Parents - If you haven't already read the pages on "Developing Character in Your Children," you might want to go there first before reading these pages.

Forgiveness Projects

1. Let the children find situations in the newspaper, tv, or real life that could be improved with a little forgiveness. Discuss with them what needs to happen and even let them role-play that situation with forgiveness added in.

2. Make little lambs by cutting ovals out of construction paper for the body and head, and sticks for legs. Glue cotton on the bodies for wool and use a crayon for the faces. Color a pasture on a piece of poster board and write the character quality with its definition at the top of the board. Whenever the children show forgiveness, let them glue another lamb on the pasture. Display it for all to see!

Tips for Parents to Encourage Forgiveness

What adult has not found it difficult at some time or other to forgive? By comparison, children seem to find it so much easier to give grace-perhaps we should take lessons from them!

However, it may be necessary to encourage them to maintain the mindset and habit of extending forgiveness as they grow older. There is no better way to teach this than by first demonstrating it in your own relationships and then by seizing the opportunities that come when your child is involved in conflict of some sort. Watch for signs of continued anger or talk of revenge, and lead your child to forgive the person who has wounded him. Be sure he knows he can forgive as an act of choice even if he doesn't feel like it!

Children will need to be taught to be open with you as their parents about any inappropriate actions from older children or adults that have wounded them and to realize that forgiving those actions does not mean they should be vulnerable to those offenders again.

The other side of forgiveness is asking for forgiveness, something we all find difficult to do. Help them walk through the steps to reconciliation when they are the one who wounded:

- *Ask the offended person to explain how they were hurt.*
- *Be humble and ask forgiveness specifically for the offenses. Be sure the child learns to ask, "Will you forgive me?" and wait for the answer to ensure closure.*
- *Be sure they don't settle for a statement such as, "I'm sorry your feelings were hurt."*
- *Ask if any restitution is needed.*

Role playing with made-up situations would be effective to teach the children these steps, and praise for displaying forgiveness should be immediate, specific, and lavish.