

3 Building Blocks to Help Your Kids Stand Tall When Life Knocks Them Down

My 2-year-old grandson wiggles into his booster seat at the table. He knows the drill. His hands find each other and little fingers embrace into the posture of prayer.

“Roman,” his daddy says, “let’s thank Jesus for the food.”

Little eyes scrunch shut. His head bows. I close my eyes but peek with one eye to watch him. He slits open fluttering lids and casts his gaze around the room. My heart melts, and my breath catches. The list begins. His hair so blonde it shines white, bobs at each pronunciation. Like the Creator in the garden, he affirms all of it good.

“Thank you, Jesus, for food.”

“Sfoon. Fowk.”

“Cheese.”

“Mommy and Dada.”

“Octonauts.”

“Table, chair, cup.”

Those sweet attempts at thanksgiving are irresistible. I wish I could simply be thankful for all I see.

How often in my dark nights have I been like that child, looking about to see something to be thankful for, wanting an answer that didn’t come and not seeing anything but sorrow. But, in darkest trials we learn thankfulness, praise and worship, and in the simplicity of childhood, foundations are laid for adult testing.

Three building blocks will help them stand steadfast even when life is difficult.

Teach *thanks* for gifts He gives.

Teach *praise* to the One who gives.

Teach *worship* for who He is.

While the meanings may appear overlapping and intangible, each is important. We can be thankful for things and people. We can praise others and God. But we can worship only God. It is an important distinction.

In John 4:24, Jesus encounters a woman who was ostracized, despised and lived a sinful lifestyle. He entered into a dialogue that cut to the heart of worship.

“God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24), he told her.

Even children can learn to worship. Jesus affirms it’s not dependent on a place nor tradition; situation or system. It is neither superficial nor distracted by circumstance. It originates from deep in our hearts.

I love to worship by going through the truths of God’s character. You can teach even little ones that God is the door of the sheep, the Light of the World, and the Creator of the Universe. I like to pray through the alphabet listing His qualities. It’s a practice children enjoy, and is distinctive of who God is.

Awesome

Bread of life

Crucified One

Defender

Eternal

Friend

Good ...

Adapt this list to age and understanding. Start simple. Grow and expand them with your children. You may want to talk about one attribute each day, or pray through them together.

Jesus deserves thanks for what He does and adoration for who He is. When children learn to embrace the rock-solid character of God, they will be better equipped to face unsettling challenges ahead.

As a new year presents itself, it is easy to slide into the January-February slump. I do. After the holidays, doldrums have a way of making life seem thankless. But in every season, God's character is a great reminder of the many joys of each day of life, and an anchor back to truth.

Teach a child to worship and you will teach him strength for the future. {eo}

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