

## TEST IS NOT A "FOUR-LETTER WORD"

James 1:2-4, 12-18

2 Peter 1:3-11

Introduction:

PROMISE

PROBLEM

PROVISION

Galatians 5:22

Fruit of the Spirit

Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self-control

### I. Types of Test

#### A. Withholding of needs

How do you treat others/God when your needs are not met?

##### 1. Exodus 15:22-26

Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea  
and they went into the Desert of Shur.  
For three days they traveled in the desert without finding water.  
When they came to Marah, they could not drink its water  
because it was bitter. (That is why the place is called Marah.)  
So the people grumbled against Moses, saying,  
"What are we to drink?"  
Then Moses cried out to the LORD,  
and the LORD showed him a piece of wood.  
He threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.  
There the LORD made a decree and a law for them,  
**and there he tested them.** He said,

"If you listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God  
and do what is right in his eyes,

*if* you pay attention to his commands  
and

keep all his decrees,

I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians,  
for I am the LORD, who heals you." (NIV)

## 2. Exodus 16:1-36

The whole Israelite community set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt.

In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron.

The Israelites said to them,

"If only we had died by the LORD's hand in Egypt!

There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death."

Then the LORD said to Moses,

"I will rain down bread from heaven for you.

The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day.

**In this way I will test them**

**and see whether they will follow my instructions.**

On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days."

So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites,

"In the evening you will know that it was the LORD

who brought you out of Egypt,

and in the morning you will see the glory of the LORD,

because he has heard your grumbling against him.

Who are we, that you should grumble against us?"

Moses also said,

"You will know that it was the LORD

when he gives you meat to eat in the evening

and all the bread you want in the morning,

because he has heard your grumbling against him.

Who are we? You are not grumbling against us, but against the LORD."

Then Moses told Aaron,

"Say to the entire Israelite community,

'Come before the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling.'"

While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community,

they looked toward the desert,

and there was the glory of the LORD appearing in the cloud.

The LORD said to Moses,

"I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites.

Tell them,

'At twilight you will eat meat,

and in the morning you will be filled with bread.

Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.'"

That evening quail came and covered the camp,

and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp.

When the dew was gone,

thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor.

When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other,

"What is it?"

For they did not know what it was.

Moses said to them,

"It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat.

This is what the LORD has commanded:

'Each one is to gather as much as he needs.

Take an omer for each person you have in your tent.'"

The Israelites did as they were told; some gathered much, some little.  
And when they measured it by the omer,  
he who gathered much did not have too much,  
and he who gathered little did not have too little.  
Each one gathered as much as he needed.  
Then Moses said to them,  
"No one is to keep any of it until morning."  
However, some of them paid no attention to Moses;  
they kept part of it until morning,  
but it was full of maggots and began to smell.  
So Moses was angry with them.  
Each morning everyone gathered as much as he needed,  
and when the sun grew hot, it melted away.  
On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much  
-- two omers for each person --  
and the leaders of the community came and reported this to Moses.  
He said to them,  
"This is what the LORD commanded:  
'Tomorrow is to be a day of rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD.  
So bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil.  
Save whatever is left and keep it until morning.'"  
So they saved it until morning, as Moses commanded,  
and it did not stink or get maggots in it.  
"Eat it today," Moses said, "because today is a Sabbath to the LORD.  
You will not find any of it on the ground today.  
Six days you are to gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath,  
there will not be any."  
Nevertheless, some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather  
it, but they found none. Then the LORD said to Moses,  
"How long will you refuse to keep my commands and my instructions?  
Bear in mind that the LORD has given you the Sabbath;  
that is why on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days.  
Everyone is to stay where he is on the seventh day; no one is to go out."  
So the people rested on the seventh day.  
The people of Israel called the bread manna.  
It was white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey.  
Moses said,  
"This is what the LORD has commanded:  
'Take an omer of manna and keep it for the generations to come,  
so they can see the bread I gave you to eat in the desert  
when I brought you out of Egypt.'"  
So Moses said to Aaron,  
"Take a jar and put an omer of manna in it.  
Then place it before the LORD to be kept for the generations to come."  
As the LORD commanded Moses,  
Aaron put the manna in front of the Testimony, that it might be kept.  
The Israelites ate manna forty years,  
until they came to a land that was settled;  
they ate manna until they reached the border of Canaan.  
(An omer is one tenth of an ephah.) (NIV)

