

KIDS of
INTEGRITY

Harmony



Deputize your kids as “discord detectives,” take your cue from harmonious relationships in nature, and win a three-legged race by cooperating.

Choose from these and over a dozen more ideas to help your children:

- resolve disputes cooperatively
- be quick to forgive
- escape selfishness and show concern for others.

This lesson also helps curb teasing, bickering, provoking others, jealousy and reacting with inappropriate actions or harsh words.

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Parents’ prayer

Before you begin leading your children through this study on harmony, spend time alone with God interceding for His help.

You can use the sample prayer below to guide you. Or, if you prefer to personalize your prayers, the verses under “Scripture-guided prayer” will help provide direction and inspiration.

Sample prayer

Lord of all Love, You are the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). Your Son Jesus is our only hope for peace, now and forever. The angels announced His birth with the chorus, “**Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom His favor rests**” (Luke 2:14). Thank you that the death and resurrection of Jesus provide a way for us to live at peace with God and others. Thank you for the promise of Matthew 5:9, “**Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called sons of God.**”

Please show me if there is any sin (selfishness, jealousy, envy or uncontrolled anger) that contributes to a lack of peace in our home. I don’t want my sinful nature to influence my actions. Rather, I want the Holy Spirit to direct the way I think and respond to others. I pray that the fruit of the Spirit will be evident in my life, especially peace and love, for “love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8). When someone sins, please give me a loving, Spirit-filled attitude so the unity in our home is maintained.

Lord, I pray that my children will seek peace and pursue it (Psalm 34:14)! I ask that Your love in _____ and _____ will help them to be polite and not rude, to put others first instead of being self-seeking, to be tolerant instead of easily angered, and to be quick to forgive instead of keeping a record of wrongs (1 Corinthians 13:5). May my children learn early in life that it is to their honour to avoid conflict and that it is not wise to be quick to quarrel (Proverbs 20:3). Please enable them to be sympathetic, loving, humble and compassionate. I ask that You will fill them with Your love so they have the grace to refuse to repay evil with evil and insult with insult, but will repay unkindness with blessing (1 Peter 3:8-9).

Paul prayed for the church: “May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 15:5-6). My prayer is that the presence of Your Holy Spirit will bring unity to our family, so that the song in our home will be one of harmony, drawing others in our neighbourhood to You because of the sweet sound of a family living together in peace and love. Amen.

Scripture-guided prayer for parents

Pray through one or more of the selected Scriptures under each heading. Focus on listening to God and allowing His Spirit to direct you as you pray.

Character focus

Begin by thanking God for being a God of love and peace.

Isaiah 48:17-18 | Matthew 5:9 | John 14:23-27 | John 17:20-23 | Colossians 1:19-20

Heart search

Acknowledge where you lack peace in your relationships.

Psalm 34:11-14 | Proverbs 6:16-19 | Romans 12:16-18 | 1 Corinthians 13:5 | Hebrews 12:14-15

Gratitude

Thank God for ways you have seen harmony in your family.

Family requests

Ask God to help you and your children live at peace with each other.

Romans 14:19 | 2 Corinthians 13:11 | Philippians 2:1-4 | Colossians 3:15 | 1 Peter 3:8-9

Kids talk with God

Just as you taught your children language skills through continual interaction, you can teach your children to have constant dialogue with God by leading them in brief but frequent prayers throughout the day.

These sample prayers will help you lead your kids in asking God to enable them to be peace-makers who get along well with others. If your kids are ready to begin formulating their own prayers, see the verses under “Scripture-guided prayer for children” for inspiration.

Sample prayers

Dear God, I don’t feel like living in peace with _____ right now. I need Your Holy Spirit to help me! Amen.

Dear God, please give us peace like a river in our home (Isaiah 48:18). Amen.

Dear God, help me to remember that it is good and pleasant when brothers (and sisters) live together in unity (Psalm 133:1). Amen.

Dear God, I ask You would send Your Holy Spirit to help me want to live at peace with _____. Amen.

Dear God, I feel like paying back the wrong that was done to me. Please help me be quick to forgive and to do something kind to this person instead (1 Peter 3:8-9). Amen.

Dear God, thank you for sharing Your love with me. Please help me to share Your love with others. Amen.

