is provided in the Student Activity Sheets. Students can refer to the cartoon as you read or tell the story.

#### 2. Diagrams:

Diagrams are included to visually reinforce key points.

#### 3. Resolution:

The conflict described in each story comes to a constructive conclusion.

#### 4. Activities and Personal Application:

Assign as many of these activities as you need to reinforce the essential concepts of each lesson.



# Goals of the Program

## Immediate Goal:

*With God's help, students will learn how to resolve personal conflicts in a biblically faithful manner and to enjoy the freedom of restored relationships.*

Students will learn the importance of personal responsibility as it relates to conflict, and will discover ways to prevent conflict in the future. Students will learn that the Bible has the answers to their personal conflicts: repentance, confession, and forgiveness. They will begin to understand that they need to obey God regardless of how they feel.

## Long Term Goal:

*With God's help, students will develop a godly character and live as God's forgiven and sanctified people.*

Students will learn skills that will strengthen their relationships with their families and friends. By learning how to use God's way of resolving conflicts, students will be better prepared to mature into responsible adults and experience more stable relationships at home, in the workplace, and in their communities. In addition, students can learn skills that can keep them from painful and unnecessary conflict as adults.

## Twelve Key Principles for Young Peacemakers

1. Conflict is a slippery slope.
2. Conflict starts in the heart.
3. Choices have consequences.
4. Wise-way choices are better than my-way choices.
5. The blame game makes conflict worse.
6. Conflict is an opportunity.
7. The 5A's can resolve conflict.
8. Forgiveness is a choice.
9. It's never too late to start doing what's right.
10. Think before you speak.
11. Respectful communication is more likely to be heard.
12. A respectful appeal can prevent conflict.

## Note to Teachers

This curriculum is designed to be used to teach intermediate and middle school students. Even so, the principles from *The Young Peacemaker* have been successfully taught to preschool students as well as high school students. You would need to adapt the stories and the language to teach younger or older students. Peacemaker Ministries intends to develop resources in the future that can be used to teach primary and secondary level students.

## Christian Schools and Home Schools

There are twelve chapters in this manual. I recommend that teachers cover one chapter per week, using one or more sessions of twenty to forty minutes, depending on the age and attention span of the students. Teachers may teach more than one chapter per week if they wish to cover the material more quickly, or they may take more than one week to reinforce certain principles in some of the chapters.

Although each chapter could be taught in one session, teachers may wish to divide the chapters into smaller teaching sections for use throughout the week.

Use the Student Activity Books during class or as homework assignments to reinforce each lesson's principles.

## Sunday Schools

There is more information in each lesson than Sunday school teachers will be able to cover during a single weekly Sunday school class. Teachers will need to thoroughly study each lesson and choose to teach those concepts that are most relevant to their students.

Some of the activities and worksheets in the Student Activity Books could be used during class times or as homework assignments to reinforce peacemaking principles.

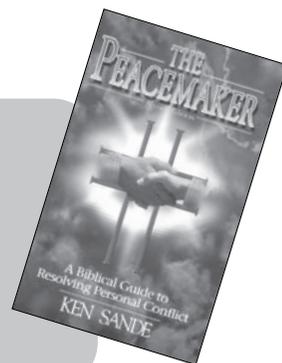
## Family Devotions

This material can also be used as a family devotional. Read and discuss as much information as you can during a thirty-minute devotional time. Use the role plays to reinforce the concepts you have taught. Encourage your children to memorize the key Bible verse for each lesson. Share appropriate examples of your personal struggle to be a peacemaker according to God's Word. In addition, explain how God has worked to help you be faithful and obedient to him as you respond to conflict situations.

# Teaching Tips

## *The Peacemaker*

One of the best ways to prepare for teaching the material in this manual is to read *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict* by Ken Sande (Baker Books, 2d ed. 1997). *The Young Peacemaker* is a simplified version of this book.



## Learning the Material

I strongly recommend that you read the entire manual before you begin to teach your students. You may wish to teach the lessons in a different order than the one

presented. Please feel free to do so. Flexibility and meeting your students' needs are most important.

## Talking

Lively discussion is an important part of this course. Please make it your habit to invite appropriate student responses to questions throughout all the lessons. While there will be some questions that have right or wrong answers, many discussion questions can be answered with

a variety of responses. Students should be encouraged to express their ideas. Always speak respectfully to your students as you respond to their answers. Your example will be an excellent teaching tool. Remember to reinforce correct or thoughtful answers with praise.

