

## JACK'S CORNER

**QUESTION:** As you suggested in one of your articles, we often watch the evening news with our kids so that we can pray with them regarding various needs in the world and help them realize not everyone has the blessings in life that they do. They were particularly moved by a news story of famine and flooding in Africa. The weight of the events really seems to hang over them. We continue to pray about the situation, but how can we best use this time?

**ANSWER:** Your comments really encourage me! Firstly, we should be deeply disturbed (not surprised, but disturbed) by such events in our world. Often, American Christians live in shallowness when it comes to material suffering and struggles that are commonplace in much of the world. We have been so materially blessed and protected that our passion has become the continuation and enhancement of our blessings. Myopically, we focus on our little world, our needs and our wants. **Our prayers are often self-serving and basically self-centered, revolving around our immediate universe and the family and friends who populate it.** We are far more interested in God's help in making our universe go well, than we are in sacrifice, repentance and deep engagement with the rest of the world.

Sure, we pay general lip service to those outside our personal universe, but there is often little empathy, understanding, or on-going involvement. I am thrilled that the "weight" of these events does still "hang over" you and your kids. Frankly, all Christians should feel this weight! Such feelings speak positively to one's spiritual awareness and maturity. The Holy Spirit is causing you and your kids to grieve (and hopefully to act); don't be too quick to remove yourself from feelings that can be opportunities for godly transformation and some practical opportunities to help!

Secondly, I thank God that you demonstrated to your children just what Christians do in these situations...**we pray, then we act!** We pour out our feelings and desires to our God knowing that we can trust in His perfect

love and His perfect plans. He lived in our world as the “man of sorrows” and “acquainted with grief.” We can and should bring all our requests to Him.

Your kids will listen carefully to how **you** pray. These are formative times in their little minds! Set a godly example of praying for others. Make this situation an on-going prayer with them...not just as long as the Media reports it.

As much as we parents would like to spare our children grief and pain, we also know that **struggle and hardship are better teachers than happiness and smooth sailing in life.** Evil, pain and struggle will find us. We must equip our children to handle them. Avoidance alone will come back to bite them at some point in time. In the scheme of life, equipping is better than protecting.

Talk to your children calmly and seriously about the situation. They will take their mood and direction from you. Continue to watch the news with them; answer questions and pray for the people and situations you see. Visuals are very powerful; use them as teaching tools. Learn to ask your kids probing questions (e.g. “What do you think we can do about this situation?”). Pull out your Bible and share what God has to say about sin, tragedies, and our role in helping others. Finally, find opportunities for you and your children to ease suffering and pain in the lives of others by acts of love and mercy. Children whose parents model giving and involvement in the lives of others, tend to retain empathy and practice involvement as they grow older.

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