

GAINING STRENGTH THROUGH PASSED TESTING

I have some questions for you. Have you ever lost a job? Have you had health problems yourself? Have you lost a loved one or close friend? Have you gone through a divorce or the depression that can set in from a broken relationship? Your responses to these or others of similar nature speak of trials you have or may face in your lifetime.

It's a given that you, as a Christian, will go through trials in your life. The Bible shows numerous encounters where men and women of faith went through various tests. Some passed, and some failed. When you stand through such trials, your faith-walk in Christ is strengthened, and He will take you to a new level in your faith so that you can move on to a greater purpose in His kingdom.

I like to use illustrations to help convey a point. Some of you may recall the Biosphere 2 project – a glass, scientific-research facility – located in Arizona that was constructed in the early 1990s. Although this facility has different uses now, its original purpose was to demonstrate the viability of closed ecological systems to support and maintain human life. Something that the scientists learned from their experience living within the closed facility really stuck out in mind. That is, the necessity of tree stresses to make it strong enough to withstand the elements. Allow me to explain. While living over a period of years within this earth-like facility, the scientists noticed that they had trees growing faster than they would grow in the wild. They also found that these trees would fall over before they were completely matured. This puzzled the scientists until they compared their man-made environment to the one God had created. The answer: they had not factored in or assumed the necessity of having any wind within the Biosphere 2 complex. Without going into any technical detail regarding this, the presence of wind, a stress, makes a tree stronger so that it: 1) Is able to mature and not fall down due to its own weight, and 2) Can withstand environmental elements. The absence of wind caused the trees to be weaker and not able to survive like their earth counterparts.

Analogous to earth's trees requiring wind to grow up big and strong, we'll go through trials so we are made stronger for our God-given purpose. I heard another quote that I think is applicable here: "The only way God can show us that He's in control is to put us in situations that we can't control." Hmm, that sounds a little "stress"-ful to me, if you get my point.

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