

# THE LEADER'S “TESTING”

(COMMON TESTS FOR UNCOMMON LEADERS)



GOD IS EQUIPPING US BY...

- ◆ Breaking Our Self-Will
- ◆ Proving His Sufficiency
- ◆ Pouring In His Wisdom

***“You intended it for evil, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”*** (Genesis 50:20)

BILL KIRK

## “THE LEADER’S TESTING”

It’s no secret to anyone – that before your character can be **trusted**, it must be **tested**. In other words, God will put you through many seasons and opportunities to prepare you **today** for a greater influence **tomorrow**.

Beloved, there is no way around it – God will test you and try you! Why?

“**So you may come forth as gold.**” (Job 23:10)

The key ingredient in every test is **our response** to that test! Many look horizontally (**at man**) and get sidetracked and detoured. Others look vertically (**to God**) and get more grace and wisdom to become a better person. I pray that you and I are found in the second group.

Below are just a few of the common tests that leaders experience. They are not all inclusive, but they are relevant, real and revealing. They come from the Word and have helped me process life from God’s perspective. They have helped me...

- ◆ When I needed **patience** with six people attending our first Sunday service in Cooperstown.
- ◆ When I needed **to forgive** a slanderous board member whom I trusted,
- ◆ When I needed **faith** for the finances to go through two building programs,
- ◆ When I needed **perseverance** to keep going in a wilderness (dry) season,
- ◆ When I needed **hope** after two years in a wheelchair,
- ◆ When I needed **a shield** in the face of criticism as a leader,
- ◆ When I needed **security** to deal with rejection from an angry person,
- ◆ When I needed **flexibility** as my plans were not always God’s plans,
- ◆ When I needed **vision** to protect me from being satisfied with maintaining the “status quo”,
- ◆ When I needed **boldness** to dismiss a staff member who refused to fulfill his job description,
- ◆ When I needed **courage** to stare down a visiting preacher who prophesied my “death in eight months” if I refused to hand over the keys and pastorate to him,
- ◆ When I needed **humility** to submit to an authority figure who used intimidation and manipulation to control other people.

### **Blessed Learning – And Remember:**

***“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”***

(Hebrews 12:11, NIV)

## 1. The “How could they misread me?” (Misunderstanding) Test!

*“And Eliab’s anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride and thy naughtiness of your heart.” (I Samuel 17:28)*

**Question:** What is the misunderstanding test?

**Answer:** It is when other people in your life misread or misunderstand your motives, words, deeds or actions.

**Question:** What does God teach us when we are misunderstood, misread or misinterpreted?

**Answer:** He teaches us to die to self-vindication and rest in Him to defend what’s worth defending:

◆ *“My defense is of God which saveth the upright in heart.” (Psalm 7:10)*

**Question:** Should I worry about those who might misunderstand me and then slander or criticize to bring me harm?

**Answer:** No need to worry if you believe the following truth:

- ◆ *“He made a pit and digged it and is fallen into the ditch which he made.” (v. 15)*
- ◆ *“The Lord shall fight for you and you shall hold your peace.” (Exodus 14:14)*

Here’s a good response in this text.

*“Say not I will recompense evil, but wait on the Lord and He shall save thee.” (Proverbs 20:22)*

Remember:

- ◆ No provocation ever **justifies** an unchristian response!
- ◆ Answer your critics with your **life** and not your words!
- ◆ Worry is accepting responsibility that God never **intended** for you to carry!

## 2. The “Boy that really hurt” (Betrayal) Test!

*“And it came to pass when Joseph was come unto his brethren...that they cast him into a pit...and sold him to the Ishmaelites for 20 pieces of silver.” (Genesis 37:23-28)*

**Question:** What is the betrayal test?

**Answer:** It is when family, friends or followers turn their back on you.

**Question:** What does God teach us when we are rejected, injured, wounded or betrayed?

**Answer:** He teaches us how to **forgive** so that excess baggage (anger, bitterness, resentment, malice and hardness of heart) does not destroy us and pollute our spirit and negatively impact our ministry.

