

Are You Using the Keys to Family Peace?

God's Word is full of instruction for peacemaking. Here are three areas in which you can develop and maintain peace in your family.



By Clyde L. Kilough

Could you sit down in your living room with a group of today's world leaders — Ronald Reagan, Yuri Andropov, Menachem Begin and Yassar Arafat, for example — and demonstrate how they could be at peace by showing them how your “kingdom,” your family, is governed?

Somebody needs to!

The family of man is certainly not at peace and our leaders continue to fail miserably at finding it.

World leaders giving speeches about peace often quote extensively from the prophet Isaiah concerning the world's need to “beat their swords into plowshares” (Isa. 2:4).

They avoid mentioning, however, Isaiah's vital conclusion: “The way of peace they have not known” (Isa. 59:8)! Nearly 6,000 years of human history have proven Isaiah's observation to be absolutely true.

People want peace and need peace. We sing about it, talk about it, hold summit conferences and proclaim it, yet we never seem to permanently find it. Why? Is peace that hard to find? The answer is yes!

Not only is it hard to find, it is impossible for man to find because this world has cut itself

off from the only source of true, lasting peace.

Christ made it plain in John 14:27: “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you.” Analyze that. How much peace does this world give, whether in government, religion, families or even in people's minds? Very little. And what little peace there is from time to time is guaranteed not to be lasting.

Peace in the family

What about, then, the peace that Christ said He would leave with us — those called, converted individuals — real Christians — who are not cut off from the source? How much peace, which is one of the basic fruits of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22), do you have?

Is your little family kingdom a light to the world, showing how all the world could live in harmony? It should be, or at least you should be making it become such a light.

We cannot change much of the world now, but we can change our own lives, and this area of peace is something our individual lives, our marriages and our children need to show more of.

True peace comes from God and from no other source!

Does God cause confusion, tumult and instability? I Corinthians 14:33 clearly says God is

not the author of confusion, but of peace.

Let's call it for what it is, then: Fighting, bickering and disagreement in the home are authored by Satan. We cannot treat it lightly and pass it off by saying, “All marriages have fights, all kids squabble — that's just the way it is.” That certainly is the way it is in this world, all right, but that is not God's way.

The basic, missing principle

It's a matter of cause and effect. Following God's ways will fulfill Isaiah 32:17-18 in our homes: “The work of righteousness [following God's laws] will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever. My people will dwell in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.”

Does that describe your home? Is your home a refuge of peace? Or do you find yourself having to regularly settle arguments among your children? “Will you kids stop fighting?” — is this a common phrase in your house? Do your children hit each other, yell at each other and talk to each other in a mean way (“You stupid idiot! I'm going to tell Mom!”)?

Do you as parents argue with your children? Do you husbands and wives argue and yell at each other, or go to the other extreme and give each other the silent treatment for long stretches of time?

Don't underestimate the im-

portance of overcoming such actions. Satan will exploit those weaknesses to trouble you physically and spiritually.

How can we, then, improve in this vital area? How can we learn to be true peacemakers? By going to the revealed Word of God, the Bible, and becoming more thoroughly grounded in the prescriptions for peacemaking, principles this world has missed.

The most basic principle is found in Psalm 119:165: "Great peace have those who love Your law, And nothing causes them to stumble." The law of God, magnified and rightly kept in spirit as well as in letter, is designed to bring peace. Whenever your family situation is not peaceful, God's laws are being broken.

Let's examine three basic principles, based on God's law, that you can incorporate into your home. The Bible contains other specific points as well, but establishing these three fundamental areas will certainly put you on the road to peace.



First, learn — and really learn deeply — and then diligently practice the way of giving. The way of giving makes peace. The way of getting destroys it.

Make sure you teach your children the way of giving, too. Children tune in at a young age to the attitude of getting things for self. The *get* attitude destroys peace on any level of human conduct, whether among nations or among children. It is important to instill God's commandments, in simple ways, into your children early in their lives.

Teaching a toddler not to grab toys from another is helping to teach him or her not to covet and steal. If you allow your child to take things from others, it won't be long till peace is disrupted.

Opportunities abound to ingrain this principle of peace into your children. Make maximum use of those occasions to actively teach them.

For instance, if you see on television some starving children, take time to teach your own children the related lessons that apply to our lives.

"Those little boys and girls are starving because the grown-ups are fighting wars," you might say. "Wars are when a lot of people fight, usually because they are trying to take something away from the other country. God hates that fighting. That's why when you fight with your brother we have to correct you. Fighting only hurts people."

Such teaching can be very effective on young, impressionable minds.

Where does fighting come from? The *get* attitude — the way opposite to the giving way God intends for us to practice (Jas. 4:1-3).

