

I Broke My Son's Mouth!

Written by Bill Perkins

While each of my three sons wore braces my middle son, David, had an unusual problem that had to be corrected. Seems his mouth wasn't large enough to hold his teeth. To remedy this, his orthodontist placed a telescopic bar across his palate which he anchored it to his back molars.

Tickle and Crank

Every night I would place a small tool into a hole in the middle of the bar and crank it--expanding the bar. This exercise cracked my son's palate making room for his teeth. Needless to say, the process hurt. However, Cindy and I figured a way to minimize the pain. She would tickle David while I cranked.

The Smile Would Sparkle

The one truth that enabled my young son to endure the pain was the assurance that his smile would sparkle when the suffering passed. That experience reminds me of a spiritual truth found in the opening lines of the New Testament book of James.

Here's what the half-brother of Jesus said to his suffering friends, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance" (James 1:2-3).

A Strange Condolence Card

Most of us have never received a condolence card like that. It would be like getting a card from a friend that said, "Rejoice in your heart attack." or, "Be happy that you lost your job." "Be thrilled that you failed a course in school," or, "Didn't make the team."

Not What James Meant

However, that's not what James was saying at all. He wasn't telling them to be happy that they were suffering or disappointed. He urged them to rejoice because of the good hardship could accomplish in their lives. We don't rejoice because of sickness or suffering. We rejoice that God can use pain to accomplish good in our lives.

Tested by Battle, Gold by Fire

James said the purpose of testing is to "Produce endurance."

The word James used for "testing" referred to soldiers tested by battle or gold tested by fire. Such tests were intended to purify and prove. Difficulties test and try our faith. And when the test is over we have an enduring faith . . . we are stronger and more Christ-like.

So if you're suffering, celebrate, not the pain or the loss, but the fact that God will use it to make you stronger.

In a very real sense, the pain passes, but the smile remains.