



ECE News

ECE News & Food for Thought



Zion Lutheran Preschool has had a fantastic first few weeks. Thank you to the Board of Education for providing breakfast for our first staff member, and for the wonderful members of our congregation who graciously provided snacks for teachers, supplies, and their time to help make our school year start off on the right foot!

Upcoming Dates

Friday, September 15th - Fundraiser Pizza Sales Due

Tuesday, September 26th - 3's Open House @ 6:30pm

Wednesday, September 27th - 4's Open House @ 6:30pm

Sunday, October 15th - Preschool Students Sing at 10:30 Service

Food for Thought

Faith Grows in Hard Places - Even for Kids

By Dan Dupee

When have you been most alive in your faith?

I once asked some parents to put that question to their kids. One answer caught me off guard: "When I was 15 and lost my best friend to leukemia." How could the devastating loss of a friend leave a teenager feeling "alive in his faith"?

Another question — *What helped prepare you to be a faithful Christian in college?* — got some equally surprising answers. Heather, a college senior, said this: "When Dad lost his job and we moved to another state. My world was crushed." As a dad, I can think of few things more difficult than watching one of my kids suffer. But as these teens' answers demonstrate, painful experiences can be an important part of preparing kids to own a personal and vibrant faith.

Parents, kids and pain

We are never more pain-averse than in our role as Mom or Dad. Whatever distaste we may have personally for suffering, our desire to see our kids avoid it is exponentially larger. I have a fear of heights, but I didn't know what fear really was until I saw our playful 15-year-old sons get close to the edge of a 200-foot drop on a trip through the Rocky Mountains.

If we consider objectively what causes human beings to develop courage, patience, empathy or other virtues, it's hard to avoid the obvious: People grow the most through adversity. For the Christian, suffering strengthens faith and often leads to knowing God more intimately ([Philippians 3:8-10](#)).

We don't readily appreciate the value of suffering in our kids' lives, precisely because of our role as their protectors. But pain is a way God grows our kids closer to Him. He uses the hard stuff.

Walking through pain

From an early age, every child experiences pain. I loved watching my wife handle all the head bonks and smashed fingers our children endured when they were young. She first acknowledged the pain and then prayed with the child, asking that God would help the hurt be less. Then she applied bandages, soap and water, or ice, as appropriate.

Notice what a child learns through all the "owies":

- Parents will walk through pain with you.
- God cares when you suffer. He is always there, always able to help with the pain.
- Turning to God does not negate taking action (applying bandages, ice, etc.).

As our kids grew bigger and ran into fewer pieces of furniture, they encountered the different sorts of pain that make adolescence challenging. While the wounds from society are often invisible, they can hurt more: a friend's desertion, a denied opportunity, an adult who says the child will never amount to anything.

Here are some ways we can walk through these painful moments with kids:

Listen and remind

We help bear our kids' burdens by first listening without judgment. Our kids often just need our physical presence as they cry. Yes, words have to come eventually, but it's important to resist the temptation to offer a solution, even if it seems clear why the suffering is occurring.

When it is time to talk, pray together and remind your child of what he already knows: Both God and you love your child. Then encourage your child to bring whatever he is feeling directly to God, even if it is ugly. I tell kids that it's OK if they feel mad at God. Look at the psalms, which are sometimes so raw with emotion that they seem out of bounds for God-fearing people. "Why do you ... forget our misery?" the psalmist asks ([Psalm 44:24, NIV](#)).

Obviously, staying mad at God isn't healthy. But appropriate confession of our emotions actually interrupts our tendency toward bitterness.

Ignoring pain or stoically adopting a "no regrets" policy may seem appropriate in the short run, but pain always finds a way to express itself in surprising, unwelcome ways. Let your kids see your family as a place where they can walk through hard times with honesty.

Face trials with a biblical perspective on suffering

Some Christian kids may adopt a "they-must-have-had-it-coming" view of others' suffering. And so, when *they* face trials, they wonder why God allowed bad things to happen since they had done nothing to deserve it. It's not supposed to work this way!

In the midst of their pain, kids may reach some devastating conclusions about God: *He doesn't care. He isn't good. He can't be trusted.* Remind your children that God doesn't engineer painful events. These situations are all rooted in humanity's fallen condition. Sometimes, pain is the consequence of our sin. Sometimes, it's the result of other people's sins. And sometimes, suffering simply comes from living in a fallen world.

On the Cross, Jesus suffered more than any human ever has. From the pit of abandonment, Jesus echoed the words of the psalmist: "My God, why have you forsaken me?" Christ was forsaken so that we could be restored in our relationship to our heavenly Father. Our kids need to know that God can understand their pain, not just in theory, but through His experience.

One day He will redeem this fallen world and heal every wound. In the meantime, God uses suffering to create an enduring hope in us ([Romans 5:3-5](#)).

See suffering as a time of growth and refinement

Some of our kids' pain is the result of sinful choices. It's our job to help them distinguish between what is not their fault (death of a friend, failing when they try hard) and what is a natural outcome of sinful choices. When our kids were young, we tried to build an awareness of actions and consequences. "If you hit your brother, he might hit you back." Encourage your child to think through specific actions and discover what the consequences might be.

When your child does choose poorly, walk her through repentance, helping her understand that God loves and forgives even as we experience nasty consequences. God uses these circumstances to help us grow ([Romans 8:28](#)).

As parents, we will always feel pain when our kids do. Still, it's amazing how God can use that pain. Rather than pray for my children to be spared from any pain, which is never realistic, I now pray for God to do His full work in any circumstance.

We may never get completely used to the idea that, in God's loving economy, suffering is an opportunity for growth. But we can cling to the promise that none of these experiences will separate us from His love ([Romans 8:38-39](#)).