

Heartland Christian Center
www.heartlandchristiancenter.com
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Principles for Spiritual Life (Part Six)

Life is Hard!

Romans 7 speaks of a “war going on in the inner life of the believer.

Romans 8:13 commands us to “put to death” the deeds of the flesh.

Galatians 5:17 tells us that the flesh and the spirit are continually at war with each other.

Three great enemies they face: the world, the flesh and the devil.

1. **Sin**
2. **Self**
3. **Satan**

“Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.” Acts 14:22 ESV

“Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.” II Timothy 2:3 ESV

Sixth Principle: There is no **growth** without struggle.

I. Four principles that help us think clearly about our trials:

- A. Because we live in a fallen world, **bad** things happen to all of us.
- B. We have no **control** over many things that happen to us or to those around us.
- C. We do have **complete** control over how we respond.
- D. Our **response** to our trials largely determines our spiritual growth – or lack thereof.
 1. Struggle in the Christian life is **inevitable**, lifelong and ultimately **beneficial**.
 2. Be a **student**, not a **victim**.

II. Practical guidelines that will help us be students and not victims:

- A. The **Command**.

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds.” James 1:2

“When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into your lives, my brothers, don’t resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends!” James 1:2 (JB. Phillips)

1. This is none other than a “**supernatural**” response.
2. Counting it all joy is a conscious **choice** we make when hard times come.
3. Following statements about our struggles and our trials:
 - a. This is **sent** from the Lord.
 - b. This is **necessary** for my spiritual growth.
4. Five suggestions:
 - a. Remind yourself of the **promises** of God.
 - b. Give **thanks** for what you can give thanks for.
 - c. Refuse to give in to **bitterness** and despair.
 - d. Choose to **believe** in God.
 - e. Make up your mind to go on with **life**.

B. The **Reason**.

“Because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.” James 1:3

1. We all have to undergo some “**furnace** time.”

“He knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold.” Job 23:10

C. The **Promise**

“Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” James 1:4

1. Now the reward of such gritty stubbornness is genuine spiritual **maturity**.

III. Things known and unknown

- A. We can’t always know why things happen the way they do.
- B. We can know that God is at **work** in our trials for our benefit and for his **glory**.

Remember these two words: PRAY and STAY.