## B. Withholding of protection/comfort

### 1. Judges 2:16-23

Then the LORD raised up judges,  
who saved them out of the hands of these raiders.  
Yet they would not listen to their judges  
but prostituted themselves to other gods and worshiped them.  
Unlike their fathers,  
they quickly turned from the way in which their fathers had walked,  
the way of obedience to the LORD's commands.  
Whenever the LORD raised up a judge for them,  
he was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies  
as long as the judge lived;  
for the LORD had compassion on them  
as they groaned under those who oppressed and afflicted them.  
But when the judge died,  
the people returned to ways even more corrupt  
than those of their fathers,  
following other gods and serving and worshiping them.  
They refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways.  
Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel and said,  
"Because this nation has violated the covenant that I laid down for their  
forefathers and has not listened to me,  
I will no longer drive out before them  
any of the nations Joshua left when he died.  
**I will use them to test Israel  
and see whether they will keep the way of the LORD  
and walk in it as their forefathers did."**  
The LORD had allowed those nations to remain;  
he did not drive them out at once  
by giving them into the hands of Joshua. (NIV)

### 2. Judges 3:1-2

These are the nations the LORD left to test all those Israelites  
who had not experienced any of the wars in Canaan  
(he did this only to teach warfare to the descendants of the Israelites  
who had not had previous battle experience): (NIV)

## C. Withholding of presence/feeling

### 1. 2 Kings 20:1-21

In those days Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death.  
The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to him and said,  
"This is what the LORD says:  
Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover."  
Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD,  
"Remember, O LORD, how I have walked before you faithfully  
and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes."  
And Hezekiah wept bitterly.  
Before Isaiah had left the middle court, the word of the LORD came to him:  
"Go back and tell Hezekiah, the leader of my people,  
`This is what the LORD, the God of your father David, says:  
I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will heal you.  
On the third day from now you will go up to the temple of the LORD.  
I will add fifteen years to your life.  
And I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria.  
I will defend this city for my sake and for the sake of my servant David."  
Then Isaiah said,  
"Prepare a poultice of figs."  
They did so and applied it to the boil, and he recovered.  
Hezekiah had asked Isaiah,  
"What will be the sign that the LORD will heal me  
and that I will go up to the temple of the LORD on the third day from now?"  
Isaiah answered,  
"This is the LORD's sign to you that the LORD will do what he has promised:  
Shall the shadow go forward ten steps, or shall it go back ten steps?"  
"It is a simple matter for the shadow to go forward ten steps," said Hezekiah.  
"Rather, have it go back ten steps."  
Then the prophet Isaiah called upon the LORD,  
and the LORD made the shadow go back  
the ten steps it had gone down on the stairway of Ahaz.  
At that time Merodach-Baladan son of Baladan king of Babylon sent Hezekiah  
letters and a gift, because he had heard of Hezekiah's illness.  
Hezekiah received the messengers  
and showed them all that was in his storehouses  
-- the silver, the gold, the spices and the fine oil --  
his armory and everything found among his treasures.  
There was nothing in his palace or in all his kingdom  
that Hezekiah did not show them.  
Then Isaiah the prophet went to King Hezekiah and asked,  
"What did those men say, and where did they come from?"  
"From a distant land," Hezekiah replied. "They came from Babylon."  
The prophet asked,  
"What did they see in your palace?"  
"They saw everything in my palace," Hezekiah said.  
"There is nothing among my treasures that I did not show them."  
Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah,  
"Hear the word of the LORD:  
The time will surely come when everything in your palace,  
and all that your fathers have stored up until this day,  
will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the LORD.  
And some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood,

