

Some days tougher than others

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Have you ever noticed that some days just seem to go better than others? Some days it seems that everything goes perfect. From the moment you wake up to the time you go to sleep, everything goes smoothly, delightfully, and without a hitch. Sometimes on days like this, an event so amazing happens that you determine it to be one of the best days of your life. Maybe it was the day you landed the big job offer, the day you caught the ball at Dodgers Stadium, or the day you scored the winning point for the championship team. Or maybe, it was the day of your wedding, or when your child was born, or a Christmas celebration when the whole family came together. The point is that these kinds of days do happen. Once in a while, just before bed, at the close of one of these remarkable days I will hear one of my children whisper in almost magical tone, "This was the best day of my life." Wow! It does seem to stop you where you are just to think of it. But the fact is that most days are not like this, are they? Most days are filled with a varying degree of challenges, difficulties, problems and stress that would cause one to categorize the day somewhere between average and terrible. And let's face it; if there is such a thing as a perfect day, there is also such a thing as a tragic day, one that you desire to never relive, like those that are best here un-illustrated and un-described.

But the bulk of our days are spent somewhere in the middle having experiences that are neither amazing and extraordinary nor catastrophic and devastating. It is in this intermediate place where most people essentially live their lives and yet it is possible that it is in this position where we can be in the most danger. This is where apathy lies in wait, discouragement seeks to pounce, and mere boredom with life wants to devour your joy.

The Bible describes the events of the lives of many ordinary people being touched by God and called to do extraordinary things. Many times this first required training. Often we don't enjoy this "training" although it is necessary. My children never actually allow themselves to say they "enjoy" school. No matter how well they do or how exciting the subject matter, they seem to feel it is an obligation all children are burdened with to never admit that school is good. I was the same way when I was a child.

In our adult lives, we tend not to enjoy things that are difficult also, and almost refuse to recognize their benefit, even when the events of our lives are being used by God to prepare us for what is coming next. The famous King David in scripture wasn't always king. There was quite a process from the time it was first announced to David that he would someday be king by the prophet Samuel and the day he moved into the palace. That time in the middle would be among the most difficult imaginable. He spent years of his life in all sorts of battles: physical, emotional and spiritual. He lived in the wilderness in caves while being hunted by people he loved. He felt abandoned by friend and country. He battled with depression. He went hungry. He wrestled with his understanding of the love of God and his faith was tested. But it was out of this time when so many of the beautiful Psalms that we quote today were written. When some people read Psalm 23 with words such as "The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want," they relegate it to something quaint and sweet not seeing this as a desperate cry in the desert of hunted prey promising to trust in the unseen God of his faith. A

commitment that says my circumstances are grievous yet I choose to believe the promise that God will never leave me. When David describes "the valley of the shadow of death" he was speaking more literally than most people realize. When he finally one day walked into the royal palace where he would be king, he was battle-tested. He had been through the fire and his faith was purified.

In I Peter 1, the Bible describes to us a testing by fire. You see, when gold is purified, it is put into an extremely hot furnace to allow the impurities to surface so that they can be removed. This type of testing is not pass-or-fail testing as some suppose. This is a purifying and cleansing process removing what doesn't belong so that what remains reflects its full value and usability. You may be reading this and understand exactly what that feels like. It says that even as gold is valuable and precious and deserves to be purified by fire, so you are more precious than gold and the faith that is in you also is worthy of the furnace. This may not sound like good news at first, but the message here is that God recognizes your tremendous value like no one else and does allow us to experience things for our good. The successful result of this is abundant joy that goes beyond the ability to explain it to others (I Peter 1:8).

When I was young, I knew school was good for me but I refused to admit it. If you are being tested today, what will your response be? Every day may not be "the best day of your life" and, truth be told, most days won't be. This same passage also describes a "living hope" that is found in Jesus Christ. Yes, there are answers and they are found in him.

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Mid-Week Study:
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