

# THE TESTS OF MINISTRY PREPARATION

Adapted from: Chapter 11, *The Making of a Leader*, Frank Damazio,  
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## INTRODUCTION:

### Premise:

Many kinds of tests come to every leader, either as part of initial preparation for ministry or for taking us to a new level of leadership. Anyone who desires to serve God will go through these tests. I Timothy 3: 10, "*They must first be tested...*" (tried, investigated, proven)

**Note:** *At any place in the outline where the masculine pronoun appears, it is used in the generic sense. What is described here can be for male or female.*

## A. WHAT DOES IT MEAN WHEN WE SAY THAT GOD TESTS A MINISTRY?

1. God uses any means which He Himself knows will determine the presence, quality, or genuineness of His call on someone's life.
2. God assesses and examines the true inner attitudes and motives of those whom He calls, to show whether they are pure or not.
3. God puts those He calls into difficult situations which will refine them spiritually (like the Latin word for test, "*testu*," which means to be put inside of an earthen pot with a lid on top).

## B. BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC TESTS

1. Hebrews 12:29 - "*For our God is a consuming fire.*" As a consuming fire, God tries the attitudes and motives of each person that He uses. This is not simply to expose weaknesses, but to cause them to turn to the Lord for help. God proves His vessels of leadership, already knowing their inner weaknesses, that these might be healed.
2. God will test a leader to purify them. God will use only pure leaders, whose only motive for ministry is the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Through trials and tough circumstances, God removes impure attitudes of bitterness, selfishness and covetousness from a leader's heart, and replaces them with motives of love.
3. Producing faithful men and women of God is a primary purpose of God's testing. Men and women who can keep believing and trusting in the living God during problems and difficulties, will develop true faithfulness to God and His Word.

4. Another purpose in God's testing of His leaders is to sort out those who are not truly called by Him. Only those anointed and called of God can sustain the pressures of filling a governmental ministry. God puts His leaders in desperate situations. Those who do not feel a true call of the Spirit upon their lives drop out of the preparation process. This is sometimes the best thing for them and for the Church. God's people can follow only those shepherds who have been divinely appointed to their task.
5. God also tests His leaders to equip them with the spiritual understanding they need to help His people. All Christians experience a variety of tests and trials. Only the leader who has successfully overcome them by themselves can help the people.
6. The different tests of God can and do occur throughout a leader's life. To emphasize their role in preparation, we will study the different tests of ministry in a special preparation role. The scriptural tests of God's leaders, listed in the next section, have some overlap and similarities. The list may not be exhaustive.

(Stages of development from new birth to fulfillment of ministry) What follows in the teaching is a focus on the "tests of a ministry."

THE SALVATION	THE CALL	THE PREPARATION	THE MATURITY
THE SEED OF MINISTRY	BIRTH OF A MINISTRY	<b>TESTS OF A MINISTRY</b>	FULFILLMENT OF A MINISTRY

## B. SPECIFIC TESTS OF MINISTRY

### 1. Time Test

#### a. Definition:

In the Time Test, by all outward appearances, God does not seem to be fulfilling the word He gave a leader in the past. The Time Test tries a leader's patience, forcing them to trust God to fulfill their call and ministry in His own time and way.

#### b. Purpose:

- To provide opportunity to grow in faith.
- To purify a leader's motives and attitudes.
- To give God an opportunity to prove Himself to be a miracle-working God to everyone He has called to the service of His Kingdom.

#### c. Biblical Illustration:

- Genesis 12-18 - The call of Abraham.

## 2. Word Test

### a. Definition:

In the Word Test, the leader experiences circumstances that seem to nullify the written or living Word of God. "How can the known will of God possibly come to pass in my life?" is the leader's cry during this time. Many feel that because they have been filled and called by God's Spirit, they should never experience darkness or confusion as long as they do not fall into sin.

The Word Test is no accident. In fact, God purposely allows contrary situations in a leader's life and ministry. No leader is exempt from these times of trial and misunderstanding. During the Word Test, God has not forgotten or contradicted His promise, but He desires to accomplish certain purposes that are as yet totally unknown to the leader. If the leader endures with patience, trust and obedience, he will eventually find himself rejoicing in the Lord's wisdom and skill in the planning and use of these seemingly antagonistic experiences.

### b. Purpose: (Word Test)

- To reject his own resources and depend only on God's strength.
- To extend the reach of the kingdom of heaven.
- To give the leader further testimony of God's power and faithfulness to share with more people.

### c. Biblical Illustration:

- Genesis 37-45 - Joseph (also note Psalm 105:17-19).

