

The Leadership Test — Part I

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Scott Peck opens his best-seller, *The Road Less Traveled*, with this statement: "Life is difficult." He continues: "This is a great truth, one of the greatest truths. It is a great truth because once we truly see this truth, we transcend it. Once we truly know that life is difficult — once we truly understand and accept it—then life is no longer difficult. Because once it has been accepted, the fact that life is difficult no longer matters.

Most do not fully see this truth that life is difficult. Instead they moan more or less incessantly, noisily or subtly, about the enormity of their problems, their burdens, and their difficulties, as if life were generally easy, as if life should be easy. They voice their belief noisily or subtly, that their difficulties represent a unique kind of affliction that should not be, and that somehow has been especially visited upon them, or else upon their families, their tribe, their class, their nation, their race, or even their species, and not upon others. I know about this moaning because I have done my share."

God uses the fire of hardship, persecution, and suffering to test our character and spiritual commitments. The Bible distinguishes between temptation, which is used by Satan to lead into sin, and testing, which is used by God to purify us and move us toward maturity and growth.

Definition of Testing: An opportunity challenging you to prove your potential and maturity through experience.

The Truth About Testing:

1. Testing always _____ **p r o m o t i o n .**

When you don't pass the test, God makes you retake the "class" and the final exam. If you refuse to take the final, you cannot advance.

2. The goal of every Christian leader must be to _____.

"Walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called."

Ephesians 4:1c

3. **Self-promotion and human promotion can never replace**

_____.

"For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted." Luke 14:11

4. **Just as products aren't used _____ they're tested, so it is with us.**

"Consider it joy, my brothers, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect (or mature), lacking in nothing." James 1:2-4

5. **God's heart is for his children to _____ the test and grow.**

6. **A test has no value if _____ are not learned.**

Cartoonist Charles Shultz once had Charlie Brown carefully building a castle in the beach sand. Standing back to admire his work, he was soon engulfed by a downpour which leveled the castle. Standing before the smooth place where his artwork had once stood, he said: "There must be a lesson here, but I don't know what it is."

The fact is, apart from storms in my life, I never would have taken time to think through these truths about who my Lord really is. Sure, I might have led a Bible study on the "names of God" or quoted that string of verses in a sermon, but I never would have brought the rock-firm reality of who He is into the heart of my experience.

How do I know He's my **Fortress** until, with arrows flying all around me, I run with all my heart into His open gates?

How do I know He's my **Hiding Place** until I hear the enemy crashing in the brush behind me, feel his breath on the back of my neck, and cry out for a place of refuge?

How do I know He's my **Portion** until all I treasure and hold dear is suddenly threatened or taken from me?

How do I know He's my **Father** until I feel orphaned and abandoned and left alone in the storm?

How do I – like Peter – learn that He is my **Deliverer** until I step out of the boat and plant my foot on the sea?

7. God has a heart for leaders who are _____ to be tested?

Who was the leader after God's own heart? David

"Thou hast tried my heart; Thou hast visited me by night; Thou hast tested me and dost find nothing; I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress."

Psalm 17:3

"Examine me, O Lord, and try me; test my mind and heart." *Psalm 26:2*

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me; and lead me in the everlasting way."

Psalm 139:23-24

Paul the Apostle closes his final letter to the Corinthians with some sobering words:

"Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!"

II Corinthians 13:5

Storms may sweep down upon us from different directions and for different reasons. Sometimes Satan causes the storm. Sometimes people cause the storm. Sometimes I cause the storm. And sometimes the Lord sends the storm. But no matter who or what the cause, they all work to reveal the same things:

the _____ of my faith;

the _____ of my commitment;

the _____ of my maturity;

the _____ of my attitude;

the _____ of my teachability.

The tests we experience aren't for God; He already knows who we are and what we can do. The tests are for us to learn about ourselves.

Ten tests that prove your potential and maturity as a leader

Test 1 The test of _____.

This tests our faithfulness in the present and our potential for greater challenges in the future.

“. . . making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.”
Ephesians 5:16a

“He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much.” **Luke 16:10**

Biblical example ▪ _____ and _____.

“And when they had approached Jerusalem and had come to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples (probably Peter and John) . . . And the disciples went and did just as Jesus had directed them.” *Matthew 21:1,6*

The law of process – leaders develop daily, not in a day.

The secret of your success is found in your daily routine.

