

At Prince of Peace Lutheran School, we want to partner with families. To help you as a family maximize the benefits of our new leadership program, the Leader in Me, we have prepared the following sessions to get your family talking about the leadership principles being taught at Prince of Peace. As a family, take some time to read the following together and talk about the questions (bolded below).

Session 1: BE PROACTIVE

It is so easy to be reactive! Have you ever gotten caught up in the moment, saying things you didn't mean? Do you do things you later regret and think, "If only I had stopped to think about it, I never would have reacted that way!"?

Family life would be a whole lot better if people acted according to their values instead of reacting to the emotion or circumstance of the moment. It seems that reacting comes very naturally to all of us. It is our sinful nature at work within us! Despite this, with God's help, it is possible to develop a habit of learning to pause and respond wisely. Proactively is the ability to act rather than react.

Think/talk about a time in your family when you reacted instead of pausing and making a better choice. (Talk about what YOU did... don't point fingers at other people!)

Here is an example of someone being proactive: When Sally comes home from work, she parks in her driveway and sits in her car, pausing before she gets out. She takes a minute to think about the members of her family and what they are doing inside the house. She considers what kind of feeling she wants to help create when she goes inside. She says to herself, "My family is the most enjoyable, the most pleasant, the most important part of my life. I'm going to go into my home and feel and communicate my love for them." Just think of the difference this makes in her family.

Here's another example: Imagine stepping out of the room for a minute and, upon your return, discovering that your three-year-old son had emptied a 4 liter jug of water from the fridge-most of it onto the kitchen floor.

What would be your natural reaction to this scene?

Now, read the alternative PROACTIVE response (one family member can read the part of mom, and the other the boy):

Mom: "Oh, Honey, what were you trying to do?"

Son: "I was trying to be a helping man, Mom."

Mom: "What do you mean?"

Son: "I washed the dishes for you."

(The mom looks over and notices that on the kitchen table were all the dishes he had washed with the water from the jug.)

Mom: "Well, honey, why did you use the water from the fridge?"

Son: "I couldn't reach the water from the sink."

Mom: "Oh! Well, what do you think you could do next time that would make less of a mess?"

Son: (pausing to think) "I could do it in the bathroom!"

Mom: "The dishes might break in the bathroom, but how about this? What if you came and got me and I helped you move a chair in front of the kitchen sink so you could do the work there?"

Son: "Good idea!"

Did you notice how the mom was able to catch herself between stimulus and response? She had made a proactive choice!

One useful way to communicate the idea of proactivity is through an analogy called the "emotional bank account." This account is like a money account at the bank. You can make "deposits" - things that build trust in the relationship. Or you can make "withdrawals" - things that decrease the level of trust. The balance in the account determines how well you can communicate and solve problems with another person.

What do we say and do in our family to make deposits in our emotional bank accounts? What do we say and do to make withdrawals?

One of the great benefits of being proactive is that you can choose to make deposits instead of withdrawals. No matter what the situation, there are always things you can choose to do that will make relationships better.

Little kindnesses go a long way toward building relationships of trust and unconditional love. Just think about the impact in your own family of saying "thank you," "please" or "you go first." You can also perform unexpected acts of service such as phoning to see if there's anything you can pick up at the store on your way home. Kept promises are huge deposits in the emotional bank account (and broken promises are huge withdrawals!) Twelve hugs a day - that's what people need. Hugs can be physical, verbal, visual or environmental. And each one is a deposit in the emotional bank account. Asking for forgiveness when we mess up and forgiving each other when we make mistakes also builds the balance in our accounts.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:11: "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."

Set one goal as a family so that you can become more proactive, and end by praying and asking for God's help to keep that commitment. Say your own prayer, or pray:

Heavenly Father, thank you for our family. Help us to be proactive, making good choices that build each other up. Please forgive us when we fail to do what is right, and help us to forgive each other. Thank you for choosing to love us no matter what, and for sending Jesus to be our Saviour. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

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Session 2: BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND

The first leadership principle – BE PROACTIVE - reminds us that every one of us has the power to make our own choices. We are not just victims of circumstance, reacting to things out of our control. We always have a choice. We choose our moods, our words, our tone, our attitudes. If life is a car, we are in the driver's seat!

This second principle of leadership – BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND – reminds us that we need to know not only that we are the drivers, but also that we know where we're going!

Imagine that 30 years from now, you all come together for a family gathering, and you start to talk about "the good old days". What do you hope you would hear in that conversation? What do you hope people could say about your family 30 years from now?

