

## **Nurturing Faith at Home** *Keeping the Peace*

*"Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me."*

We know the words of the song, but do we realize just how true they are. November is a month to remember those who have endured and are suffering the consequences of war. We often wonder how we can bring peace to a world where, presently, there is war and conflict in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Middle East, and several other places. Firstly, we can pray for all those involved. We can also take positive action by teaching our children to be peacemakers at home, for that is, indeed, where peace on earth begins.

I well remember my own many squabbles with three brothers and one sister when I was a child. Conflict amongst siblings is normal. It may even be considered good, if we are learning something worthwhile from it. As you strive to help your children resolve their conflicts and to maintain peace in your home, you may find the following procedure to be helpful. I borrowed it from a *Focus on the Family* magazine. It is a logical format to follow and easily memorized – even by the kids – because each of the steps begins with an 'A'. When your child has 'disturbed the peace' in your home, consider guiding them through these five steps, which might find a home on the refrigerator or in another prominent place for easy reference.

1. **Admit** wrong. Help your child to recognize their wrongdoing and to accept responsibility for their actions.
2. **Apologize** to the person(s) who were hurt or were affected by the wrongdoing. As a parent, you will need to facilitate the coming together of all those concerned.
3. **Accept** the consequences. These consequences are best if they are appropriate and consistent.
4. **Ask** for forgiveness. This is an essential – but sometimes overlooked – part of the process. Reconciliation between individuals requires the offender to ask the other person for forgiveness ... and then to receive it.
5. **Alter** choices or behavior in the future. In disciplining children at school, I would always tell them: "Making a mistake is not the end of the world, as long as you learn from it and strive not to make it again."

I would even suggest an additional step or two, but these steps would be part of your response, after the conflict was resolved: **Affirm** your child's goodness and **assure** him or her of your unconditional love. After I was disciplined as a child, my father would, without fail, visit with me and give me some sign of peace. I always knew that, although I had gotten into trouble, I was still loved. My behavior may have been bad, but *I* was still good.

Finally, once again your example as a parent cannot be overstated. A child learns how to resolve conflict and how to forgive by observing you. When involved in a disagreement with your spouse or when resolving a discrepancy with a friend, demonstrate peacemaking in action. Your children will follow your example.

Needless to say, despite your excellent role-modelling, your children will still bicker and fight from time to time. Conflict is simply part of life. However, teaching them how to resolve conflict respectfully and responsibly will promote reconciliation and peace in your home. Scripture contains numerous passages about the importance and value of forgiveness, and sharing some of these bible stories with your children may provoke some worthwhile discussion. Of course, Jesus provides the best example of forgiveness. His parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15: 11 – 32) and the account of the woman who committed adultery (John 8: 1 – 11) speak of the importance of forgiveness.

In December, *Nurturing Faith at Home* will describe how you can establish a place of prayer in your home. In the meantime, may peace be with you all.