

Quibbling Siblings

Addressing the feisty hearts in your home

by

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TRAINING HEARTS FOR JESUS.ORG



Does this sound familiar?

Katie had spent the morning in her Bible, along with some great biblically based books on conflict/resolution. She was feeling encouraged and more ready to face her day than usual. You see, Katie had been dealing with an ongoing problem with her kids that was zapping her energy, and truth be told, causing her to feel defeated and a bit depressed. Katie adored her three kids, was always a bit entertained and amazed by their different personalities and strengths, and loved the idea of being an engaged, intentional mom who wanted to invest in their gifts and strengths. But, a pattern of behavior had set in with the kids that seemed to get worse with each passing day. Fights ensued multiple times a day between her children, as they displayed anger and hurt feelings and demands for justice from mom. She was beginning to feel like she was their own personal referee! She had posted a few times on social media, asking friends if they had any advice for this problem, which she gently touted as her “quibbling siblings”. She had applied the advice of some, leading her to subtle forms of manipulation or “fun” challenges to put an end to the battles, but not only did they fail to work over time, the fights increased in intensity, and the attitudes went from childish anger to genuine disdain between her kids. It was breaking her heart! But this morning... after this time spent in God’s Word and theologically sound books, Katie finally began to see that there may be solutions to her “quibbling siblings”. She was feeling excited to begin applying the truths she found through these sources.

*be
kind &
grateful*


How close to home does Katie's story hit for you? This is probably the most asked question I receive. We can try to soften the pain by making light of the situation, as Katie did and affectionately refer to our consistently angry kids as "quibbling-siblings", but the cute label doesn't change the gut-wrenching reality that our children are battling hatefully with one another. We can see the writing on the wall! If not effectively dealt with, a few years down the line, this will ultimately poison the family bond, leaving members bitter and resentful. And we find ourselves bearing the guilt over the assumption that we are failing as a parent in creating a happy, peace-filled home. If that's true... then how do we fix this? There is a solution! but first we need to recognize that the fighting is not the issue, but a symptom of the issue. This is key!



We Need to Get to the Heart of Our Child!

And for Christians, this means turning to God's Word (see The Caring Kids Memory Verse document included with this article).


Luke 6:45 explains this best:



The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

It's hard to think that the heart of our child is evil, but in light of God's sinless perfection, we are all evil!

Psalm 51:5 tells us...



*Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
and in sin did my mother conceive me.*

Our little ones are sinners from the womb. In fact they absolutely indulge in selfishness from the start! If you think about it, they are demanding food, sleep and comfort right from birth. This is reasonable to us, as it's their way of communicating their needs, and since they can't take care of themselves, we are grateful to know their demands. Their survival may balance on this initial form of communication. But left to this myopic concern for self, it will soon create havoc with everyone in their path, because this selfishness is the very iniquity that David is speaking of in Psalm 51:5.

If that's not enough, they are born into an entire family of sinners. Amen? Consequently, as long as there are as few as two sinful human beings in one room for any length of time, there is bound to be conflict. Now add the fact that your kids spend day after day, week after week, and year after year together! You have the perfect petri dish for conflict!

So, why are we surprised by the fighting? Instead we must face it... Yes! I'm even saying anticipate it! Know for a fact that it will be a part of your day! When it shows itself, purpose to see it, not as a disruption to your day, but as an opportunity presented by God so

that you may train the hearts of his children in his ways. Let's think about this. Every time they fight... you have a new training

Opportunity! The more of these training moments you get, the deeper you're able to plant God's biblical truths of selflessness and peacemaking that will begin to grow in place of their selfish sin. We need to help our kids put to death the sin of selfishness. This is the only way for us to achieve a biblical level of peace in our homes.

Does this sound exhausting? It can be. I'm certain you've discovered first hand that parenting is exhausting! But it's so much better to use our energies on something that solves the problem, rather than agitating or even promoting the issue.


*we want
Peace
like a
River*

You see, as parents we often unwittingly *fail* to adopt our God-ordained job descriptions for parenting, and far too often adopt worldly job descriptions instead. Teaching biblical truths, such as Philippians 2:3-4 and Ephesians 4:2-3 (we'll cover both scriptures and more below), is clearly on the Christian parenting job description, yet in the course of our day, in the midst of the chaos, we fail to bring God's word into our training. On the other hand, we seem to easily default to man-made efforts like games or manipulation that simply result in more strife. UGH!!

For instance, how many times have you felt like you should own a black and white vertically striped jersey as you find yourself standing over your little wrestlers while blowing the proverbial referee's whistle,

and sending them each to their corners! You have just taken on a job that was never intended for you, and has absolutely no lasting, or more importantly, no biblical resolution. You see, we have to continue to understand the core of the problem, and then we can look for the biblical solution.


James 4:1-3 tells us...



