

CA 13 EMAW 13 WHEN GOD WANTS TO BUILD A MAN

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FOSTER: Have you ever been in a situation where, even though you're trying to do everything right, everything is going wrong? It seems unfair sometimes, doesn't it? But think back over your Christian life, what was happening when your relationship with God grew the most? Many of us were having the tough times. It seems like we hear God's voice the clearest when we are in the crucible. It's almost like God has it planned that way...and actually... He does.

Welcome to Champions Arise. I'm Foster Braun and I'm with Kent Darcie. We're glad you could join us here at Champions Arise where we discuss issues that impact men and their ability to follow God. And today is no different. We're going to look at what happens when God wants to build a man. Stay with us. You'll be glad you did.

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FOSTER: Kent, we've all had those times when tough situations continue to hit us like waves on the seashore. It can be very tiring.

KENT: And discouraging if we're not careful. But I think a lot of that is a perspective problem.

FOSTER: What do you mean?

KENT: I was on the internet the other day. And I found a list of the top grossing movies of all time. Not adjusted for inflation, because I that adjusts the list some, but I found it fascinating that of the top 10 movies that made the most money—worldwide, 8 of them had main characters that were men who had to overcome tests and trials to achieve a goal. So to me, that says that the challenge of overcoming obstacles resonates with men—on a deep level.

FOSTER: As I think about some of my favorite movies, they are what you described—they feature men who overcome the tests and trials to achieve a goal. But Kent, life is not a movie.

KENT: True. It's better, because movies are fake, but what we do for the kingdom of God is real. But my point is, in the world, we accept the fact that tests and trials make a man stronger. At the end of the movie they are a better man, hopefully they have better character, they are more resilient, and the ending credits roll. But we don't take that same mindset to a man who serves God.

FOSTER: Which is ironic given all the Bible verses that talk about the trials that Christians will face.

KENT: You're right. 1 Peter 4 verse 12 says *"Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you."* [NIV]

James 1:12 says, *"Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him."* [ESV]

And probably some of the most interesting verses, when it comes to talking of tests and trials, are in James chapter 1. “*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.*” [ESV]

FOSTER: ~~That’s the opposite of what the world teaches.~~ That is not how we tend to think.

KENT: No. We tend to think it’s not fair. So we whine and complain, get angry, or get a lawyer and sue people, because, you don’t deserve this. But the Bible says that suffering, trials, and hard times are necessary to bring out real change in our character, our values, and how we live.

FOSTER: I know that’s true. I’ve seen it in my life. But it’s not much fun when you are going through it.

KENT: No it’s not. I’ve been there too and it’s not fun at all. The author of the book, “Every Man a Warrior,” Lonnie Berger, tells a story about a guy named Bob who also experienced what we are talking about.

Bob became a Christian in High school and continued to grow his faith in college. He majored in construction science and started his own construction company after he graduated.

He worked hard and his business grew. Within 5 years, his company had 300 employees and was working on multimillion-dollar construction projects in four states in the US.

Things were great. Bob taught the adult Sunday school class each week, sat on the church board, and gave generously to ministries. When Bob would give his testimony, he always shared that the secret to his success was that he had dedicated his business to God.

But Bob knew in his heart something was wrong. The **business** had become the center of his life – not Jesus. As a result, he began neglecting his family. His time alone with God became hurried and inconsistent. So he wasn’t hearing from God any more.

And I want to stop here and ask: My friend does this describe you today? Are you so busy that you don’t have good quality time with God?

FOSTER: I would hope that that is not true of any of our listeners, but, unfortunately, many of our men are probably in this place. Maybe they don’t own a construction company, but Jesus is not the center of their life any more. But that can change.

But if you joined us late, you are listening to Champions Arise. I’m Foster Braun and I’m with Kent Darcie. Today we are discussing what happens when God wants to build a man. So Kent, Bob is drifting away from God and you said that he was having a difficult time hearing God.

KENT: Yes. But one day God *did* speak. Bob was standing on the balcony of his business office, overlooking all his construction machinery. God spoke to Bob’s heart and asked, “*Do you love this more than Me?*” And shortly after that, the tests and trials came.

First, Bob’s job foreman stole \$350,000 out of the bank account—all they had.

Then a few weeks later Bob found out that other funds that were paying for a multimillion-dollar office complex were suddenly shut off. Apparently, the development owner and his wife were

getting a divorce because Bob's construction manager and the owner's wife were having an affair. So without any funds, all the work had to stop.

FOSTER: Wow. I can't imagine what that would be like.