Scripture-guided prayer for children

Read through one of the selected Scriptures under each heading and help your children pray based on the verse you read. Encourage them to listen to God and allow His Spirit to guide them as they pray.

Character focus

Begin by thanking God for being a God of love and peace.

Isaiah 9:6 | Isaiah 48:17-18 | Matthew 5:9

Heart search

Acknowledge when and how you have trouble getting along with others.

Proverbs 20:3 | Romans 12:16-18 | 1 Corinthians 13:5

Gratitude

Thank God for ways you have seen harmony in your family.

Personal requests

Ask God to help you, your siblings and parents live at peace with each other

Romans 14:19 | 2 Corinthians 13:11 | Colossians 3:15

Speak a blessing

Your affirmation will give tremendous encouragement to your children as they strive to grow in the area of harmony. Use this section as a reminder to “speak a blessing” when you see this godly characteristic in your son or daughter.

- Thank you, _____, for being a peacemaker!
 - I see that you are doing your best to keep the peace, _____.
 - Good job talking out your problems.
 - _____ is girl/boy who doesn't say things to bother others.
 - It is so peaceful at our house, I know that Jesus is pleased. This is music to His ears.
 - How good and pleasant it is when brothers (and sisters) live together in unity (Psalm 133:1).
 - The Bible tells us that God's children are peacemakers. I'm glad you chose peace (Matthew 5:9).
-

Memory verses

Memorizing Scripture with your children helps God's Spirit bring about lasting change. Choose a verse that your children can learn in a pre-determined period of time and aim to review the verse at least once every day.

Psalm 29:11 “The Lord gives strength to his people; the Lord blesses his people with peace.”

Psalm 34:14 “Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.”

Psalm 37:37 “Consider the blameless, observe the upright; there is a future for the man of peace.”

Psalm 133:1 “How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!”

Proverbs 6:16-19 “There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush in to evil, a false witness that pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers.”

Proverbs 12:20 “There is deceit in the hearts of those who plot evil, but joy for those who promote peace.”

Proverbs 15:18 “A hot tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel.”

Proverbs 17:1 “Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife.”

Proverbs 20:3 “It is to a man's honor to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel.”

Proverbs 22:10-11 “Drive out the mocker, and out goes strife; quarrels and insults are ended. He who loves a pure heart and whose speech is gracious will have the king for his friend.”

Proverbs 30:33 “For as churning the milk produces butter, and as twisting the nose produces blood, so stirring up anger produces strife.”

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

Romans 12:16-18 “Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil with evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”

1 Corinthians 13:5 “[Love] is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.”

2 Corinthians 13:11 “Finally brothers, good-by. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.”

Galatians 5:25-26 “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.”

2 Timothy 2:22-24 “Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. Don’t have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord’s servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.”

1 Peter 3:8-9 “Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.”

Kick-off craft

The craft suggested here will help your children practice peacemaking and working together in harmony. For this kick-off craft, you will make and decorate musical instruments.

The harmony of peacemaking

Directions

- 1 To make a drum, cut off the small, elastic opening of a balloon, and stretch the remainder over the open end of a can. Secure it with an

elastic band or tape if necessary. Use chopsticks or wooden spoons for drum sticks.

- 2 To make a guitar, stretch several elastic bands (the “strings”) around shoe or cereal boxes.
- 3 For a horn, use a paper towel roll, toilet paper roll or rolled up card-stock paper.
- 4 To create shakers, fill a screw-top plastic bottle halfway with unpopped popcorn kernels, flaxseeds or similar small objects. Fasten the top permanently to avoid choking hazards.
- 5 Write your selected memory verse on the outside of the instruments.
- 6 Finish by adding a few decorations, such as stickers, sticky back foam shapes, metallic stars, and ribbons for streamers.
- 7 To practice peacemaking while decorating the instruments, give out only one of each color or kind of decoration. Create dialogue as you hand out the items. For example: “Brady and Thomas both love the color blue, but I only have one blue streamer. What can we do to keep the peace?”

Handing out minimal decorative items allows you to extend the peacemaking practice time. Let your children know that more stars, stickers, or streamers will be given out when you notice they are working in harmony.

Display the finished creations in a basket and keep them handy to use for the “peacemaker parade,” as outlined in the **hands-on options** section.

Other ideas

Search the Internet for more ideas for homemade musical instruments, or try your local library. Dollar stores often carry an assortment of instruments as well.

