



Linus, the cartoon character from Charlie Brown comic strips, builds a beautiful sandcastle, works on it for hours. Finally, he stands back and admires it. It's just as he wanted it to be...wonderful. Then just as he's admiring it, a wind storm and rain comes up and destroys all of his sandcastle. Now, he's standing where his beautiful masterpiece once

was and says to himself, *"I know there's a lesson in this, but I'm not sure what it is."*

One thing everyone has in common is that we have had storms come and wipe out our sandcastles and we're not sure what the lesson is. We have all faced trials and have wrestled through the struggles of life. Some of our struggles are extremely tragic and some, by comparison, are less traumatic. But they are all real. The Bible refers to these struggles as trials. *"Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."* (James 1:2-4) The term trials used in this verse means a "test" and it is often translated "temptation" in other contexts. These trials are the tests of faith that come from persecution both outside and inside the church.

The first sentence in Scott Peck's book "The Road Less Traveled" says: Life is Difficult." Truth is that it is inevitable that you will have problems/trial/tests in life. I Peter 4:12 says: *"Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you."* Trials are not planned. We seldom can anticipate the problems we're going to experience in life that sometimes flows into our spiritual life. That's probably good because if we could anticipate them, we'd run the other way and we wouldn't get the benefit from them. You do understand that life's trials can also be a learning tool for the future? When tests and challenges come at you from all sides, then please remember that under pressure, your spiritual faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. Almighty God, through the gift of his Holy Spirit is with us

through every moment of our life...seek him through prayer...he'll guide you always.

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