

## Transformation Through Your Trials

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Life is a series of trials and one of the most critical lessons to learn in life is how to deal with them. Since, you have probably just emerged out of a trial, are currently in one right now, or about to go into one, you must become an expert in handling trials. Life east of Eden is a series of trials.

So many things happen to you through the trials you experience. One thing is certain—God can marvelously sculpt your life through the predicaments, challenges and adversities of life (Jn. 15:3-5; 16:33; Jam. 1:2-4; Heb. 12:10-11). The greatest trials can bring about the greatest growth. The harder the trials, the deeper the lesson learned, and the cross is our template—the greatest evil became the greatest good. This is the most astounding theological reality and glorious paradox in living the Christian life (Heb. 11.34).

### **Ways you are Affected by the Trial**

Here are some ways that you are affected by the trials in your life.

*First*, God may use the trial/adversity to get your attention—“But by means of their suffering, He rescues those who suffer. For he gets their attention through adversity” (Job 36:15 New Living Translation, 2004); and “For as soon as trouble comes, they will earnestly search for me” (Hosea 5:15, New Living Translation, 2004). More specifically, God may use a trial to humble you— “I will walk humbly all my years because of this anguish of my soul” (Isaiah 38:15, New International Version, 1984). Nebuchadnezzar lived in defiance of God, but God was not willing for him to perish (2 Pet. 3:9), and so He humbled him through a mental illness (boanthropy/lycanthropy) and Daniel added this contingency: “*until you learn*” (Daniel 4:25, 26, New Living Translation, 2004). God is up to something with your life. He wants you to learn

the things you must surely learn on this journey of life. Often, if you refuse to learn things in an easier and calmer way, God will allow you to enter into storms that will compel you to learn.

You may need to be broken of pride, arrogance, and rebellion. It is through your trials that this can happen. Brokenness may be your only hope to come face to face with yourself and reality. Often, it is an earthshaking event or cataclysmic experience through which your life makes a major shift for good. The Apostle Paul is one great example of this humbling that altered his destiny (Acts 9, 22).

*Second*, God may use a trial to move you into His divine destiny (Gen. 50:19, 20). What seems bad may turn out to be the best thing that could have happened to you. God uses bad things to cause great things to happen. What you discover is that a “set back” is often a “set up.” Naomi’s triple suffering resulted in an amazing “set up” for the Messiah to enter into human history (Ruth 1-4; Mt. 1:5, 6, 16). Jacob was utterly despondent and pessimistic in the midst of Joseph’s trials (Gen. 42:36), but how could he understand what God was setting up something so incredible. Often, it is by faith that you have to trust that God is working through the trial, albeit perhaps in a mysterious way, to accomplish something good (Rom. 8:28).

*Third*, God often uses trials to sculpt and refine you (Heb. 12:10, 11; Jam. 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 4:12, 13; cf. Dan. 3:1ff, vs. 27). Scriptures declares God’s intention through your suffering—“I have purified you by giving you troubles” (Isa. 48:10 New Century Version, 1987); and “It was for my own good that I had such troubles” (Isa. 38:17 New Century Version, 1987).

In the world, trials are like a sledge-hammer that pulverizes your life, but in Christ, trials are like a chisel that sculpts your life. As someone has observed: your strength doesn’t reside in having never been broken, but in the resolve to grow strong in the broken places. Your greatest opportunity to grow may come from the challenge of a trial.

*Fourth*, trials may be instrumental in destroying sinful tendencies in your flesh—“so that the sinful nature may be destroyed, and his spirit saved” (1 Corinthians 5:5, New International Version, 1984). The pain of suffering, trials, and adversity is not to punish you but refine how you function as a disciple of Christ. God disciplines us for our own good (Heb. 12:10, 11). Such discipline is an indicator that you are an authentic child of God (Heb. 12:7-11).<sup>1</sup>

*Fifth*, trials may cultivate a hunger in your heart for heaven (Jam. 1:12; Col. 3:1, 2), and for a deeper relationship with God (Ps. 32:1-11; 51:1-17; 55:1-2; 56:13). In a fallen world, God uses trials to bless you on a deeper soul level. Laura Story’s song, “Blessing,” depicts all of this in a moving way—the chorus: ‘Cause what if your blessings come through raindrops; What if your healing comes through tears; What if a thousand sleepless nights; Are what it takes to know You’re near; And what if trials of this life are your mercies in disguise.<sup>2</sup>

