Hard Is Not the Same Thing as Bad STUDY GUIDE



Abbie Halberstadt

Illustrations by Lindsay Long



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Introduction

ave you ever thought, "I really don't like this __ (circumstance, season, problem, pain). I'd just like to skip it, _please"? Or maybe a less polite version? Maybe you've slammed your palm against the wall, screamed into your pillow, cursed into the silence of your car? Even if none of these exact scenarios ring a bell, the fact remains that, if you're breathing, you've experienced hard things. Jesus literally promised us we would encounter "trouble" in this world (John 16:33 NIV). It's the human condition. Not only that, but He declares this fact within the context of just having warned His disciples of the coming of their darkest days (Christ's crucifixion). The weird part? He doesn't tell them so they will freak out or panic. No, He gives them a glimpse into a difficult future so that they "may have peace." If that sounds like a paradox of the highest order, I agree. It sure can seem that way. But as uncomfortably as it sits in our chests sometimes, there is a certain peace to be found in expecting hard things. When we know everything won't always be smooth paths and rose gardens but that, even so, Jesus

has "overcome the world," we are empowered to face hardship with the knowledge that we stumble along bumpy paths with Christ ever by our side.

Hard Is Not the Same Thing as Bad is your invitation, not to cheer every time something "goes wrong" but to face each and every hard thing with the peace and confidence that Jesus has borne our sorrow, even to the point of death on a cross. I wrote this for moms, but I believe the biblical principles permeating each chapter are for every believer in Christ who desires to move beyond an attitude of escaping hardship into a mindset of overcoming in Christ's strength.

In this study guide, you'll find practical action steps, thought-provoking questions, a helpful chart breaking down the dichotomy of a worldly mindset about hard things versus a biblical one, space to record your thoughts, and even a format that will enable you to transform this from a time of personal reflec-

tion into a group study if you feel so led. I've also provided a QR code to allow access to accompanying video content from me for each chapter. This is the ideal companion to the book and study guide to help you take these truths to heart.

I'll be the first to admit I don't like most hard things I encounter any more than the next girl. But I'll also be the first to proclaim my gratitude that the Lord has seen fit to carry me through the trials He's entrusted to me because I know I'm changed for the better by them.





A Tiny Perspective Shift

REAPING THE BENEFITS OF LOOKING AT HARD A WHOLE NEW WAY

he first chapter explores the perspective shift that takes place when we flip our knee-jerk tendency to view hard things as negative—as something from which to run—and replace it with a willingness to consider that the hardship itself might be a tool the Lord is using to shape us. Our culture constantly encourages us to escape or slough off experiences or people that don't "serve us," which can make switching into a mindset of viewing trials as potential sandpaper to smooth out our rough edges and to reveal our need for Christ feel downright jarring. But, as I share through personal experiences, when we turn toward Jesus instead of toward entertainment or numbness or anger, the maturity we gain is an incredible gift from God. The growth is worth the grit!

The Narrative

Read the examples in your book of a worldly response to hard versus a biblical response to hard. Take some time to pray about the areas in which you might be embracing a worldly "mindset of hard," and record them here. Then reflect on what those same issues might look like through a Christian perspective of biblical truth.

THE WORLD'S RESPONSE TO HARD	A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO HARD

Action Steps ***

Write out, memorize, and meditate on 2 Timothy 4:7: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." One helpful way to memorize Scripture is to start by writing it down.
Write five sticky notes with "hard ≠ bad" on them and post them in high traffic areas of your home as reminders of this tiny perspective shift. How has seeing this message made a difference for you?

I have fought the good Shave finished the race,

J have

Kept

the faith. 2TIMOTHY 4:7

Pray about one friend who could help hold you accountable in changing the way you view the hard things in motherhood. Reach out when the Lord bring someone to mind. Who will you reach out to?
Reflection Questions Do I view hard primarily as bad? (Explain.)
Do I view nard primarily as bad: (Explain.)

f so, am I getting this view from worldly culture or the Bible?		
What is something hard in motherhood right now that the Lord is also using for good? And how?		

