

## **Weathering the Storm with Jesus in the Boat!**

We and our children may find ourselves in a storm, but praise God that Jesus never leaves us or forsakes us, and His Holy Spirit is there to help us and bring us through.

Spend some time as a family reading scriptures and worshipping God, even very briefly, as a start to your day, and watch Him come in and make a difference!

If you have teenagers who don't want to get up or join you in meeting with God put a verse under their door or on their pillow!

Use His power and speak out the Word of God over the situation, as the Holy Spirit shows you. Here are some verses you may want to declare over yourselves and your family and share with your children.

“We don't allow our hearts to be troubled and we won't be afraid!” John 14,27

“We do everything without complaining or arguing.” Philippians 2,14

“We can do ALL things through Christ who strengthens us.” Philippians 4,13

“The Holy Spirit that was given to us has flooded our lives with God's love.”  
Romans 5,5 Voice translation

“We and our family are one in spirit like Jonathon and David, “based on 1, Samuel, 18,1

“Our children shall be taught of the Lord and great shall be their peace.” Isaiah 54,13

Below are some thoughts and ideas which may be helpful to you as you 'keep on keeping on' with your children through this difficult time. You may be needing to try and work from home and juggle caring for the family at the same time. Whatever your situation is, remember that you can call on the Holy Spirit's help at any time. He has all the answers!

### **Listen to Your Children**

Children really value their parent/s' time and attention. Do what you can to spend time being available to listen to them, and to any worries that they have, even if you don't have all the answers to their questions. Ask God to lead you to specific verses that might answer for you! If your young people seem hard to communicate or connect with, try and drop what you are doing when they do want to speak to you. Since you find yourselves spending more time together as a family consider doing things together which you wouldn't do usually. Regardless of their age they may enjoy you reading to them, or they may be willing to share a book/read to you. Showing an interest in books or information that interest your children can be really beneficial to building relationships. Some older teenagers may prefer to spend considerable time in their rooms using technology to access information and finding out what their friends think about the current situation. If this is the case, encourage discussion with them, and ask them to let you know about any worries they have. If they aren't very communicative consider putting a note under the door of their room from time to time, praising them for all positive steps they are taking, e.g. getting up! completing schoolwork, joining the family for meals. This lets them know that you care about them.

## **Do What You Can to Have Fun Together**

Look for activities that you can do together with your children, e.g. baking or cooking, building Lego together, drawing, painting, or maybe spending some time gaming together. Many children love it if we spend time in an activity with them. It builds bonds with them and enhances relationships.

See if you can find comedy films which you could watch as a family. Laughter releases emotions and has a hugely positive impact on our health and wellbeing!

## **Kindness and Gratitude/Expressing Worries**

Think about having a 'Thank You' box in the home. Encourage the family to put notes in thanking others for anything that they have done for them, or to put 'Grateful' thoughts in the box. You could read and celebrate them together. A 'Worry' box would give your children an opportunity to express what they are finding difficult to say. You may not have all the answers, especially at such a testing time, but your children will feel that they are being listened to, and that you are concerned for their emotional welfare. You may also find that God is giving you a verse which answers their question, or that one of your children does!

## **Lessening the Impact of News and Media on Your Family**

Encourage the children to avoid over-focussing on the very serious news in the media regarding the COVID19 issue and suggest to them that they find 'good news' stories of kindness and breakthroughs, and that they share these often.

It is so important to attempt to balance access to the news and information flooding the media with the promises of God which we can stand on, in order to maintain a positive approach to what is a very challenging situation. Remember that our words have power and speak God's Word and positives about the situation whenever you can.

## **Support for Yourselves as Parents.**

Try to avoid expressing your own fears or concerns as parents to your children but seek support from other Christians who are strong in faith at any time that you feel overwhelmed.

You may be working at home and trying to juggle work pressures with maintaining family life; whenever you can, take time to 'be kind to yourself,' have 'treats,' rest and sleep well. Remember that good sleep contributes to strengthening the immune system and keeping us emotionally well.

## **Pile on the Praise!**

Maintain usual boundaries and expectations in the home but be aware that it is PRAISE and affirmation that will lead to changes in behaviour, and which will reinforce behaviour which you want to encourage. Whenever possible praise your children for any positive aspects of their life at home, e.g. getting up at an expected time, or earlier than they managed the day before! Praise them for beginning schoolwork, and focus on what they have done, rather than on what they haven't achieved. Tell them why you are pleased. Specific praise is very effective and will encourage your child to seek out your positive attention again. If you have more than one child at home and friction is arising at times, praise them for any positive time they spend together, even if this is watching a programme without conflicts arising. You will find that this leads them to expect and seek praise for positive behaviour and leads to a calmer home.

### **Is Your Child Very Active?**

God has made a certain proportion of children very active and they tend to find sitting still challenging. If this is your child praise them when they get started on work tasks.

Encourage them to move about during schoolwork sessions, and praise them, in particular, when they return to work. You could suggest that they set themselves goals for how long they will aim to concentrate on a task. They may want to try using an alarm. Praise them when they meet their target or encourage them to try again when they don't. It can be helpful to intersperse schoolwork tasks with some movement or exercise.

Some ideas for general movement and exercise might include following an online workout, doing a number of star jumps, and doing 'laps' of any outside space you may have.

Children might enjoy setting themselves movement targets and seeing if they could improve them day by day. Daily exercise outside the home will particularly benefit young people who are very active. If they find the prospect of a day inside challenging, make a schedule with them for when you will have exercise/movement breaks. Your active young person will appreciate it if you spend some time exercising with them.

### **Do You Have a Child Who Struggles with Change?**

If your child really struggles to adapt to change or uncertainty, then this will be a particularly challenging time for them. As far as possible keep regular home routines such as mealtimes and bedtimes in order to reduce any anxiety they may be feeling. Listen to your child and answer as many of their questions as possible, praising them for every small achievement which they make during the day. Some young people may be content to spend much more time in their rooms using technology. Encourage your child to come out of their room and spend time with others in the family, even if they prefer to do this in a quieter area of the house. Encourage them to go outside daily and exercise in some way. This might be best achieved by sitting down with them and devising a schedule which includes schoolwork, exercise, and time with or near the family. If possible, attempt to 'enter their world' by joining them in an activity which they particularly enjoy.

### **Finishing the Day**

If you can, finish the day with some prayer and praise! Encourage everyone to thank God for something that happened in the day, thank God for what he is going to do to deliver us and keep us healthy at this time. Introduce your children to Psalm 91 and speak it out over them and yourselves. Praise them if they too will speak it out over the family.

### **Finally**

Cover yourselves and the family with the Blood of Jesus every day.

Keep the bible open in the house in a place where you can 'dip into it' at any time to encourage you during the day.

Be determined to stay joyful no matter what the circumstances are!

"For the joy of the Lord is our strength." Nehemiah 8,10.