This is all about starting today with a clear vision of what you want your family to be like. In other words, what's important to you and where do you want to end up as a family? The most profound, significant and far-reaching application of this principle is the family mission statement. This is a combined, unified expression from all family members of what it is your family really wants to do and be – and the principles you choose to govern your family life.

When children are young, they generally love to be included in the process of creating a mission statement. They love helping to create something that gives them this sense of family identity.

Here's how to create a mission statement in your family.

Step One: Explore what your family is all about. Call a family meeting to introduce the idea and start the process. Keep it short: Ten fun minutes a week over a period of several weeks will be much more effective than one or two long, philosophical discussions.

Make sure everyone knows that you want the mission statement to real and important for *everyone* in the family. Ask questions such as: What things are truly important to us as a family? What are our family's most important goals? What kind of relationships do we want to have with each other? What are our responsibilities as family members?

Step Two: Write your family mission statement. The process of writing your thoughts down into a statement is both challenging and important. You are forced to really understand what the words mean, as you choose the best ways to say what's important. Try to use words that everyone understands.

Whatever you come up with at first will be a rough draft. Family members will need to work with it until everyone comes to an agreement: "This is our mission. We believe it. We buy into it. We are ready to commit to live it."

It doesn't have to be some magnificent verbal expression. It may be a word, a page, a document, even a song or a drawing. The only real criterion is that it represents everyone in the family and inspires you and brings you together.

Step Three: Stay on track. Your statement is meant to keep your eyes focused on the goal. It will guide your decisions and actions. It will help you make choices about how you spend your money and your time. Put it in a place where you see it often. Look at it and use it.

One father said: *"For our blended family, having a mission statement has been tremendously helpful. It gives us some common values and a common focus on where we're going. It reads: "Our family mission: To put God first, and to love each other like He loves us. To always be kind, respectful and supportive of each other, to be honest and open with each other, to pray and worship together in our home, to love each other unconditionally, to be responsible to live a happy, healthy and fulfilling life, to make this house a place we want to come home to."*

We put the statement in a beautiful frame and hung it over the fireplace, and every week we have somebody share what one of those words or sentences means to him or her. It only takes two or three minutes, but it makes the mission statement come alive. We're also setting goals around the mission statement, making it a central part of our lives."

Make a plan to create your own Family Mission Statement.

Read 1 Timothy 2:3-4 "This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."

This was God's mission: to have everyone be saved and know Him! Thank God that He made us His highest mission, and ask Him to help you develop a family mission statement.

Prayer: *Dear Heavenly Father, you made it your mission from the very start of time to include us in your family. Help us discover and define our family mission. Give us wisdom to see what you want for our family. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

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Session 3: PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST

There's no way we can be successful in our families if we don't set priorities in our lives. This is what PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST is all about.

Make a list of activities that filled your family agenda last week, including those activities that never actually get written on the calendar. (examples: school, work, cleaning house, playing games, watching tv, computer time, homework time, church, eating meals, going to lessons/teams, etc).

Our life is filled with many different activities! Wow, no wonder we're tired!!! The reality, however, is that all activities are NOT created equally. Some are important and some are not. How do we know if they're important? Look back at your mission statement!

Now, look back at the list you just created. As a family, talk about which are important, and which are not important. Of the important activities, which are MOST important in fulfilling your family mission statement?

The reality is that often, we don't get to the important things in life, because they are squeezed out by what seems urgent. Have you ever experienced that? The secret is this: be intentional.

There is probably no single activity that will add more meaning to your family than a weekly family night. One family set a tradition over the years where they would review their calendar of upcoming events, take time to talk about issues and problems, have a talent recital so the kids could show the family how they were coming along with their music or dance lessons, do a short devotion and a family activity (with treats!). In this way, they accomplished what they felt were the four main ingredients of a successful family night: planning, problem-solving, teaching and fun.

Another very meaningful family tradition is one-on-one bonding time. These "one-on-ones" are where most of the real work of the family is done. This is where the most significant sharing, the most profound teaching, the deepest bonding takes place.

A mother of five sons said:

"The other day, I took My 22-year-old son out to lunch. As we ate together, we talked about his life, including his classes at school, his plans for the future, and so on.

We had a wonderful time just being together. As I thought about it later, I realized this is something that didn't just happen. I started this one on-one tradition when the boys were in elementary school, and it's really made a difference. I don't think I could have this kind of time with my son now if we hadn't started doing it when he was younger."

Pick the MOST important activities your family could do to accomplish its mission (they may even be new activities you've never had time for until now). Now, look at next week's calendar, and schedule those in. They are the important things, so do them first.

