

*In search of...*

# Truth & Right

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## Trials of Life

In both the Old Testament and in the New Testament, believers have been told that God knows our hearts (I Samuel 16:7, Luke 16:15). He not only knows what we are thinking at this moment, but he also understands our inclinations and desires. God knows each of us better than we understand ourselves. He knows whether we have chosen to follow Him or to follow Satan.

Yet, If God already knows where we stand, then what is the purpose of the trials of life - those pop quizzes of God - which He sends our way? Who is it that benefits from these tests? Consider this story:

A man found a cocoon of a butterfly, which he carefully brought home. Several days later a small opening appeared. He sat and watched several hours as the butterfly struggled to force its body through the tiny opening. After hours of struggle, the butterfly stop making any progress in its escape. It appeared as if it had gone as far as it could.

The man decided to help the butterfly, so he took a pair of scissors and carefully enlarged the hole. The

butterfly was then able to exit the cocoon easily, but like a newborn infant, it looked misshapen. Its body was swollen and its wings were small, shriveled things.

"Surely, at any moment, the wings would expand," the man thought as he continued to watch. But nothing happened. The body remained swollen and the wings remained crippled. It was never able to fly.

What the man in his kindness and haste did not understand was that the restricting cocoon and the struggle required of the butterfly to emerge through the tiny opening were God's way of forcing fluid from the body of the butterfly into its wings. Once it achieved its freedom from the cocoon, it would be ready for flight.

Sometimes struggles are exactly what we need in our life. If God allowed us to go through our life without obstacles, it would cripple us. We would not be as strong as we could have been.

We are the ones who benefit from the trials of life. We may claim a firm belief in Christ, our Savior. We may think we would follow Him no matter

where the road may lead. But until we have to stand with Him in the face of severe trials, we cannot be fully sure of ourselves.

Consider the testing of Abraham in Genesis 22 when he was told to sacrifice his beloved son, Isaac. The writer of Hebrews, in Hebrews 11, said that Abraham considered the command a death sentence for his son. As we read the chilling story, we realize that Abraham had every intention of carrying out God's command. He journeyed three days knowing he was about to kill his son. Abraham was sure Isaac was required to die, but he was sustained by his belief that God would raise Isaac from the dead.

God knew the strength of Abraham's faith before putting Abraham through this severe test. However, until Abraham raised the knife to plunge it into his son, would Abraham have understood if he could put his God before his son? Could we have understood the strength of faith that God requires of us, if these events did not happen for us to read about?

When God told the Israelites to enter the land of Canaan and take possession of it, He could have delivered it into their hands with no effort required on their part. If God wanted to, He could have sent a great plague through the land and decimated the entire population of Canaan. The Israelites could have simply walked in and taken possession of the empty cities. There would have been no risks of battle, facing enemies fighting to protect their homes and families. However, God wanted each man's faith to be tried, so he would know and appreciate where his new home came from. It could not have been easy for the Israelite soldiers to face

larger armies with better equipped soldiers on their home turf. Even if they believed God's promise of victory in the end, would there not have been some nagging doubt regarding if they, personally, would survive the next battle. Each could ask himself, "Will I be able to enjoy the promise land?"

If God just handed the land of Canaan over to the Israelites, they would not have known for sure how valuable the land was to them and their children. They could not have fully appreciated the care of the God on whom they had to rely.

Most of the religious world sees no necessity for the rite of baptism. After all, God already knows the condition of each man's heart. When we say that we believe, is that not enough to prove our willingness to follow God? Yet, over and over we see that simple affirmation is not enough. Abraham had to act on his faith to show where he stood in the sight of God. Each Israelite soldier had to face the enemy troops to let it be known where he had placed his trust. We must act on our faith, to perform what may seem to be an unnecessary act, to receive our salvation.

Abraham could have declared his faith in God from every housetop, but if he had failed to sacrifice his son, he would have shown the world that his word was worthless. We too may declare our faith in Jesus Christ, but if we cannot perform the simple obedient act of baptism for the remission our sins, then we too will have failed the test.