**Question:** Why is this test so important?

**Answer:** Because every leader has to learn this one truth to be a better leader (what is it?)

This truth:

- ◆ That **what happens** to you has no power to defeat you (only your **wrong response** to what happens can defeat you).

This is where Joseph excelled as he forgave his brothers (which allowed him to save the nation during seven years of famine).

In other words,

- ◆ Passing the betrayal test will increase your capacity for God to use you to minister to more and more people down the road!

Remember this:

- ◆ Unforgiveness is the umbilical cord that keeps you tied to the past. When you forgive, you cut the cord and can live free from the **control** of what someone else has done to you!
- ◆ Unforgiveness is the poison we drink while we wait for the other person to die!
- ◆ Resentment is allowing someone you despise to live “rent free” in the house of your mind.
- ◆ An enemy in the heart is worse than 10,000 in the field.

### 3. The “What’s taking so long?” (**Patience**) Test

*“And Saul tarried seven days...but Samuel came not to Gilgal...so Saul offered the burnt offering...and when Samuel met him he said, ‘Saul, what have you done? You have done foolishly and not kept the commandment of the Lord...and now your kingdom shall not continue.’” (1 Samuel 13:8-14)*

*“In your patience possess ye your souls.” (Luke 21:19)*

*“But let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” (James 1:4)*

**Question:** What is the patience test?

**Answer:** It is when God doesn’t move or answer prayer according to your **time table**.

**Question:** What does God teach us when His timing is different than our timing?

**Answer:** He teaches us to trust Him while we wait upon Him with faith and expectation.

- ◆ We learn to relinquish what we cannot control!
- ◆ We learn to enjoy today as a gift from God!
- ◆ We learn to be content with all that we have!
- ◆ We learn to persevere in prayer and not give up!
- ◆ *“For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday.” (Psalm 90:4)*
- ◆ *“One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” (II Peter 3:8)*
- ◆ *“My times are in your hand.” (Psalm 31:15)*

◆ *“He makes all things beautiful in His time.”* (Ecc. 3:11)

#### 4. The “I can’t please everybody” (Security) Test!

*“Those who fear the Lord are secure.”* (Proverbs 14:26)

*“The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord will be secure.”*  
(Proverbs 29:25)

**Question:** What is the security test?

**Answer:** It is when you are pressured to be something you are not, do something that isn’t God’s will for you or refuse to relinquish responsibilities (and have to do all the work yourself – Moses in Exodus 18)

**Question:** What does God teach us when we meet people who use intimidation and manipulation to take advantage of a person’s insecurity?

**Answer:** God teaches us to overcome the “**disease to please**” – so that we can get His will (and not everybody else’s) will done in our lives.

*“Am I trying to win the favor of men, or God? Do I seek to please men? If pleasing people is my goal, I cannot be a bond servant of Christ.”* (Galatians 1:10)

**Question:** Why is it better for us to sooner (rather than later) pass this test?

**Answer:** Because passing this test...

1. Will overcome self-consciousness which is the feeling of being observed yet not approved.
2. Will allow you to still feel ok when you do not meet everyone else’s expectations.
3. Will help you see that God does not expect you to make everybody happy.
4. Will allow you to say “no” without feeling guilty.
5. Will allow **God** to control you instead of other people.

This test teaches you to understand...

◆ That it would be nice if everybody liked you but it’s not necessary for God to use you (and)

◆ Being excessively concerned about what other people think is an open door to torment!

Remember Jesus’ words...

*“I have glorified You (Father) on the earth; I have finished the work which You gave me to do.”* (John 17:4)

#### 5. The “Does God know where I am?” (Wilderness) Test!

*“Remember all the way which the Lord led you these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you, to prove you and to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.”* (Deuteronomy 8:2)

*“Who fed you in the wilderness with manna...that He might humble you and prove you, **to do you good at the latter end.**”* (v. 16)

**Question:** What is the wilderness test?

**Answer:** It is when you go through a period of **silence** – when it seems like the heavens are brass, praying is dry and fruit is slow in coming.