## 3. Character Test

### a. Definition:

In the Character Test, the leader is surrounded by ungodliness that attempts to pull him in its direction. The leader may be tempted to sin in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life. In order to develop leaders with strong, godly character qualities - love, joy, peace, patience, self-control, faithfulness - God puts His leaders in fiery places so they may learn to stand strong in Him.

### b. Purpose:

- To show areas of weakness in his own personality.
- To expose his own true inward self.

- To motivate a leader to boldly take a stand against the powers of darkness around him.

**c. Biblical Illustration:**

- 1 Samuel 2-3 - Samuel in the midst of a corrupt society.

#### **4. Motivation Test**

**a. Definition:**

This is a heavenly "examination" in which God exposes to the leader what inner and outer forces influence his decision-making processes. God will arrange situations to reveal a leader's true inner intentions, thoughts, values and priorities that cause him to make choices or act in a certain way.

A leader may not always know why he does something. What appears to motivate him, from an outer inspection, may be a far cry from his true internal motives.

**b. Purpose:**

- To disclose those inner drives and to purify them into desires for the glory of God.

**c. Biblical Illustration: (Motivation Test)**

- Numbers 22-24 - The story of Balaam and Balak.

#### **5. Servant Test**

**a. Definition:**

In the Servant Test, a person is asked to do menial tasks that seem below their high calling in God. No menial task is below any true servant of God. Especially before (or even during) their time of fully giving oneself to prayer and the Word instead of "waiting on tables" (see Acts 6:1-6), God tests a leader to see if they are willing to do menial service.

**b. Purpose:**

- To reveal if the ministry motivation is to be in the public eye and receive service.
- To give an opportunity to governmental leaders to experience what it feels like to do different jobs in the church.

**c. Biblical Illustration:**

- 1 Kings 19 - Elisha serving and following Elijah.

## **6. Wilderness Test**

**a. Definition:**

In the Wilderness Test, God directly or indirectly guides a leader (or future leader) into a materially and/or spiritually dry and desolate place. When no fruit comes from their life or ministry, a leader feels he is in this test. In such times, a leader wonders whether he really received a call of God upon their life, because he appears to have no direct involvement in the true, living work of the kingdom of God. Sometimes a leader is left with no one else to talk to but God Himself

**b. Purpose:**

- To increase the leader's appreciation for the good things that God has already put in his life.
- To teach the leader how to discern whether the Lord alone sustains his spiritual life, or he draws from his ministry activity to sustain his relationship with God.
- To strip the leader of all the wisdom and ways of the world, and to teach him the ways of His Spirit.
- To drive a leader to cultivate his life in prayer and the Word.

**c. Biblical Illustration:**

- Exodus 2-3 - Moses in the wilderness.

## **7. Misunderstanding Test**

**a. Definition:**

The Test of Misunderstanding occurs when those hearing a leader do not receive (or reject) the correct meaning he is trying to communicate. People may misinterpret or mistake the true significance of his actions, words, attitudes or motives.

**b. Purpose:**

- To cause a leader to look for new or better ways of bringing across his feelings.

- To cause a leader to examine his basic attitudes and motivations in communication. Many times people will misunderstand what a person is trying to say just because the communicator has an attitude that is too hard, harsh or angry when he tries to say it.

**c. Biblical Example:**

- Hebrews 12:3 - Jesus serves as our pattern as one who endured misunderstanding.

## **8. Patience Test**

**a. Definition:**

The Patience Test happens when a leader's expectations in God are not fulfilled "on schedule." Patience is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22). This word comes from a Latin word which means "to suffer." In the Patience Test, God challenges a leader to wait patiently, or to endure some tribulation, without complaint. To grow in patience, a leader must bear pain or trouble, without losing self-control or becoming a disturbance to others. In portraying this quality, a leader calmly tolerates delay while refusing to be provoked by it.

**b. Purpose:**

- To pass the test of yielding one's rights to Jesus Christ and wait for things to work out in God's timing.
- To learn how to release expectations that we put on others in order for our vision to be fulfilled.

**c. Biblical Example:**

- Genesis 5-7 - Noah and the preparations for the flood.

## **9. Frustration Test**

**a. Definition:**

A leader undergoes the Frustration Test when he feels that his life or ministry goals cannot be achieved. People or circumstances may prevent him from gratifying his

conscious or unconscious desires and goals. A leader especially experiences this feeling when he finds no logical or rational reason why his efforts are being baffled, foiled or confused.

**b. Purpose: (Frustration Test)**

- To cause the leader to re-examine his spiritual priorities. Is he giving enough time to prayer and the Word? Is he/she giving enough attention to their spouse and family?
- To re-examine priorities for ministry in general.
- To cause the leader to put more fervor into his primary spiritual battle against opposition to the simple gospel of Jesus Christ.