What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

Think of this verse in light of your children's battles. Consider that the word "murder" in verse 2 can also mean, "to be angry or to act out in anger" (see Matthew 5:21). Also think of the meaning of covet. Simply put, it implies a yearning to possess something. In most sibling fights, these sinful attitudes are flowing from the hearts of your children. When we take a step back and look at it in humility, it's very easy to see.

In contrast, we are called as Christians to apply Phil 2:3-5...



Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,

Consider If we used Philippians 2:3-5 as a barometer for our family's behavior (meaning these words are spoken daily, and sinful behavior is held up to the truth of this verse), we would be far more convicted as we practice anger and covetousness, not to mention all the other sins in which we so often indulge.



Get God's Word into the Hearts of Your Children.

Purpose to make Philippians 2:3-5 the family memory verse and speak it to your children every day. Have them speak it to you and each other every day. Allow this verse to hold all your family members accountable to humble and considerate behavior.

Consider adding these following verses to your list once Philippians 2:3-5 has been memorized, and let them remind your family of this same target that is morally right behavior as you continue to train the hearts in your home.


Luke 6:31.



And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.

This is called the Golden Rule, and believe it or not, in the past it was commonly used publicly to remind the American culture to consider this standard of thoughtfulness. It's been decades since we've seen this verse highlighted inside a public bus, or in a grocery store, etc., as it was in the past. Don't you wish it was prevalent again? Let's make it so in each of our homes!


Ephesians 4:2.

A decorative green flourish consisting of several loops and a small heart shape at the end, positioned to the left of the text.

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace. (NIV)

Imagine the changes in our attitudes if we added this verse as a family standard of behavior towards one another. Even the first phrase, “be completely humble and gentle” would radically change our behaviors with our family members if we practiced to apply it. This would make it difficult to continue indulging in selfishness, as our focus changes to that which is most beneficial for the other family member.

Colossians 3:13

A decorative green flourish consisting of several loops and a small heart shape at the end, positioned to the left of the text.


Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. (NIV)

How long has it been since your family has practiced the habit of forgiveness. Let’s wisely stop here, open our Bible and carefully read *The Unforgiving Servant* found in Matthew 18: 23-35, and then come back to complete this article.

Can you agree that when we consider this parable told by Jesus, forgiveness is not an option if we want to be forgiven by God? This helps us understand that high view of God and his power over our lives, and the immense value he puts on forgiveness. When you work

consistently with your children on their habit of forgiveness, they will eventually take ownership of this truth. Not only when they're told, but one day you will begin to witness your children taking on this biblical mandate without any prompting from you! Oh, what a moment this will be! Don't take my word! take it from God!!

Work diligently, consistently (again, and again... and again) to get the Word into the hearts of your children on a daily basis, and as you hold them accountable to practice the implied principles of those scriptures, the attitude of your home, and the attitude of your child's heart will be continuously transforming, and you will begin to experience a peaceful, joyful home!

Now, let me paint a more practical picture.  The next time your kids enter into a wrestling or verbal match, send them each to their corners (or maybe to each end of the couch), *but refrain from asking them what happened!* Do not let them tattle on their sibling! Do not put the jersey on and play referee and judge, declaring what you believe to be fair or just! Doing this will always leave one child a winner and one child a loser, which results in the appearance of the parent taking sides. This only promotes an unhealthy competition between your kids that inevitably feeds jealousy. Not good! In actuality, it is almost certain that they have both sinned in some way, and both need to take steps to cleanse their hearts from that sin. It might be that one sins in a more deeply rebellious way, but at that moment, that's not the issue. By dealing with this biblically, you will work through that in the end.

Practice Biblical Conflict/Resolution

Example Script: Parent, speak the following in age appropriate terms to the quibbling siblings:

“According to Matthew 7:5 which says...

...first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.”

(If they need an explanation of what Matthew 7:5 means, give it.)

“We must not concern ourself with what the other person did. Instead, we are to acknowledge our own sinful attitude or behavior in the circumstance. Therefore, I will ask each of you questions and you are not to share with me about what the other did. Speak only regarding your own behavior.”

Begin to ask each child, back and forth per question, one at a time and rather than accusations towards their sibling, you will now only receive confessions:

Step 1 Self evaluate (Matt 7:3-5) and Confess your sin (James 5:16)
That includes confession of sin towards God and others.

Question 1: Consider what you did that was wrong/sinful before God and please share that with us. What does the Bible call that?

By asking this question, you allow the God-designed mechanism which is the conscience to do a work in the hearts of your children. When they cannot point to the other child, but are restricted to only considering what they did wrong, how they offended God and their family member, and are also partially responsible for the discord, the conscience begins to convict the heart. The child can be humbled regarding his own behavior. Without this evaluation, the carnal alternative takes root! That is allowing focus on the other person's sin to produce pride that puffs up, and confirms an attitude that his sin is not as bad as his sibling's. Does this remind you of the pharisees in the Bible? Yikes!