that will be born to you, will be taken away,  
and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon."  
"The word of the LORD you have spoken is good," Hezekiah replied.  
For he thought, "Will there not be peace and security in my lifetime?"  
As for the other events of Hezekiah's reign,  
all his achievements and how he made the pool  
and the tunnel by which he brought water into the city,  
are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah?  
Hezekiah rested with his fathers.  
And Manasseh his son succeeded him as king. (NIV)

## 2 Chronicles 32:24-31

In those days Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death.  
He prayed to the LORD, who answered him and gave him a miraculous sign.  
But Hezekiah's heart was proud  
and he did not respond to the kindness shown him;  
therefore the LORD's wrath was on him and on Judah and Jerusalem.  
Then Hezekiah repented of the pride of his heart, as did the people of Jerusalem;  
therefore the LORD's wrath did not come upon them  
during the days of Hezekiah.  
Hezekiah had very great riches and honor,  
and he made treasuries for his silver and gold  
and for his precious stones, spices, shields and all kinds of valuables.  
He also made buildings to store the harvest of grain, new wine and oil;  
and he made stalls for various kinds of cattle, and pens for the flocks.  
He built villages and acquired great numbers of flocks and herds,  
for God had given him very great riches.  
It was Hezekiah who blocked the upper outlet of the Gihon spring  
and channeled the water down to the west side of the City of David.  
He succeeded in everything he undertook.  
But when envoys were sent by the rulers of Babylon to ask him  
about the miraculous sign that had occurred in the land,  
God left him to test him and to know everything that was in his heart. (NIV)

## Hebrews 13:15-16

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise --  
the fruit of lips that confess his name.  
And do not forget to do good and to share with others,  
for with such sacrifices God is pleased. (NIV)

The only time one can offer this "sacrifice of praise"  
is when things seem to be going wrong.  
For it is only then  
that he is called upon to die to his own opinions, choices, and judgements.  
The distressing situation will pass,  
but one's reaction to it  
results in a permanent moral and spiritual deposit in the character.

## II. Purpose of Test

### A. To expose what really is in my heart.

James 1:13-15

When tempted, no one should say,  
"God is tempting me."

For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;  
but each one is tempted when,  
by his own evil desire,  
he is dragged away and enticed.

Then, after desire has conceived,

it gives birth to sin;

and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. (NIV)

1 Peter 1:7

These have come so that your faith -- of greater worth than gold, which perishes  
even though refined by fire -- may be proved genuine and may result in praise,  
glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. (NIV)

### B. **PROBLEM** I am tempted to use my resources or God's

### C. Expose - MY ATTITUDE (My own evil desire)

He is right , I am wrong!!

It is not the fact - that my needs aren't being met

- that I'm not protected or made comfortable

- that God's presence isn't felt.

that is the problem.

It is my **ATTITUDE about these facts** that is the **PROBLEM**.

### III. So what?

Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. ( James 1:4 )

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.  
( James 1:12)

Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. ( 2 Peter 1:4)

For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.

Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

( 2 Peter 1:8-11)

1. How have you looked at "problems" in your life? Do you see how God used these "problems" to change you?
  
2. Share a time when "provision", "protection", or "presence" were withheld in your life. What was your feeling and how did the situation resolve?
  
3. What did your experience of withheld expectations produce in you?
  
4. What has God left in your life to test you to see if you will follow His instructions or to teach you warfare?
  
5. Share a time when God felt far away. What things were exposed in you?
  
6. Is there "secret sin" in your life that you are hiding and trying to conquer on your own?
  
7. What are the warning signs that you are being enticed by your own evil desires?  
What helps you break the "spell" ?