Teaching Children To Trust In The Midst Of Trials

By Kim Butts

It is much easier to teach a child to trust in a loving God when all is well. However, our children need to learn that God is present and loving even when things are difficult. If we can introduce the importance of perseverance in the midst of suffering or at times when things are not going well, our children will develop a powerful trust in the Lord God Almighty's ability to comfort, sustain, protect and provide. If they are unprepared for the struggles of life, which are inevitable, they will also be unprepared to stand firmly on the Rock while the storm rages around or within them.

Many adults are unprepared to stand firm in their faith in the midst of trials because they have never been taught how to. It is not unusual for them to turn their backs on God, or stop attending church, or to be disillusioned by the enemy when they have not been trained to learn and to grow from suffering. By preparing our young ones to understand the discipline of suffering, we will see them reap victory when Satan attempts to defeat them. Hebrews 12:11 says, *"No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it."*

Please do not alarm your children by painting a bleak picture of life and the walk of a Christian. Help them to know that there is nothing better than the joyful life of a believer. However, they must be aware of the schemes of a very astute enemy who desires to destroy the minds and hearts of our children and youth. Awareness that we are in a daily battle is extremely important. I highly recommend that you teach your children to put on the armor of God each day (Eph. 6:10-18)! This will help them to face each day without fear, knowing that the Father who loves them is in control.

1. Children need to know, first of all, that trials will come. Especially if they have an active faith, they will suffer trials because they are Christians. The better equipped our children are to withstand the difficult times of life, the harder it will be for the enemy to shake their faith (1 Pet. 4:12-14).

2. Children need to know that God cares about everything they go through. If they will learn to give Him every difficulty, He will walk them through each one (Matt. 11:28-30; Psa. 23:4).

3. Children need to know that the trials they go through will shape them into stronger Christians. Hard times cause us to lean on the Lord for strength. If nothing was ever hard, we would never grow spiritually. *"Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope"* (Rom. 5:3-4; cf. Jas. 1:2-4).

4. Children need to learn that God does not leave us on our own to deal with trials because He understands all about suffering! God gave up His own Son for us. He knows what it is to go

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through pain (John 3:16; Isa. 53:3-5). Jesus endured tremendous suffering on our behalf, and we can always know that He is walking with us through the tough times: *"But those who suffer He delivers in their suffering; He speaks to them in their affliction"* (Job 36:15).

5. Children need to know that God will comfort them and use their trials and suffering to make them more useful to the kingdom. Every difficult experience can prepare us to be used in the life of someone else. If a child goes through an illness or a loss of some kind, the Lord will generously provide multiple opportunities for this young person to comfort, encourage, or otherwise minister to others who are going through a similar situation. (See First Peter 1:6-7; Second Corinthians 1:3-5.)

6. Children need to know that people will be watching to see how they handle trials. A child's Christian witness can be very powerful if they are prepared to stand with God in the midst of a difficult time. Putting on the armor of God is a powerful way to do this. Attitude is particularly important when facing trials, because others want to see if a child's faith is real. God does not say that we must be thankful FOR our circumstances. He DOES say that we are to give thanks in the midst of them. Our Loving Father expects us to grieve, or to be upset by the difficult things that happen; however, He also expects us to overcome our adversity and grow because of it. *"Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus"* (1 Thes. 5:16-18).

7. Children need to know that they must be careful never to think they are strong enough on their own. They must always be dependent upon the power of the Lord in every circumstance – particularly when temptation is involved (1 Cor. 10:12-13).

8. Children need to know that if they are faithful and persevere in their trials, there is a reward. James writes, *"Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him"* (Jas. 1:12; cf. 1 Pet. 4:13-14; Rom. 8:17-18; 1 Pet. 5:10).

