

Beginning Again

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Long division is the bane of my Grade Four students. Recently, during one of their Math classes, I noticed that one of the students seemed to be constantly erasing whatever he had just finished putting on his paper. As soon as I finished explaining to the first grader her math assignment, I wandered over to his desk to see what was going on. He looked up at me rather sheepishly and said, "I keep getting mixed up and I don't know why." I looked at his paper and saw that the problem he had been working on was completely illegible due to the many times he had written and erased on that one spot. I told him that perhaps his confusion was caused by his inability to decipher what he had been writing, so I suggested that he might be more successful if he began the problem right from the beginning, at another spot, a clean one, on his paper. He looked at me as if he wasn't quite convinced that the simple tactic I had suggested would work; however, he did implement the advice. It worked.

At the first recess, there was dissension because the students could not come to a consensus over what game they wanted to play. Everyone wanted something different and no one was willing to compromise. Finally, but only after they had wasted about half their recess period, they reluctantly agreed to play soccer. However, I could tell from their behaviour after recess that the students still had not gotten over their disagreement.

While I was assisting a Grade Five student with her English grammar workbook, I saw one student, out of the corner of my eye, making a face at another student. Yet another student, when he had to speak to his study partner, used a tone that was very sharp and a bit sarcastic. Things had gone far enough and it was time to discuss their behaviour, so I said, "It seems like all of you got up on the wrong side of your bed today because you have been so quarrelsome when you usually get along. So let's talk about our problem."

Then one of the Grade Four students chuckled and said, "Too bad we can't just start the day over, like I did with my math problem."

"Very good idea," I said.

And they all seemed just a bit surprised as I proceeded to restart the day with the National Anthem and a worship talk. In this second worship, I talked about how we can start each day, anew, in our walk with our best friend, Jesus. And I talked about God's forgiveness and how He forgets our wrongs once we confess them to Him -- the best kind of erasing - - one that leaves a clean, pure, white page. I went on to say that we need to do that with each other as well.

When we forgive we must also forget the wrong done to us and start again like nothing ever happened. Then we had a prayer circle and as we finished there were apologies and warm smiles all around. Restarting the day was a great solution and we had a marvelous, productive day without any more quarrels.