Things we do or don't do daily that make a difference:

- | | |
|------------|-------------|
| (1.) _____ | (6.) _____ |
| (2.) _____ | (7.) _____ |
| (3.) _____ | (8.) _____ |
| (4.) _____ | (9.) _____ |
| (5.) _____ | (10.) _____ |

Leadership Principle:

No leader who desires to do great things for God will achieve them without first being faithful in doing small things for God.

Test 2 **The _____ test,**

This test always asks, "WHY am I doing these things?"

Jesus taught the importance of right motives continually.

"And when you pray, you are not to be as the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners, in order to be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will repay you. **Matthew 6:5-6**

Biblical Example: _____ .

He was tested to find out why he loved and served God. Was it for possessions? Was it for prestige? Or did he do it out of devotion for who God was?

Then Satan answered the Lord, "Does Job fear God for nothing? Hast Thou not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But put forth Thy hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse Thee to Thy face." **Job 1:9-11**

Satan questioned Job's motives, and hoped that God's servant would falter. But Job loved God and obeyed him even when he wasn't being blessed.

M-O-T-I-V-E

M _____ **sure you're pure.**

Thomas 'a Kempis stated it, 'Live in such a way that there is always something deeper on the inside than anyone could ever see on the outside.'

If you ask what purity means in everyday living, here are a few suggestions:

Purity means . . . that you always intend the best for others.

Purity means . . . that you want to make peace with any enemies that you might have.

Purity means . . . that there's "Nothing between your soul and the Savior."

Purity means . . . that "Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."
1 Corinthians 10:31

Purity means . . . that doing God's will is the central purpose of your whole life.

O _____ **God continually.**

"Let us think often that our only business in this life is to please God."
Brother Lawrence

"If you want to know God's plan for your life, just do the next little thing he tells you to do."
Oswald Chambers

T _____ **behavior to belief.**

In our day, there is a lot of what C. S. Lewis calls "compartmental Christianity." People will follow God in 98% of their lives, but they have one or two areas in which they want to live as they personally choose. Which leads Lewis to **add** this comment, "God will not have a part of us. He will only have us if He can have all of us. If we claim we have given all of ourselves to God **and** are still holding **back** on one or two areas, we are only fooling ourselves, We need to start over with our gift to Him and this time make it complete."

I _____ **others to hold you accountable.**

Accountability – "A willingness to explain your actions." Chuck Swindoll

Leadership Levels of Accountability

The leader _____ be accountable.

The leader doesn't _____ to be accountable.

The leader doesn't _____ to being accountable.

The leader does _____ to be accountable.

The leader _____ people to hold him accountable.

V

_____ your motives often.

Ask these questions:

"Am I serving myself or others?"

"Am I serving myself or God?"

"What is the spoken reason and the real reason?"

"What does God think or say?"

"People may think they are doing what is right, but the Lord examines the heart. We must recognize that God is as interested in motive as He is in **deed.**"

Proverbs 21:2

" . . . My conscience is clear, but that isn't what matters. It is the Lord himself who will examine me and decide. . . Remember that God alone knows your heart. Ask him to reveal to you any area in which your motives are less than **pure.**"

I Corinthians 4:1-5

E

_____ into the spirit-filled life.

We sing the little chorus from *Matthew* 6:33, a verse a little farther down in the Sermon on the Mount. "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

Jesus knew full well that the kinds of challenges He was laying at the feet of His hearers were not things that people can accomplish in themselves. He knew that you can't just turn over a new leaf, you have to have a new life. The Holy Spirit and His infilling alone is the prerequisite for living the noble and pure life called for in the Sermon on the Mount.

Leadership Principle:

Why we do something will eventually determine what we do.

Test 3 The _____ test.

This tests how strategic and generous we are in handling the resources we presently control.

And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a certain rich man was very productive. And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' And he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.'"

"But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?'"

'So is the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."
Luke 12:16-21

"His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy of your master.'"
Matthew 25:21

Biblical Example: _____

"He gave a tenth of his possessions to honor God."

Genesis 14:20

"He willingly placed his son Isaac on the altar to God."

Genesis 22:1-19

Biblical Stewardship: Christianity's Silent Subject

by Brian Kluth, national president of the Christian Stewardship Association (CSA)

"My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. A people without understanding will come to ruin!"
Hosea 4:6,14

Seminaries don't _____ it.

A study funded by Lilly Endowment Inc. discovered that 90% of seminaries offer no formal or required courses in biblical stewardship principles and practices, personal finances, or church finances and funding.

Pastors don't _____ on it.