Bible stories

This section provides a collection of stories with the theme of harmony, along with questions you can use as a guide for family discussions. Choose one story that is appropriate for your children. Before reading aloud, take a few minutes to review the story. If the Bible passage is too complex for your children, paraphrase the story yourself or use the summary provided under “key concepts.”

Family feud, part one

Read Genesis 37:1-11 and Galatians 5:19-25.

Questions for discussion

1. What can make you feel jealous of your brother/sister/friend?
2. Does it ever seem like your siblings get more than you do?
3. What made Joseph’s brothers jealous?
4. How could this have been avoided?
5. How can we avoid this kind of conflict in our family?

Key concepts

Jacob, the father, favoured his youngest son, Joseph. This made the other sons jealous. Then, Joseph had a dream and told his brothers about it. He said he dreamed that while they were binding sheaves of wheat in the field, their sheaves bowed down to his sheaf. He had another dream where he dreamed the sun and moon and eleven stars bowed down to him. These dreams made his brothers even more jealous.

It is not right for parents to favour one child over another. Nor is it right for one child to brag about things to the other children to try and make them jealous. Jealousy of any kind only serves to cause discord in families. Jealousy is sin and the only way to get rid of sin is to pray and ask for God’s forgiveness. We also need to ask for His Holy Spirit to fill us with love and peace instead.

Family feud, part two

Read Genesis 37:12-36 and 1 John 4:7-12.

Questions for discussion

1. What did Joseph’s jealous brothers plan to do?
2. Which brother tried to stop them?
3. What was the first thing they did to Joseph?
4. What was the last thing they did to him?
5. What does jealousy do to families?
6. When are you tempted to be jealous of a brother, sister or friend?
7. What should you do when you are tempted to feel jealous?
8. How can we feel love for someone instead of jealousy?

Key concepts

Joseph’s brothers were so jealous of him that they decided to kill him. One brother, Rueben convinced them to throw him in a dried-out well instead. Before Rueben could rescue Joseph the other brothers sold him to some merchants who then sold Joseph as a slave. Jealousy can even grow into hatred. Jealousy and hatred are sins that can lead to more sin. God is more powerful than any sin and He can give us His power and strength to overcome sin (1 Corinthians 15:56-57, 1 John 4:4). God is love and having God’s love in us enables us love each other (1 John 3:7-12).

Family feud, part three

Read Genesis 50:15-21, 1 Peter 3:8-12 and Colossians 3:12-15.

Questions for discussion

1. What did Joseph’s brothers think he might do after their father died?
2. What did Joseph do?
3. Why do you think Joseph cried?

4. What did Joseph say to his brothers?
5. If someone harms you, is it God's job or your job to punish that person?
6. What did Joseph do instead of repaying his brothers for the evil they had done?
7. Who can help you follow Joseph's example of forgiveness?

Key concepts

Though there were many challenging years for Joseph in Egypt, God used his situation to rescue and reunite Joseph's entire family (Genesis 42-47). Joseph had been blessed by God and was in a position of such power that he could have destroyed his brothers and their families if he had chosen to. After their father died, his brothers became afraid that Joseph might repay the evil they had done to him (Genesis 50:15-17). Instead of doing God's job and punishing his brothers, Joseph gave God glory for taking the bad situation and turning it into good for all of them. He forgave and comforted his brothers (Genesis 50:19-21). Using God's love, we can follow Joseph's example of forgiving others, even when they don't deserve to be forgiven.

Waiting

Read Psalm 37:1-11.

Questions for discussion

1. What do you feel like doing when you see someone getting away with doing something wrong? (Give an appropriate example.)
2. Who can help you in a situation like this?
3. What does the Bible say will happen if you get angry and worry about it?
4. What should we do if it seems like others are getting away with being wicked?

Key concepts

David's advice for those who see others getting away with evil is to wait patiently before God. He advises that getting angry and fretting only leads to more evil. When you are upset because it seems as though

someone is doing wrong, talk with God or ask a parent to help you talk with God about the problem.

Living in love

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7,11,14.

Questions for discussion

1. Can you name the opposite of each of these words: patient, kind, content, humble, polite, generous, tolerant?
2. Have your children fill in the blank as you say, "If we love each other, we choose to be patient instead of _____." Repeat for all of the dimensions of love your children listed in response to the first question. Discuss scenarios in your family life where your kids would be faced with these choices.
3. God wants us to live at peace with others. Can we do it without His help?

