



# TRIALS

God's Refining Fire



June Hunt



HOPE  
*for the Heart*

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## God's Refining Fire

JUNE HUNT



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Dear Friend,

Because of trials encountered early in my life, I grew up knowing resentment as well as most people know their best friend. In fact, for years I didn't have a best friend. Fearful of inviting an outsider into my private pain, I directed my energy not toward friendships, but toward *justifying* seething hatred of an individual I viewed as Personal Enemy #1: my father.

The mental list I kept of my father's perceived sins and shortcomings was nearly endless: abusive, arrogant, angry, amoral, and that was just for starters. Though I didn't know it at the time, presiding as the virtual judge and jury over his life was a burden I was neither *designed* nor *equipped* to bear. As a result, my ever-expanding list—along with my certainty that dad would never change—gradually ripped the hope right out of my heart.

So much so that, on a hot summer day shortly before starting my junior year in high school, I remember thinking these exact words: "Do it, June! Drive off the bridge! It would be so easy! Why not?" As a newly licensed driver, I gripped the steering wheel of my car and seriously considered whether this would be

the day to bring a quick and welcome end to a life of just 15 years.

With my foot poised on the accelerator and the compulsion to press down growing, suddenly I felt an overpowering restraint. “Wait! What if I’m not successful? I could end up only maiming myself. Then Mom (whom I adored) would have the huge burden of needing to take care of me the rest of my life!”

How vividly I remember the painful emotions churning inside of me and the hopelessness that ushered such upheaval into my life. It wasn’t that I *wanted* to kill myself; I just wanted to stop the pain—relentless, unspoken, soul-ravaging pain—produced by a fiery trial that seemed to have no end.

What would have happened during the apex of that trial had I ignored my inner voice of restraint and, instead, careened over the expressway bridge? With the benefit of hindsight, I invite you to pause with me now to consider: Would I have been alive to accept Christ the following year ... as I did? Would I have experienced the awesome privilege of leading my father to a saving faith in Christ six months before he succumbed to cancer ... as I did? Would I have been available for God to use me to found a worldwide ministry that,

today, brings *biblical hope and practical help* worldwide ... as He has?

I'll never know the answers to these questions on this side of heaven, but I do know this: Had I not persevered during the trials in my life, I would have no personal testimony of God's faithfulness, no ironclad assurance of His ability to rescue and restore.

You see, in both the Old and New Testaments, we find numerous references to our God refining us through painful trials in much the same way an earthly refiner uses fire to purify gold and silver. God's purpose for this process is *to conform our character to His*.

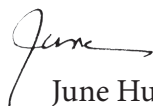
Clearly, we don't develop Christlike character all at once. It's forged over time, especially through *trials*. Helping you hang on to hope in the midst of these trials—especially when the heat is turned up beyond what you think you can bear—is why I wrote this book. Page by page, it provides *biblical hope and practical help* so you can draw near to the heart of the One who allowed the trial, trust in His perfect plan and character, and confidently surrender your will to His will.

As you do, you can have utmost assurance that the "*momentary affliction*" (2 Corinthians 4:17 ESV) God allows in your life is immensely

purposeful. The heat will not destroy you, only conform you to Christ's character. You can rest in the timeless truth of Isaiah 43:2: "*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.*"

In my own life, the facts are clear: God, through His matchless mercy and grace, turned my own personal *mess* into a *message*. He transformed my *test* into a *testimony*. And friend, you can be sure of this: If He did it for me, He can do it for you—for your gladness and His great glory!

Yours in the Lord's hope,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "June". The signature is written in black ink and has a long, sweeping horizontal tail that extends to the right.

June Hunt

# TRIALS

## God's Refining Fire

*Everyone* undergoes change in a crucible.

*Everyone* faces the heat in a furnace.

*Everyone* can be refined by the Refiner.

This is the pursuit of our personal Refiner—to purify us. And He is masterful at knowing how much heat is needed and how much time it takes in the Refiner's fire to surface impurities in our character. Whether refining precious metals or refining precious people, one point is certain: Purity is *never* achieved from only one firing in the furnace.

Just like a silversmith or a goldsmith, God is determined to delete the dross from our lives so that we'll shine as He intends. It is the image of Christ He wants clearly reflected in our lives. The refining process begins on this side of heaven and is finally finished on the other.