The testing of our faith only begins with baptism. Each day, in many ways, Christians must face the daily battle of life and declare his faith in the Son of God by standing firm with Him, come what may. If an

Israelite's faith failed him in battle, he may have died from a mortal wound. If a Christian's faith fails in his struggles with evil, he may die a spiritual death; losing the salvation of his soul.

When a Christian passes a test, he is made stronger. Even failure to stand rock solid in the faith can be a benefit, if he will only learn from his mistakes. Failures show a Christian his true condition, his need to rely on God, and the absolute need to grown strong in the faith. If a Christian will ask God for forgiveness and try again, then God will make him stand. In this way, the trials we face purify our lives as fire purifies gold by burning the contaminants out of the ore.

*"These have come so that your faith - of greater worth than gold, which perishes, even though refined by fire - may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."* (1 Peter 1:7)

Trials are never easy or enjoyable. View them as opportunities to show where you stand. Learn from them where your weaknesses are, so you can shore up your defenses.

There are some who are reading this, who have yet to obey God's calling to become a part of his people. I cannot see into your heart. I don't know why you are hesitating. Perhaps there is some sin in your life that makes you think you are not good enough for God. I would rather not know what that sin is, but I do know this: There is no past sin that God cannot wipe away for an obedient child of His and there is no future temptation or sin that is not easier to deal within the loving body of His people. Will you not join us this day?

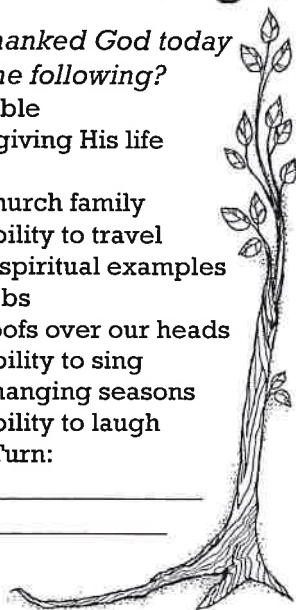
Jeffrey W. Hamilton

dear God,  
thanks for this  
beautiful life  
and forgive me if  
i dont love it  
enough.

*Have you thanked God today  
for any of the following?*

- The Bible
- Jesus giving His life for us
- Our church family
- The ability to travel
- Good spiritual examples
- Our jobs
- The roofs over our heads
- The ability to sing
- The changing seasons
- The ability to laugh
- Your Turn:

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# Christian Q&A

*Corey Latimer has been a member here for a year and a half, and Sarah has been here since they got married last year. Sarah is Jarred's sister, so obviously they know each other, but perhaps you can get to know her & Corey better.*

## **What is your favorite part of attending the Wellsburg church of Christ?**

Corey: Brothers and sisters, and well-taught sermons.

Sarah: The brethren, mostly, and it is good to be close to family.

## **What is your favorite hymn that we sing? Why?**

Corey: "Sing and Be Happy," because it's fun and uplifting.

Sarah: "Beulah Land," because it is an old childhood favorite.

## **What is your favorite Bible verse? Why?**

Sarah: 2 Corinthians 12:9

Anytime I'm dealing with adversity, it's encouraging.

Corey: Psalm 27:4

It's about wanting to inquire about Heaven.

## **What makes you a strong believer in your faith?**

Sarah: Looking around at nature and realizing that none of this is by chance.

Corey: Because the world is balanced by good & evil and we are all tested in some way. Just look around, you know?



## **What are your greatest strengths/weaknesses as a Christian?**

Sarah: For strengths, I'd say understanding. It's pretty easy for me to understand most sermons & scriptures. My worst weakness is that I am really bad at keeping up my personal study.

Corey: For strengths, I'm kind of the opposite; I explore the Bible often, working on sermons. I'd say a big weakness of mine is music; focusing too much on worldly music and not enough on hymns.