Key concepts

God wants families to live at peace with each other. This can only happen if we ask God's love and peace to live with us. We will experience more peace in our homes and relationships if we are patient instead of impatient, kind instead of mean, content instead of envious, humble instead of boastful or proud, polite instead of rude, generous instead of selfish, and calm/tolerant/self-controlled instead of easily angered.

Loving our brothers (and sisters!)

Read 1 John 4:7,10-12,19-20.

Questions for discussion

1. How can someone tell if you love your brothers and sisters?
2. How can someone tell if you do not love your brother and sisters?
3. Why does the Bible say we are to love our brother and sisters?
4. Who can help you love a brother or sister when it is hard to love them?

Key concepts

God is love, and love comes from God. God asks us to love others as He loves us. Showing love to others shows them God's love for them. When we have a hard time loving someone, God can share His love for that person with us.

The Prince of Peace

Questions for discussion

1. Read Isaiah 9:6. What is Jesus called?
2. Read Luke 2:13-14. What did the angels announce about His coming?
3. Read Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, Romans 5:1-2. What keeps us from being at peace with God?
4. Read Romans 5:6-8, John 3:16. We deserve to be punished for our sins, but how did God arrange for someone else to take our punishment?

Key concepts

Jesus is the Prince of Peace. When He was born, the angels sang "Peace on earth." Because we have sinned, we are separated from God and deserve to die for our sins. But Jesus died, taking the punishment for our sins, so we can have peace with God. If we ask God to forgive our sins and believe in his Son, Jesus, God forgives our sins and considers us to be one of His sons or daughters. We then follow God by asking Him to be the leader of our lives and allowing Him to put His Spirit in our hearts to make our thoughts and actions like Jesus'.

Me first

Read Mark 10:35-45.

Questions for discussion

1. What causes conflict at home? At school?
2. What did James and John do to cause discord?
3. What did Jesus say?
4. What do you do to cause this kind of disagreement?
5. How can we avoid these kinds of conflicts?

6. List some ways we can serve each other.

Key concepts

Just as James and John both wanted to have the place of honour, children often push and shove to be first in line or have the preferred seat. James and John requested honour for themselves, which stirred up discord among the disciples. Jesus' reply was that he who wants to be the greatest must be the servant of all. A "putting others first" approach encourages peace, whereas a "get ahead for myself" attitude causes conflict. When we choose to honour others by putting their needs ahead of our own, it is pleasing to God.

Creative discipline

Few parents enjoy their God-given responsibility of disciplining their children, and even fewer children enjoy being on the receiving end. The Bible tells us to expect discipline to be uncomfortable, but also promises positive results. This section will provide you with innovative suggestions to use when correcting your children, to help them learn to practice harmony.

For problems with being easily angered

Biblical basis

Proverbs 15:17-18 "Better a meal of vegetables where there is love than a fattened calf with hatred. A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel."

Suggested disciplinary action

Instead of solving your children's problems for them when they come to you with complaints about each other, have them sit down on the couch and spend time talking it out. Encourage each child to be patient and calm while they discuss the problem.

Only allow your children to resume playing when they have come up with a solution that they both agree on. Compromise can come quickly when offending parties realize they are both missing playtime! Younger children will likely need your guidance during their discussion.

Take time to explain that with peacemaking, everyone wins, whereas with discord, everyone loses. This

is illustrated in a practical sense with the “couch” discipline. When they fight and argue, they both end up on the couch and lose valuable play time. If they choose to play together peacefully, then play time remains uninterrupted and they both win. To drive home this point, you may also choose to remove the object that caused the strife, be it food, toys or another privilege.

Affirmation

After the discipline is completed, affirm your children with Matthew 5:9: “**Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called sons of God.**” Tell them that blessed means happy. Pray, asking the Holy Spirit to help all of you to be peacemakers so you can live together happily and be called sons of God.

For problems with teasing **Biblical basis**

Proverbs 22:10-11 “**Drive out the mocker, and out goes strife; quarrels and insults are ended. He who loves a pure heart and whose speech is gracious will have the king for his friend.**”

Suggested disciplinary action

Send the teaser or mocker out of the room.