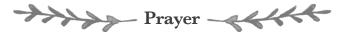
Group Discussion Questions



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How can hardship help us conform to the image of Christ?				



Lord, thank You that Jesus "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame" (Hebrews 12:2), and, in the process, set the ultimate example of hard not being the same thing as bad. Help us to shift our mindsets from negativity to joy in You by Your strength.





Hard Things Are Not Always Suffering

KEEPING PERSPECTIVE IN THE MIDST OF THE STRUGGLE

his chapter encourages us to examine our hard circumstances with clear eyes and honesty. Are we maximizing our struggles for attention or exaggerating them at times? Or conversely, are we so determined to downplay the hard that we minimize or invalidate our need for help and end up refusing opportunities for comfort (from God and others)? The Bible goes to neither extreme, instead exhorting us to mourn with those who mourn while still pressing into the "enoughness" of Christ's strength. We are not motherhood martyrs, but neither are we hardship deniers. It's truly possible to honor the hard in motherhood while not placing it on a pedestal as the ultimate suffering.

The Narrative

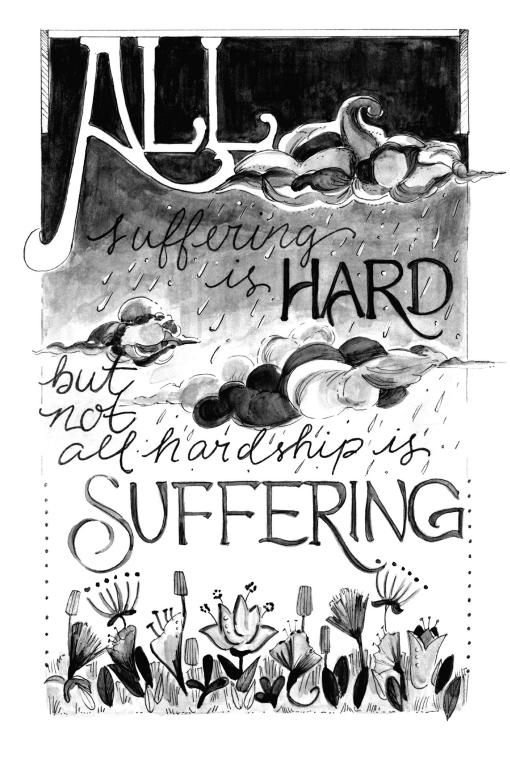
Read the examples in your book of a worldly response to hard versus a biblical response to hard. Take some time to pray about the areas in which you might be embracing a worldly "mindset of hard," and record them here. Then reflect on what those same issues might look like through a Christian perspective of biblical truth.

HARD

Action Steps

Write out, memorize, and meditate on 2 Corinthians 4:16: "So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day."
Write down two things you have viewed as suffering that are actually just God given challenges.
1
2.

Ask your accountability partner from the last chapter to pray for you to view these two struggles rightly as you mother this week. Record here the prayer requests she has for you.
Reflection Questions
Why (biblically) does God allow us to experience hard things?



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Group Discussion Questions



Jp to this point, what has been your defi	nition of "hard" in motherhood?
That have you heard, seen, or read lately s a victim or martyr of motherhood?	that encourages you to view yourself
	Video Link
	©: ***** #

Can you think of a time in your life when your own mother (or another adu	
or "mother figure") implied that caring for you was a form of suffering? If	so,
how did that make you feel?	
	_
What are some "words of life" you can speak over your family this week?	
	_
	_

What is one practical way you can intentionally shift your mindset from "have to" to "get to" this week?						



Lord, thank You that we really can do "all things through Christ who strengthens [us]" (Philippians 4:13 NKJV)—including finding contentment in hard circumstances. Grant us eyes to see the opportunities for sanctification and growth tucked inside each new mothering challenge we encounter.