Read together Matthew 6:33 "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, please give us the wisdom to see what is really important for our family and the commitment to make sure those important things actually take place. Help us to remember that our family's relationship with you is important. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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Session 4 THINK "WIN-WIN"

As we move toward our destination as a family, we're sometimes thrown off track by outside events and pressures that distract us from what is really important. The force, however, that does the greatest damage is the climate created within the family by negative emotions such as competition, criticism, blaming, anger.

The key to handling these challenges is to cultivate a family culture of mutual respect, understanding and creative cooperation. This is the essence of this principle (and in fact, principles 4, 5, and 6!).

One father told this story: Our two boys were very competitive and squabbled frequently. Finally, I confronted the older boy about it. He abruptly announced, "The thing you don't get is that I can't stand my brother." I was shocked by the intensity of his feelings.

Then I asked the older boy to tell his brother what he'd told me. The younger boy was hurt by the cutting words. Blinking back tears, he looked down and quietly said, "Why?"

His brother was quick with his answer: "Because you're always saying things that make me mad. I just don't want to be around you."

The younger brother sighed. "I do that because every time we play a game you always win."

"Sure I do," the older boy quickly replied. "I'm better than you."

With that, the little boy could hardly speak. But he said, "Yeah, but every time you win, I lose. So I say things to bug you. I just can't stand to lose all the time."

These tearful words reached the heart of the older brother. The tone of his words softened as he said, "I'm sorry. But will you please just stop saying and doing the stupid things that make me so mad at you?"

"OK," the younger boy replied. "And will you stop feeling that you always have to win?"

Take some time to talk as a family about what it feels like to win and what it feels like to lose. Are there times you've felt like the younger brother ?

No one likes to "lose" - especially in close family relationships. So win-win is the only solid foundation for effective family interaction. It's the only pattern of thinking and interacting that builds long-term relationships of trust and unconditional love. And all it takes to change the situation is for one person to try to find creative ways to make sure everyone is heard and has their needs met.

Thinking win-win means you have this spirit of win-win in all family interactions. You always want what's best for everyone involved.

Of course, there will be times when you'll have to say no to children. This doesn't feel like a win to them. But if you cultivate the spirit of win-win whenever you can, children will better understand and accept those decisions that sometimes seem to them to be win-lose. There are several ways to achieve this.

* **Let them win in the little things.** In one family, if the children wanted to go outside, get their clothes dirty or leave a cardboard fort in the house for weeks, we generally let them do it. We decided together to distinguish between matters of principle and matters of preference, and only take a stand on things that really count.

* **Talk with them about the big things.** That way they'll know you have their welfare in mind. Try to involve them in the problem and work out the solution together.

***Take steps to offset the competition focus.** A man went to watch his granddaughter play in an important soccer match, which ultimately ended in a tie. Her team was demoralized, and the coach was deeply disappointed also.

So the man began to say enthusiastically, "Great game, kids! You had five goals: to try your best, to have fun, to work together as a team, to learn and to win. You accomplished four and a half of those goals. That's ninety Percent! Congratulations!"

You could just see their eyes brighten up. It wasn't long until players, coach and parents were celebrating the four and a half goals these kids had achieved.

Take time to talk about these three goals and to find ways to make your household one where "win-win" is everyone's goal.

Read Philippians 2:3-4 "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."

Prayer: *Dear Heavenly Father, help us to put other people first, and give us the creativity to find ways to make sure everyone is valued in our family. We ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.*

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Session 5: SEEK FIRST TO UNDERSTAND ... THEN TO BE UNDERSTOOD

There's simply no way to have rich, rewarding family relationships without real understanding. We often don't intend to hurt each other. It's just that we don't understand. We don't take the time to see clearly into each other's hearts.

Really listening to get inside another person's mind and heart is called "empathic" listening. It enables you to see as someone else sees, and it also helps family members feel safe in sharing, gets to the real issues and helps people connect with their own unique gifts.

Talk about a time in your family when you felt really listened to and understood. What did the other person do or say to make you feel that way?

Suppose that for several days, your teenage daughter has seemed unhappy. One night, while you're washing dishes together, she finally begins to open up: "Our family rule that I can't date until I'm older is embarrassing me to death. All my friends are dating. I feel like I'm out of it."

An empathic response would attempt to reflect back what your daughter feels and says, so that she would feel that you really understand. For example: "You kind of feel torn up inside. You understand the rule, but you feel embarrassed when you have to say no to dates. Is that what you mean?"

