

Three Unexpected Tools

Jesus wants us to grow and be spiritually mature. Lent is about growing in spiritual maturity, which is, becoming more like Jesus Christ.

Spiritual maturity is moving out of EGO (Edging God Out) into EGO (Exalting God Only).

The Third Purpose of Life is to **be like Jesus**. At Corpus Christi we call the Third Purpose of Life **Grow**.

There are lots of ways that God helps us to grow in spiritual maturity. Today, our focus is on three specific, not-so-obvious unexpected tools that God uses to help us grow in spiritual maturity.

The tools are: trials, temptations, and trespasses.

It's very important to pray for the right attitude, because not everyone grows through trials, temptations and trespasses. Without the right heart trials, temptations and trespasses will not make you better, they'll make you bitter. So the starting point is to open our hearts to what God wants to do as revealed through the Prophet Ezekiel:

"I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26).

1. God uses **trial** to teach us to **trust** him.

Trials are situations designed by God to draw us closer to Him.

'If God sends you many sufferings, it is a sign that He has great plans for you and certainly wants to make you a saint.'" St. Ignatius Loyola

Jesus surrendered to God's plan, teaching us to trust God.

Jesus went through many trials in His life, but His greatest trial was the night before He was crucified.

*Then they came to a place named Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray."...Then he said to them, "My soul is **sorrowful** even to death..." (Mark 14: 32-34).*

The Gethsemane Prayer:

"Abba, Father, all things are possible to you. Take this cup away from me, but not what I will but what you will" (Mark 14:36).

- Jesus acknowledges his Father's sovereignty (I know you can take it away)

- I don't want it, I want You to take it away
- If this trial is for Your purpose in my life, so be it, bring it on

The Gethsemane Prayer can be summed up in one word: **TRUST**.

2. God uses **temptation** to teach us to **obey** Him.

Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil (Matthew 4: 1).

Temptations are situations designed by Satan to draw us away from God.

God never tempts us to do the wrong thing. God is able to use temptation to do good in our lives.

How? Every temptation provides a choice. It answers the question *whose am I?* One's answer to that question defines the ultimate authority and primary audience for one's life. Every time we face a temptation we are choosing who we love the most. We're choosing whether we love God more than the temptation. When we chose to love God most we grow in spiritual maturity.

At this, Jesus said to him, "Get away, Satan! It is written: 'The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve'" (Matthew 4:10).

3. God uses **trespasses** to teach us to **forgive**.

Those passing by reviled him, shaking their heads...the chief priests with the scribes and elders mocked him...the revolutionaries who were crucified with him also kept abusing him in the same way (Matthew 27:39-44).

The Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

Trespasses are situations designed by other people to hurt us.

If we're going to become like Christ, we must learn to forgive.

"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us"

Key thought: Remember that God has **forgiven you**.

Be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ (Ephesians 4:32).