## Creative Answers

If answers are wrong or contradictory to Scripture, this may be an indication that some principles need to be reviewed. You will find examples of appropriate answers in parentheses after most questions. If students give unrealistic or attention-getting answers, simply acknowledge the answer by saying something like, "That's a thought. I'm

certainly glad that doesn't usually happen." It is important not to argue with the students as to whether their answers are good or bad. Arguing is not a good example and could create a conflict. If necessary you may want to speak with a student privately about an inappropriate answer or a confusing concept.

## Parental Cooperation

Parent and teacher cooperation is of utmost importance if this program is to benefit families and schools. In Appendix B you will find a letter to parents that explains how parents can support *The Young Peacemaker* program. Encourage students to take all of their activity

sheets home each week and review them with their parents. If possible, schedule a meeting for parents and teachers to explain the program and address questions. An audio tape that provides an overview of the program is available from Peacemaker Ministries.

## Tools of the Trade

Use a blackboard, overhead projector, or charts for visual reinforcement.

You may need to define some words. The vocabulary may stretch some students.

Know and teach from Proverbs!

Barbara Decker has developed a very helpful and well organized resource called *Proverbs for Parenting* (Pub. 1991, Lynn's Bookshelf, PO Box 2224, Boise, ID

83701). I highly recommend this resource for your parenting library.

You may need to explain some Bible verses or stories to students. For Bible stories, I recommend that you use a good children's Bible such as *The NIV Adventure Bible* (Zondervan, 1994) and *The NIV Young Discoverer's Bible* (Zondervan, 1985).

**Know  
and  
teach  
from Proverbs!**

## The Peace Table

Set up a *Peace Table* or a *Problem Solving Corner* in your home or school room where students can go to resolve their conflicts after they have learned how to do so. When they come to tattle on each

other, simply send them to the peace table to work out the problem. Then have them report back to you as to how they resolved the conflict.

## Sharing Personal Experience

Make yourself vulnerable when you are teaching this material. Let the students know that you struggle in some of these areas, and that you are asking the Lord to help you to become a better peace-

maker. As you share *appropriate personal examples* with your students, they can learn what to do and what not to do in conflict situations.

## Consequences

As parents and teachers, we have an important task of teaching and training our students in righteousness and responsibility (Deut. 6:4-7). With that command in mind, I suggest that we take seriously the following thoughts:

*Threats and promises are not consequences!*

When we tell our students that they will receive a discipline or a blessing, then we must follow through. Otherwise we teach them that consequences mean nothing. If we break our word to them we will not be setting a godly example!

There will be times when our students will need to be disciplined because of their choices. *When we rescue them from their deserved consequences, we are only promot-*

*ing their childish behavior, immaturity, and irresponsibility.* It is more loving to allow them to accept their consequences so that they may become more responsible and self-disciplined in the future.

Ideally, students should make good choices simply because it is the right thing to do. However, *a carefully chosen consequence can motivate them to seek God's help so they can make the right choice more often.*

Carefully chosen and infrequent rewards could be used as good consequences for those who return homework assignments. Students need to see consequences in a positive light.

# Use Every Opportunity to Teach Peacemaking

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give to you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up " (Deut. 6:4-7).

## Talking:

Talk about peacemaking whenever the opportunity arises.

## Use Pictures:

Use drawings, pictures, and stories that illustrate peacemaking principles. Involve the students in listing important concepts.

## Role Plays:

Make up a story that involves a conflict and then assign roles to the students and yourself. Practice using effective conflict resolution skills. Evaluate each other's participation in the role play. How well did you communicate your thoughts and feelings? How well did you take responsibility for your actions? How many choices did you come up with to solve the problem? Always do this in a constructive manner.

## Story Openers:

Read or make up story openers that the students finish by thinking of ways to solve the story's conflict. They could write an ending to the story and act it out for their friends, family, or classmates. Build on their creativity!

## TV Examples:

Watch selected television programs with your students and identify the constructive or destructive ways of handling conflict, such as taking responsibility versus blaming. Watch for examples of proper or improper communication.

## Bible Stories:

Read Bible stories about Joseph, Deborah, David, Daniel, Jesus, and Paul and discuss how God helped them to handle the conflicts they had with others.