Affirmation

Read Romans 8:6-8: “**The mind of the sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace . . . Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.**”

Explain to your child that having their mind (including thoughts and attitudes) controlled by the Holy Spirit is a choice. God is not pleased when he/she chooses to tease or fight with a sibling. Encourage your child to pray with you, asking God to send His Holy Spirit to inspire them to choose peace.

You can also reward gracious speech with special treatment. Have your child imagine what special treatment a friend of the king might get (Proverbs 22:11). He may wear a crown, get carried in a chariot, or have a bubble bath. Reward your child with their choice of treatment when they speak in a way that demonstrates their desire to live at peace with others.

Hands-on options

Often we are consumed by the busyness of day-to-day living and we forget to look for opportunities to teach our children God-honouring character traits. These ideas require very little preparation, making it easy for you to share some simple but memorable lessons with your kids. Read over the suggestions at the beginning of your week and choose one or two that will fit your schedule.

Celebrate unity!

fun with food

Life is good and pleasant for everyone when family members live in unity. We can easily take it for granted when children are getting along well. Instead of ignoring the peace, choose to celebrate it!

When you hear a child choosing to be a peacemaker, surprise the playmates by giving a small treat to all of them. As you do, recite Psalm 133:1. Keep the reward small and simple so you can repeat it often (e.g. a chocolate chip, a mini-marshmallow, a sticker or a penny). You may also choose to link this suggestion with the **kick-off craft** by offering additional decorations for the musical instruments as rewards.

Relevant Scripture

Psalm 133:1 “**How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!**”

Peacemaker parade

physical activity

*Note: Ideally, before completing this activity, have your children create their own instruments by following the directions in the **kick-off craft**.*

Put your children to work as “peace police officers” who watch for peacemaking in your home. Examples of peacemaking include talking through problems instead of using aggressive or harsh actions; using a quiet and calm voice to explain problems; practicing forgiveness and showing love.

Peacemaking also means giving up what you want for yourself for someone else and then being happy for him or her. Celebrate with a “peacemaker parade” after each peacemaking incident. March around the house playing musical instruments together, singing praises to God. Practice saying the selected memory

verse. Celebrate maintaining harmony and talk about how pleasant it is when everyone lives together peacefully. After the parade, pray, thanking God for the good gift of His Holy Spirit who enables family members to get along with each other.

Discord detectives

drama / role play

This activity is based on James 4:1-3. Explain that some police officers work as detectives. Their job can involve looking for clues to help them find the truth.

Begin by reviewing potential causes of discord (lack of peace) in your home. Ideas listed in the Bible include selfishness, envy, teasing another person, being hot tempered, stirring up anger/ provoking, lack of sympathy, lack of love, impatience or intolerance.

Explain to your children that they can be “discord detectives.” For even more fun, wear detective-type costumes. When someone spies discord, the detectives must discover clues to help find out what caused the discord in the first place.

Be sure your children understand that it very important to correct others gently and to offer grace and forgiveness readily (Galatians 6:1, Colossians 3:13, Matthew 18:35). The verses listed in the **memory verses** section can be a helpful reference. Once the reason for the discord has been uncovered, ask God to forgive the person who caused the conflict. Pray as a family and ask the Holy Spirit to fill all of you with His love. See Galatians 5:25-26 and 1 Corinthians 13:5 for further reference.

Note: If your children do not have the maturity to handle this exercise, they can be discord detectives while viewing an appropriate DVD or video.

Relevant Scripture

1 Corinthians 13:5 “[Love] is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.”

Galatians 5:25-26 “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.”

James 4:1-3 “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 the wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.”

Walking in the light

physical activity

This activity is based on 1 John 2:9-11. Go for a walk on a dark night or allow your children to walk with you in a dark room. Ask if they are walking in the light or in the dark. If they say they are walking in the light, ask if they are trying to fool you.

Read 1 John 2:9-11. Explain that anyone who says they love God, but doesn’t love their brother is fooling himself or lying, just like the person who walks in the dark and says he is in the light.

Also, read 1 John 1:5-7. Finish by praying together, asking God to remove any darkness and sin and to fill your hearts and home with His love and light.

Relevant Scripture

1 John 2:9-11 “Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness; he does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded him.”

1 John 1:5-7 “This is the message we have heard from Him and declare to you: God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with Him yet walk in darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin.”

