

TRIALS THAT PUSH US

James 4:10 ... "Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord, and he will lift you up."

We discussed in the two previous studies how trials affect us: Small trials give us a rehearsal for bigger trials that will come our way, and trials stretch us like athletes stretch before an event, so that the challenges of life do not easily harm us. Today we will consider how trials are allowed into our lives for the purpose of driving us forward; how they push us to improve and give us the desire for a closer relationship with Jesus. In today's study you might learn that there is a greater purpose in trials than you might have thought in the past.

Although God sometimes uses trials to nudge us back to him when we have staggered away from his plan or to even discipline us, every trial has another even more important purpose. If you are a cook, you know that the flavor of garlic is not released until you smash it, and a peppercorn does not release its flavor until it is broken. The charcoal that many people cook over, started out as wood or coconut shells that had to be burned and broken before it was useful. Carpenters must first cut lumber before it can be used to build a house. Eggs must be broken to eat. Corn must be dried and cracked before it is fed to chickens. There are countless examples of this principle all around us. And, it applies to our spiritual lives.

The best that you have to offer God in service to him, may come after you have been broken in some way; after you have been pushed to your physical or mental limits and have learned to surrender your will to Him. Trials are not meant to drag you down and make you feel oppressed, hopeless and bitter. Their real purpose is to lift you up and propel you forward. For some of us, God needs to break us and humble us to make us useful for his kingdom. The years of my childhood and youth spent in hospitals and on sick beds, crippled and barely able to walk for more than two years, broke down my own desires for a career in law, and allowed God to lead me into ministry. I value those horrible years of physical misery as representing the gate God opened for me to enter and prepare to serve Him.

I pray that when you reach my age, you will look back on your own life and see the value of the trials God allowed into your life to conform you to his will. How they taught you to stand upright during your difficulties through the rehearsal of smaller trials. How they stretched you to prevent real harm to yourself. And, how they lifted you up and pushed you forward, better equipped to serve God. But, do not wait until you are old to evaluate that. Do it now so that God's plan can be executed in your life when you are still young. You can agree to serve him willingly, or you can wait to be broken. I pray you will offer yourself to him today for whatever plan he has for your life. As our verse says: "Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord, and he will lift you up."

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