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## The Dynamic Ceramic

In 1952, Don Stookey was a scientist at the Corning Glass Works Company in upstate New York. While he was heating a piece of glass in a furnace, the temperature control failed. The glass was supposed to reach 900 Celsius but got way hotter.

Expecting to find a molten glob, the scientist was shocked to see the glass was still intact, with an off-white ceramic look. He used tongs to pick it up but accidentally dropped the glass. Instead of shattering on the floor, it clanged like a piece of steel!

Intrigued, Stookey soon found that liquid glass could be heated again, at an even higher temperature, to control the growth of crystals, turning glass into a hard ceramic, which Corning called Pyroceram.

Since Corning had already introduced the first glass cookware in 1915 (Pyrex), the company wanted to use its newest discovery for something else. It just so happened the military needed a material to help nuclear and ballistic missiles withstand dramatic temperature changes while careening through the atmosphere.

Pyroceram was perfect. For two decades, defence companies put it on the nose cones of their missiles and later used the same material to build the ceramic heat shields that still keep NASA's space shuttles from burning up when they re-enter the earth's atmosphere.

By 1957, Corning was using Pyroceram on kitchen goods, too, calling it CorningWare. The new dishes were an instant hit because they could be used in the oven or the freezer, or be moved from one to the other without cracking.

But CorningWare lasted forever. So when Corning leased its cookware rights to another company, the new firm kept the CorningWare name but replaced the original material with stoneware, which was





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less durable. Naturally, it was an original CorningWare plate that was included in the National Millennium Time Capsule, a collection of artefacts designed to describe life in the 20th Century. When the capsule is opened in 2100, the plate will be just as strong as ever.

More often than not, it's in the furnace of pain and adversity that we find an inner strength, flexibility and durability we can't achieve any other way. Though we seldom welcome it, struggle brings maturity and personal growth.

The key is keeping the struggle in perspective. If we see God as a distant, uncaring or vengeful Judge, every negative thing will seem a punishment or a random insult. But *"I know the plans I have for you,"* he says. *"They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. In those days when you pray, I will listen. If you look for me wholeheartedly, you'll find me."* (Jer. 29:11-13)

Knowing he has a specific plan for us; that *"God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose"* (Romans 8:28), we have every reason for hope, confidence and perseverance. We can face anything, knowing God will make sure we're okay, if look for him *wholeheartedly*.

Sometimes it takes suffering to help us see past the distractions and recognize what's truly important; to finally understand that what matters most is forgiveness of our sins that will let us share eternity with a Father who wants the very best for us, forever. With that, we can be grateful even for the tough times *"for they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation."* (Rom. 5:3-5)

In the furnace, faith, hope and trust combine to give us an inner strength that empowers us to defend ourselves against our spiritual enemies, and to withstand even the most extreme fluctuations, from the frigidity of cold hearts and broken relationships to the searing heat of others' anger, bitterness and resentment. With faith, we can endure anything we must, without cracking.

But be careful. There are those who wear the name of Christ and offer what looks like genuine love and faith when, in reality, their shortcut, cookie-cutter Christianity won't work and won't last. But embrace true trust in God and you'll be as strong as ever on that awesome day when the Lord is ready to serve up his reward.

*Rick Gamble*