Singing songs of peace

any time

Almost anytime is a good time to sing or listen to music. Music also helps children remember concepts. Here are some suggestions appropriate for your study on harmony:

- “Fruit of the Spirit,” a song by Terry Butler, from the CD *Fruit of the Spirit*. Vineyard Music, 2002.
- “I’ve Got Peace Like a River,” a song by author unknown (traditional). (Scriptural basis found in Isaiah 66:12)
- “Let There be Peace on Earth,” a song by Sy Miller and Jill Jackson, from the piano and guitar songbook *The Choirboys*. Wise Publications, 2005.
- “Peace,” a song by Wayne Zeitner, from the CD *Music Machine: The Fruit of the Spirit*. Alpha Omega Publications, Bridgestone Multimedia, 2002.
- “Peace Like a River,” a song by Charles Davis and C.D. Davis.

Salty snacks

fun with food

Prepare a salty snack like pretzels, chips or popcorn for your family and use it as an opportunity to talk about peace. Begin by reading Colossians 4:6. Put individual portions of the snack in sandwich bags along with a verse to read. Choose from Mark 9:50, 2 Corinthians 13:11, 1 Thessalonians 5:15 and Matthew 5:13-16, or any of the verses in the **memory verses** section.

Read each verse and talk about the difference between “salty talk” and “sour talk.” (“Salty talk” expresses God’s grace to others, promoting peace. The opposite is “sour talk,” words that are quick to judge and accuse others.) When a child speaks in a way that lacks grace and forgiveness, you can gently remind him/her by saying, “Kind words are salty words.” Or “Sprinkle your words with gentleness.”

Relevant Scripture

Colossians 4:6 “Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”

“Shalom, peace be with you”

drama / role play

Introduce your children to the Hebrew word *Shalom*. *Shalom* is traditionally used as a greeting. *Shalom*

means “Peace be with you.” Although many people use the term casually, as we would say “hello” or “good-bye,” the word *Shalom* has a much deeper meaning.

Explain that Shalom is a sense of wholeness and well-being that exists when we are at peace with God and others because we have allowed God to forgive our sins and replace our sinful human nature with His new nature (Romans 8:5-8). Everyday circumstances occur that require us to ask God to send His Holy Spirit to bring Shalom into our lives. Philippians 4:6-7 says, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” It is wanting things “my way” or our sinful nature that tempts us to want to repay evil for evil, to be first and to have the biggest and the best for ourselves. But Jesus tells us that the first will be last. He teaches us His way: to share what we have, to give generously and to forgive others readily. Following our sin nature fosters discord, but Jesus’ way promises peace.

Through familiarizing your children with the significance of this word, you can expand their vocabulary and their understanding of God’s role in bringing peace into our lives. For younger children, you may want to complete these activities over the course of a few days. If you prefer, these activities can be done using the word *peace* instead of *Shalom*.

- 1 Begin by asking your children to imagine that they are in the Garden of Eden. Pretend to be walking around together, looking at all of the wonderful plants and animals God created. Point at butterflies flying by, pet an otter and perhaps go for a ride on a tiger. Highlight what a privilege it would be to walk and talk with God as Adam and Eve did. Emphasize the reverence and awe you would experience being in the presence of God. Tell your children that because Adam and Eve had not yet sinned, they were able to be in God’s presence and experience complete *shalom*.
- 2 Ask your children if they know how Adam and Eve ruined the peace that existed between

themselves and God. Liken this to a child sneaking a cookie. A child who has taken a cookie without asking permission does not want to be seen by a parent.

3 Pretend to be Adam and Eve hiding from God. Explain how the snake tricked you into doing it and tell God how sorry you are for eating the fruit He asked you not to eat. Dramatize crying after God asks you to leave the garden. Sit down and pretend to pull weeds and dig up the hard dirt outside of the Garden of Eden. Illustrate that just as we hate weeds in our garden, so God hates sin. While continuing to pull the pretend weeds, explain that in order to bring restore peace between God and man, God chose to send His Son, Jesus, into the world to die for our sins. Jesus died to take the punishment for our sins. He did this so that anyone who asks can have their sins forgiven and find peace through having a relationship with God (John 3:16, John 14:6 and 1 John 1:8-9). Read aloud Jesus' promise from John 14:27: "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

4 Next, encourage your children by explaining that when we choose live with Jesus' attitude in our hearts we experience the peace He promises.