KENT: It gets worse. With the funds stopped, Bob's company couldn't pay its construction bills. Within a month, eighteen lawsuits from subcontractors were filed **against the company and** against Bob **personally**.

FOSTER: I'd say that's worse.

KENT: And it continued to get worse. See, before all these bad things happened, Bob's company had maintained an excellent reputation. They had never been in a lawsuit.

Now one of the vendors was interviewed on TV and claimed that Bob's company had extorted funds from subcontractors, didn't complete projects, and told many other lies. And that TV interview played on the news three nights in a row. So what would you be thinking during all this?

FOSTER: I'd probably wonder, why God let all this happen.

KENT: I think a lot of us would be thinking that. And that's exactly what Bob asked. He was devastated. Bob's construction company went from having 300 employees to three employees. And there's no work and few prospects of any work. He had to sell all of his construction equipment. And his family had to move from a beautiful mansion to barely adequate housing that was subsidized by the government.

FOSTER: Kent, I sure hope there is a bright side to this story.

KENT: Foster, with God there is always a bright side. We may not see it at the moment. In fact, we may not see it until we're in Heaven, but with God, there's always a bright side. Fortunately, Bob got to see the bright side of this. It was during this dark time that Bob began to hear God's voice again. And God's voice was kind, full of grace, and without condemnation. And while visiting with some Christian leaders one day, he was encouraged to "turn worry into worship!" And he did.

Eventually, the lawsuits were settled and all of the bills were paid. But the real blessing was Bob had a renewed passion to spend time with God. And during the quiet times of Bible reading, prayer, and worship, Bob learned some of his greatest spiritual truths and life lessons from God.

Today, when Bob shares his story he usually ends with this statement, *"When you walk with God through the fires of testing, the only thing that gets burned off are the ties that bind you."*

FOSTER: That's a powerful image. When we think of the fires of testing, we don't normally accept that as a positive thing, but if it frees us from "the sins that so easily entangle us" as Paul writes, **[so]** the fires of testing are a very good thing.

KENT: And that is so contrary to the world we live in. So we have to be very, very careful not to accept a false view of the purpose of trials. That's why having the daily quiet times are crucial. This daily time with God helps us to develop and maintain our deep relationship with God and keep His perspective when we face trials and challenges.

Again James 1 vs 2-4 tells us, "Dear brothers and sisters, when trouble comes 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." [NLT]

God promises that the testing of our faith will produce endurance. 1 Timothy 4 verse 8 says, *"Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come."* [NLT]

FOSTER: As men of God, we need to remind each other of that.

KENT: Yes and there is another thing we need to remind each other about. We have been chosen by God for the path we are on. He wants to mold us into the image of His only Son Jesus Christ. Think about it. We read about Paul and we read about Peter. And James and Timothy and the Apostle John. God chose those men and molded them—every one of them—by trials and tests. And God has purposely added important names to that list. Foster and Kent, and your name, my listening friend. Yes. You too.

And maybe you're thinking, "Well Kent, I've messed up and I failed some of the tests God has given me. In fact, I'm not doing so well right now."

My friend, Peter, who walked on the water with Jesus. Saw Him heal the blind and the deaf and the lame. Saw Jesus transfigured on the Mountain where "His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light," this same Peter, denied Jesus—three times.

But, Jesus sought out Peter and restored him. And my friend, if you're struggling today, Jesus is seeking you out through this program, to restore you.

Because God wants you to be the best godly man you can be, and the best godly husband you can be, and the best godly father you can be, and the best godly employee and neighbor and friend you can be.....but... God builds a man like this through trials.

FOSTER: You know Kent, earlier you mentioned how the top movies featured men who had to overcome trials to make it to the end. I think it's also interesting that this type of movie—that men tend to enjoy—has a hero that men secretly wish they could be. But it occurs to me that God has chosen us to be His hero. We just need to be willing to submit to His training and testing.

KENT: Great perspective. And that really sums up what we've talked about today.

FOSTER: My friend, if you are going through hard times right now, and even if you aren't, I want to encourage you with the words of God through the prophet Isaiah,

"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine! When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you. For I am the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior." (Is 43:1-3)

What a wonderful promise from God. We'll be right back.

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(Program close)

FOSTER: Thank you for listening to Champions Arise where men are equipped and strengthened to meet their God-given potential. Today we discussed what happens when God wants to build a man. This program was based on lesson #6 in the book "Every Man a Warrior," Volume 3, by Lonnie Berger. You can find more information on his book and listen to any of the programs in this series at our website which is found at championsarise.org. I'm Foster Braun with Kent Darcie. Thank you for listening to Champions Arise. May God mold you into the man He knows you can be.

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