

TIMES OF TESTING BEFORE INCREASE

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Before increase and enlargement in the service of God there are usually times of testing and trials.

Ps 66:8-12 says that **God holds us secure** as he brings us into times of testing. God **proves us, tries us, confines us, afflicts us**, causes **men to ride over our heads** and we go through **fire and water**.

If we hold firm in faith and trust in God during the trials we pass through, God will bring us out into a **great enlargement of service to Him**, *Ps 66:12*.

When I was a boy at school, the motto was, “Through difficult ways to higher ways,” (“*Per Angusta Ad Augusta*.”)

Because our test or trial is often through **human relationships** that seem to go wrong, it is important to obey Jesus’ commands as well as keep trusting God. During these trials make sure you:

1. **Keep forgiving** the other person(s). *Mk 11:25,26, Mat 18:21-35, Mat 6:9-15, Eph 4:32*. Avoid resentment, bitterness, hurt feelings.
2. **Release them from judgments of condemnation**. *Mat 7:1,2, Jam 4:11,12, Rom 2:1*. [evaluative judgments are expected and acceptable, *1Thes 5:21, Ac 17:11, 1Jn 4:1*.]
3. **Hand the problems over to God** to sort out and resolve. *Ps 55:22, 1Pet 5:7, Mat 11:28-30*.
4. **Pray effectively for the highest good of the other person(s)**. *Lk 6:27,28,35*. For example you can pray *Col 1:9-11, Acts 26:18*.

If there are unforgivenesses, judgments, bitternesses and resentments, there will be no increase and enlargement after the trials. So we need to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God that He might exalt us in due time; casting all our care on Him; for He cares for us, *1Pet 5:6,7*.

Joseph is an example to follow. He shared the call of God upon his life with his brothers but they refused to accept what he said, *Gen 37:3-11*.

Actually Joseph was in a difficult position because his father favoured him before all the others, *Gen 37:4*.

As a result of this, his brothers treated him very badly, selling him into slavery and telling their father, a wild beast had killed him, *Gen 37:12-34*.

Joseph passed through much suffering as a slave in Egypt, *Gen 39:1-20*, and after that in prison, *Gen 39:21-41:1*.

After probably 13 years, (from a 17 year old to a thirty year old, *Gen 37:2, Gen 41:46*), of intense suffering, Joseph was **promoted to the position of Prime Minister of Egypt**, *Gen 41:1-57*.

In all these years of test and trial, **Joseph kept his faith and trust in God** intact and walked in daily obedience to God.

As a result of passing the test(s), God brought Joseph out of the times of trial into a **very great place of service to God and to the peoples**.

Psalm 105:17 says that the Lord our God, *v7*, sent Joseph into Egypt, *v17*, and through the times of testing he experienced, *Ps 105:17-22*. *Verse 17* says that until **the time** came for the Word of God to Joseph, *Gen 37:3-11*, to be fulfilled, the same Word caused his tests and trials.

This same thought is expressed in *Mat 13:21*, in the parable of the sower. The Word of God's calling in our lives causes tribulation and persecution before the Word comes to pass, *Mk 4:17*, *Lk 8:13*.

Before we can move on to a new level of ministry in God, to a greater level of responsibility, God brings us through times of testing to see if we are ready. **If we pass the test, God allows us to arise up to a new level of effective ministry**. If we fail the test then God leads us out into the wilderness for another time "around the mountain," in the hope that we will pass the test next time.