

June 19, 2006

## **Encouragement for Today**

### **“A Mother’s Suffering”**

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#### **Key Verse:**

Philippians 1:29, “For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him ...” (NIV)

#### **Devotion:**

My son heaved an exaggerated sigh, tightened his face, and answered with frustration, “No one else has those rules, why can’t I just do it this once?”

I’d already explained why, but the answer didn’t satisfy him. Determined not to get into a battle, I simply repeated “no.” He turned on his heels and stomped up the stairs, obviously very annoyed with me. I returned to my work with a heavy heart. It’s hard when my children get mad at me.

That interaction with my son wasn’t rare. Because our rules are stricter than many of their friends, my kids struggle against their limits. Even though in many cases it would be easier to give in, my husband and I are firm. There are lines we won’t cross because we clearly see the danger on the other side. And many of those lines are set because of our faith in God.

I sometimes think about how much easier life would be if I gave in and let my kids do whatever they wanted. In those moments of pondering, I imagine no arguments, no rolling of eyes and no anger. I see happy children and happy parents. Of course, that’s a fairy tale, because children raised without healthy, and God-honoring boundaries can make very childish decisions that profoundly affect the rest of their lives and those of their parents.

And so, I’m content to set standards and hold my children to those standards. When that happens, I also accept the suffering that comes my way for taking a stand against the tide of the world.

I always thought that suffering for Jesus meant persecution. Christians in some parts of the world face imprisonment, torture and death for their faith. That’s true suffering. But in some way, I’m suffering for Jesus by being a mother who won’t give in.

In the book of Philippians, Paul writes to encourage the believers in Philippi. Paul writes from a state of imprisonment in his own home. Although he was not free to leave, he was free to share the Gospel. Paul knew suffering and wrote to encourage the believers, knowing they too would face difficulties. In the first

chapter of the book, Paul admonished them to conduct themselves in a “manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.”

Paul’s encouragement isn’t exactly what we would consider lighthearted, because he goes on to tell the readers to expect life to be hard because of Jesus. Verse 29 says, “For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him ...”

Suffering is the badge of the believer. Whether we identify it as suffering or not, every time we take a stand against sin or against negative influences in our home, we will suffer. Every time we choose purity and righteousness, we will suffer. We will suffer because most children don’t have the maturity of the Holy Spirit to accept godly limits without some type of struggle. Parenting is simply going to be hard on some days.

When our children turn an angry shoulder or speak a harsh word, we need to show love to them and faith in Jesus by standing firm in our suffering. Also, when we suffer for the sake of Christ, we join legions of believers who’ve chosen to walk the path that Jesus took to the cross. It wasn’t easy or pleasant, but the rewards are eternal.

**My Prayer for Today:**

Heavenly Father, You are faithful and awesome. Forgive me when I seek my own comfort. I ask for a heart like Yours to see beyond the surface of this life, a heart that sees the work that needs to be done from an eternal perspective. I pray for courage and boldness to become a steadfast servant, pleasing in Your sight. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

**Application Steps:**

Identify one area of your life where you have compromised your beliefs because it was hard to stand firm. Commit to God to make a change in this area and be willing to suffer because of it.

**Reflection Points:**

What conduct is worthy of the Gospel?

What are some boundaries we set for our children or ourselves that are different than many non-believers?

How have you suffered for standing firm for those boundaries?

How does your faith in Jesus help you endure hardship for your faith?

Have you ever put your own comfort ahead of obeying God in an area of your life?

**Power Verses:**

Luke 9:23-24, "Then He said to them all: 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.'" (NIV)

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

Romans 12:12, "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer." (NIV)

Matthew 25:21, "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'" (NIV)

Matthew 26:38, "Then He said to them, 'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.'" (NIV)

**Additional Resources:**

Being A Great Mom, Raising Great Kids by Sharon Jaynes  
[http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources\\_greatMom.htm](http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_greatMom.htm)

What Happens When Women Walk In Faith by Lysa TerKeurst  
[http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources\\_whatHappens.htm](http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_whatHappens.htm)

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