

PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY AND LEADERSHIP

Part Two:

Tests, Faithfulness, and Leader Reading

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TESTS, FAITHFULNESS AND LEADER READING

All quotes are from *Spiritual Leadership* by J. Oswald Sanders unless otherwise noted.

I. The Tests of God

George Mueller, when asked the best way to have strong faith answered, "The only way to learn strong faith is to endure great trials. I have learned my faith by standing firm amid severe testings."

A. Tests have to do with building character.

B. What is character? "Character is what man is in the dark." D.L. Moody

C. Character development includes testing for:

1. Integrity (doing what you believe)
2. Values
3. Temptation
4. Persecution
5. Loyalty
6. Honesty (restitution)
7. Obedience
8. Patience – "And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak and be patient with all men." **1 Thessalonians 5:14**

"While we know we cannot lose our tempers with those we lead, do we know we are in constant danger of losing our kindness with them when we lose our patience."

D. Success in the test! - **Daniel 1:8-21**

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E. Saul – **1 Samuel 15:1-3, 9-28**

1. Failed in what he valued
2. Failed in temptation
3. Failed in honesty
4. Failed in loyalty

- F. Peter – "Then Peter answered and said to Him, 'Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us? And Jesus said to them, 'Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses and brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My sake, shall receive many times as much, and shall inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last; and the last, first.'" **Matthew 19:27-30**

Peter left his material goods.

G. Abraham – **Genesis 22**

1. Willing to sacrifice Isaac.
2. "Obedience must be learned, then taught." Robert Clinton

H. Tests of Samuel – **1 Samuel 3:1-13**

- I. Our daily tests will include many of the same issues:
1. a. Possessions and giving
 - b. The choice of a mate and putting God first
 - c. Willingness to be used by God in ministry
 - d. Willingness to trust a truth God has shown
 - e. Willingness to forgive
 - f. Willingness to confess sin
 - g. "Willingness to right a wrong" Robert Clinton

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2. These tests will challenge you:

- a. Compromise
- b. Pride
- c. Jealousy
- d. Ambition
- e. Failure
- f. Authority

J. God's response to lack of integrity – **Ezekiel 34**

II. Faithfulness = Key to Tests

A. "Faithfulness is the yardstick by which God measures ministry maturity." Robert Clinton

B. Faithful in little and in much – **Luke 16:10-13**

C. Barnabas – A faithful life:

- 1. He risked his reputation for Paul – **Acts 9:27-29**
- 2. He seeks out Paul – **Acts 11:22-26**
- 3. The two are sent out – **Acts 13:1-3**
- 4. The roles have switched, Paul lost patience, ministry conflict – **Acts 15:36-41**
- 5. Paul's change of heart – **Colossians 4:10 and 2 Timothy 4:11**

D. Problems bring about maturity (often authority issues).

"Anyone can submit when decisions appear right, it's when the decisions seem wrong or are wrong that submission is difficult." Robert Clinton

E. Problems reveal character.

"What we are in conflict is much more critical than what we do." Robert Clinton

- F. Ministry conflicts are very difficult, but not near as difficult as going through the trial and not learning from it.

III. Leaders and Their Reading

- A. Reading and praying builds convictions that build integrity, which carries us through our tests.
- B. Writing from prison Paul said, "When you come bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments." **2 Timothy 4:13**
- C. "There is a parallel story told of William Tyndale during his imprisonment shortly before his martyrdom in 1536. He wrote to the governor-in-chief asking that some of his goods be sent:

A warmer cap, a candle, a piece of cloth to patch my leggings...but above all, I beseech and entreat your clemency to be urgent with the Procurer that he may kindly permit me to have my Hebrew Bible, Hebrew Grammar and Hebrew Dictionary, that I may spend time with that in study.

Both Paul and Tyndale devoted the days before martyrdom to the study of the parchments."

- D. "Why does today's Christian find the reading of great books always beyond them? Certainly intellectual powers do not wane from one generation to another. We are as smart as our fathers, and any thought they could entertain we can entertain if we are sufficiently interested to make the effort. The major cause of the decline in the quality of current Christian literature is not intellectual, but spiritual. To enjoy a great religious book requires a degree of consecration to God and detachment from the world that few modern Christians have. The early Christian Fathers, the Mystics, the Puritans, are not hard to understand, but they inhabit the highlands where the air is crisp and rarefied, and none but God-enamoured can come...One reason why people are unable to understand great Christian classics is that they are trying to understand without any intention of obeying them."
- E. "Bacon's famous rule for reading was: 'Read, not to contradict or confute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse, but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tested, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested.'"

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- F. "There are some authors whose writings challenge heart and conscience and hold us to the highest. The reading that provides impulse and inspiration is to be cherished."

IV. Tools to Use (Barry Austin)

- A. Helping one another grow
- B. Care and accountability questions
- C. Prayer partnerships
- D. Guidelines for small groups
- E. Leading discussion groups
- F. Burnout
- G. What to do when we think our leaders are wrong
- H. Guidelines for confrontation

