

Trials are the Surefire Way of Knowing if Your Faith is True

If there's one thing I can promise you about life with Christ, it is that it will not always be easy. Walking side-by-side with Christ does not always mean that everything will come simply to us. There's a reason that Jesus said, "If anyone will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me," (Matt. 16:24). He does not promise that everything we experience during this life will be easy, but it will be worth it in the end.

That's why it's crucial to stay in touch with the Holy Spirit as your guide. When you step out of the way and let Him lead, you will have the capacity and the strength to stand tall in the days of evil. It is through these trials that the genuineness of your faith is tested. I discuss the topic of trials in depth in my new book *Spirit-Led Living in an Upside-Down World*, which was released this week.

I believe these trials never last, but overcomers do, which is an important key to living in the Spirit. Consider these spiritual giants whose lives still inspire us though they lived through terrible afflictions:

- John Wesley had such a terrible marriage that when his wife died, he didn't attend her funeral.
- Eric Liddell, made famous by the Oscar-winning movie *Chariots of Fire*, died of brain cancer during World War II in a Japanese prison camp occupied by China.
- Amy Semple McPherson, who founded the Church of the Foursquare Gospel, had a failed marriage and was embroiled in a well-publicized scandal.

- Oral Roberts, the best-known of the healing evangelists of the 1940s and 1950s, endured unimaginable tragedy when his daughter died in a plane crash and his oldest son committed suicide.

If these struggles sound familiar, you are not alone. I have met many Christians who sincerely want to live overcoming lives, but they feel helpless and alone, often because they are disconnected from a life-enhancing community of believers. Maybe they have never really been strengthened and established in the Christian faith. So they toss to and fro, as the Bible puts it, never really experiencing the fullness of Spirit-led living.

Still others hear sermons or read books about God's power to deliver us from sin and make our lives work, but those kinds of breakthroughs always seem to happen to someone else. They feel empty, inept and powerless to experience the victorious life they know God wants them to have. Alone, discouraged and weak, they pretend to be fine and hope no one notices.

So, what are we to do? How do we hold on tight to the Holy Spirit in the midst of trials?

The most important practical step is to make a daily habit of spending time in the Word and prayer, which is not only talking to God and telling Him your problems but also listening.

The key is to "dwell," or rest, in the secret place, which is the presence of God. Resting brings us to a place of vulnerability and submission. We cannot fight in our own ability when we're resting and dwelling in God. God wants us in this position so He can be our strength when we have none. He wants us to cling to Him and allow Him to uphold us in times of hardship, confusion and pain.

We may not understand what's happening when a trial hits our

lives, but we must trust that God Almighty wants to use it to bring something good. We must cling to Him in faith, even when it seems our faith has failed. We must continue walking with the Holy Spirit through prayer, worship and studying the Word, even when it's hard and the urge to quit is too much. This is what it means to abide in Him. {eoa}

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