

HANDLING THE TOPIC OF SUFFERING WITH KIDS

Jesus tells us that everyone will face times of suffering during their lives. (John 16:33)
Sometimes kids begin facing hard situations early in their lives. They may wonder why God lets people suffer, especially if they are His followers. They may also wonder why God doesn't "fix" things since He has the power to do anything. In fact, many adults wonder this as well. How can children's teachers or parents help their children learn to trust God in difficult times?

Pray for God's specific guidance. He alone knows exactly what each child is dealing with in his life. He will guide you with His own words for your situation. Pray to give comfort to kids who may be in the process of suffering or dealing with the aftermath of it.

Foster an environment where kids know people are God's prized creation. He created us. He declared us very good. He desires to have a lasting relationship with each and every one of us. Although people sin and become separated from Him, God desires to bring us back into a restored relationship with Him. Help kids know that no one loves them as much as God loves them.

Avoid using the term suffering. Some kids who are not even in serious situations may become frightened over the possibility of actual suffering. Use the term difficult situations or hard times instead of suffering.

When kids are asked to name things they think people may face that are difficult, accept all answers equally. What doesn't seem important to you may be very important to the child.

Be sure to mention that sometimes God works to remove the difficult situation and sometimes He does not, but He always has the power to do anything. Also, God has the wisdom to know what is ultimately best, even when that may not be what a person wants.

Encourage the child by sharing what God has promised to do for those in hard times: He will be present with them. (Joshua 1:9) He will love them. (1 John 4:10) He will not forget them. (Isaiah 49:15) He will bring Bible verses to mind. (John 14:26) He will be sorrowful with them. (Psalm 86:15)

Remind kids that God always answers prayers, but the answers may be yes, no, or not yet. Explain that we may not understand why God doesn't take away the difficult situation when His answers are no. Tell kids that we do not have the wisdom that God has to know what is best. So we must have faith in what God is allowing.

Encourage kids to pray about their hard situations and to ask God to help them.

Pray with and for kids as an expression of love and care.

If you think a child may be in danger, please notify your pastor immediately. In cases of abuse, you are required to contact the authorities.

The best encouragement may come from sharing Genesis 18:25b where God is called a Righteous Judge who will ultimately make all things right.