



Let's be honest. Nobody likes trials. You will never see people crossing their fingers in nervous anticipation saying, "I hope something goes wrong today!" We tend to view all opposition, setbacks and persecution as "bad" to be avoided at all costs. In fact, if we are being totally honest, we'd have to admit that when things work against our desired direction, we all too often quietly think that we *must* be doing something wrong. Or worse, we think God has fallen silent on the job and forgotten us. At times, our poor choices produce less than appealing outcomes, but for the believer, a whole other dimension is at work that we often overlook. The Bible repeatedly tells us that trials are *part* of our destiny. In fact, in the hands of a very gracious God, our trials are a sort of furnace where God *refines* us. Just as precious metals go through the fire to remove every impurity, God allows trials to purify us as a spotless and radiant bride. Don't misunderstand. The trials are *for* us. We are being *refined*. And just like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, when we enter the furnace, we find God there *with* us. He ensures that the trial doesn't burn us — it merely burns away everything that opposes his glory and purpose in our lives! Father, refine us, your Bride!

"We also *glory in our sufferings*, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And *hope does not put us to shame*, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us" Romans 5:3-5 – Emphasis added.

"In all 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 the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though *refined* by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed" 1 Peter 1:6-7 – Emphasis added.

"Consider it *pure joy*, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the *testing of your faith produces perseverance*. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" James 1:2-4 – Emphasis added.

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION:

1. *What trials, oppositions, challenges or setbacks are you currently facing? Ask the Holy Spirit if these are self-inflicted, an attack from the enemy or trials that are refining something beautiful in you. Ask him to speak to you about what he would have you do in this trial. Listen for his answer. If you need help discerning what God is saying in your trial, meet with another friend or leader in your life who hears from God.*
2. *Spend a few minutes thanking God for the trials he allows for your good! Ask for continued strength to persevere through this time of refining.*

PRAYER:

*Father, Your love is amazing, more than wonderful and greater than I can imagine! Thank you for loving me enough to make me uncomfortable. Thank you for doing absolutely **everything** for my good. Give me wisdom to understand the circumstances in which I find myself. I reject the lies of the enemy and choose to be filled with joy, confident that you will complete your every purpose for me!*

LISTENING TIME:

Stop for a few minutes and ask the Lord what he wants to say to you. He might bring to mind a picture, a word, a song, an encouragement, a Scripture or an answer to a burden in your heart. Don't rush or feel pressure to figure out the meaning of your impressions. Just invite him to speak and draw or write down what you sense. Afterward, ask God to help you discern and understand what he is saying to you. You might want to ask other trusted friends in the Kingdom for their input as well.

USE THE FOLLOWING SPACE TO RECORD WHAT GOD IS SAYING



TOOLS FOR FAMILY DEVOTIONS:

Look up the process of what happens to metals in a refiner's fire. Ask, "Where are you in a trial right now? What is God burning away? What good work is he accomplishing?" Pray for one another.

TOOLS FOR PRAYING FOR OTHERS:

Pray for someone going through a trying time. Ask God to give them wisdom, strength and encouragement. Consider practical ways you can help or encourage them.