**Question:** What does God teach us in our wilderness seasons?

**Answer:** He teaches us to...

- ◆ Trust in His sovereign plan and goodness!
- ◆ Seek His face and not His hands!
- ◆ Rid ourselves of murmuring and complaining!
- ◆ Serve God with our will and not with our feelings!
- ◆ Depend on His grace which is always sufficient!
- ◆ Learn to be quiet and refrain from impulsive activity.
- ◆ Let God work an inner transformation upon the soul.
- ◆ Rest in His presence and not in our circumstances.

*“I will even make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.” (Isaiah 43:19)*

*“I will make the wilderness a pool of water and dry land springs of water.” (Isaiah 41:18)*

Remember the process –

*“For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.” (Mark 4:28)*

In other words –

- ◆ At times God’s work is **invisible**, but God is working even when you cannot see Him!!!

And

- ◆ Discouragement is a lie of the devil to blind you in the **present** of what God is going to do in the **future**!

## 6. The “Just a little compromise won’t hurt” (**Temptation**) Test!

*“But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed.” (James 1:14)*

*“My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.” (Proverbs 1:10)*

*“Beware lest you also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.” (II Peter 3:17)*

*“Run from anything that stimulates evil thoughts.” (II Timothy 2:22)*

*“Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” (II Corinthians 7:1)*

*“May your spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (I Thessalonians 5:3)*

*“Wherefore beloved, seeing that you are looking for the new heaven and earth, make every effort to be found spotless and blameless before God.” (II Peter 3:14)*

*“Keep yourself from being polluted by the world.” (James 1:27)*

*“You cannot stand before your enemies until you remove the sin from among you.” (Joshua 7:13)*

*“Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.” (Isaiah 52:11)*

*“Teach the people to discern between the unclean and the clean.” (Ezekiel 44:23)*

**Question:** What is the temptation test?

**Answer:** It is when sin in any form tempts you to compromise your character and obedience to Jesus.

**Question:** Where does all temptation come from?

**Answer:** *“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood.” (Ephesians 6:12) means:*

◆ Our battles are not against people, but against the spirits behind them.

In other words –

◆ Temptation comes from satan to impact upon our minds to make wrong **choices** that will bring negative consequences to our lives.

Never forget these truths –

1. Every evil **thought** is sin in its embryo stage!
2. Our life will always go in the **direction** of our most dominant thoughts!
3. Sin that is destroyed in our **minds** will not become a part of our **history!**
4. All temptation in essence is a **lie**, promising you something that it cannot deliver!

Is it that important?

*“I will **search with lanterns** in Jerusalem’s **darkest corners** to **find and expose** those who sit **contented in their sins**, indifferent to the Lord, **thinking God will do nothing at all to them.**” (Zephaniah 1:12)*

**Question:** Why do I call this the “**Zephaniah principle**”?

**Answer:** Because (as in Zephaniah’s time) there are those who are ignoring these three truths:

1. Boundaries and fences are designed to keep us on track and out of trouble.
2. Those who ignore the boundaries are deceived into thinking that secret sin can be kept secret.
3. God (who cannot lie) has promised to search, find and expose the one who is contented to keep their sin secret and do nothing about it.)

In other words,

◆ God loves us enough to tell us (up front) that we choose our behavior in secret – but the consequences will carry an open exposure and open reward! (Just think of Zephaniah 1:12)

***“I will search with lanterns in Jerusalem’s darkest corners to find and expose those contented in their sins.”***

Remember Matthew 5:8

*“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”*

1. The word **“blessed”** comes from the Greek word (makarios) which means: “an inward joy that exists regardless of conditions around you.”
2. The word **“pure”** comes from the Greek word (katharos) which means: “without mixture.”
3. The word **‘heart’** comes from the Greek word (kardia) which means: “the seat of our desires, affections, will, motives, emotions and thoughts.”