*Sixth*, trials may move you to see the things that you must surely see—the reality of living within the will of God and the trouble of living outside of the will of God (Ps. 119:67, 71; Mal. 3:18). The underbelly of evil and the Evil One is often revealed through a collision with this dark world—we finally see the reality of the dark-side. I have counseled hundreds of people who have had a serious wakeup call through their suffering, and came to the conviction that God’s will/wisdom is the only one way to live. Perhaps one of the greatest failures in life is to fail to learn from our failures.

### **How to Grow Through Your Trials**

*First*, you must have the right attitude as you endure the trial (2 Cor. 12:10; Jam. 1:2-4). Consider it “joy” (a soul level experience, not necessarily a happiness experience) when you are

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<sup>1</sup> For a fuller treatment on this see Christopher Moody, *Disciple-making Disciples: A Practical Theology of the Church* (Franklin, Tennessee: Carpenter’s Son Publishing, 2021), 93-95.

<sup>2</sup> Laura Story, Blessings Album, “Blessing,” 2011, accessed through Apple Music.

experiencing a trial because of the result that will come from the trial—your growth! If the trials are to have their desired effect upon your life, you must avoid self-pity, complaint and self-denigration.

*Second*, don't miss your chance to be deepened in your connection with God through the trial. Suffering becomes a theological wrestling, an attempt to "justify the ways of God to man."<sup>3</sup> One who suffered greatly declared, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (Jam. 4:8, New American Standard Bible, 1995). There is only one direction in the midst of a trial and that is to go deeper.

*Third*, take full advantage of the trial. Don't miss out on your opportunities with a trial. Learn all you can from the trial and do all you can while in the trial. Paul wrote some of the most significant writings while in prison. Victor Frankl (1905-1997) refined the foundations for an astounding therapeutic approach (existential or logotherapy), while in a Nazi concentration camp.<sup>4</sup> One country singer told me his best love songs emerged out of his period of loneliness after losing his wife.

*Fourth*, leave the duration of the trial up to God and do not give up on God. No storm lasts forever, but some storms last longer than others. The key is not to capsize your life in the midst of the storm. You must persevere through the trial to God's best for your life (Jam. 1:12). You must not give up on God's use of the trial. Eventually you will experience a break through to the highest He has for you (Ps. 32:8). As someone has observed: "Everything is ok in the end; If it is not ok, then it's not the end." You will surely reach a point in which you realize the storm is finally over and you have a sense in your soul that things are now ok and better things are now

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<sup>3</sup> J. S. Feinberg, "Theodicy" in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Walter A. Elwell, Editor (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 1184, also, refer to pages 1185-87.

<sup>4</sup> Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006).

ahead. Two Scriptures you must ponder in the midst of your adversity: “Weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning” (Psalm 30:5, New American Standard Bible, 1995); “...God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, and to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28, New American Standard Bible, 1995).

*Fifth*, embrace the pain so you can grow. Accept the pain of the trial—do not excuse, complain, reject, or deny the pain. Embrace it just like Jesus did all the way to His death. In like manner, we must die to ourself through the trial (Gal. 2.20). He is our example (1 Pet. 2:21). It is in the midst of pain, that silliness, superficialities, and illusions are eviscerated, and you are forced to face the truth vs. deception; reality vs. fantasy. The pain focuses your mind and you start realizing things on a deeper level.

*Sixth*, your past experiences/trials must be used in ministry for a greater good—“Your misery is your ministry; your mess is your message.”<sup>5</sup> You are no more profound than when you speak out of your suffering. Don’t let the trial/suffering go to waste. You gained much from the experience. So, utilize it as a stepping stone to bless others.

### References

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- Moody, Christopher, *Disciple-making Disciples: A Practical Theology of the Church*. Franklin, Tennessee: Carpenter’s Son Publishing, 2021.

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<sup>5</sup> Ed Young aphorism.