



How Trials Shape Our Character

Like precious metal is refined by fire, our faith is purified through trials. Though painful, these challenges shape us into people who reflect the character of Christ. Every hardship we endure becomes part of God's greater work of growth, preparing us for eternal reward and faithful living.

Some of the greatest instruments of God's work suffered mightily. In some cases, it could be viewed as justified, while others were seemingly unfair. What God does, and allows to happen, in our lives is for the purpose of serving Him and the Great Commission. If we acknowledge that our lives are not our own but belong to God to do with as He sees fit, every season of pain, struggle, and darkness will result in a refined offering of His love to the world.

How have you ever seen God refining your righteousness through difficult circumstances? How did that season of life change you?

Read James 1:1-10

What does it mean to "count it all joy" when facing trials (James 1:2)? What are we depending on to occur?

In what ways does wisdom and perspective from our own suffering encourage others who are going through trials to trust God through their refining process?

Proverbs 24:16 "For though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again, but the wicked stumble when calamity strikes."



Romans 3:22 "This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile."

The Righteous Fall — And Rise Again

The term "righteous" used here doesn't mean 'someone who does the right thing.' Righteous means those who have been put right in their relationship with God.

This verse doesn't say the wicked fall and the righteous don't. It says the righteous fall — but they get back up. Falling is part of the journey of faith, not a sign of failure in faith. Consider how much you've learned through difficulties in your past. It may not necessarily have to do with depression; it could be challenges related to school, work, finances, relationships, etc. It's difficult to maintain perspective in the midst of it, but you can probably cite at least one thing you learned about God's faithfulness. Those lessons are very difficult to learn without personal experience, and nearly impossible without God's grace to forgive us and allow us to use the falls for the benefit of the Kingdom.

Righteousness in the Midst of Struggle

In the midst of failure and despair, the righteousness we've been given by God is not lost—it's revealed in how we continue to love others. What this means is that even when we are enduring self-inflicted depression; perhaps brought on by us doing something unjust, unrighteous, or even illegal, the righteousness we have been given through our faith in Christ Jesus does not disappear. It's easy to feel that we have failed God and He is so disappointed that he doesn't want anything to do with us, but nothing can be further from the truth. He knows that we are going to stumble, falter, and in some cases, fail catastrophically. But he did not send his son to die for us only to put conditions on the gift of freedom from our sins.

Perspective Questions:

How have you experienced a "fall" that strengthened your faith?

What helped you get back up again?



Righteousness Is a Gift, not a Goal

Romans 3:22 assures us that righteousness is given, not earned. Depression can lie to us, saying we're worthless or failing—but the truth of Scripture overrules those lies.

Perspective Questions:

How does it change your outlook to know righteousness is a gift and not earned?

What are some ways we can rest in the Gospel Truth during low moments?

Love Is the Expression of Righteousness

Jesus said the second greatest commandment is to love others as ourselves. This is how God defines love, not how we feel unlovable when we're in a bad place.

Even in depression, a small act of love reflects the righteousness of Christ within us. We know we're not worthy of the sacrifice Jesus made for us on the cross, but that's why He's Jesus and we're not. So, to love someone else that needs to know God is there for them is a simple, yet powerful demonstration of being Christlike.

Perspective Questions:

Have there been small acts of love have made a big impact on your life? If so, what were they?



What's one simple act of kindness you can do for someone else this week?

Write down the name of person to reach out to this week with a kind message, note, or call:

Depression Doesn't Disqualify You from Righteousness

Depression can paralyze our energy and focus, but it doesn't remove our righteousness. God knows your struggle. Your value in His eyes is secure—even when you can't 'perform.'

Perspective Questions:

What does it mean to you that God understands your struggles?

How might your expression of empathy and understanding to someone in pain show compassion to others?



Journal a prayer to God expressing your honest emotions. He will not hold your pain, fear or anger against you. He desires the honesty of your heart. What is it about your pain you want Him to know?