After explaining "my way" versus "Jesus' way" to your children, have them role-play situations where they can practice. Have your children practice saying: "I am feeling upset about _____." Instead of (yelling/crying/hitting/sulking/whining), I will pray and tell God about the problem. Then I know that Jesus' peace will protect my heart and mind from having a bad attitude." Here are some example situations:

- Make playdough cookies decorated with playdough chocolate chips/candy, and pretend to bake them. After they are "done," hand them out. Be sure to make a big production of giving one child a bigger cookie with more candy on it. Ask the child who was given the less appealing cookie how they feel. Explain that Satan tempts us to get the best for ourselves. Ask what they think Jesus would tell people to do (Luke 6:30-31,38, Acts 20:35, 1 John 3:16-18).
- Have a race or a contest. Someone will win and someone will lose. Ask how the loser feels. Ask if they think most people would want to be first or last in a competition. Further open the discussion by saying, "Most people do want to be first instead of last, but what did Jesus say about being first (Mark 9:35)?"
- Pretend that you are playing in the park or having a snowball fight. Someone splashes mud on you or throws a snowball in your face. How would you feel? People might say that you are entitled to get upset and seek revenge when someone wrongs you. To contrast this attitude, ask the question, "What do you think Jesus would do if someone hurt Him?" Promote further dialogue by asking, "How many times do you think Jesus would want you to forgive someone for bothering you (Matthew 18:21-22)?"

Close by pretending to bring out a large, beautifully wrapped gift. Have your children guess who the amazing gift is from. After the guesses have been completed, explain that gifts usually do come from people who love us. Ask if they know who loves them more than anyone else. Explain that God's love is bigger than the sky (Psalm 108:4) and that Shalom is such a great gift, only God can give it to us. Make it clear that it is God's Holy Spirit living in us, which can bring peace to our lives (Galatians 5:16-26). Tell them the good news that God is delighted to give us Shalom (His peace) when we ask Him to. Pray together and ask for the good gift of the Holy Spirit to bring peace to your family.

Challenge your family to use the word *Shalom* as a greeting, but also as a way of saying, "I forgive you," "I want the best for you, not myself," or "I share with

you in the joy of your success.” Explain that whenever a family member says *Shalom* to another, they are saying, “I choose to let God bring peace to this relationship.”

Harmony hop

physical activity

You will need at least two children to complete this activity. You may choose to incorporate it into a playdate with another family.

Take two children to a large room or outdoors if possible. Put a treat or an appealing toy an appropriate distance away from them. Tie their legs together three-legged-race style and tell them they need to work together to reach the treat. If they succeed without discord, they get to enjoy the treat after you have prayed and thanked God for the blessing of friends and harmony.

If they experience conflict, tell them they can try again after they have prayed. Pray, requesting that God would send His Holy Spirit to enable them to work together cooperatively. Try the three-legged approach to the toy or treat again. Celebrate by saying Psalm 133:1 or the memory verse they are learning.

Relevant Scripture

Psalm 133:1 “How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!”

Psalm 29:11 “The Lord gives strength to his people; the Lord blesses His people with peace.”

Music to my ears

any time

Play some music on the piano or stereo. Sing along, singing off-key and then singing in tune. (If you are gifted musically, you can play chords that are harmonic or discordant.)

To foster discussion, ask your children which singing they think sounded better. Follow up with the question, “If this music represented a family, which family would you rather be a part of?” Bickering or arguing sounds like discordant music – it grates on everyone’s nerves! Conversely, when everyone is choosing to live in peace, the “music” is beautiful.

Close by praying together, asking God to send His presence in the form of the Holy Spirit to fill your home and your hearts with peace.

Relevant Scripture

1 Peter 3:8-9 “Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.”

Galatians 5:25-26 “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.”

Please, may I have the crust?

fun with food

This hands-on option is based on Proverbs 17:1.

During a meal when crusts (or other food items) are avoided, it is a great time to discuss the value of getting along with others. Pick up the piece of food that is left over and ask your children if they would rather eat the crust or the dessert. In most cases, the dessert will be chosen.

Explain that the Bible says it is better to be in a home where there is nothing to eat but dry bread crusts and there is peace, than to live in a house where there is feasting and fighting. The gist of this lesson is that the quality of relationships we have in our home are far more important than the material things that are in a home.