So Matthew 5:8 means:

◆ Those who pass the temptation test will possess an inward joy and the ability to see God direct their path step by step!

Proverbs 4:23 in the Hebrew text says:

◆ *‘Keep watch over your heart, the place where God speaks to you, because from within it comes divine direction for your life.’*

*“A boat in water is good; this is what boats are for. However, water inside the boat causes it to sink.”* (A.W. Tozer)

## **7. The “I just don’t understand” (Secrets) Test!**

*“The secret things belong unto the Lord; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children. (Deuteronomy 29:29)*

**Question:** What is the secrets test?

**Answer:** It is when you learn to live with unanswered questions (and continue on faithfully in the midst of life’s unexplainables).

**Question:** What does God teach us when we don’t understand all that’s going on around us?

**Answer:** He teaches us that when you cannot trace God’s **hand** you can always trust His **heart**.

To be honest, I don’t understand...

- ◆ Why Peter was released from prison by an angel yet James was killed with the sword. (Acts 12)
- ◆ Why Paul was used mightily by God yet his faithful co-worker Trophimus was left at Miletum sick. (II Timothy 4:20)
- ◆ Why Job was righteous and pure yet he suffered with great physical afflictions. (Job 2:7)



- ◆ Why my two roommates in the hospital (Mark & George) died but I lived.

In other words –

There are some things that we simply have to leave in the eternal chambers of God!

## 8. The “What about me?” (Humility) Test!

- ◆ *“I will dwell with him that is of a humble and contrite spirit.”* (Isaiah 57:15)
- ◆ *“The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a humble heart.”* (Psalm 34:18)
- ◆ *“God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.”*(I Peter 5:5)
- ◆ *“Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and He shall lift you up.”* (James 4:10)
- ◆ *Whoever exalts himself will be abased and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”* (Matthew 23:12)

**Question:** What is the humility test for a leader?

**Answer:** It is when God gives you the opportunity to empty yourself to enrich another (instead of emptying another to enrich yourself).

While humility in essence is...

- ◆ An inward condition of heart that gives us a proper view of God, others and ourselves!

Humility in practice...

1. Confesses and repents of our own sins (instead of justifying and covering them.)
2. Deflects all praise to God and others (instead of taking credit for what God and others have done.)
3. Looks for actions to praise in others (instead of finding faults in others which makes us look better.)
4. Forgives all offenders (instead of desiring revenge and feeling pain when our enemies are praised.)
5. Serves like Jesus (instead of waiting for someone else to take the towel and wash our feet).

*“Now that I, your Lord and Master have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet.”* (John 13:14)

(Which means a humble leader.)

1. Serves despite their **pain** (as Jesus was facing impending death and carrying the “weight of the world’s sin” at the supper, yet He washes feet).
2. Serves despite their **reward** (as Jesus washed the feet of those who would deny, betray and forsake Him (Mark 14:50)

3. Serves despite their **title** (as Jesus was the King of the Universe and about to be elevated at the Father's right hand, yet He washed dirty feet regardless).

In other words,

- ◆ James and John thought that leadership was about having **control** and being the **center** of attention. (Mark 10:37)

But Jesus teaches us...

(That servant leadership marked by humility)

1. Can serve through pain without self-pity.
2. Is not shaken or detoured by those ungrateful.
3. Never thinks itself "too big" to do the "small things" when no one else is watching.
4. Submits to delegated authority as Jesus submitted to His heavenly Father.

*"There is no authority except that which God has established. Consequently, those who rebel against authority bring judgment upon themselves."* (Romans 13:1, 2)

## 9. The "I don't need to change" (**Correction**) Test!

*"And Nathan said to David, 'Thou art the man' (II Samuel 12:7)*

*"He that regards reproof is prudent (Proverbs 15:5)*

*"He that regards reproof shall be honored." (Proverbs 13:18b)*

*"Poverty and shame shall be to him that refuses instruction; he that regards reproof shall be honored." (Proverbs 13:18)*

**Question:** What is the correction test?

**Answer:** It is when God or another confronts me with something that needs to change in my life.

It's no secret that...