## Real Life:

Use students' actual experiences as teaching opportunities to discover better ways of responding to conflict.

## Bible Memory:

Help students memorize relevant Scripture verses that they can use in making wise decisions and handling conflict biblically.

## Your Example:

*The best way to teach peacemaking principles to students is to demonstrate them in your own life.* All adults (parents, family members, teachers) need to understand how their example will teach students either to aggravate conflict or to deal with it in a responsible way.

# Part One

## Understanding Conflict



**B**efore children can learn how to settle arguments and fights, they need to understand what conflict is and how it grows. In this section you will teach your students to identify their typical responses to conflict, to discover what is at the heart of their conflicts, to see how their consequences are directly related to their choices, and to find a better way to make choices in the first place.

# Conflict Is a Slippery Slope

If  
it is  
possible,  
as far as  
it depends  
on you,  
**live  
at  
peace**  
with  
everyone.

Romans 12:18

## Lesson Goal:

To help students understand what conflict is and how they can respond to it.

## Lesson Objectives:

By God's grace students will learn:

1. What conflict is.
2. Different responses to conflict (the slippery slope diagram).
3. God is with them—even in conflict.

## Key Principle:

Conflict is a slippery slope.

## Lesson Needs:

Bible  
Student Activity Book #1

CONFLICT?  
I NEVER HAVE  
CONFLICTS.  
WHAT IS A CONFLICT  
ANYWAY?



## Begin with Prayer

Begin the lesson with prayer for wisdom and faithfulness as children learn to apply God's Word in their lives. Pray that your students will understand what conflict is and learn to respond to it in a godly way.

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## Note to Teachers

Role plays can be threatening to children. Be sure to deal with any put-downs or ridicule promptly. You can help students

feel secure during their role plays by letting them know that making fun of each other will not be tolerated.

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## Setting the Stage

Today we are going to begin to study conflict. According to Webster's Dictionary, the word conflict means: "a clash between hostile or opposing elements or ideas."

- **Can you simplify that definition?** (Conflict is a fight between people who think or act differently.)
- **Can anyone tell me some other names for conflict?** (Fights, quarrels, disagreements, arguments.)
- **How many of you have ever been involved in a conflict? Briefly explain what happened.** (Encourage some students to share a few of their personal experiences.)
- **How do you feel when you are in conflict with someone?** (Angry, hurt, sad, frustrated, lonely.)
- **With whom can people have conflicts?** (Parents, brothers, sisters, other family members, teachers, friends, police, store clerks.)
- **What happens to relationships when people get into a conflict?**
- **How do people feel and act when they are in a conflict?**

When you are in conflict with others, you are usually not very happy. Conflict can bring out the worst in you, and you may say or do things that will make the conflict worse.

Starting today you are going to learn some important information about conflict.

- You will learn to recognize the difference between good and bad conflict.
- You will learn how to resolve and prevent bad conflict.
- You will learn how to have better relationships with other people.

# Twisted Ten Speed

featuring

## KENT & JAMES

WHAT HAPPENED  
TO MY  
NEW BIKE?



Listen to a story about two boys who are having a fight. The way they respond to this problem will either resolve it or make it worse.

Kent couldn't wait to show James his new mountain bike. He was so proud of it—he had saved for two years to get enough money to buy just the one he wanted. As he saw his best friend James walking up the sidewalk, Kent hopped on his new bike and rode down the sidewalk to meet him.

James couldn't believe his eyes! "Wow! What a cool bike, Kent! So this is why you wouldn't spend any extra money."

Kent returned the grin and said, "Now that I have a bike like yours we can ride everywhere together. Let's start by riding back to school. I forgot to bring home my jacket this afternoon."

"YES!" James replied enthusiastically.

When they got to school, they left their bikes at the end of the parking lot. While Kent went inside to get his jacket, he assumed that James would watch the bikes. While James was waiting for him, he heard some kids playing basketball, so he went around the corner to see the

game. A few minutes later he heard Kent scream. James went running back to where they had left their bikes in the parking lot. Kent's bike was lying on the ground all bent and twisted.

"My new bike!!!" Kent yelled. "What happened to my bike, James?"

"I don't know what happened. I was only gone for a minute," replied James, stunned.

"Someone smashed it to pieces, that's what happened. And it's your fault. You should have been watching it."

