

Parenting Suffering Children, Part 3 | the purpose of suffering

I. How to approach to having these conversations with your kids.

- Teach your child the truth about God using the Scriptures. The importance of this cannot be overstated.
- Help them understand the truth about God by answering their questions. Keep the content as biblical as possible, but feel free to utilize the reasoning and logic God's given you.
- Once your child has a working understanding of the character or stated purpose of God, you can help them bridge the gap between knowing and believing — between understanding and doing. I'll illustrate this step more clearly in a moment.
- When times of suffering come, we need to review this process with our children so they're meditating on the Truths that lead to maturity. I Timothy 4:5 reads, "*Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all.*" We won't progress as we should if we're not taking pains to remember and believe.

II. Suffering helps us be holy as God is holy.

- James 1:2-4; II Corinthians 4:17-18; Romans 8:28-29
- Toothbrush Illustration
- All things that accomplish our conformity to Christ are *good* things. Yes, there will be uncomfortable circumstances that happen when we love God and are working toward His purposes, but God promises that responding correctly in that discomfort will help us be more like Jesus.
- Help them engage their thinking brains instead of their feeling brains. This will look like me drawing their minds to the truths about God we've already learned. Ask them questions like, "I know this is inconvenient, but is God still good?" "What does the Bible say God's trying to accomplish through this experience?" "How does James describe how you should be responding to this situation?"
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III. Suffering reveals God's love for us.

- Hebrews 12:6; Psalm 119:75; II Corinthians 1:3-4; Galatians 6:2;
- First, we all deserve to be in hell. Anything more comfortable than hell is an act of mercy.
- Second, if God *didn't* love us, He wouldn't want what's best for us. He wouldn't want to save us and sanctify us to Himself. If He didn't love us, suffering would indeed have a purpose, and that sole purpose would be our *pain*. But God lovingly redeems our suffering by turning it into a blessing!
- God never allows anything to come into our lives that is not a direct result of His love for us. He wants our absolute best in life. To not work toward our best interest would be unloving. So, if the best thing for us is to be conformed to the image of Christ, and experiencing trials will help us do that, then it would be unloving for God to keep us from those trials.
- And when it comes to love, we can also add that suffering gives Christians the opportunity to show love to others. In Part 1 of this study we learned that suffering is contagious in part because God wants suffering to be an experience of love. Experiencing suffering helps us care for those who experience similar suffering.

IV. Point One

- I Peter 5:7; Isaiah 42:3
- But what if God isn't powerful enough to help me through my struggle? Then there's reason to be afraid! But what if He's strong enough to give us "*everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence*"? Then I can have confidence in my trial!
- We can piggy-back this with the fact that since God is not only omnipotent, he's also omnipresent, we need never fear that He's abandoned us in our struggle or that we won't be able to find Him when we look.
- Combine all of this with the fact that God is *sovereign*. He's not just all-powerful, He's also in *complete control*. Nothing can happen outside of God's perfect will for us.
- These truths — when understood and applied — add to the Christian's ability to suffer well. We shouldn't find suffering to be an excuse for anger and bitterness and rejection of God. We should see how important it is to run to God in our distress.
- Suffering isn't a time to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps and soldier on. Suffering is a time for us to retreat to the powerful, sustaining refuge of our Lord.
- Suffering sanctifies us, convinces us of God's love, and puts us into a position to rest on Him as we should. Suffering is a powerful way God shows His love toward us by helping us know Him better, depend on Him fully, and be conformed to His image so that He may be glorified and others may be introduced to Him.

Love.
Parent.

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