- ◆ The **#1** reason why some people never grow beyond their present effectiveness is – they are **impossible** to correct (and)
- ◆ The **#1** reason why others continue to grow and grow and bear much fruit is – they are **easy** to correct (and do not sulk, blame, withdraw, become defensive or adversarial).

(In other words, passing this test...)

1. Gives you access to wise people who will invest in you and your future!
2. Allow you to be truthful regardless of how much it hurts.
3. Protect you from resenting authority which is for your well being and protection.
4. Helps you to stay accountable and answer the hard questions in life.
5. Spares you from tunnel vision - thinking your way is the only way!
6. Guards you from resenting those who give input, feedback and suggestions.
7. Crucifies your ego (flesh) which wants to be right, first, honored and acknowledged.

(Never forget this truth)

“The greatest liberty is having nothing to **prove**, nothing to **defend** and no one to **impress**.”

(And remember)

- ◆ None of us is as smart as all of us!
- ◆ “Only a fool knows everything.” (Charles Crabtree)
- ◆ “The greatest of all faults is to be conscious of none.” (Thomas Carlyle)

## 10. The “But I’m so busy” (**Distraction**) Test!

*“Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful; and Mary has chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her.” (Luke 10:41, 42)*

**Question**: What is the distraction test?

**Answer**: It is the test of putting your **work** before your **walk**.

**Question**: What happens if you fail this test?

**Answer**: Like Martha (who misplaced her priorities and became distracted) you will become “**anxious**” and “**disturbed**” and will not enjoy the journey.

**Question**: Is it that important?

**Answer**: Paul thought so when he said to Timothy:

***“Take heed to yourself”*** (I Timothy 4:16)

- ◆ Timothy was serving the congregation in Ephesus, the largest church in the world at that time.
- ◆ Timothy was consumed with responsibilities, needs and demands.
- ◆ Timothy was facing the very real test of neglecting the care of himself.

(So Paul says “**Take heed to yourself.**”)

- ◆ The words “**take heed**” come from the Greek word (epecho) a compound of the words (ep) and (echo).
- ◆ This word (epecho) means: “to take hold of something with an extremely tight/firm grip”

(So God is telling us here)

- ◆ “Take hold of yourself with an extreme firmness and make your spiritual life (the inner core) your #1 priority on earth”.

**Question**: What will passing this test do?

**Answer**: It will protect you from...

1. Living distracted from **intimacy** with God!
2. Living off of **others** spirituality!
3. Living with a **hurried** spirit and frenzied busyness!
4. Living life and making **decisions** without first consulting God!
5. Living without a “**fresh** anointing” that spills over to other people.
6. Living among people yet not being “**truly present**” when you are with them.

7. Living in your own **energy** which will leave you drained, weak and irritable.

**Question:** Why is passing each test so important?

**Answer:** Because you have only three choices when it comes to your approach to ministry (where God has put you):

1. **Stop growing where you are**, and just repeat and rehash what you've done before every few years.
2. **Move to another location** and repeat everything you did in your previous location. (Location changes but you don't change and grow.)
3. **Stay put** (until God says it's time to move) and go deeper in prayer, study, learning and discover new ways to reach more people than ever before.

#### **Only three choices**

1. **Maintain the status quo** - and become repetitive, predictable and passionless.
2. **Move** - and do #1 all over again without growing personally.
3. **Change** - not location, but yourself by allowing God to stretch and expand your usefulness.

#### **Only three options leader**

1. **Repeat** (Over and over where you are out of routine!)
2. **Move** (And repeat over and over what you previously did before.)
3. **Stay** (and grow to a whole new level of effectiveness in God.)

**Question:** When do you begin this process of growing, asking questions, reading good books, visiting healthy leaders and living to reach the unsaved where you serve?

**Answer:** Today! Why? Because...

***“If you wait for the perfect circumstances, you will never get anything done.”***

**(Ecclesiastes 11:4, NLT)**

Nuf Sed!  
Bill Kirk