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Encouragement for Today

“The Test”

Van Walton, Director of Spanish Ministries, Proverbs 31 Speaker Team Member

Key Verse:

1 Peter 4:12,

“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you.” (NAS)

Devotion:

Being a

school teacher, I am familiar with testing. It is what I do. I teach. I test. I correct papers. If my students earn a good grade I assume they prepared. If they perform poorly, I am convinced they chose to slack off.

Because of my familiarity with testing you would think that I know how to prepare, but I have learned that I am a poor tester. I perform poorly for several reasons. Sometimes I believe there is nothing I can do to get ready for a tough exam. Other times I talk myself into accepting the idea that no matter how hard I try, I will never measure up. Often I am just lazy and prefer participating in the fun and easy, rather than concentrating on the challenging and difficult.

I retired from the classroom several years ago and, even before that, I stopped going to school. I have put tests behind me. Short of the ever-recurring, I-forgot-to-set-the-alarm-and-am-running-in-my-pajamas-to-my-physics-final nightmare, exams are a thing of the past, or so I thought.

Recently I found myself in the classroom, sitting at a desk, pen in hand, blank paper before me ... Well, not exactly. The conventional classroom had been replaced by a difficult situation, surrounded by too many negative possibilities. Although not sitting at a desk, I had been put in a hard and contemplative position; my tools were my head and heart instead of pen and paper. I faced a very difficult exam, a trial of sorts, and I was failing, miserably. I struggled, searching for the right answer.

The greatest difference between an academic exam and a spiritual test is the teacher. In the halls of academia the student is all alone to pass or fail. Spiritual trials always offer help, assistance from the Rabbi, whose name is Jesus. When life's tests are hard, I turn to my Teacher.

Once I had a chance to sit with Jesus and understand where my weaknesses could be found, I realized a few things about preparedness. The teacher in me would like to share with you what the Rabbi taught me. Maybe these hints will be helpful for you the next time you face a spiritual test.

Realize that life is a series of tests, just like school. Real life is about learning our lessons so we can be prepared for the test. You might ask, “How can I prepare?”

1. Report to class regularly.
 - Read your Bible.
 - Learn what the Scripture means and how it applies to your life.
 - Memorize.
2. Use Study Hall wisely.
 - Waiting for the answer to come is not down time - it is the study hall of life.
 - While in the 'wait' room or 'study hall' prepare and practice for the next tests. What we do while we wait determines the outcome of our test.

3. Get tutoring in areas of weakness.
 - Pray, developing a deep relationship with Jesus, the Teacher.
 - Listen until you hear the answers to your questions.
4. Practice whenever possible.
 - Review regularly what you learn.
 - Study groups are necessary for accountability and success.

When the day of the test arrives, as it surely will, make sure to be totally present. Many times in the Bible, God calls His servant, just like roll call, before He gives the test. Be ready to raise your hand and respond, "Here I am." (Genesis 22:1)

Be comforted with the fact that God believes in re-tests. We don't have to live with the "F" of Failure or even an average grade of a "C" for just plain Common. God is into perfecting us. He wants to give a "B" when we do our Best or an "A" when we rise Above the world. I want my final grade to be A+. May my life be **All About the Almighty**. Unfortunately we have to take the same test many times before we get the ever-coveted A. Always remember, God wants to say, "Well done my faithful one."

When the test is over at the end of the day – I want to know I did my best. I want God to be pleased with me.

My Prayer for Today: Jesus, my Teacher, I am so very blessed that You are perfect, yet You do not call me to be perfect. You make me perfect through Your shed blood. All You ask of me is that I obey You. Please help me to understand my assignment; give me strength and endurance to fulfill the plans you have for me; show me the way of wisdom so I will make choices that glorify You. I ask this in Your Name, Jesus, Amen.

Application Steps:

Recall the last time you faced a difficult trial. Describe and explain the experience. List the positives that resulted due to the 'test'. What were the negative outcomes? If you had it to do over, how would you handle the same 'test'?

Reflection Points:

How do I handle the trials and tests that come my way?

Am I prepared to be spiritually tried?

Do I avoid life's tests or do I face them head on, confident that God is by my side, allowing me to be tested.

Power Verses:

Deuteronomy 13:3,
"...don't pay any attention to what that prophet or visionary says. GOD, your God, is testing you to find out if you totally love him with everything you have in you." (MSG)

Psalms 139: 23-24, "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." (NAS)

1 Thessalonians 2:4, "On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts." (NIV)

James 1:2-3, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. (NAS)

Additional Resources:

Who Holds the Keys to Your Heart, by Lysa TerKeurst

http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_whoHoldsKey.htm

Becoming a Woman who Listens to God, by Sharon Jaynes

http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_becomingAWoman.htm

What Happens when Women Walk in Faith, by Lysa TerKeurst

http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_whatHappens.htm