

THE TESTS OF LEADERSHIP

Job 23:8-10 *Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him: But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.*

In the ancient world there was no banking system as we know it today, and no paper money. All money was made from metal, heated until liquid, poured into moulds and allowed to cool. When the coins were cooled, it was necessary to smooth off the uneven edges. The coins were comparatively soft and of course many people shaved them closely. In one century, more than eighty laws were passed in Athens, to stop the practice of shaving down the coins then in circulation. But some money changers were men of integrity, who would accept no counterfeit money. They were men of honour who put only genuine full weighted money into circulation. Such men were called "dokimos" or "approved." That is what New Testament writers meant when they used this word, which is translated in the King James Version as "approved" or "tried" ...

- **2 Corinthians 10:17-18** *But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. For not he that commendeth himself is **approved**, but whom the Lord commendeth.*
- **2 Timothy 2:15** *Study to shew thyself **approved** unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*
- **James 1:12** *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is **tried**, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.*

The opposite of "dokimos" was "adokimos" which meant "not standing the test, not approved, unfit for use, unproved." It is rendered in the King James Version as "rejected, castaway, reprobate."

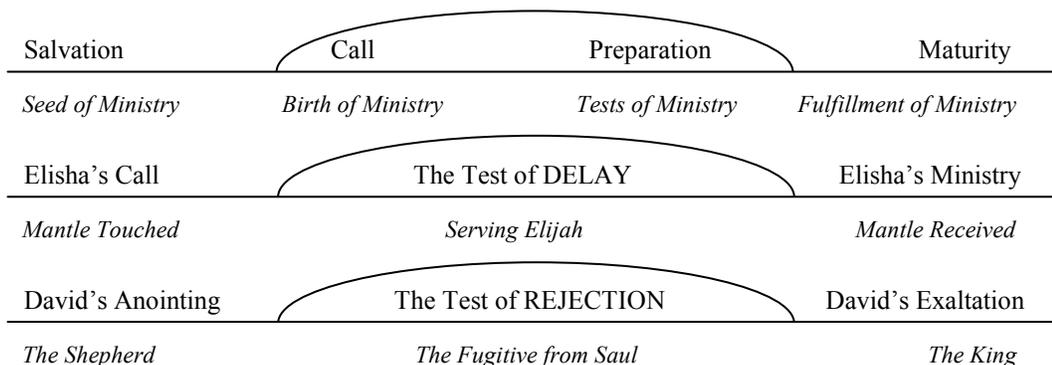
- **1 Corinthians 9:27** *But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a **castaway**.*
- **Titus 1:15-16** *Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work **reprobate**.*
- **Hebrews 6:7-8** *For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh off upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briers is **rejected**, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.*

If you truly desire to serve the Lord in whatever capacity He assigns you, it will be reassuring to understand some of the tests of God that lie before you. It will be encouraging to know that He uses these tests to build and grow you, not to tear you down. You can take great comfort also in the spiritual fellowship of the many great servants of God in the Bible, and those around you. For you as a Christian, they are "older brothers," leaders by example, and the truest "mentors" that you could ever hope to find.

WHY DO WE HAVE TO BE TESTED? Doesn't God know if you're ready to minister? Of course He does, but you need to know it too. The very act of testing is itself part of your preparation, and can drive you into a deeper relationship with God like nothing else can. The Bible clearly teaches that God tests and tries every ministry which He uses in His Kingdom. By that, we mean ...

- God examines the true inner attitudes and motives of those whom He calls, to show whether they are pure or not; this is not simply to expose weaknesses, but to cause them to turn to the Lord for help and healing. Through our trials, God removes impurities.
- God puts those He calls into difficult situations which will refine them spiritually (the Latin word for test, "testu" means "to be put inside of an earthen pot with a lid on top"). This creates faithfulness, sorts out those who are not truly called by Him, and equips His servants with the spiritual understanding they need to help His church in the future.
- This testing is why the Bible says "For our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29).

Every Christian should have a desire to be used by God in some way, but many do not understand the process of preparation for their ministry. Most people also do not understand that PROVING IS A LIFETIME PROCESS, and that tests will occur throughout our lives. Visualize a timeline with a large "gap" in the middle, that looks like this ...



There are many different tests God uses to uniquely prepare His servants for their various ministries. Many of them are seen at the time as dark and deep valley experiences, but when later regarded in retrospect they are seen as some of the most precious times in one's spiritual life.

THE TIME TEST. By all outward appearances, God does not seem to be fulfilling the word He gave you in the past. This tries your patience, forcing you to trust God to fulfill His promise in His own time and way. A time of delay gives you the opportunity to grow in faith and purifies your motives and attitudes like nothing else can. Don't forget that God is always faithful! **(Abraham)**

THE WORD TEST. You experience circumstances that seem to nullify the Word of God. Many feel that they should never experience darkness or confusion, but God purposely allows contrary situations to accomplish purposes we cannot see. This makes us reject our own resources and ultimately lets us have confidence in His Word as more than just an untested promise. **(Joseph)**

THE CHARACTER TEST. You are surrounded by ungodliness that attempts to pull you in its direction. This shows us the areas of weakness in our own personality, and we realize we must call on more of God's grace. Our hidden areas of need and deficiency surface, and expose our own true inward self to us. When we are attacked by evil, we become more bold against it. **(Samuel)**

