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Talking with Your Kids about Difficult News

June 10, 2020



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helping your kids process what they're seeing and hearing

Jonathan McKee (<https://www.amazon.com/Jonathan-McKee/e/B001IQWE9U>)

If you have kids under 18, then the last few weeks...scratch that...months have probably invoked more fear and unrest than they have ever experienced looking at the world around them.

First Covid-19, then the tragic killing of George Floyd, then the outbreak of violence in the streets... all of these issues dividing people instead of united them. Millions of American homes have news channels on right now that aren't reporting news as much as "casting blame."

I've been alive 50 years, and I've never seen our country so divided.

I don't think many adults are stopping to consider...*our kids are watching.*

Our Kids are Watching

A black man is killed by a policeman on national TV. Our kids are watching.

Looters throw garbage cans through store windows and carry out televisions. Our kids are watching.

Politicians point their fingers. Our kids are watching.

The world pauses to remember George Floyd, even on kids' channels (<https://www.marketwatch.com/story/some-parents-are-slamming-nickelodeons-george-floyd-tribute-for-scaring-children-and-being-disgusting-2020-06-02>). Our kids are watching.

Parents turn on that news station they love so much and watch editorialists shake their heads and point their fingers for hours upon hours. Our kids are watching.

Brands speak out and voice their protests in unique ways (<https://www.insider.com/lego-4-million-donation-black-youth-pulls-police-sets-ads-2020-6>). Our kids are watching.

Grampa gets mad at the TV screen and starts casting more blame. Our kids are watching.

What are our kids gleaned from all of this pain, violence, bitterness, and unrest? More importantly, how can we talk with them about all they are observing?

Opening Up the Doors of Dialogue

Here is yet another situation where being proactive is always better than being reactive. Right now the entire world is reacting, many acting without thinking. What our kids need is a solid foundation in an otherwise shaky world.

So how can we anchor our kids to this solid foundation?

When churches shut down in March, a group of my neighbors began gathering together down by our community barn to pray (yes, I live in rural America). We all backed up our trucks, staying about 10- to 15-feet apart, opened the tailgates, and we lead a time of prayer where families each prayed in their own trucks, social distancing, but experiencing a little bit of community at the same time in the fresh morning air.

Each week I would start by doing a little 10-minute devotional (the kids loved it—a 10-minute sermon. "Why can't church always be like this?") So, I began going through the Beatitudes (Matthew 5) one per week.

An interesting thing happened.

The week the world exploded in violence the passage just happened to be...

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."

It's nothing I could have planned. I had no idea what would be going on six weeks prior when I started the series. God just knew that we needed to be soaking in His perspective about peace and reconciliation, so we knew how to treat others, even during tough times.

I can imagine if we *hadn't* been soaking in God's truth for the six weeks prior, maybe we all could have called an emergency meeting in panic and then said, "Quick, let's look for a passage that talks about this!" And maybe even landed on "Blessed are the peacemakers." But it wouldn't have had the same impact.

The fact is, the six weeks prior we were soaking in the truth of Jesus' teaching where He let us in on a joy that is available regardless of circumstances. The Beatitudes all begin with the words "blessed are the" which really means, "We have everything we need when we are..." And in the last six weeks we had already been encouraged by the good news that joy was readily available when we realize how much we need Jesus (poor in spirit), when we are moved with compassion when we look at the world around us and see their need for Jesus (those who mourn), when we humbly practice self-

control even though we might have the power to show others how powerful we are (the meek), when we allow Him to fill us so we choose what's right and just (who hunger and thirst for righteousness), when we consider others before ourselves and are quick to forgive (the merciful), and when we desire to be blameless before God because our relationship with Him matters most (the pure in heart)...

And then Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." Not just withholding anger or outbursts, but actually making efforts to bring about peace, because God has reconciled us and made us His own. That means our identity is in Him, not anything else.

I memorized I Corinthians 5:17 when I was young: *"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old is gone and the new has come."* Funny, I should have kept reading, because the next verse talks about how we as "new creations" are supposed to live: *"All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation."*

Peacemakers.

Whodathunkit. When we submit to Christ and allow Him to change us, He gives us a new identity and purpose all wrapped up into one: "I am only worthy because of what Christ did to me, and you can have this too."

Imagine if everyone was living like this.

Imagine if the reconciled followers of Christ were living not as a Jew or Gentile, male or female, black or white...but as children of God seeking to reconcile others to Him.

That's what peacemakers do.

The more time you spend time in God's word soaking in His truth, the more you and your family will not only recognize when people aren't living that way, more importantly, you will all know how you should respond in these times.

So what can you do when your kids see the world unraveling around them?

