1. True faith will be tested. Christians will inevitably undergo constant testing. Gal 2:20

2. The stronger the potential faith, the greater the testing one should expect. Job 1:2

3. Testing and suffering reminds us who really is Lord of our life...and it’s not us!!! I Corinthians 6:20

4. The hardest thing about suffering is remembering the central focus of the test: to keep our faith strong. Romans 8:35

5. As our faith is refined, our feelings will, if possible, undermine our faith. Thus, testing ought to drive us to the objective certainty of faith and not to the subjective despair of emotion. I Peter 5:8-9

6. God does not wish us to suffer; however, He must test us as we need to be tested. Therefore, the most critical and difficult tests which we will endure can be expected to involve those things, people (friends, family, etc.) and issues which, from our perspective, are most highly prized, precious, valuable, esteemed and loved. Indeed, every essential value, belief, moral, attitude, motivation, world-view and perspective by which we live will be severely tested and, through such testing, leave us strengthened for God’s service. This is the ultimate focus of trial-to strengthen our Christian character. Ephesians 6:13

7. Before, during, and after testing, we ought to constantly examine in which ways our armor is weakened so as to prepare ourselves for the inevitable next--and greater--testing. The longer and more severe the testing, the more zealously we need to examine our armor. Ephesians 6:10-11

8. We need not--and should not--blame God for suffering which is a result of our own foolish, intentional sinful actions. Such actions ought to direct us to the unlimited forgiveness and grace of God. Romans 5:1-5

9. Suffering, for the Christian, is not punishment. It is discipline, specifically the discipline of Christian character. It is the way God demonstrates that we are His children. Romans 8:31

10. God sets the maximum boundaries for the “allowable” limits of suffering we will endure; Satan pursues them to the max Job 1

11. The limits of suffering may be exceeded if we neglect all of God’s provisions for our physical, emotional well-being. It will almost certainly be exceeded if we give up our primary defense: Absolute trust in God as He has revealed Himself in Word and Sacraments. Ephesians 6:13

12. Death, at God’s time, is the final blessed deliverance from suffering. Until that time, life will be full of difficulties as we walk in the valley of the “shadow of death” (Psalm 23). For the Christian, death from an eternal perspective is never a “tragedy”; instead it is the blessed deliverance from an evil pain-filled world. Job 19:25-27

13. God allows Satan to test us for the purpose of demonstrating to Satan just how strong a believer’s trust in God is; it is Satan who does the damage... Job 1

14. God does not forsake us when we fail; Jesus constantly prays for us before, during, and after testing. Luke 22:31

15. Christians are never alone in their testing, even when we feel we have left God or He has left us. As Jesus prayed for Peter while being “sifted like wheat” and as the Father continued praying for the return of His lost son (Luke 15), so God never takes His loving attention from us. He is always praying on our behalf. Romans 8:35

16. The Christian’s final response to the suffering and testing of God is always to bless God. Job 1:21

17. Suffering is not a Means of Grace. It is, however, a gracious and careful preparation of God for greater exaltation in His grace. James 1:2-3

18. Thus, whatever suffering we endure as a testing of our faith is cause for joy, not despair. James 1:2-3

19. Why” questions are an important part of the Christian’s grieving process in that they acknowledge God’s power and our weakness before Him. The answers may be received, as part of the testing, at a later time or, more often, in the eternal courts of God. During our pilgrimage on earth, one of the most useful purposes of “Why” questions are to shape patient, hopeful, and persevering Christian character. Ephesians 6:13

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21. A Christian’s trial is not completed until such time that we have used the promises of God in Word and Sacrament to deal effectively with grief. Christians who continue attitudes of anger, self-pity and confusion will continue experiencing the overwhelming of these emotions until such time that God’s will has been accepted and assimilated into the Christian’s heart and life. Only at such time will Christians learn how to consider such sufferings “pure joy” James 1.

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24. The most powerful testimony of our trust and faith in God is patient endurance which trusts that God’s strength is made perfect in our weakness. II Corinthians 12:8-9

25. After trial, we are never the same. Trial, as God intends, exposes and deepens our weaknesses even as it uncovers and develops new strengths and opportunities for ministry. The tears of trial, therefore, are the chisel God uses to change the Christian’s heart painfully--but skillfully--to enliven our hope in Jesus Christ. Romans 5:1-5

26. God ultimately uses suffering as an act not of Law, but of Gospel, to draw us to God by drawing us into the suffering, death, resurrection and forgiveness of Christ into which we have been baptized. Thus, the ultimate focus of trial is to highlight God’s gracious and undeserved love for us in Christ. Hebrews 12:5-6