



Trouble comes in many forms. There are accidents that cause pain, and sin (ours or someone else's) that lead to terrible suffering. But no trouble is outside of the reach of our good God. Often, God uses troubles to grow our faith and lead others into His kingdom.

Day #1: It's Not Fair!

When was the last time you heard someone say, "It's not fair?" When was the last time *you* said it? Maybe your whole class missed part of recess when only a few kids had done something wrong. Or maybe you didn't get an equal share of dessert.

We often want to shout when we feel we didn't get something good that we deserved, or when we got something bad that we didn't deserve. But the truth is, FAIR isn't what we should be asking for.

Paul started nearly every one of his letters by asking God to give grace to the reader. That's because Paul had not gotten what was fair, he got something much, much better. He got grace.

When Paul was a young man, he believed many lies about who Jesus was, and because of that, he tormented the people who followed Jesus. What Paul deserved was death and separation from God forever. But when Paul finally believed in Jesus, what he received was just the opposite. He received forgiveness, a place in God's kingdom, the opportunity to serve God all over the world, and the honor of writing part of the Bible! Paul understood that God's amazing plan of grace was way better than "fair".

So Paul doesn't complain about the trouble he found himself in. He didn't say it wasn't fair. He kept his focus on the good that God was doing through his trouble.

+ *I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.* - Philippians 4: 12b-13 NLT

***** Talk about what has Jesus done for you. This should help you keep your focus when an "It's not fair!" is on the tip of your tongue.

Day #2: We Shine

Shine a flashlight in a well-lit room. What effect does it have? Not much. But what if you shine it in a dark place? With your mom or dad's help, go find the darkest places in your house. (Maybe a bathroom or closet, or even...the crawlspace!) What happens when you shine a flashlight in there? Does it make a big difference?

Our world is kind of like that. There are some places that are spiritually bright because people know about Jesus and the kingdom of light. They follow God's instruction and it is peaceful and joyful. But some places are dark because the people there haven't heard, or don't believe, the good news about Jesus.

The jail that Paul went to was very dark at first. There were criminals who didn't follow God's plan. There were jailers and judges who hadn't heard the good news. But along came Paul to shine the truth. Paul knew this dark place was his mission field. He was faithful to tell these men about Jesus. Listen to what he wrote to his friends back in Philippi:

+ *And I want you to know, my dear brothers and sisters, that everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News. For everyone here, including the whole palace guard, knows that I am in chains because of Christ.* - Philippians 1: 12-13

"Everyone" includes a lot of people! God allowed Paul to go to that dark place because God loved all those people who needed the Light!

***** What places do you know of that are spiritually light? Where is it spiritually dark? How do you think the light can get there? What if no one was willing to go? God might just allow some trouble in order to get the light where it needs to go.

Day #3: Scattered

Kids, if you are reading, give this to mom or dad. (Psst...Mom and Dad, To make this FIT extra fun, try to do this in secret before you start: Secretly rub liquid dish soap all over the end of your finger. Don't let the kids see you do this!) Ok, resume reading aloud:

Today, you'll need a regular cereal-sized bowl filled halfway with water, and a pepper shaker (preferably finely-ground pepper, not heavy chunks).

Paul's jail sentence is not the first time that God has


Day #3 continued:

turned trouble into something great for His kingdom. In fact, ironically, before Paul believed in Jesus, Paul's terrible actions were the cause of some trouble that God used for kingdom good.


At the beginning of the book of Acts, most of the followers of Jesus lived in Jerusalem. They hung out together and enjoyed time together. Let's say the bowl of water is Jerusalem. Without touching the water, sprinkle in a bunch of "people" (pepper). There they are talking, singing, and praying together.

But then, the people who didn't believe in Jesus, started to persecute them! Paul was one of the leaders! He had the believers beaten and thrown in jail. Mom or Dad, you be Paul. Put your finger right in the center of the "people."

What happened? The people scattered! Wouldn't you run away if you were there? It was terrible. It seemed like everything had gone wrong for the believers. But God had a great plan in store.

 *The believers who had been scattered preached the word everywhere they went. - Acts 8:4*

The bad guys thought they would stop the truth from spreading, but instead, they caused it to be taken to other cities, far and wide! That's how God made something great out of a very troubling situation.

 Mom or Dad, can you share a story of when you had trouble, but God used it for good?


Day #4: Worth It

One Sunday morning, a couple took their two young sons and 3-month-old baby girl to church. It had rained the night before, and the steps at the church were a bit slippery. When coming out of the building, the wife's feet slipped out from under her. She heard a loud POP before she hit the ground.

It was only a matter of minutes before her right foot was swelling and turning a deep shade of purple. The X-rays showed that her foot was broken—not in one or two places, but in over a dozen places! She had to have an operation to put everything in place, and she wouldn't be able to walk for weeks. She wondered how she would take care of her three young children.

Sleep was impossible that night as the pain was so bad. She lay awake wondering why in the world this had happened. Why would God allow it? Had she done something wrong? It didn't make any sense to her. But then God's Spirit reminded her of a Bible verse.


Day #4 continued:

 *Always give thanks to God the Father for everything. Give thanks to Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. - Ephesians 5:20*

"Okay," she prayed, "Lord, I don't understand why this happened, but I thank you for it."


A few days later, the woman's mother came to stay with her family and help take care of everyone. The two women had a good relationship, but the mother was not part of God's kingdom. In fact, she really didn't like talking about kingdom things. But, somehow, during her stay with her daughter's family, something changed. They were able to talk about Jesus for the first time. The mother was very receptive to hear what her daughter and son-in-law had to say. And you know what? It wasn't long before the mother came to trust in Jesus and enter God's kingdom.

If you ask the daughter today if the trouble was worth the good thing that God did, she would say, "ABSOLUTELY! I'd break *both* my feet for that!"

 Is there something that seems like trouble in your life that you should thank God for? Take a minute to thank Him now.

Day #5: Perfect Example


We've looked at several examples (in the Bible and in modern day) of God allowing some trouble in our life in order to accomplish a kingdom purpose. But there is no more perfect example than that of Jesus.

 *Let us keep looking to Jesus... He paid no attention to the shame of the cross. He suffered there because of the joy he was looking forward to. Then he sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. - Hebrews 12:2*

No one could have suffered more than Jesus did on the cross. He never did anything wrong—not one lie, not one bad attitude, not one sin of any kind. Yet He was lied about, beaten, and nailed to a cross like a common criminal. (This was certainly "not fair.")

But Jesus suffered for an amazing purpose! It was all part of God's plan. Jesus died to take our sin onto Himself, so that everyone who believes in Him would become right with God and live the best life possible in His kingdom that never ends.

God gives you the gift of eternal life because of what Christ Jesus our Lord has done. - Romans 6:23

 In the verses above, underline the words that show trouble. Then circle the words that show God's good purpose. The Bible says to think about Jesus to give you hope when you have trouble in your life (Hebrews 12:3).