

# POP-UP CONVERSATIONS

## My Kid Is Confused & Anxious About Our Polarized Culture

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• **Intro:** Welcome to our Pop-Up Parent Conversation! We're so grateful for your presence, and for investing your time in this hour-long guided conversation on behalf of your kids. Today we're going to dive into a topic that's always and everywhere in our face—the divisive rhetoric and polarizing beliefs driving a wedge between our relationships, and contributing to the anxious “background noise” our kids experience every day. We asked Fred Oduyoye, founder of Reachable Reconciliation, to offer us a 10-minute introduction to the forces that divide us, and describe a path back into relationship that can help you help your kids with this. Let's watch... *(Or share the video with parents ahead of time, so that they can come together and discuss what they saw.)*

• **Fred Oduyoye (Video - 10 minutes):** The “5 R's” approach to bridging differences in a polarizing culture.

• **Ask (5 minutes):** First, what are your initial reactions to what you just heard? *(Gather feedback, interact, and ask follow-up questions. If you're online, you could choose to have parents give feedback in the Chat instead of spoken. Be sure to take notes on spoken responses in the Chat.)*

• **Say:** Divisive, polarizing messages surround and immerse us—from political ads to holiday conversations with relatives, our kids can't escape the anger, fear, and accusations that invade all their relational spaces. They're learning that relationships are fragile and volatile, and are watching as the adults in their life struggle to keep the lid on their anxiety. Life seems fraught with dangerous relational potholes that suddenly appear on their path. Their own anxieties feed off of the anxiety they see in adults and their surrounding culture.

• **Let's Talk (Pairs or Trios - 15 minutes):** We're going to split into Pairs/Trios now for a 15-minute conversation, then we'll gather back together to debrief what each Pair/Trio talked about. Reference your handout for the questions we'd like you to tackle together... *(or post the questions into three-person chat rooms if you're leading this online)*

- **What conversations, if any, have you had with your kids about the divisiveness and polarization in our culture?**
- **How do you see the divisiveness and polarization in our culture impacting your kids, and why?**
- **How have you tried to frame your own perspective on polarizing rhetoric that undermines relationships, and what's happened as a result?**

• **Debrief (Whole Group - 10 minutes):** Gather back together and ask: What stuck out to you in your conversations, and why? In Romans 12, Paul offers this bold guidance: “Bless those who persecute you.

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Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them. Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all!" What are the risks and rewards of following his guidance? *(Gather feedback, interact, and ask follow-up questions. If you're online, you could choose to have parents give feedback in the Chat instead of spoken. Be sure to take notes on spoken responses in the Chat.)*

- **Say:** Fred Oduyoye walked us through the "5 R's" of reconciling relationships—React, Reflect, Repair, Reach, and Relationship. As Fred said, these 5 R's are not a step-by-step formula for helping us navigate divisive relationships—they're a flexible menu of possibilities that can help us take our next steps, no matter where we are on the "relational bridge" with someone. These 5 R's can be helpful "handholds" for kids who are trying to make sense of a world where so many are angry and fearful. If we can learn to see through the lenses of the 5 R's, then we can better help our kids as they face their own fears and anxieties about relationships. So, think about one of your own strained relationships—which of the 5 R's offers your "best next step" in that relationship, and why? Let's spend some time talking with your partner(s) about that...

- **Let's Talk (Pairs or Trios – 10 minutes):** We're going to split back into Pairs/Trios now for a 10-minute conversation, then we'll gather back together to debrief what each Pair/Trio talked about. Reference your handout for the questions we'd like you to tackle together... *(or post the questions into three-person chat rooms if you're leading this online)*

- **When you think about one of your own strained relationships—which of the 5 R's offers your "best next step" in that relationship, and why?**
- **When we feel hopeless about our path forward in a polarizing culture, we can find hope through our relationship with God. In what ways has God helped you to navigate our divisive culture? What's one way your experience can help you help your kids?**

- **Debrief (Whole Group – 7 minutes):** Gather back together and **ask:** What's something you heard, or said, in your Pair/Trio that offers real help for you as you parent kids struggling to navigate a polarizing culture? *(Gather feedback, interact, and ask follow-up questions. If you're online, you could choose to have parents give feedback in the Chat instead of spoken. Be sure to take notes on spoken responses in the Chat.)*

- **Closing Prayer:** God, sometimes the divisiveness we experience in our culture makes us feel hopeless—but we know you are the true source of our strength and peace and courage. Please help us to follow your Spirit as we help our kids navigate a polarizing relational environment, and give us opportunities to practice the 5 R's in our relationships, and to offer that help to our kids.