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LIFE IS A TEST

G. MICHAEL COCORIS
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God tests us! Both the Old and New Testaments teach that. I have never understood it. Why should He, who knows everything, need to test me? He already knows of what I’m made. Furthermore, He knows I will often fail the test. He even knows which test I will fail. Why then does He need to test me?

It’s like the lady who said to a friend who had just been served a jumbo hot fudge sundae, “Hey, aren’t you on a diet?” The lady, about to dig into the sundae, responded, “Yes, I am. I just do this to test myself.” Then, picking up her spoon, she added, “And so far, I’ve failed the test every time.”

The Bible speaks of trials as external submission to pressure, and temptation as an internal solicitation to evil. Both of these are often referred to as tests. God tests us with trials, and Satan tests us with temptations. But the question still remains, why do believers need to be tested?

If you’re anything like me, you hate tests. When I was a student, I despised them. Once I graduated, I thought I was finished with tests for the rest of my life.
Before long, however, I discovered that all of life is a test. Let's see what the Bible has to say about this issue.

**GOD TESTS US TO BRING OUT OUR FAITH**

James opens his book with the admonition, "My brother, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience" (1:2-3). The phrase translated "the testing of your faith" refers to the genuine part of your faith. This same Greek phrase is translated "the genuineness of your faith" in 1 Peter 1:7. James is saying, then, that you can count a trial as joy because you know that your faith will produce patience. A diamond is just a chunk of coal that made good under pressure.

In their book entitled, *The Sanctity of Sex*, Olford and Lewis say, concerning James 1:2, "Does the batter groan because the pitcher is about to deliver the ball? No, because without the pitcher there would be no game, no opportunity to hit the ball into the stands and share the glory of the mounting score. Temptation is the Christian’s opportunity."

Peter says something similar in the opening verses of his epistle. He says, "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it be tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1:6-7).

Like James, Peter is teaching we should rejoice in our trials. According to Peter, the purpose of our trials (cf. "that") is to test our faith, our genuine faith, so that it can be praised and honored at the coming of Christ.

Clouds in our lives are sent to bring showers of blessing. The rain waters the crop now; the fruit comes later. Life is a hard school, but hard schools make excellent graduates.

God tests our faith so that He can refine it now (James 1:3) and reward it later (1 Peter 1:7).

Let me illustrate. Peter talks about gold being tested by fire. The purpose of putting gold in the fire is not to see whether or not it is genuine. It is to purify
and refine it. The fire burns out the dross. The purpose of the test, then, is to burn out the faults and find the true nature of the object tested. God tests us to bring out and develop our faith. He who knows the beginning from the end knows what we will do, but He has to take us through the process to develop us. When we face a trial, if we believe God, our faith is strengthened and developed. We develop endurance and, as we endure, we mature (James 1:4). As we jump the hurdles of life, we develop strength in our spiritual legs.

**Satan Tests Us to Bring Out Our Flesh**

If God tests us to bring out our faith and develop us, why does Satan test us? After discussing trials (1:2-12), James turns his attention to temptation (1:13-18). By putting trials and temptation in juxtaposition, James is teaching that they often accompany one another. God allows trials to come into our lives. His intent is that we would trust Him and thus our faith would be developed. Satan sees an opportunity to destroy us, so he puts a temptation beside the trial. His aim is not to bring out our faith, but to bring out our flesh.

Peter writes, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary, the Devil, walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). Peter begins his book discussing trials; he ends it talking about temptation. Enduring trials develops us, succumbing to temptation destroys us.

A salesman was waiting to see the purchasing agent of a large company. He was there to submit his company’s bid for a lucrative contract. He couldn’t help but notice that the competitor’s bid was on the purchasing agent’s desk. The actual figure of the bid, however, was covered by a can of juice. The temptation to see the amount of the competitor’s bid became too much, so the salesman lifted the can. He watched horrified as thousands of BBs poured from the bottom of the can and scattered across the floor. He had bitten the bait. He had succumbed to the temptation. He demonstrated that he was an unscrupulous salesman — and he lost the bid.

Let’s say you have a financial trial. There is more month than money. The pressure is enormous but, remember, life is
a test. God has allowed this trial to come into your life to test you. God wants to test your faith to see if you will trust Him. He wants to strengthen your faith and develop your character. To respond in faith, all you need to say is, “Lord, I believe you’re in control of the universe, that all things work together for good, and that you have a purpose in this trial. I’m going to trust you, and I’m going to learn from this trial. Now what do you want to teach me?”

With this kind of attitude, you will discover that God wants to either teach you something about yourself or something about Him. He may want to teach you that you have not been handling your money properly. Or He may want to teach you that He is sufficient to supply your needs.

In the meantime, Satan will also test you. His intent is to tempt you in order to bring out your flesh. He may suggest, “Steal some money and solve your financial problems. Cheat to relieve the pressure.” If you follow Satan’s route, you will strengthen your flesh, not your faith, and you will develop a selfish character, instead of a sanctified character.

**CONCLUSION**

Life is a test. God tries us to bring out our faith and develop us. Satan tempts us to bring out our flesh and destroy us.

God tests us, so He can reward us at the judgment seat of Christ. God’s purpose is to develop, Satan’s purpose is to destroy.

Life is a test. Are you passing or failing? All of us pass some tests and fail others. Rarely does anyone go through school with a perfect score. In life, no one does. You can fail a few minor exams and still be classified as an outstanding student, but fail too many of them and you’ll find yourself in deep trouble.

Am I saying that believers must grow in strength until they are personally able to cope with anything? No! Growth in our spiritual lives is not a matter of greater personal strength but a greater ability to exercise faith consistently. When we trust ourselves, we fall. When we trust the Lord, we stand. Trials teach us to trust Him more consistently. The object is not for us to be stronger in ourselves or to be independent apart from the Lord. Paul said, “When I am weak then I am strong”
Believers are to be strong, not in themselves, but in the Lord (Ephesians 6:10).