**c. Biblical Example:**

- II Corinthians 11:17-12:1 - The many challenges that Paul faced in the ministry.

**10. Discouragement Test**

**a. Definition:**

A leader is going through the Discouragement Test when he allows circumstances or people to dishearten him and deprive him of courage in the Lord. A discouraged leader is deterred from an undertaking which he believe was God's will. During such times, a leader may lose his confidence or hope in God, His provision, His promises, or His calling.

**b. Purpose:**

- To drive the leader to God in prayer, often using the Psalms.
- To teach the leader that joy comes from being rooted in the Lord and not only through happy circumstances.
- To reveal bad and hidden attitudes in the leader, leading to repentance of complaining, criticizing, and murmuring.

**c. Biblical Example:**

- 1 Kings 19 - Story of Elijah, after his victory at Mt. Carmel, and, upon learning that Queen Jezebel planned to kill him.

**11. Warfare Test:**

**a. Definition:**

The Warfare Test happens when a leader encounters violent spiritual opposition to his progress in the Spirit, or in his extending of God's kingdom. Though it

happens in the realm of the spirit, it can find natural expressions in conflicts with people, lack of

response to one's ministry, or struggles of various sorts (including the feeling of unbearable temptation to sin).

Some people think anointed leaders cannot be tempted like other people can. Much publicized leadership failures have proved that untrue! And the Bible says that even Jesus *"was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin"* (Hebrews 4:15). The calling of God does not remove human susceptibility to temptation. Leaders must make a conscious effort to *"walk in the Spirit and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh"* (Galatians 5:16).

**b. Purpose: (Warfare Test)**

- To force the leader to grow stronger in the Spirit.
- To train the leader how to effectively use his spiritual weapons of the Word, prayer, praise, and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**c. Biblical Example:**

- I and II Timothy-(I Timothy 1:18;4:7;6:12; II Timothy 2-24)-Timothy was encouraged to fight the good fight of faith.

## 12. Self-will Test

**a. Definition:**

When a leader realizes God is asking him to do something that counters his own plans or desires, the Self-will Test has begun. God has to break the self-will and personal ambition of every person He uses, so that He can trust him or her to do whatever He requires in His Kingdom. Even good and appropriate things He asks us to sacrifice at times. God will sometimes even requests a person to do something for Him, and give no logical reason for it. In not always explaining His requests to leaders, God is developing a child-like faith and obedience in their hearts. God does not necessarily prefer painful sacrifices from His leaders, but when he speaks something contrary to a person's desire, that person must quickly respond to the word.

**b. Purpose:**

- To subject the leader's will to God's Word (both the written and the quickened).
- To crucify a leader's desires, on occasion, so that He can accomplish His own way (Isaiah 55:6-9).



**c. Biblical Example:**

- Matthew 26:36-48-Jesus in Gethsemane.

### **13. Vision Test**

**a. Definition:**

The Vision Test occurs when contrary people and circumstances besiege a leader's

spiritual insight into the purposes of God. Natural and physical vision is not enough for a leader of God's people. He must also have spiritual eyes of faith to see God's will and desire for His people. The spiritual Vision Test asks two main questions: "Can you see the spiritual needs and answers of the people of God?" and, "Can you resist opposition and adversity, and tenaciously hold the vision that God has given you as a leader?"

**b. Purpose: (Vision Test)**

- To show a leader how shallow his spiritual insight really is.
- To keep leaders fully dependant on the Lord.
- To ensure that the glory for success goes fully to God.

**c. Biblical Example:**

- Nehemiah 1, 2, 4 - Nehemiah rebuilding the walls in spite of constant challenges to the vision God gave to him.

### **14. Usage Test**

**a. Definition:**

A leader undergoes the Usage Test in his life or ministry preparation when he cannot find the need, demand, opportunity, invitation, results, or expected occasion to exercise his ministry. "Put on the shelf" is a common description for this situation.

**b. Purpose:**

- To show the leader that they depend too heavily on their actual service or activity, rather than upon the Lord Himself, for their joy and spiritual fulfillment.
- To humble a leader.

- To purify the motives of a leader.
- To deepen the message of a leader.

**c. Biblical Example:**

- Matthew 3; Mark 1; Luke 1,3; John I - Example of John the Baptist.

**CONCLUSION:**

The tests of ministry preparation described in this outline may come especially during the early stages of a leader's ministry. But they can come at any time - as they did for the persons described in the Biblical examples. Governmental ministries face what may be a "hotter" refiner's fire. However, God takes all Christians through these tests to refine their faith. Because God's imagination is limitless, so are His ways of bringing His children into maturity!