



- Difficult environments prepare us to follow Jesus long term.

2 My friends, be glad, even if you have a lot of trouble. 3 You know that you learn to endure by having your faith tested. 4 But you must learn to endure everything, so that you will be completely mature and not lacking in anything. James 1:2-4 (CEV)

Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. So don't try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way. James 1:2-4 (MSG)

- Our disciplines determine the duration of our journey.

- Our problems have a purpose.

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 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 1:6-7 (NIV)

A necessary perspective:

- What God is developing in me will honor Him when Jesus returns.

11 "My purpose in writing is to encourage you and assure you that the grace of God is with you no matter what happens." 1 Peter 5:11 (NLT)

So take a new grip with your tired hands, stand firm on your shaky legs, and mark out a straight, smooth path for your feet so that those who follow you, though weak and lame, will not fall and hurt themselves but become strong. Hebrews 12:12-13 (NLT)

Definition of perseverance:

- To continue in a course of action even in the face of difficulty or with little or no prospect of a desired end.
- Steadfastness in doing something despite the difficulty or delay in attaining it.

4 We speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions, which you endure. 2 Thessalonians 1:4 (NASB)

... we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. Romans 5:3-5 (NASB)

The problem we create is:

- We pray to get out of troubles.

- Our character is unformed.

- No hope is produced in our heart.

When troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing. James 1:2-4 (NLT)

33 Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world." John 16:33 (NLT)

We undermine perseverance when:

- We pursue the temporary, rather than the eternal.

12 Happy are those who remain faithful under trials, because when they succeed in passing such a test, they will receive as their reward the life which God has promised to those who love him. James 1:12 (GNT)

- We base our commitment to God on our circumstances.

15 ... let's keep focused on that goal, those of us who want everything God has for us. If any of you have something else in mind, something less than total commitment, God will clear your blurred vision—you'll see it yet! Philippians 3:15 (MSG)

- We want what is easy, rather than what reflects Jesus.

Philippians 3:17-21 (MSG)

Times of difficulty teach us to die to ourselves.

Hebrews 12:2-5 (MSG)

When Difficulties come:

- Make it an opportunity to pray.

If any of you are having trouble, pray. James 5:13 (GW)

12 Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying. Romans 12:12 (NLT)

13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13 (NKJV)

- Don't worry about Why, deal with What.

- Make it an opportunity for faith to grow.

Friends, when life gets really difficult, don't jump to the conclusion that God isn't on the job. Instead, be glad that you are in the very thick of what Christ experienced. This is a spiritual refining process, with glory just around the corner. 1 Peter 4:12-13 (MSG)



**TO CREATIVELY LOVE AND LEAD PEOPLE
IN A GROWING RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS.**

Questions for Connection Groups:

These questions also work well for personal time with God.

- What scripture and/or point spoke most to you from the Talk on Sunday? Explain why?
- When You think about an experience like Boot Camp, what are some of the difficulties they encounter? Why are these environments important? How does Boot Camp turn civilians into soldiers?
- Do you see difficult times as an important part of our spiritual development? Explain.
- If we don't learn perseverance, what happens to us?
- Can you recall a difficult time that helped you to grow and strengthened your faith?
- What does the statement mean to you - "Our disciplines determine the duration of our journey"? Do you agree with that? Explain.
- How does learning perseverance honor God when Jesus returns? (1 Peter 1:6-7)
- How do difficult environments prepare us to follow Jesus long term?
- Talk through the points under the sub-heading - "We undermine perseverance when".
- How do times of difficulty teach us to die to ourselves? What does that mean to you?
- Why is prayer important in developing perseverance?
- How do we make difficult times an opportunity for faith to grow?

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