"Listen! It's not my fault!" James fired back. "I can't help it if somebody wrecked your bike. It's not fair to blame me for this!"

"Well, all I know is I left my bike with you and now it's all bent and scratched up. I want it replaced, so you'd better figure out how to come up with the money to get me a new bike!" With that, Kent stormed away, leaving behind a confused and angry James.

Kent and James are learning that **conflict is a slippery slope**. If they are not careful, they could slide into a danger zone by running away from the conflict or by attacking each other. This will only make the conflict worse and possibly do permanent damage to their relationship. Only by staying on top of the slippery slope will they be able to solve the conflict and preserve their friendship.

# The SLIPPERY SLOPE

Let's look carefully at this slippery slope diagram and see the nine ways people can respond to conflict.

The slippery slope is divided into three sections. Two sections are "danger zones."



The escape responses are used to get away from conflict instead of trying to resolve it. They often prolong conflict and can result in bitterness and unforgiveness.

## Denial

Pretending that a conflict does not exist, or refusing to do what we can to work it out, is always a wrong response to conflict.

### ■ What do you think might happen if Kent or James denied that there was a problem?

Kent chooses to say nothing to James about

his bike getting bent and scratched.

Because he says nothing, he probably gets angrier and angrier. Even if he pretends that nothing is wrong, he still sends unspoken messages to James that he is upset. Or James acts like the "bike thing" was not a big deal. He clowns around about it, and eventually refuses to talk about it.



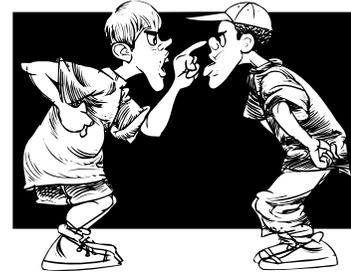
## Blame Game

Instead of taking responsibility for our choices, we try to escape their consequences by blaming others for the problem, pretending we did nothing wrong, covering up what we did, or lying about our contribution to a conflict. This is never a responsible way to handle conflict, nor does it resolve problems.

### ■ How would the choice to blame

### someone else affect the boys' relationship?

Once Kent confronts James about his wrecked bike, James makes excuses for not taking care of his friend's bike or blames someone else for the problem. James claims it is Kent's fault the bike was damaged because he left the bike at the end of the parking lot in the first place.



## Run Away

Running away from the person we are quarreling with is only acceptable if there is danger of harm. Otherwise this response does not solve problems.

### ■ How would the choice to run away from the problem affect Kent and James' friendship?

Both boys might start avoiding each other, refusing to talk or even look at each other.



The escape responses may be referred to as *peace-faking* because we try to pretend there is peace between us and the other person when there really isn't. None of the escape responses will solve the dispute over Kent's bike.

**Role Play Activity:** Have two students act out what it would look like if Kent and James used the escape response to resolve their conflict.

The attack responses are used to put pressure on others to get our own way. These responses usually damage relationships and often result in anger and hatred.



## Put Downs

We attack others with harsh and cruel words when conflict arises. This response usually stirs up anger in the other person, and is always a wrong response to conflict.

- What would the choice to put

## Gossip

We talk about people behind their backs in order to damage their reputation or to get others on our side. Gossip is hurtful and is always a wrong response to a conflict.

- Who else could this response affect besides Kent and James? How?

Kent and James start saying mean things about each other to their classmates and friends.

## Fight

We use physical force to get our own way. This is almost always a wrong response to conflict. (This response is proper only if you have to protect yourself or another person from being injured by an attacker.)

- What might happen to Kent and James if they choose to fight about the bike?

Kent and James get into a fist fight and start calling each other names. Both boys could get hurt physically.

### each other down do to Kent and James' friendship and their conflict?

The boys start mocking one another by saying hurtful and unkind things to each other. This could destroy their friendship.



The attack responses may be referred to as *peace-breaking* because we break apart our relationship with others by verbal and physical attacks against one another.

**Role Play Activity:** Have the students act out what it would look like if Kent and James used the attack responses in their situation.

# Optional Topics for Discussion

## Note to Teachers

There are three extreme responses to conflict that you may choose to discuss with some children. They are not shown on the slippery slope diagram.

### Suicide

is the most extreme

**escape** response

(below "run away").

