



"Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come  
your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy."

James 1:2

### **Intro | How you see your life, shapes your life.**

If someone was to ask you what your favourite metaphor for life was, how would you answer? Metaphors are often expressed like, "Life is like a game, or a party, or an adventure". I'm sure you've heard many.

The reality is the way we see our life, will shape how we experience our life.

Over the years people have offered some great descriptors of the human experience.

For example, William Purkey, a famous educator, said,

"You've gotta dance like there's nobody watching,  
Love like you'll never be hurt,  
Sing like there's nobody listening,  
and live like its heaven on earth."

*[Don't you think he sounds like someone that would be great to have around]*

Many an author has described life as a story. In fact, one wrote, "The way we tell our life story is the way we begin to live our life".

On the other hand, Albert Einstein described life as a game, saying "first you have to learn the rules, and then play it better than anyone else."

Many have described life as "a journey with problems to solve and lessons to learn, but most of all experiences to enjoy."

Other's see life as an obstacle course, or a giant jigsaw puzzle, or a marathon, or a race.

The truth is whatever picture or metaphor you use to define your life, will shape how you respond to the situations and events that unfold in your life.

If you see life as a race, you'll always be competitively pushing ahead of others.

If you see life as an obstacle course, you'll be forever expecting to face a challenge or problem.

If you see yourself as the author of your unique choose-your-own-adventure, you'll be forever striving to navigate your life towards thrills and excitement.

Now as much as I love John Bunyan's metaphor in Pilgrim's Progress of the Christian life being a journey toward our celestial home, that is not the dominant metaphor God uses in Scripture to describe our life on earth.

Before I share what is God's dominant way of describing our time on earth, let's recap a few truths from last week.

We learned how God created every person for a purpose.

God's purpose for us is not, however, to live for ourselves and our own happiness, but rather to use our life as preparation for our eternal life with Him.

We only discover this purpose when we invite Jesus Christ to come and live in our heart and give Him the right to sit in the driver's seat of our life.

Then, through the power of God's Spirit, we are rescued from our bondage to the devil's kingdom of darkness and placed into Jesus' eternal kingdom of light and grace.

Once we are made members of God's kingdom family, we are invited to partner with Jesus in carrying out the Father's plans and purposes on earth.

OK. Let us return to discover what the dominant metaphor or picture God uses to describe our preparation time on earth.

There are actually three main metaphors. However, today, for the sake of time, I'm going to roll them into one.

God's Word teaches us that life is a series of tests, through which we learn to trust in Him, as He teaches us about how to be His kingdom people, equipped to dwell in God's eternal home.

**Point 1 | The dominant metaphor God uses in His Word to describe our time on earth is that it is a temporary preparation time during which we encounter a series of tests to learn how to trust in God.**

When God chose to reveal Himself through His word, He didn't just blurt out a series of truths He wanted us to write down and learn. Instead, God revealed Himself through the stories of specific people, and how they related with people in the surrounding nations.

Throughout every story we see God continually testing people's character, their faith, their obedience, their love, their integrity, their honesty and most of all their loyalty to Him.

That is why we find words like 'trials', 'temptations', 'refining' or 'testing' more than 200 times in the Bible.

We read how the first humans failed their test, and the resulting consequences.

We also read about people like Abraham, Ruth, Daniel and Esther who passed their tests brilliantly.

Yes, the Bible gives example after example of people who both passed their tests and also those who failed them miserably.

What is revealed through these tests that God assigns?

Tests reveal the character of a person and what is really going on in their heart, where their loyalty and devotion ultimately lies.

The Bible reveals God is constantly watching our response to people, problems, success, conflict, illness, disappointment, criticism and change.

One important test that God often assigns is how we will respond when we can't 'feel' God's presence in our life.

It may be strange for us to learn that God sometimes intentionally draws back, so that we don't sense His closeness as we usually do.

That's what happened to King Hezekiah. We read, "... *God withdrew from Hezekiah in order to test him and to see what was really in his heart.*" (2 Chronicles 32:31)

It is during seasons where God tests us that we learn how much we trust God's faithfulness to His promises and His Word.

**Point 2 | Life on earth is series of tests. All of these tests are designed to test our trust in God.**

Now, I understand this is rather a sobering concept – it is eons away from how the world defines life.