One national study discovered that 85% of pastors did not feel prepared through their seminary or denomination to adequately address stewardship, funding, and personal financial matters in their local church.

Churches don't _____ for it.

In many churches, stewardship&the veneer put on "bills, budget, and building" needs. More than 80% of church leaders recently **surveyed** in a national research project indicted their church has no vision or active plan to advance biblical stewardship teaching in their local church.

Denominations don't _____ it.

In a phone survey to NAE denominations, CSA discovered that 90% had either no resources or limited resources and programs to help pastors and churches advance biblical stewardship in their congregation.

Ministry leaders and development officers don't _____ it.

In a recent gathering of senior development officers from Christian colleges and universities, most indicated they had never thought through a biblical rationale and plan for their funding programs and methodologies. CSA research indicated that most leaders feel their fund-raising skills are average or weak. The vast majority of leaders also feel board members are NOT helping them reach the ministry's funding goals through personal giving, getting, referrals or solicitation.

Christians don't _____ it.

The Empty Tomb Inc. studies have discovered a steady 25 year decline in the percentage that Christians give to their local church. The percentages of income that Christians give to their local church has shrunk to between 112 % and 3.5% Church studies by the CSA president indicate that in most evangelical churches, only one or two out of every ten Christians appear to actively give 10% or more of their income to the Lord's work. Most Christians are completely uninformed about the more that 2000 verses in the Bible that speak about wealth, money, giving and material possessions.

Stewardship Thoughts for Leaders:

1. We are responsible to _____ stewardship principles for our people.

Strange is our situation here upon earth. Each of us comes for a short visit, not knowing why, yet sometimes seeming to divine a purpose.

From the standpoint of daily life, however, there is one thing we do know; that man is here for the sake of other men – above all, for those upon whose smile and well-being our own happiness depends, and also for the countless unconnected souls with whose fate we are connected by a bond of sympathy.

Many times a day I realize how much my own outer and inner life is built upon the labors of my fellow men, both living and dead, and how earnestly I must exert myself in order to give in return as much as I have received.

Albert Einstein

Powerful Resource

Do you need some help in this area? Proven Principles for Successful Stewardship is a full day stewardship training workshop and it is available on tape. Get your copy by calling 1-800-333-6506.

I owe it to Margaret, my children, my family, my friends and my calling to be a better steward of my life. I have neglected my health for too many years . . . Stupid once! Now that I have had a heart attack, I must make immediate and drastic changes so I won't be stupid twice.

Three Areas of Change: (1.) Food – Eat less food and eat better food.
(2.) Exercise – Every day, and I mean every day.
(3.) Rest – I will get in touch with my body and rest it often.

I have a passion to live, do ministry with people I love, enjoy my family and finish well. Whenever I am tempted to cheat on these commitments I will think of my love for my family . . . my calling to raise up Christian leaders and God's goodness in sparing my life. If those thoughts do not motivate me to discipline my life . . . then I should die!



12-21-98

2. We are responsible to _____ stewardship principles to our people.
3. We will give an account to God of our stewardship of the people we lead.

"And from everyone who has been given much shall much be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more."

Luke 12:48

"I know God will not give me anything I can't handle. I just wish that He didn't trust me so much."

Mother Teresa

Leadership Principle:

Leaderships gifts and privileges require good stewardship.

Discussion Questions

1. In what areas of your life are you "failing" the Test of Small Things? Do you need to ask someone to hold you accountable in those areas?
2. Are you living a life of "Compartmental Christianity"? Do you need to start over with your gift to Him and this time make it complete?
3. When was the last time you visited your motives? Review each letter in the M-O-T-I-V-E acronym and evaluate your present situation.
4. How are you modeling and teaching stewardship principles for your people?

Powerful Resource

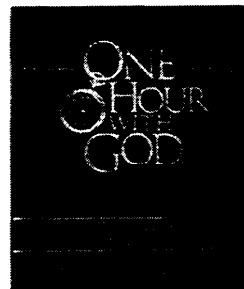
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Answers: Precedes; Pass the Test; Divine Promotion; Until; Pass; Lessons; Willing; Nature; Strength; Level; Health; Measure; Small Things; Peter; John; Attitude; Initiative; Relationships; Priorities; Discipline; Focus; Follow Through; Influence; Skills; Courage; Motive; Job; Make; Obey; Tie; Invite; Won't; Want; Object; Want; Seeks Out; Visit; Enter; Stewardship; Abraham; Teach; Speak; Program; Encourage; Understand; Practice; Model; Teach

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