Meanwhile, Scripture encourages us ...

**“And we all, who with unveiled faces  
contemplate the Lord's glory, are being  
transformed into his image with ever-  
increasing glory, which comes from the  
Lord, who is the Spirit.”  
(2 Corinthians 3:18)**



## DEFINITIONS

Every one of us faces testing trials and fiery trials at different times. When they occur, we often wonder, “Why *this?*” “Why *now?*” “Why *me?*”

The next time you feel you are being tested remember what the Bible says in 1 Chronicles 29:17 ...

**“I know, my God,  
that you test the heart  
and are pleased with integrity.”**

Think about the role of a silversmith. A silversmith is in the business of separation—removing the unwanted impurities from the silver to achieve the highest degree of purity possible. This would be an impossible task without *heat*.

Impurities are released only when the temperature is turned “way up.” The same is true when we have deeply embedded flaws and defects in our character. These are surfaced only by the fiery heat of *trials and testings*.

## WHAT IS the Purpose of Trials?

Incredible change occurs in the crucible.

A crucible is a pot made of clay, porcelain, or iron that is capable of sustaining extremely high temperatures. Silversmiths of old, those you would find bartering and bargaining in the corner markets of ancient Jerusalem, would grind up chunks of crude silver, place the granular material in a crucible, and then place the crucible in a furnace over an open fire.

The silversmith would watch and wait, keeping an eye on the furnace, continually evaluating temperature as well as time in the blazing heat. Totally attentive, his concern is the crucible, cognizant that a tremendous transformation is in the making.

A curious substance begins to form on the surface of the now molten metal, a scummy layer of material that the silversmith is eager to slough off and remove—forever. The useless impurities have no redeeming value in silver, *nor in our lives.*

When our “dross” is removed, then God transforms us into something both beautiful and useful.

**“He has made everything  
beautiful in its time.”  
(Ecclesiastes 3:11)**

- ▶ **Trials** are the process of proving the quality or worth of something or someone.<sup>1</sup>
- ▶ **Trials** are tests of your faith, patience, or endurance through the process of suffering.<sup>2</sup>
- ▶ **“Trials”** in Greek is primarily three different words, each with a slightly different meaning, yet all reveal God’s purpose for trials and suffering.<sup>3</sup>
  - *Dokimion*: proven faith

A testing trial proves whether or not your faith is genuine.

*“In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed”*  
(1 Peter 1:6–7).

- *Purosis*: refined character

A fiery trial refines your character, as gold is refined (implies suffering).

*“Do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you”* (1 Peter 4:12 ESV).

- *Peirasmos*: tested commitment

A testing trial or temptation determines the quality of your commitment.

*“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything”* (James 1:2–4).

## **WHAT IS** the Refining Process?

In the Bible, many references present the refining of gold and silver as a parallel of God's refining us through our own painful trials. This unforgettable allegory is meant to help us understand the purpose behind our pain—specifically, to conform us to the character of Christ.

Clearly, we don't develop Christlike character all at once. Character is forged over time, especially through fiery trials. Indeed, God is our Refiner.

**“For you, God, tested us;  
you refined us like silver.”  
(Psalm 66:10)**

Because the Bible is filled with images of God working as the Refiner in our lives, we can gain much insight by understanding the refining process.

## The Six Stages of Refinement

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### ▶ STAGE 1: The Breaking

**The refiner breaks up the natural ore.**

- In biblical times, a refiner began by breaking up rough ore—hardened rock encased with common minerals (such as tin, copper, and zinc), but which also may possibly contain rare metals, the precious metals of gold and silver.
- Breaking the rock is necessary to begin the refining process of exposing highly valuable metals to heat.
- The Lord states, “*My people [are] the ore*” (Jeremiah 6:27). We are rough rock in need of hammering, breaking, and refining.

**“Is not my word like fire,  
declares the LORD,  
'and like a hammer that breaks  
a rock in pieces?'"**  
**(Jeremiah 23:29)**

### ▶ STAGE 2: The Crucible

**The refiner places unrefined silver or gold into a crucible.**

- The refiner puts broken, crushed ore into a crucible—a fireproof melting pot able to withstand intense heat.