

Parenting Suffering Children, Part 4 | the response to suffering

I. Prepare for suffering now.

- **Study God.** Be ever faithful to teach your children who their Creator is. Take every opportunity to help them see how He is the kind of God Who is can trusted to do what's right and take care of us.
- **Study Suffering.** In addition to learning from the Scriptures Who God is, teach your kids what God says about suffering. You can even listen to this series with them. Use the scraped knees and frozen games and daily let downs of life segue into a deeper discussion about the reality of pain. It really will be a very logical and easy bridge to cross.
- **Learn about Those Who Suffered Well.** This may be in the form of a biography. Jews and Christians from nearly every generation have learned much and found great hope studying the lives of those who have gone before us — seeing how God rescued His people and worked in His people.

II. Run to the Scriptures.

- Psalm 119:25-32
- In those moments that David was lying face down in the proverbial dust, when grief caused him to weep in his very soul . . . David longed for the Truth of the Bible.
- You and your children may not feel the same way David did, but when tragedy strikes, you need to run to Scripture anyway. I believe David could write those words because he had already built a habit of searching for God when he experienced difficulty.
- Making a habit of turning to the Bible when little pains occur (like the scraped knee from before) makes it so much easier to long for the Truth when larger anguish comes knocking.

III. Rehearse the Truth about God and our suffering.

- I Peter 3:14a; Romans 8:16-30; Psalm 77

IV. Trust God.

- Psalm 103:13-14; I Peter 4:19; Revelation 2:10; II Corinthians 1:8-9
- God is trustworthy because God knows exactly what we need and is wise enough and powerful enough to accomplish it.
- I've never spoken to anyone who said, "Tomorrow my doctor is going to do something really bad to me." No! We allow doctors to cut into us because we trust that the pain they're going to cause is necessary to save our lives and make us better!
- But I've met many people who get mad at God for their suffering. I believe this happens for a number of reasons. Some people suggest that if God had told us exactly why He was doing what He was doing (like a good doctor does), He would be easier to trust. This reaction shows that we don't know the Scriptures like we should, or that we're not interpreting them correctly. My friends, the Doctor has spoken. He's laid out every piece of information we need for life and godliness. If we don't understand why this trial is good for us, that's our fault for not listening . . . not God's for not communicating well.
- So, the "operation" starts and we freak out because we don't understand why it's happening. We didn't realize there was a problem. We didn't know we needed to be cured. We thought we were as patient and holy and mature as we needed to be, why would we possibly need more suffering?!

- Sometimes we misinterpret what God says, and that's why we don't understand the pain. We read passages like Romans 8:28 and interpret "good" to mean "comfortable." In those cases, any pain seems to contradict the Scripture. This is very tied to our last incorrect response.
- Sometimes we only listen to the comfortable parts of the Bible which makes the pain seem like a lie. We spend time in the portions of Scripture that speak to blessing and happiness, but we don't like the messages that confront us with sin and its consequences. Our faith is a rosy delusion, so we are incapable of understanding our hardship.

V. Pray for wisdom.

- I Peter 5:7; James 1:5; Philippians 4:6-7
- Wisdom is taking what we know and understand and applying it to life. God gives us what we need to know in the Bible. He helps us to understand that knowledge through His Word, the Holy Spirit, and a multitude of wise counselors, and then He helps us live wisely in light of the Truth.
- When you do things God's way, and seek His face, He comes to our aid with all the knowledge, understanding, wisdom, peace, and comfort that we need.

VI. Praise God.

- James 1:2-4; Philippians 4:4, 6
- We can praise Him when our suffering is the result of our own sin because we understand that He's drawing us back to Him.
- We can praise Him if our suffering is the result of someone else's sin because He's using it to continue the purification process.
- And we can praise Him when our suffering is the result of the fact that we live in a cursed world because He's giving us exactly what we need. He's giving us the best for which we could hope.

VII. Ask for help.

- James 5:14-16
- When we find it easier to trust our feelings and experiences and the failure philosophies of this world, we are spiritually emaciated and weak. James uses the figurative language of someone who's spiritually sick.
- It's in those times that we need help from our brothers and sisters in Christ. We need them to surround us with Truth and love, to pray for us, and to lead us to confession of our sins. And when we embrace the Truth about God and suffering and repent of our lack of faith, we can be healed of our spiritual impotence.

VIII. Find ways to serve others.

- I Corinthians 12:24-26; Galatians 6:1-2; II Corinthians 1:3-7
- Just because we're suffering doesn't mean that no one else is suffering. That means that we can be a blessing to others who are suffering at the exact same time that we are struggling.
- What a sweet testimony it is to pray for someone who has come to your bedside to pray for you. How kind it is to make the nurses's job as easy as possible.
- Are you in financial distress? Consider inviting someone over for dinner because you know God will take care of you and you know He wants you to care for others.