Having your child name their own sin allows him to acknowledge the truth that he is a sinner, and helps him to understand that he is in need of a Savior. Now we begin to point them to the Gospel of Christ. If your child doesn't know, help him to identify the sin. Maybe it's selfishness, or jealousy, or anger, or lack of patience, etc. Allow your child to grow in humility and become comfortable calling a sin by its name.

Step 2 Acknowledge the offense towards others (Eph. 5:21).

Question 2: How was that an offense towards your sibling?

We want to encourage empathy in our children for others, and especially when it is related to pain or frustration that they may have

caused. This is where we gain traction in the future with the compassionate truth of Luke 6:31:


 *And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.*

Step 3 If an offense towards a sibling has not been confessed, the offended sibling must share it with the offender (Matt 18:15)

(Make sure he is not speaking to you, the parent, but to the one who offended him).

Question 3: Is there anything that you feel offended by that your sibling did not acknowledge or confess? If so, kindly share that with your sibling.

It's important to acknowledge that there may be more to the conflict that needs resolution. Often times in anger, we don't even realize how we have offended the other person. In Matthew 18:15 we are given instructions on how to rightly deal with this:

 *"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.*

We want to nurture an attitude of care for the one whose in sin, with a desire to see him restored to God. This approach will not come naturally to the offended child, so must be taught and encouraged. This is not an act of retribution, but an act of love and regard for the spiritual well-being of the sinner.

Step 4 Ask for Forgiveness from those who were offended (Matt 5:23-24).

Question 4: Considering how you sinned against your sibling, please ask your sibling for forgiveness.

Parents, in conflicts teach your children to stay away from the words, “I’m sorry.” There is nothing in the Bible that encourages these words when there is sin involved. “I’m sorry” allows the sinner to keep the control in his court. He said he’s sorry, so he’s finished in his mind, whether the offended brother still feels offended or not. But, when we ask for forgiveness we transfer our control over to the other person who then has the freedom to say “yes, I forgive you”, or “no, you are not forgiven” (Parent, I know the question that just popped into your mind. “What if my child won’t forgive!” I promise, we’re getting to it! Read on.).

Because you gave each child the opportunity to share if they were still offended by their sibling, there really shouldn’t be any other unspoken sins. Now... the answer to that question that popped in your mind... we then need to teach our children, based on the parable of *The Unforgiving Servant* from Matthew 18 along with Luke 6:37, that if we want to be forgiven for our sins by God, we must forgive others for their sins. If we love God, there is no option.




Forgive
your
brother
from your
heart

Step 5 Commit to Repentance. (2 Cor.7:10a)

Question 5: Can you tell me how you will avoid sinning like this in the future?

Explain repentance, saying it is when one turns away from their sin, and commits to sin no more. Explain the difference between worldly grief vs. godly grief (see 2 Cor 7:10a) Encourage your child to come up with ways to apply the Put-off-Put-on principle as found in Eph 4:21-24:

...assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Perhaps your child needs permission and encouragement from you to come and ask for your help *before* it becomes a battle with his sibling. Be available to help, but again... not as referee. Stir up the heart and the conscience with God's Word. Remember, he is not to tattle on his sibling, but to seek wisdom from his parent regarding a peaceful way to avoid a battle that leads to anger. Teach him as often as necessary how to do this.

Learning to adopt these five steps will benefit your child in every human relationship, most importantly his or her marriage. Imagine the impact your teaching can have on the success of his or her

marriage! The sooner this becomes a normal process for conflict, the more comfortable your child will be in applying it. Again, and again... and again... practice it consistently. It will take less and less time as your family adopts it into your daily lives. There will be future conflicts, but less and less, as your family deals with them biblically and consistently. As these biblical truths are practiced, the hearts in your home will remain tender towards one another, and ultimately taking your quibbling siblings to the *Caring Kids* you have been praying for. And then, to whom much is given, much is required. It will soon be your turn to help other moms work towards this gift of biblical conflict/resolution in their homes!

*The
Beginning*


Caring Kids

Bible Verses

Family Memory Verses:

Philippians 2:3-5

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus

Luke 6:31

And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.

Ephesians 4:2

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace. (NIV)

Colossians 3:13

Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. (NIV)



Quibbling Sibling Verses to Ponder

Luke 6:45 The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

Psalms 51:5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

James 4:1-3 What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

Matthew 7:3-5 Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

James 5:16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

Ephesians 5:21 submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Matthew 18:15 "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.

Matthew 18:23-35 "Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. ²When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.' So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

Luke 6:37 "Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven;

2 Corinthians 7:10 For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

Ephesians 4:21-24 assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