She might say yes and go on deeper into her feelings. Or she may say,

"Well, not exactly. What I really mean is..." When you give an understanding response, you make it safe for her to open up. You make it comfortable for her to air the problem so that together you can search for solutions. And you build the relationship.

Practice empathic listening. Have one brave family member think about the most important thing they want to share. It could be a very important memory that has special meaning, a situation they are in that is difficult, or a big decision they have to make. Have them share and have other members in the family practice listening (no judging or solving, just listening and reflecting back what you hear).

There are other expressions of empathy besides summarizing and reflecting. Sometimes total silence may be empathic; sometimes a nod or a single word is empathic. Empathy is a very flexible, sincere and humble process.

This principle doesn't stop with empathic listening. We don't only seek to understand. Once we've really listened and understand others, we're then – only then - really prepared to share with others our points of view. When we are open to other people's ideas, we'll almost always have greater influence with them.

Many times, families don't make the time to really listen to each other. One technique that may help is to find a special object small enough to hold in a hand (examples: a rock, an ornament or a cross). This becomes your "talking thing" (talking rock, talking cross, etc). When someone in your family notices that people aren't listening, use your "talking object". When someone is holding it, everyone else listens until that person feels understood, and only then does someone get the object. Take turns until everyone feels understood, and only then start finding solutions.

When people know they will have an opportunity to be fully heard, they can relax. They don't have to become over-reactive, because they know that their time to be understood will come. This dissipates negative energy and helps people develop internal patience and self-control.

Choose a talking object for your family.

Find a Bible and read 1 Samuel 3: the story of Samuel having to listen for God's voice. Talk about how we have to work to listen to each other and we also have to be careful to listen for God. Talk about how we hear what God has to say (through the Bible).

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, help us first to listen to You and Your Word, and then to listen to each other. Help us to balance consideration for others and the courage to share what is on our hearts in a kind way. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

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Session 6: SYNERGIZE

Synergy is a big word that we don't hear too often. Synergy means celebrating differences and working together as a team to accomplish great things. As you can see, it's not only a big word; it's also a big idea!

On a piece of paper, write the name of every family member. Under each name, write characteristics that make that person unique and special. Include physical characteristics, talents, likes, personality traits. Take time to celebrate every person in your family.

It isn't easy or natural to truly celebrate people who are different than we are, but what a blessing takes place when we do! In fact, when we recognize that everyone is valuable and has something to contribute, we have a foundation for amazing teamwork. Teamwork is the second ingredient of synergy! When we really look for win-win solutions (THINK WIN WIN), really listen to each other and contribute to the conversation (SEEK FIRST TO UNDERSTAND, THEN BE UNDERSTOOD), and work together as teams of diverse individuals, amazing things happen. It's as if magical math takes place, and $1+1=3$, or 30, or 300! We accomplish more as a group working together than we ever could as individuals working separately. And it's more fun, too!

A man tells this story that captures the essence of synergy:

After one week of practice, my son wanted to quit the high school basketball team. I was very disappointed. I worried that if he quit basketball he would just keep quitting things. My son didn't want to hear me at all. I was so upset I walked away.

Over the next two days, I wondered just what had made him want to quit. Finally, I decided to talk to him again. [Principle 5: Seeking to Understand] At first, he didn't even want to discuss it, so I asked him about other things. After some time, he began to tear up and he said, "Dad, I know you think you understand me, but you don't. No one knows how rotten I feel."

I replied, "Pretty tough, huh?" [Principle 5: Empathic Listening]

He then literally poured his heart out. He expressed his pain at constantly being compared to his brothers and said he felt I favored them. He also told me about the insecurities he felt in not only basketball, but in all areas of his life. He expressed how he felt that we had somehow lost touch with each other.

His words really humbled me. I had the feeling that what he said about the comparisons with his brothers was true. I acknowledged my sorrow to him, and, with much emotion, I apologized. But I also told him that I still thought he would benefit from being on the team. He listened patiently, but he would not budge from his decision. Finally, I asked him if he liked basketball. He said he loved it, but he disliked all the pressure associated with playing for the school team. He said that instead he would really like to play for the church team, but that team's coach had just moved away.

I found myself feeling good about what he was saying. I was still a little disappointed that he wouldn't be on the school team, but I was glad that he still wanted to play [Habits 4 and 5: Think Win-Win, Seek First to Understand].

At that point, a new idea came into both of our minds at the same time. In unison we said, "I/You could coach the church team!" [Habit 6: Synergy: a new alternative solution] The weeks I spent as the coach of that team were among the happiest of my athletic experiences. And they provided some of my most memorable experiences as a father.

