

Reading: 2 Corinthians 12:7-10**Topic:** Growing Stronger Through Struggles

INTRODUCTION: The butterfly is a beautiful insect, admired by _____ and yet before it becomes this beautiful creature, it must _____ through an intense struggle.

I. THE STRUGGLES OF LIFE:

A. *From Birth:*

1. Our human struggles begin at birth, the struggle to take the first _____, the challenge to face life outside the safety and security of mother's _____. Job 3:1-3
2. Most of our infant stage struggles deal with our security and comfort _____ as we have to depend on others for our survival – to _____ us, to dress us, to carry us, to clean us, etc.
3. As we begin to _____ physically, we learn how to do things for ourselves – to talk, to _____, to _____ ourselves and to feed ourselves, but now our struggles change to the battle of our human wills.

B. *From Dreams To Reality:*

1. Everyone dreams of a life without _____, a life with no sickness, no pain, no conflicts with other people, no _____, no sorrow, no crying, etc.
2. Since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, every human being born into this world _____ struggles and difficulties that challenge one's _____ to survive and grow in this world. Job 14:1
3. The fairy tale life that people _____ about where everyone lives "Happily ever after" does not exist in this world, so facing reality and building one's _____ is the only way to succeed.
4. Jesus made it very clear that in this _____, everyone will face some kind of difficulty and opposition so we must be _____ to face it and get through it. Jn. 16:33

II. THE PURPOSE OF STRUGGLES:

A. *To Realize Our Need:*

1. When God led the children of Israel into the Promised Land, He gave them a land that was _____ and prosperous, but He also made them _____ and fight to take it.
2. God left some enemies around to test them and to _____ their abilities to be prepared for the times when other _____ nations would come to attack them. Judg. 3:1,2
3. God also allowed them to face enemies that were _____ and stronger than themselves, so that they would learn to _____ on their God and trust in Him rather than in their own strength. Josh. 10:11

B. *To Make Us Stronger:*

1. Body building and fitness have become popular _____ in the past several years as people seek to develop muscle _____ and strength for physical wellness and appearance.
2. The strength and muscles are only developed through _____ to the body – the effort required to push, to pull, to _____ and struggle, to run, jump and move, etc. I Cor. 9:26
3. The spiritual and natural struggles that God _____ us to experience are not to destroy us, but they are to _____ our spiritual muscles and develop our patience and trust in God. Is. 43:2
4. The struggles and trials that Job went through were extremely _____, but in the end, he was blessed by God and renewed in his strength to be an even _____ man than before. Job 23:8-11

5. The Word of God describes our process of struggles as the trial of our _____ that is a refining experience that develops us into something _____ for the Lord. I Pt. 1:6,7

III. OUR RESPONSE TO THE STRUGGLES:

A. The Human Response:

1. No one enjoys going through struggles and difficult things, and our human tendency is to _____ and ask why is this happening to me and did I do something _____? Jn. 9:1-3
2. As human beings, we always want an explanation for what is happening in our _____ and we may become frustrated when we don't have an _____ for why we are going through a struggle.

B. The Spiritual Response:

1. When the Apostle Paul was going through a particular struggle, and he had _____ of them during his life and ministry, this was his response: 2 Cor. 12:7-10
 - a. He _____ to God for the struggle to end.
 - b. He prayed not once but _____ times when he didn't get an answer the first time.
 - c. He got an _____ from the Lord but it wasn't what his flesh wanted to hear.
 - d. He finally realized that God had permitted this struggle in his life to not just make him a _____ person, but to _____ him from the possibility of destruction.
 - e. He learned how to thank God for the difficulty and to _____ upon the strength that the Lord gave to him daily to continue living for God.

C. The Act of Trusting:

1. As human beings, we tend to not _____ what we do not understand, and God understands that we have that issue, but He didn't ask us to understand everything, just to _____ Him. Pr. 3:5,6
2. The Lord's ways and His _____ are so far above ours, for He sees and knows the _____ and knows the end from the beginning. Is. 55:8,9
3. What we can be assured of is that though we cannot figure out all the _____ that God works, nor do we know all the time what He is doing, we know that He _____ us and He cares for us. Rom. 11:33,34
4. When we realize that God is still working on our behalf even through our _____, we can do what He asked us to do – not understand but to _____ all our cares upon Him because He cares! I Pt. 5:7

CONCLUSION: Nobody enjoys going through _____ in life, but like the beautiful butterfly, when the process is completed we are made beautiful to _____ for Jesus in this world.