1. Continue reading His word so it is present in their lives already when these things happen. Don't be reactive, be proactive about saturating in God's word so they know the truth and recognize the lies. (<https://thesource4parents.com/parenting-help/helping-kids-hear-truth-in-a-world-blaring-lies/>)
2. Be present. Let your kids know you're there. Be a listener. Step into their shoes and make them feel heard. Validate what they're feeling.
3. If they ask you tough questions, it's okay to answer a question with a question. If they ask questions like, "Mom, are the police bad?" or, "Why are those people breaking windows?" Don't rush to lecture them about your particular view. Instead ask them, "What do you think?" Followed by, "How do we know how we should treat others?"
4. Return to God's word for answers. Don't feel the pressure to have the answer for everything. Instead, point them to a passage that gives us guidance on daily living, then ask them, "So how do you think you should respond if you were in this situation?"
5. Create breaks from the issues confronting them. Don't shield them, just create moments of space. Don't leave the TV on. Engage in fun escapes where they laugh and experience connection with family.

Create a comfortable place where your kids feel loved, encouraged and safe to share their honest feelings.

Life hasn't been easy the last few months. People are scared and stressed, and that brings out a secondary emotion: anger.

Remember, your kids are watching.

People are like teabags. Put them in hot water and you'll see what comes out.

What are you filled with?

What's coming out?

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Jonathan McKee

Jonathan McKee is the author of over twenty books including the brand new *The Guy's Guide to FOUR BATTLES Every Young Man Must Face* (<https://www.amazon.com/Guys-Guide-Battles-Every-Young/dp/1683229495>); *The Teen's Guide to Social Media & Mobile Devices* (<https://www.amazon.com/Teens-Guide-Social-Mobile-Devices/dp/1683223195>); *If I Had a Parenting Do Over* (<https://www.amazon.com/If-Had-Parenting-Do-Over-Changes/dp/1683220676>); and the Amazon Best Seller - *The Guy's Guide to God, Girls and the Phone in Your Pocket* (<https://www.amazon.com/Guys-Guide-Girls-Phone-Pocket/dp/1624169902>). He speaks (<https://thesource4parents.com/speakers-workshops>) to parents and leaders worldwide, all while providing free resources for parents on his website *TheSource4Parents.com* (<https://thesource4parents.com>). Jonathan, his wife Lori, and their three kids live in California.

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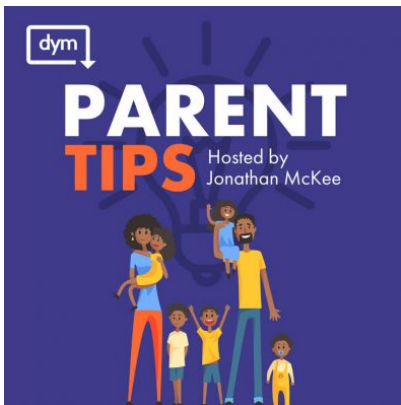
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(<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/06/200603132550.htm>)

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80% of teenagers want to be self employed or freelancers in the future (<https://thefintechtimes.com/80-of-teenagers-want-to-be-self-employed-in-the-future-and-are-more-inclined-to-be-freelancers/>)

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Some parents upset about Nickelodeon’s George Floyd tribute for ‘scaring children’ (<https://www.marketwatch.com/story/some-parents-are-slamming-nickelodeons-george-floyd-tribute-for-scaring-children-and-being-disgusting-2020-06-02>)

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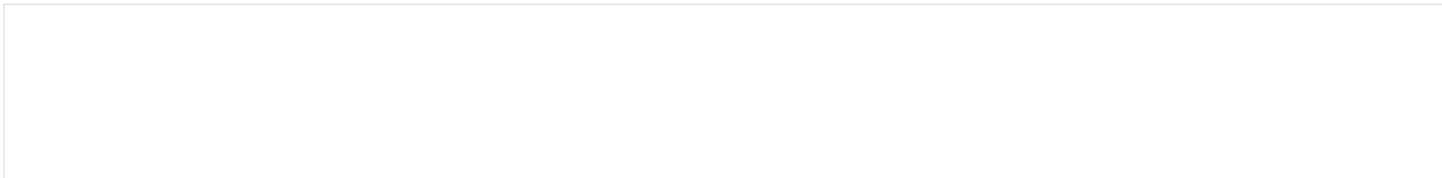
Lauren Daigle called out for staying silent about George Floyd (<http://churchleaders.com/news/376810-lauren-daigle-called-out-for-staying-silent-about-george-floyd-responds-with-tearful-instagram-video.html>)

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Lego praised for donating \$4 million to black youth and pulling ads for police and white house toy sets (<https://www.insider.com/lego-4-million-donation-black-youth-pulls-police-sets-ads-2020-6>)

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