This father and son seemed locked in a win-lose situation. But then the father made an important shift. He sought to really understand his son. Together they came up with a better way—an entirely new solution that was a true win for both.

The key to synergy is to celebrate the difference. It's not enough to simply tolerate differences in the family. To have the kind of creative magic we're talking about, you must be able to say sincerely, "The fact that we see things differently is a strength—not a weakness—in our relationship."

Think of a situation where family members have a difference of opinion. Can you work together to find a creative solution? Find joy in synergy!

Synergy also helps you to create a culture in which you can successfully deal with any challenge you might face. The culture of leadership is like an immune system. It protects your family so that when mistakes are made, or when you get blindsided by some physical, financial or social challenge, you don't get knocked out. You can deal with whatever life throws at you and use it to make the family stronger.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27: "The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ... Now the body is not made up of one part but of many... in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body... God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."

Prayer: *Thank you, Heavenly Father, for making us all different and special. Help us to always value each other and work together as a team. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

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Session 7: SHARPEN THE SAW

Picture a man in a forest with a pile of logs behind him. He is huffing and puffing with sweat rolling down his face as he struggles with saw as it slowly cuts a log. Each stroke of the saw takes such effort! You ask the obvious question, "It looks like your saw is pretty dull. Why don't you sharpen it?" His reply, "Are you kidding!? Don't you see this pile of wood? Who has time to stop and sharpen the saw?" You walk away and shake your head at this foolish man, because you know if he had a sharp saw, the job would go so much faster. In the end, he would be way ahead, if only he stopped to sharpen his saw.

"Sharpening the Saw" is the metaphor for making good choices in our lives that keep us healthy and able to maintain balance in our lives. Only with balance and health can we live out the first six leadership principles.

Talk about other metaphors that help us understand this concept. (example: being too busy driving the car that you don't take time to gas up).

Spend some time as a family answering this question: How sharp is our family saw? Are we taking time to renew and stay healthy as a family?

If done properly, consistently and in a balanced way, this leadership principle will cultivate all of the other six habits and keep our family strong and vibrant. How do we sharpen our family saw? We sharpen our saw by prioritizing high impact activities that focus on balance and health. There are four areas of health to focus on when sharpening the saw: physical health (body), relationship/emotional health (heart), spiritual health (soul), and intellectual health (mind).

Healthy family traditions have many benefits: they give family members a sense of belonging, they open up communication and help family members understand each other, family members feel supported, and families grow as they play and serve together.

Think of all the opportunities for fulfilling traditions:

Family dinners. You may have only one good meal together each week, but if it is meaningful and fun, time around the family table can become the highlight of the week.

Family vacations. Amazing memories are made when families plan vacations. Whether trips are made to far away and exotic locations or to the local campground, the process of planning the trip, anticipating the fun, experiencing new places together, and reminiscing past trips all become bonding experiences.

Extended and intergenerational family activities. Aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins and other extended family members can have a tremendous positive influence. Broaden almost any activity, such as Sunday dinner, to include them.

Worshipping together. Research shows that shared worship is one of the characteristics of healthy, happy families. It can create context, unity and mutual understanding - much in the same way that a family mission statement does.

Serving together. This tradition can be tremendously renewing. Can you imagine anything more bonding, more unifying, more energizing than working together to accomplish something that is really meaningful and worthwhile? Think neighbourhood (as a family, rake the neighbour lady's leaves), community (spend a Saturday helping sort food at the local food bank), or world (planning a family mission trip.)

Play a physical game together: Find a sport or game that is physical that everyone enjoys, and do it regularly!

Working together. There are many ways to create the tradition of working together, at home or in a parent's place of business-and many benefits of doing it. Here's an example. One family started the "ten-minute program." Everyone in the family would work really hard for ten minutes to clean up the house. They discovered how amazingly easy it was to clean up when everyone worked together as a team. They also had "work parties" Where they'd work really hard for three or four hours to get something done, and would have food and laugh and talk as we worked. They'd also do something fun after, like go to a movie. Everyone expected they'd have to work. It was just part of life. But it was so much better with these little treats.

Learn Something New Together: Find a workshop or seminar that everyone would enjoy and go together. Make a trip to the local Science Centre or Zoo together. Take your digital camera and take pictures that represent things you learned. Celebrate learning together as a family!

Pick one area a week (body, mind, soul, heart) and choose an activity together that will sharpen your family saw.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body."

Prayer: *Thank you God for giving us our lives, our minds, our souls, our bodies and our families and friends. Help us to make wise choices so that we can nurture what you have given us. Bless our family as we grow together. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*