

IN THE MARGINS: The lesson repeats until we learn

By Tony Martin

Editor

Ever felt like you're stuck in a never-ending loop, facing the same problem repeatedly? It's like a recurring scene in a movie, playing over and over until you finally grasp its meaning. That's no coincidence. There's a divine purpose behind it. God, in His infinite wisdom, often brings us back to the same issue until we learn the lesson He wants us to grasp.

Understanding the Divine Cycle

The Bible tells us in Proverbs 3:11-12 (ESV), "My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights." Discipline isn't a sign of God's displeasure; rather, it's a mark of His love and commitment to our growth.

Why Does God Repeat Lessons?

1. To Refine Our Character:

- James 1:2-4 (ESV) reminds us, "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."
- God's aim is to refine us, making us more like Christ. Each repeated lesson is a step towards that goal.

2. To Correct Our Path:

- Sometimes, we stray from the path God has set for us. Proverbs 3:5-6 (ESV) advises, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.”
- Repeated lessons serve as gentle nudges back onto the right path.

3. To Strengthen Our Faith:

- 1 Peter 1:6-7 (ESV) explains, “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”
- Our faith grows stronger each time we navigate the same trial, leaning more on God and less on our own understanding.

How to Recognize and Learn the Lesson

1. Reflect on Patterns:

- Notice recurring themes in your life. Is it a financial struggle? A relationship issue? Identifying these patterns can highlight areas where God is working.

2. Seek God’s Guidance:

- Spend time in prayer and scripture. Psalm 119:105 (ESV) says, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my

path.” God’s word can illuminate the lessons He wants you to learn.

3. Embrace Humility:

- Be open to the idea that you might not have all the answers. James 4:10 (ESV) encourages, “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.”

4. Take Action:

- Faith without action is dead (James 2:26). Once you discern the lesson, put it into practice. If it’s about managing finances wisely, create a budget. If it’s about patience, consciously practice it in your interactions.

Encouragement for the Journey

Facing the same issue repeatedly can be exhausting and disheartening. But remember, you’re not alone. God is with you every step of the way, patiently teaching and guiding you.

Romans 5:3-4 (ESV) offers this encouragement: “Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope.”

Here’s a practical example: Imagine you struggle with patience. You pray for patience, and suddenly, every slow driver in town seems to be in front of you. Coincidence? Hardly. It’s God providing opportunities for you to develop patience.

Practical Steps to Embrace God’s Lessons

1. Journaling:

- Write down your experiences and reflections. This helps in seeing patterns and growth over time.

2. Accountability:

- Share your journey with a trusted friend or mentor. They can offer perspective and encouragement.

3. Gratitude:

- Focus on what you're learning rather than the discomfort of the lesson. Gratitude can shift your perspective from frustration to growth.

In conclusion, God's repetitive lessons are acts of love, aiming to mold us into the best versions of ourselves. Embrace the process, seek His guidance, and trust that each lesson brings you closer to His purpose for your life. Remember, the lesson repeats until we learn.