THE MOTIVATION TEST. God arranges situations to reveal to you what influences your decisions, values, choices and priorities. We may not always know why we are really doing something, so God discloses our inner desires. Then we serve God to give to Him and His church rather than looking for what we can get; we use our gifts to glorify God rather than ourselves. **(Balaam)**

THE SERVANT TEST. You are asked to do menial tasks that seem below you. This reveals whether your motivation is simply to be in the public eye, or if you truly desire to help. Those who pass this test learn that God brings forth some of the most precious fruit in the shade! God will use the authorities He has placed over you to discern your real level of commitment. **(Elisha)**

THE WILDERNESS TEST. You find yourself in a dry and desolate place where no fruit is growing in your life, and you wonder if God really wants to use you. Sometimes, you have no one to talk to but God Himself. This shows you whether your spiritual life is sustained by the Lord or merely by all your activities, cultivates your prayer life, and strips you of worldly wisdom. **(Moses)**

THE MISUNDERSTANDING TEST. Those around you misinterpret your actions, words, attitudes or motives. This causes you to examine yourself, and to look for new or better ways to bring across your feelings. It also motivates you to trust totally in God and not in your own skills. To be free mentally, emotionally and spiritually, we must make room for misunderstanding. **(Jesus)**

THE PATIENCE TEST. God challenges you to wait patiently for your expectations to be fulfilled, or to endure some tribulation without complaint, without losing self-control or becoming provoked by the situation. This teaches us to yield our "rights" to God, and to not "play God" in our lives or the lives of others. God can even use the harsh criticism and demands of others to teach us! **(Noah)**

THE FRUSTRATION TEST. You feel that your spiritual goals cannot be achieved due to people or circumstances. There is no logical reason, yet your efforts are being foiled. This causes us to re-examine and re-align our spiritual priorities. When our other goals and activities are temporarily out of gear, we may realize that we have neglected our primary spiritual battle. **(Paul)**

THE DISCOURAGEMENT TEST. Circumstances or people dishearten and deter you from an undertaking which you believed was God's will, and you lose your confidence and hope. This causes us to go to God in prayer. These times of stress are not wrong, but the attitude we take toward them can be. We must delight ourselves in the Lord, not in people's response. **(Elijah)**

THE WARFARE TEST. You encounter violent spiritual opposition to your progress. Remember that the call or anointing of God does not remove our susceptibility to temptation. Spiritual warfare forces us to grow stronger in the Spirit, like muscles grow through the resistance of exercise. We only learn to use our spiritual weapons and grow to maturity through such testing. **(Timothy)**

THE SELF-WILL TEST. God asks you to do something that counters your own plans or desires, or ask you to do something for which there is no logical reason. We must realize that God has to break the self-will and personal ambition of every person He uses, so He can completely trust them. Simple faith and submission crucifies the flesh and pleases God. **(Abraham, Jesus)**

THE VISION TEST. People or circumstances interfere with your spiritual vision. We must realize that natural vision is not enough for God's vessels. This test shows us how shallow our spiritual insight really is, and how insufficient we are. It also insures that all the glory for success goes to God. A vision may appear to die, so that it's fulfillment brings more glory to God. **(Nehemiah)**

THE USAGE TEST. You cannot find the opportunity to exercise your ministry, and feel like you have been "put on the shelf." Through this, God may show us we are depending too heavily on our SERVICE rather than HIM; He may desire to humble us, purify motives or deepen the witness we give to others. Remember, you are only out of commission in PUBLIC. **(John the Baptist)**

THE PROMOTION TEST. You find yourself not moving forward in the church, and are tempted to become angry and bitter at the lack of advancement or preference given to you. The more developed you are, the harder this test is to endure! God's timing is not man's timing, and true promotion comes only from Him. **(Jotham's Parable of the Trees - Abimelech)**

The Parable of Promotion

Judges 9 contains a parable that can easily be called "the parable of promotion," because it uses the word promotion three times (v. 9,11,13). This parable is found in the midst of a political upheaval that includes a terrible blood bath. The men of Shechem accepted as their king for a short time Abimelech, the son of Jerubbal (Gideon) by his Shechemite concubine (Judges 8:31). By recruiting help from his mother's kin, the Shechemites, Abimelech won the family fight among Gideon's seventy sons for rulership over the tribe of Manasseh. With the support of the Shechemites, Abimelech went to his father's house at Ophrah and murdered his seventy half brothers upon a single stone. Only Jotham, the youngest, escaped his hand. Jotham, from the safety of Mount Gerizim, screamed out this incisive parable of promotion ... (It ultimately brought division between Abimelech and his followers, and Abimelech was eventually killed)

Judges 9:7-15 *And when they told it to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried, and said unto them, Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you. The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us. But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? And the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou, and reign over us. But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees? Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over us. And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us. And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon.*

This parable of promotion demonstrates through nature the spiritual principle that every leader must know his own place of ministry, and STAY IN IT! All but one tree knew the place that God had given to them in nature, and were content to stay there. The olive tree (v. 9), the fig tree (v. 11), and the grape vine (v. 13) showed their acceptance of their place in nature when they REFUSED PROMOTION beyond God's will. The bramble bush, however, expressed its desire to go beyond the realm God had given to it. It wanted to be promoted over all the other trees. EVERY CHRISTIAN MUST ACCEPT THE PLACE OF MINISTRY WHICH GOD HAS GIVEN HIM. Find your ministry and stay in your boundaries!