However, building on what we learned last week - that this life is preparation for our next life – AND when we acknowledge that God regularly tests us, it will reveal even further how much our Heavenly Father loves and cares for us.

Remember, it is the love and nurture of a wise and caring parent that draws them to discipline and train their children.

In Proverbs we read, "*For the Lord disciplines or corrects those he loves, just as a father disciplines or corrects a child in whom he delights.*" (Proverbs 3:12)

The reason God tests us is to train us, so we become holy and righteous people who properly reflect His glory.

He tests us so that we learn to trust Him even more than we currently do.

This is what the writer of Hebrews explains,

*"As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. ... But God's discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness. No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way."* (Hebrews 12:7-11)

And, you may be surprised to learn, it is not only us who must 'learn through being tested'. Even Jesus had to endure His Father's testing.

We read in Hebrews, writing about Jesus,

*"Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him."* (Hebrews 5:8-9)

John Piper explains this verse saying,

"He learned obedience" means that Jesus moved from untested obedience into suffering, and then through suffering into tested and proven obedience. If you think about it, if you are good enough, you can learn a new task without failing. And the new task that Jesus had to learn every hour, especially at the end of his life was: Can I endure this suffering that I have never experienced before, this new obedience that I have never performed before in the history of the universe? Can I learn and do this perfectly without failing, without falling into unbelief and complaining?

And the answer is yes. He could and he did. He learned obedience in what he suffered, and he never, never, never failed once in the process of perfect learning, proven, tested obedience."

Jesus demonstrated this life of being tested by our loving Father, by setting an example which we are to follow in our lives.

**Point 3 | This world is not our ultimate home. God tests our trust in Him to shape our lives so that we live to give glory and praise to Him.**

We may ask, why did Jesus have to endure tests?

The writer of Hebrews explains, "*God, for whom and through whom everything was made, chose to bring many children into glory. And it was only right that he should make Jesus, through his suffering, a perfect leader, fit to bring them into their salvation.*" (Hebrews 2:10)

In other words, Jesus was fulfilling everything that the Father saw as fitting in becoming the Saviour for sinners.

Where we failed in our test, someone must completely succeed and then offer Himself as the foundation of our salvation so that if we trust Him and we are united to Him, His success in becoming a perfectly obedient person is counted as our obedience and our success.

How awesome is that!

And what was the goal of the testing Jesus endured?

It was all to bring glory and praise to God the Father.

That was Christ's aim and that is our aim.

We were created to give glory and praise to our heavenly Father.

The more the Spirit of God tests us, the more He refines and cuts away our flaws and imperfections, the more we begin to reflect God's glory.

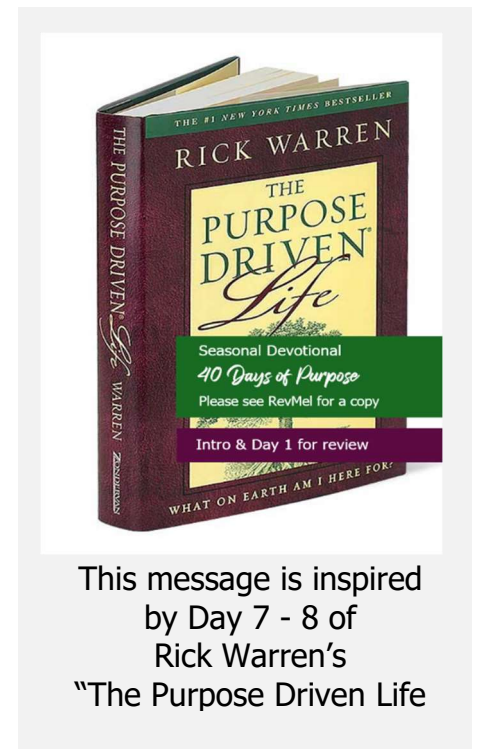
Paul wrote, *"And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image."* (2 Corinthians 3:18)

### **Application |**

While we may not 'see' it here on earth, every test God assigns has eternal ramifications. God has revealed that those who patiently endure testing, will *"receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him."* (James 1:12)

So, let us follow the advice the Apostle James offers,

*"... when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing."* (James 1:2-4)



This message is inspired  
by Day 7 - 8 of  
Rick Warren's  
"The Purpose Driven Life