

Conscious Disciples

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Main Concepts/Issues, and/or Practice(s) being Addressed, and the Context

While parenting two young children, I was introduced to *Conscious Discipline* as it was being applied in a preschool setting for a county-wide demonstration school. During classroom observations, I watched teachers take the time to teach children how to navigate conflicts, collaborate in problem solving, and rejoice in each others' celebrations. Even though it was a secular setting, I was witnessing "kingdom of God living," where the children were practicing the hard work of honoring each person as equal, caring for each other as God would. I also had to admit that I had a lot to learn about self-control and empathy for my child's hurts and tantrums, for many times the "behavioral issues" in my home were due to my own inability to manage my emotions well. As I saw it, *Conscious Discipline* was not a bag of tricks for getting children to behave, but a tool for teaching people, children *and* adults, to relate to each other as children of God.

Since that initial encounter, I have sought to learn all I can about CD and its applications, convinced that it has an important role to play in religious education. I have read all the books, attended conferences led by Dr. Becky Bailey, who created this model, and have worked extensively with a colleague in my community to provide opportunities for both children and adults to gain the skills they need to foster emotionally healthy families. In 2012 I completed a doctoral project (D.Ed.Min.) researching current applications of CD in Christian religious education programs. The stories of transformation are too numerous to count: tantrums diffused, dignity restored, safety and security established, marriages saved.

Does CD belong in the discussion of facilitating the "unlearning of violence?" Absolutely! When done in the context of religious education, CD seeks to re-imagine the world, teaching *kingdom of God living* in a way that causes people to notice there might be a different and better way to live, a better way to treat others. Not only is "neighbor" redefined, but so are "brother," "sister," and "family." The social and political systems based on competition become driven by cooperation and collaboration, and power over another is no longer valued. As a religious educator, Bailey's work allows my profession to pair brain research and studies in social sciences with the teachings of Jesus in order to continue this transformation. We can gift God's children with the skills and powers to live together in community where all are safe and valued.

Workshop Outline

1. A Brain Smart Start: Unite, Calm, Connect, Commit (workshop participants will experience first-hand what this is)
2. The Need for Social-emotional Education in Religious Education
 - a. Introducing research, such as that which suggests technology is re-wiring our brains
 - b. Cultivating compassion: The Church as an agent of change
3. Establishing *Conscious Discipline* as a Viable Tool for the Unmaking of Violence
 - a. Define *Conscious Discipline*
 - i. Video of Becky Bailey introducing her work
 - ii. Brain model: seeking connection, not coercion
 - iii. Video of DJ's Story: former gang leader changes because of connection with a *Conscious Discipline*-trained teacher
 - b. Theological grounding of *Conscious Discipline*, using "Kingdom of God" parables of Jesus to Re-imagine the World
 - i. The Parable of Two Sons (The Loving Father)
 - ii. The Rich Man and Lazarus
 - iii. The Helpful Samaritan
 - iv. The Pesky Log
4. Practical Applications for the Local Church
 - a. Children's ministry
 - i. Faith-based weekday schools
 - ii. When the religious community gathers
 - iii. Case Study—revamping educational model and worship
 - b. Parent education
 - c. Community outreach
 - i. Baby Doll Circle Time (teaching parents/caregivers skills in setting where they attend classes *with* their infants/toddlers)
 - ii. Partnering with Social Agencies who serve families
 - iii. Prison Ministry

Resources to be Presented and/or Used

1. Bailey, Becky A., Ph.D. *I Love You Rituals*. New York: Harper Collins, 2000.
2. -----, Dr. Becky. *Creating the School Family™*. Oviedo: Loving Guidance, Inc., 2011.
3. -----, Dr. Becky A. *Conscious Discipline: Seven Basic Skills for Brain Smart Classroom Management*. Oviedo: Loving Guidance, Inc., 2000.
4. -----, Dr. Becky A., Ph.D. *Easy to Love, Difficult to Discipline: The Seven Basic Skills for Turning Conflict into Cooperation*. New York: Harper, 2000.

Greeting Wheel: Creating Connections to Liturgical Rhythms of the Year
 Helping Hands Job Board: Children Have Purpose in the Church Family
 Breath Prayers: Connecting Consciously Calming to Act of Prayer
 Family Routine Charts/Books
 Outline for Family Worship at Home using Brain Smart Model