Practical Ways to Teach These Principles

1. Look for teachable moments whenever something happens that makes children sad, angry or hurt:

• Teach them to remember that God is in control. *"…The Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials..."* (2 Pet. 2:9). *"Do you know how God controls the clouds and makes His lightning flash? Do you know how the clouds hang poised, those wonders of Him who is perfect in knowledge?"* (Job 37:15-16). *"But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables Him to bring everything under His control…"* (Phil. 3:20-21).

• Teach them to pray that God will be honored and glorified in the midst of their circumstances, even if they have to suffer or go through a difficult time: *"…And call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor Me"* (Psa. 50:15). *"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined*

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by fire – may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed" (1 Pet. 1:6-7).

• Teach them to love and to pray for people who cause harm or suffering to them, or to others: *"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you"* (Matt. 5:43-44).

• Teach them to pray for God to show them what He needs them to learn: *"He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them His way"* (Psa. 25:9).

• Teach them to give thanks to God, knowing that He will bring good into the situation, even though it can't be seen at the moment: *"Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus"* (1 Thes. 5:18).

• Teach them to begin looking for ways to glorify God rather than give in to defeat. Help them to learn to ask this question: "How can I use what has happened to me to help others, and to point them to Christ?" (See First Peter 4:19.)

2. Be a good example of a person who perseveres under trial. If they can see how you stand up under difficulty, they will have a good model to follow.

3. Show them how Jesus dealt with difficulties. For example, how did He deal with the enemy when He was tempted in the desert? (He used the Word of God.) What did Jesus do when He knew He was about to be betrayed? (He prayed.) What did He say about those who hung Him on the Cross? (*"Father, forgive them…."*)

Here are several important spiritual tools to teach your children as they prepare for the trials ahead.

1. The Word of God – Reading it, praying it, obeying it, memorizing it, speaking it, singing it, meditating on it… the Word of God is powerful only as it is used in daily life. This includes times of suffering or trials. *"He replied, 'Blessed rather are those who hear the Word of God and obey it'"* (Luke 11:28). *"Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God"* (Eph. 6:17). *"I have hidden Your Word in my heart that I might not sin against You"* (Psa. 119:11). *"Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path"* (Psa. 119:105).

2. Joy – If the enemy can rob our children of their joy, he can do much damage. *"Be joyful in hope…"* (Rom. 12:12). *"Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength"* (Neh. 8:10b).

3. Patience – It is difficult enough to demonstrate patience when everything is going well. It is only by the power of God that we are *"…patient in affliction…"* (Rom. 12:12; cf. Jas. 5:10-11).

4. Prayer – What did Jesus do in the midst of hard times? He prayed! Therefore, we should also be *"…faithful in prayer"* (Rom. 12:12). *"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints"* (Eph. 6:18).

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5. Forgiveness – Teach children how to forgive instead of wallowing in self-pity or thinking of revenge when they have been hurt or wronged. Because most children have a natural inclination to fight back or hate whoever has damaged their lives, this is a good time to learn to pray for enemies: *"But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven"* (Matt. 5:44). Here are some Scriptures to teach children a Jesus-centered approach to dealing with those who have wronged us: *"Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse"* (Rom. 12:14). *"Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone"* (Rom. 12:17-18). *"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good"* (Rom. 12:21). Children need to learn that unforgiveness is a sin: *"Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors"* (Matt. 6:12). *"For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins"* (Matt. 6:14-15).

6. Praise – Because Jesus died on the Cross for our sins and was raised to life, we will have everlasting life. This simple fact of faith should overcome any adversity our children face. Help them to give praise to God when things are not going well. They will see an amazing difference in the way they look at difficulties. *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time"* (1 Pet. 1:3ff.).

Teaching children to trust God in the midst of their trials will seem like an overwhelming task, since you, as an adult, also must struggle with these principles. However, if you will take every opportunity to help your children become aware of the battle, and the tools needed to defeat the enemy when trials come, you will be helping to raise up a generation that God can use for His purposes and plans on this earth. *"We will shout for joy when you are victorious and will lift up our banners in the name of our God. May the Lord grant all your requests"* (Psa. 20:5).

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