Sometimes people think

taking their own lives is

the only solution to their

problems. They need to

understand that their

problems are usually

temporary. But suicide is

forever—it doesn't solve

any problems!

### Litigation

is another **attack**

response (between "gos-

sip" and "fight"). Some

people will attack their

opponent by suing that

person in a court of law.

Some lawsuits are neces-

sary, but most conflict

that results in a lawsuit

could be handled more

constructively by staying

on top of the slippery

slope diagram.

### Murder

is the most extreme

**attack** response

(below "fight"). Some

people will even kill

those who stand in

their way or who make

them angry. Murder is

always a wrong

response to conflict.

None of the escape or attack responses will resolve the conflict between Kent and James. In fact, those responses will only make the conflict worse. But there is a way that Kent and James can "stay on top of conflict" by using the work-it-out responses.

The work-it-out responses are found at the top of the curve. These responses usually lead to constructive solutions to conflicts and help to preserve relationships. They are carried out in three different ways.

The first two ways can be done personally and privately.

## Overlook an Offense

You deal with the offense *by yourself*. You simply *decide to forgive* a wrong action against you and walk away from a conflict. Perhaps you think this is the same as denial, but forgiveness is the key here. The person who overlooks another's offenses will continue to have a growing, healthy relationship with him or her. "Don't sweat the small stuff!" (see Prov. 12:16; 17:14; 19:11; Col. 3:13; 1 Peter 4:8)

■ **What would it look like if Kent overlooked this problem? Is this a problem that should be overlooked? Why?**

After the blowup, Kent cools down and begins to think of how he can stay on top of this problem. He remembers that one of his options is to overlook the offense. He decides against this option because his bike is damaged and he needs to find out what really happened. In addition, the two friends already said some harsh words to each other that will damage their friendship if they don't work it out. (Since he cannot overlook the problem, Kent should use one of the following work-it-out responses.)

## Talk-It-Out

A conflict is resolved by going directly to the other person to *talk it out together*. This can include confessing your own wrongs and confronting the other person's wrongs in a kind and respectful way. This response should be used if you cannot overlook what the other person did, and the problem is hurting your relationship (see Matt. 5:23-24; 18:15; see also Prov. 28:13; Gal. 6:1-3).

■ **How could Kent and James talk together about their conflict?**

Kent walks over to where James is watching the basketball game and explains how he found his bike. He asks James if he knows what happened to the bike. Doing so will give James a chance to explain what he knows about the situation. This response gives the boys an

opportunity to work together to find out what happened to the bike.

If James doesn't know how the bike got damaged, Kent needs to know this so that he won't wrongfully accuse his friend. By working together, Kent and James might be able to find out who damaged the bike and help the person responsible to face the consequences of his or her actions.

If James hurriedly laid the bike down on the parking lot before running off to watch the game, then he should confess his carelessness to Kent. He should offer to get the bike fixed or replaced since his actions resulted in damage to the bike. If he sincerely confesses and is willing to make it right, then it will be easier for Kent to forgive him.



The third way to resolve a conflict is to get help from others.

## Get Help to Know What You Should Say

When you are in a difficult conflict, it is often wise to ask someone else (such as a parent, teacher, or friend) to help you decide how you can handle the conflict so it won't get worse—at least from your side. This is called *coaching*. Ask the person to help you decide what you should say and how you should say it (see Prov. 15:1; Eph. 4:29).

If the boys' attempts to solve their prob-

lem do not work, then one or both of them may ask someone they trust (like their parents, a teacher, a pastor, or a mature friend) to help them talk it out. It's important to realize that both boys have a responsibility to work on the conflict. However, either one of the boys could ask someone to coach him to make choices that could solve the problem.



## Get Help to Talk Together

When you cannot resolve the conflict just between the two of you, then ask someone else to meet with both of you to help you talk together and find a solution to the problem. This is called *mediation*. Mediators only suggest solutions—you still need to decide what to do (see Matt. 18:16).

If the boys' attempts to talk it out continue to be unsuccessful and they see that they are heading down the slippery slope (either by escaping the problem or attacking each other), they could agree to ask someone they trust to meet with them and help them work out their differences.



## Get Help to Decide

If you cannot solve a conflict by talking with each other or by mediation, then you can both tell your side of the story to a person in authority who will decide on a solution. This is called *arbitration*. The helping person (an arbitrator) could be a parent, teacher, school administrator,

or pastor (see 1 Cor. 6:1-8; Exod. 18:13-27).