As you enjoy eating dessert, make up your own Proverbs. For example, “It’s better to have an old rusty bicycle with a peaceful and quiet home, than a new shiny one with fighting and biting.” “Better a black and white 12 inch screen TV with harmony than a 60 inch plasma TV with discord.” Close the discussion by praying and asking that God would help you prioritize and value peace in your family more than worldly possessions and comforts.

Relevant Scripture

Proverbs 17:1 “Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting with strife.”

Environmental awareness

getting into nature

Provide some basic environmental awareness education for your children. Include the following concepts:

- When God created the world, He created the most wonderful symphony – a world of plants and animals functioning together in harmony.
- The sun provides light for plants to grow.
- Plants provide food for animals to eat.
- Some animals also eat each other, but they usually don't kill more than they need. The delicate balance found in nature can easily be upset by human choices.

Next, discuss how God's perfect design can be damaged by the actions people take:

- People litter, harm plants and animals, and destroy the beauty of nature.
- Factories put harmful chemicals into the environment that kill or hurt animals.
- People kill animals for sport or selfish gain, rather than for food, which adversely affects the balance in nature.

After reading about environmental awareness, explain that God designed families and friends to live together in harmony, but Satan is like the people who choose to litter and pollute the world. Satan tries to cause discord and upset the harmony that God intends to be present in relationships. Explain to your children that just as we can choose to litter or to put our garbage where it belongs, we can choose to ask God to send His Holy Spirit to enable us to live together peacefully when we feel like fighting and arguing. Close by praying one of the **kids talk with God** prayers together.

Harmonious relationships in nature

getting into nature

Spend some time exploring a fascinating aspect of nature called symbiosis. Search the Internet or

the library to familiarize yourself with the basics. Then, explain to your children that there are special friendships (symbiotic mutualistic) in nature which are helping and harmonious relationships. Symbiotic mutualistic relationships occur when two different organisms (plant or animal species) live together and help each other survive. (For contrast, you may also want to familiarize your children with parasitic relationships where one organism benefits, while the other is harmed.)

An example of mutualistic relationships includes the crocodile and the thick knee (bird). The bird feeds on the food left between the crocodile's teeth, and the crocodile benefits by having its teeth cleaned.

After learning about these kinds of relationships in nature, you can ask your children to identify helping and harmonious relationships in your home. Explain that God designed people within a family unit to have "special friendships" like the animals living in mutualistic symbiosis. It is God's plan that family members love and care for and help each other. However, when there is discord, unkindness, lack of respect, and/or selfishness within a family, individual members are harmed by others. Living with continual conflict within a family can be considered parasitic and detrimental to relationships. End the discussion by praying together asking God to help you to be a family that lives together peacefully.

Love covers sin

science with a twist

This experiment is based on 1 Peter 4:8.

You will need 1 tbsp of vinegar, 1 tsp of baking soda, 2 tbsp of water coloured with a few drops of red food colouring, and a small bowl.

- 1** Begin by placing the vinegar in a bowl. The vinegar represents a child playing happily with a toy. The baking soda represents another child interrupting and asking for the toy. Add the baking soda to the vinegar and you will see a lot of fizz. Tell your children that the fizz is fighting. The first child says, "No, you can't have my toy!" The second child starts yelling, "I'll tell Mom and Dad if you don't share!" Be sure to pour the red coloured water into the bowl before the fizzing

stops. With the addition of the red water, all will be calm again.

- 2** Explain that the red water represents love. The Bible tells us that love covers any amount of sin (1 Peter 4:8). Love will help a child offer a turn with a toy (Luke 6:33). Love is not easily angered, love is kind and love does not demand its own way (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). Summarize by saying that responding to others in difficult situations with love results in peace instead of discord.
- 3** Have your children think of scenarios in their lives where they need to choose to respond in love to maintain harmony. Redo the experiment for each example and allow them to pour in the red water and say, “Love covers sin.” Close by praying that God would fill your hearts with His love so you have lots of love to offer each other.

Relevant Scripture

1 Peter 4:8 “Above all love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins.”



Recommended resources

For a list of children’s stories that reinforce the theme of this lesson, consult the home page for the **harmony** lesson at Kidsofintegrity.com.