How about in marriage? Can two people who are giving to one another 100 percent ever fight? Proverbs 13:10 tells us that by pride comes only contention. Selfish pride, in some shape or form, is at the root of any lack of peace in the home. Pride is self-centered, part of the way opposite to giving.

Learn to view life from these two standpoints, *give* versus *get*, and see how one way builds peace and the other destroys it. Think

deeply about it and see what can be changed in your family to better practice the giving way. Work together. Do favors, unasked, for each other. Be nice, be giving. Teach your children to do so as well and just see if peace does not begin to increase.



Second, determine that there will be no fighting in your home. Make it a rule. Granted, there will be times when someone may make you angry, frustrated or moody, but exercise some character and refuse to get into an argument. In times of disagreement, even if one is right and one is wrong, if both parties start fighting, that makes both of them wrong.

Simply put, good Christians don't fight.

Christ set the example, "that you should follow His steps: 'Who committed no sin, Nor was guile found in His mouth'; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten" (I Pet. 2:21-23). Why didn't He? Because it results in a wrong attitude, which leads to wrong actions.

Christ was enough in control of Himself that He would not, as

Illustrations by Terry Smith

I Peter 3:9 says, render evil for evil or reviling for reviling. It takes two to carry on a fight or argument, and Christ showed us it doesn't have to be done that way.

When children start fighting over something, regardless of the situation, all who are fighting should be corrected and disciplined. Teach children the source of fighting — lift human controversies to the spiritual level. Teach them how Satan can influence their attitudes toward fighting and steer them back toward God's attitude. It can be done.

Determine there will be peace. Does that mean to bury your head in the sand and pretend problems don't exist? No, it simply means to not let any problems get worse by bickering, arguing, yelling and fighting. This leads to the next point. What do you do when problems do occur?



Third, determine to solve problems in a quiet and peaceful manner, with God's help.

Do you go to God first with your family problems, then resolve them peacefully?

Psalms 34:14 tells us to "seek peace, and pursue it." What is the

first step? Verse 15 says: "The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, And his ears are open to their cry." You begin seeking and pursuing peace by talking to God about it. This should automatically be the first thing we do, not the last, as is often the case.

The effect that God's Spirit can have on a home when God is sought first is truly amazing. When your children are mean to each other and fight, march them into their bedroom and have them kneel down and pray about it and for each other, asking God to help them treat one another with love and care and a giving attitude.

Husbands and wives, the same thing applies. When dissension arises and one is spiritually mature enough to suggest: "Let's not fight. Let's go and pray about this" (and the other is spiritually mature enough to accept that sound advice), God enters the picture and can then begin to author peace.

Of course, your prayers cannot be from the self-righteous standpoint of, "God, make them see where they are wrong."

Pray in a repentant attitude of asking God to show you what you are doing, to give you the wisdom you need to avoid saying the wrong things that only inflame the situation, to put in your mind the traits of gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance, longsuffering, love and the ability to show these fruits to your mate.

It's pretty tough to get up from heartfelt prayer, having humbly laid your troubles before God, and start fighting again.

We need God's help as well in restraining our carnal tendencies to avoid turmoil in the first place. It's easy to yell, easy to lash out, easy to snub, but we have to keep in mind that these actions do not establish the peace that Christ left with us.

Everyone has a hand in maintaining peace, but in the family kingdom, as in the nation, the example set by the leaders for the followers is all important. If the parents yell at one another, the children learn to yell at each

other. If the parents snub and stop talking to each other, so will the children. After all, that's the way they've been taught.

We teach by example, but also by instruction. Teach your children to avoid creating problems and how to solve problems correctly when they do arise. Bear in mind they will continue wrong practices only if allowed to.

Don't allow them to call each other names such as "Stupid" or "Dummy" (to say nothing of the much worse names used in the world today, even by small children). Mean or insulting names only arouse resentment. Resentment does not make for peace.

Instead of tattling on each other all the time, children should learn to come and say, "Mom, we have a problem that needs solving." Teach your children early in life the important lesson that everyone in the home is responsible for keeping the peace.

Dwell in unity

These points are basic and simple. Yet name one nation today that is following even one of them. The kingdoms of this world just do not know the way to peace, but the kingdoms of our homes should.

David wrote in Psalm 133:1, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" It really is something to behold. Think how many homes you know of that are truly peaceful and harmonious. Sad to say, there may not be many.

We need to be learning to be different from the world now, if we are going to teach the world God's way in the world tomorrow.

So recognize where peace comes from and where the lack of peace comes from. Understand how vitally important it is to pursue peace with God, in our own lives and in our homes. Then, someday soon, we'll be able to show the entire world how to be at peace when we rule with Jesus Christ, the "Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6). □