

Four Reasons You Suffer as a Parent

- I. You may be experiencing hardship in your marriage or parenting because of your own sin.**
- Explanation It's possible that your current parenting or marital pain is due — in part — to your own sinful choices.
 - Too many of us set a sinful example and then are surprised when our children follow in our footsteps. There are a million examples, but there are only a couple Christ-honoring responses.
 - We must carefully, biblically, and wisely determine if the current family pain has anything to do with the sinful choices we've made. Invite your spouse to speak into the issue. Collect trusted counselors who will give you honest and biblical insight. One of the reasons it's hard to determine if we have sin in the mix is that it's generally too easy to see the faults in others. The log in our eye makes it hard to see the log. However, it's more realistic to expect that you have played a part — perhaps even a small part — but a part nonetheless.
 - When we discover that we have unrepentant sin, we must apologize and repent. To apologize is to seek forgiveness for our sin, and to repent is to turn from said sin and embrace the righteous motivation and behavior.
 - This does not mean that your current suffering will cease and that all will be well again, but it does mean you've taken the first step toward spiritual and relational healing.
 - Revelation 3:19-22
- II. You may be experiencing hardship in your marriage or parenting because of someone else's sin.**
- Sin hurts. So, if there's hurt, there's sin. So, what do you do?
 - *Know and understand the truths we've uncovered concerning the character of God.*
 - You're experiencing suffering that has been allowed into your life by the almighty, all-loving, all-wise, all-powerful God of suffering. He has a plan. He has promise. He's trustworthy.
 - *Know and understand the truths we've discussed concerning the purpose of suffering.*
 - If God has a plan, it would be wise to discover what it is. The purpose of our suffering is clearly laid out in Scripture. We know the end of the story. Understanding and accepting the purpose of our suffering is a huge part of suffering well.
 - *Believe the truth about God and suffering and live accordingly. Live wisely.*
 - It's one thing to know and understand; it's a completely different thing to apply that knowledge and understanding to life. That's called belief. That's called living wisely.
 - Move toward steadfastness. James 1 explicitly told us that we can joy in our trials because they're designed to produce steadfastness.
 - Embrace maturity. James goes on to say that our increased steadfastness results in maturity. I think a really accessible definition of maturity is this: the more you live like Christ, the more mature you are.
 - Ask for wisdom. When you realize how impossible this is for you — and that's an accurate realization to which to come — turn to the Father and beg Him for the power to live wisely.
 - Rejoice and be glad in the suffering. Lastly, as you encounter suffering in your family, don't complain about it, consciously choose to rejoice in it. That doesn't mean you have to find nice things to say about the pain, but you can always rejoice in God. You can always rejoice in the amazing purpose He's ordained (Matthew 5:10-11).

III. You may be experiencing hardship in your marriage or parenting because of the fact we live in a broken and cursed world.

- Pain and brokenness and runny noses and stubbed toes happen because we live in a fallen world.
- *Embrace all of the points from the previous point.*
- *Get the family on the same team.*
 - Teach them the Truth about living in the broken world. Help them understand that we're all working together to glorify God by responding to hardship the way Jesus would.
- *Know and understand the truth concerning the current struggle.*
 - Take time to understand the sickness and explain it to the kids. Explain to them why our skin burns and our toes stub. Don't hide them from the physical and spiritual realities of death. Teach them about the God of suffering, the nature of suffering, and the purpose of suffering.
 - Knowledge truly is power. You can't live what you don't believe, and you can't believe what you don't know. When our kids are left to formulate their own conclusions about suffering, they will come to all the wrong conclusions.
- *Seek the Scripture and biblical counsel to determine if there is a more Christ-honoring response.*
 - Our study of suffering should have made it amply clear that God designed us to live in community, and that community was created to help us achieve God's purposes in our suffering.
 - Don't go it alone. Don't isolate and cloister your family. Embrace the Body of Christ.

IV. Regardless of why you're experiencing hardship in your marriage or parenting, look for ways to minister to others who are experiencing similar suffering.

- II Corinthians 1:3-7
- God is to be blessed for the comfort and mercy He gives.
- One of the reasons we suffer is so that we may pass on God's comfort to others.
- Jesus is the channel of our suffering and our comfort. Only through a relationship with Him can we enjoy the comfort of God.
- The beauty of suffering is that it not only leads to our comfort, but also the comfort of others.
 - How dare we be stingy and not serve others who are struggling in a similar way that we have.
 - It's too easy for us to be pridefully embarrassed about our struggles — as if cancer and death is something about which to be ashamed. But we do it.
 - And that response make it that much easier for us to refuse to tell people about the consequences we've suffered as a result of ours and our family members' sins. We think that's way too personal! So, no one knows about the sin, no one knows about the consequences, no one knows about the suffering, and absolutely no one is comforted because of the experience we endured. May it never be!
 - We should never rejoice in our sin and make our idolatrous self-worship a moment for bragging, but we do need to be honest with others about what the Lord has taught us.
 - And that's why James calls us to "*confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.*" If we hide what we've done, we're going to hide what God's done. If we hide that, we're missing out on the beauty of our suffering and the purpose God is trying to accomplish.