If coaching and mediation do not work, the boys could ask someone in authority (probably their parents) to listen to both sides of the story and then decide what should be done.



The work-it-out responses may be referred to as *peace-making* because we try to bring peace back into the relationship by our efforts to confess and confront it in a respectful way.

If Kent and James use the work-it-out process to resolve the bike problem, they will stay on top of the slippery slope and resolve the conflict in a constructive way. They will feel confident that the problem will be solved, and they will keep their friendship strong and healthy.

Whatever work-it-out response the boys choose, they would be wise to involve their parents in the process. Their parents will trust and respect their children for learning to solve problems responsibly.

CONFLICT IS A  
SLIPPERY SLOPE.



**Role Play Activity:** Have two students act out the work-it-out responses to Kent and James' conflict about the damaged bike.

# God Is with You— Even in Conflict

As you study the concepts in this course remember that when you are in a conflict God is always with you, and he will help you stay on top of the slippery slope. Because he is with you, you can be confident that conflict is an opportunity to do good things. In particular, you can please God, grow to be like Christ, and serve other people—both those involved in the conflict and those watching how you handle it. Let's look at two Bible stories that show God is always with his people—even in a conflict.

## Teaching Tip

Read the following Bible stories to your children and discuss them. These stories will help children understand that God is with his people in difficult situations.

## Daniel's Diet

*Read Daniel 1:1-21. (Daniel appeals to the king's guard to be allowed to eat a more healthy diet.)*

Daniel chose to glorify God by showing respect to the king's officials. Instead of refusing to obey the king's requirement to eat only the royal food, he respectfully asked for permission to be tested. He said, "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see" (Daniel 1:12-13). The guard agreed, and at the

end of the ten days Daniel and his friends looked healthier and better nourished than the young men who ate the royal food. Daniel could have chosen to defy the king and refuse to cooperate with his officials, or he could have eaten the food and disobeyed God. Both of these responses would have created serious problems for Daniel and the other Israelites. Instead, Daniel chose to glorify God by humbly relying on God's wisdom to find a way to eat a more healthy diet. Daniel knew what God wanted him to do, and God helped him work with his opponent to accomplish faithful obedience. *God was with Daniel and his friends!*

## The Lions' Night

*Read Daniel 6:1-28. (Daniel is thrown into the lions' den for his faithful obedience to God.)*

Daniel continued to earn favor with the kings of Babylon because of his wisdom and faithful service. When King Darius took over the kingdom, he planned to give Daniel a place of honor. The king's officials did not want to be under Daniel's authority, so they laid a trap for him. They persuaded the king to sign a law requiring that any person who prayed to anyone but the king would be thrown into the lions' den. Daniel could have obeyed the king's law, but he chose to remain faithful to God. He knew that God's law was higher than human law, so he continued to pray

faithfully to God as he always did. Consequently, he was thrown into a den of lions. But God protected him and the next day King Darius found Daniel alive. "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?" Daniel answered, "O king, live forever! My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king" (Daniel 6:20-22). The king was so amazed by Daniel's God that he sent a decree to his people: "I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel" (Daniel 6:26). *God was with Daniel, and Daniel glorified God!*

These stories show that our God is a personal and loving God, and he is always with you. At times he will immediately deliver you from a difficult situation, as he did in the first story about Daniel. But, as you learned from the second story, sometimes God will take you through a conflict to teach you to love and trust him more.

# What Can Be Good about Conflict?

Many people think that all conflict is bad. Often they will try to escape or attack at the first sign of a conflict. Actually conflict provides an opportunity for us to do what is right and please God (not ourselves) by responding in the

ways that the Bible teaches. You are going to learn in this course how to handle relationship problems more constructively instead of falling off the slippery slope into bad ways of responding to conflict.

## Wrapping It Up

You learned that a conflict is a fight between people who think and act differently. You also learned that **conflict is a slippery slope**. If you are not careful, you can slide into the escape or attack zone, which will usually make conflict worse and damage relationships. Instead of sliding off the edge of the slippery slope, you can learn to handle your fights and quarrels in a constructive way by staying in the work-it-out zone. There are times to overlook the problem, while at

other times you may need to go in private to talk together. If that doesn't work, you can get help from others through coaching, mediation, or arbitration. During the next few weeks you are going to learn about ways that you can choose to stay on top of conflict. You will talk about where conflict comes from, how to respond to it properly, and how to try to prevent it when you can. You are going to learn how to be peacemakers for Jesus!

### ***Closing Prayer***

*Dear Lord, I have a lot to learn about conflict and how to handle it better. Most of the time I respond by escaping or attacking. I can see now that those responses make my conflicts worse and even hurt my relationships with others. Teach me how to be a peacemaker, Lord. In Jesus' name,  
Amen.*

## Making It Real

Assign one or more of the suggested activities for Lesson One that are found in the Activities and Personal Application section of this lesson. Some of the activities are included in Student Activity Book #1.

# Activities and Personal Application

Activities one and two can be found in Student Activity Book (SAB) #1.

**1.** Can You Survive the Slippery Slope? (see SAB 1-9): Using the slippery slope diagram as a guide, identify the ways you usually respond to conflict.

**2.** Bible Heroes on the Slippery Slope (see SAB 1-10): Indicate which slippery slope response was used in each situation. (This activity is best done as a group activity. The answers are given below.)

Adam and Eve are confronted with their sin (Gen. 3:8-13). (*blame game*)

Cain murders Abel (Gen. 4:2b-8). (*fight*)

Eli denies the seriousness of his sons' sin (1 Sam. 2:22-25). (*denial*)

David fights with Goliath (1 Sam. 17:1-51). (*fight-good*)

Nathan confronts David about his adultery and murder (2 Sam. 11:1-12:13). (*talk it out*)

Jonah runs away from God (Jonah 1:1-3:3). (*run away*)

Daniel wants to eat proper foods (Dan. 1:8-16). (*talk it out*)

Joseph flees with Mary and Jesus to Egypt (Matt. 2:13-15). (*run away-good*)

The Christians argue about how to distribute food (Acts 6:1-7). (*get help through mediation*)

People do not want to hear Stephen talk about Jesus (Acts 6:8-15; 7:54-60). (*put downs, gossip, fight*)

People criticize Peter for preaching to the Gentiles (Acts 11:1-18). (*talk it out*)

The Christians have a doctrinal dispute (Acts 15:1-32). (*get help through arbitration*)

The Philippians oppose Paul's ministry (Acts 16:16-22). (*put downs, gossip, fight*)

The Ephesians oppose Paul's ministry (Acts 19:23-41). (*put downs, gossip, fight; finally resolved by getting help*)

**3.** Watch a video or television program or read a book with your family and write a description of how the story characters handle conflict in terms of the slippery slope diagram.

## Dig into the Word

### Memory Verse:

Romans 12:18

### Other Relevant Bible Verses:

Proverbs 12:16, 17:14, 19:11, 29:13

Matthew 5:23-24, 18:15-20

1 Corinthians 6:1-8

Galatians 6:1-3

Colossians 3:13

1 Peter 4:8

### Applicable Bible Stories:

Assign one or more of the passages given in activity two (Bible Heroes on the Slippery Slope) to help children analyze conflict situations in the Bible.

# The Lesson Summary

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## **Bible Memory Verse:**

"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Rom. 12:18).

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## **Key Principle:**

Conflict is a slippery slope.

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## **The Main Points of the Lesson**

- 1.** What is conflict?  
A clash between hostile or opposing elements or ideas.  
A fight between people who think or act differently.  
Fights, quarrels, arguments and disagreements are other names for conflict.
  
  - 2.** Different responses to conflict (The slippery slope diagram)  
The Escape Responses
    - Denial: Pretend a conflict doesn't exist.
    - Blame game: Place responsibility for conflict on others.
    - Run away: Run away from the reality of the conflict.The Attack Responses
    - Put downs: Say hurtful or threatening things to someone.
    - Gossip: Talk behind a person's back to damage his reputation.
    - Fight: Use physical force to get what you want.The Work-It-Out Responses
    - Overlook: Decide to forgive and walk away from a conflict.
    - Talk: Confess your sinful choices and confront in a kind way.
    - Get help: Coaching, mediation, or arbitration can help you resolve conflict.
  
  - 3.** God is with you even in conflict  
Conflict provides an opportunity to please God (not ourselves) by responding in ways the Bible teaches.
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