

BECOMING A GOOD TEST TAKER *Part 2*

We introduced a dream to you last week.

I was back in school. It was senior year and the class was preparing to take a test. This was not a final exam. Instead, it was more like a unit quiz. I'm feeling really confident heading into the test. My classmate, on the other hand, was feeling less than confident. We were given a test, and it was a vocabulary test. When we received the results, my classmate scored much better than I did.

We said to you that this is a warning against being overly confident when entering a test. Many of us are failing our tests, and it's partly because we're entering our tests with an arrogant attitude. Jesus told His disciples, "Pray that you enter not into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak!" In other words, don't just assume that you're ready for any test. Pray for grace.

Let's continue because there's more to the story.

We are given the test, and it's a vocabulary test...

This statement is important because it reveals that oftentimes we're being tested on how we respond verbally to our tests!

James 3:2

² For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

Notice, in order to be a "perfect" (or score well) we must be able to control our body, particularly our mouth!

Psalms 39:1-2

¹ I said, I will take heed to my ways, That I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, While the wicked is before me. ² I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good; And my sorrow was stirred.

Sometimes to keep from sinning with our mouth, it's best to keep silent. Keeping silent also keeps us from speaking against God.

Psalm 39:9

⁹ I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; Because thou didst it.

The Psalmist kept silent because he didn't want to appear like he was opposing God.

1 Peter 2:22, 23

²² Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: ²³ Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

Another reason to keep silent is to keep from making things worse.

James 3:6

⁶ And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

The word “course” in verse 6 means *wheel* or a *recurring event or pattern*. The word “nature” (Greek **g nesis**) is *generation*. So, our tongue has the power to *repeat generational cycles* (cause generational patterns or events to repeat). Thus, generational patterns are often repeated in our *speech* before they are repeated in our *lives*!

I went to my next class, which was a literature class. I remember being assigned a lot of reading in this class. In fact, this was one of those classes that if you fell behind in the reading, it was nearly impossible to catch up!

Not only are we being tested on how disciplined we are with our *words*, we're also being tested on how disciplined we are with our *reading*!

Exodus 16:4

⁴ Then said the Lord unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no.

The Israelites were *tested* on how well they gathered manna *each day*. Moreover, how they performed this duty determined how well they would respond in *other* tests! Similarly, how we respond to God's word (meditating on it day and night) will determine how successful we are in our trials.

Joshua 1:8

⁸ This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

I went into my bag to grab my literature book and noticed that there were all kinds of pamphlets and flyers inside. I was finding it hard to distinguish between what I needed to read and what was just propaganda.

This is a reminder that we're being tested by the rhetoric and propaganda. It seems there's so much disinformation that it's hard to distinguish truth from error.

What is propaganda? Propaganda is information that is used to promote a particular *opinion*. In the past, propaganda appeared on pamphlets and flyers. Today it appears on film, TV, newscasts, podcasts and social media posts.

Again, propaganda has become so distracting that it's hard to know what God is saying.

1 Timothy 6:3–5

³ If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; ⁴ He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, ⁵ Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

This verse represents a kind of *religious* propaganda that says that the goal of godliness or the Christian life is *gain* (i.e. to experience *the good life*). While God definitely gives us “good things to enjoy,” the *aim* of the Christian life is not to experience *the good life*. Instead, the aim of godliness is to experience Christ's life. Failure to understand this will cause one to *err from the faith*.

1 Timothy 6:10

¹⁰ For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

There's another kind of propaganda, one that tries to make faith more *logical*. There's a big push among many in Christianity to try and make faith rational and logical (i.e. make sense).

1 Timothy 6:20–21 MSG

20 And oh, my dear Timothy, guard the treasure you were given! Guard it with your life. Avoid the talk-show religion and the practiced confusion of the so-called experts. 21 People caught up in a lot of talk can miss the whole point of faith.

The more we try to make faith make sense, the more we miss the point of faith. Sometimes faith doesn't make sense, because faith often runs *counter* to logic.

For example, logic requires reason (i.e. an explanation or proof). Logic says, "I won't accept any opinion unless I'm convinced of it first!" Faith, on the other hand, is not limited to logic. Faith believes what God says without the need of proof. In other words, faith takes God at His word.

There are people who struggle with faith and refuse to have a relationship with God until He answers all their questions in a way that satisfies their logic. But, no relationship can survive that is based solely on logic. Every relationship requires a certain level of trust (faith) to survive.

Stop letting rhetoric and the opinions of others distract you from knowing what the true aim of the Christian life really is. Stop letting so-called "science" and logic distract you from walking by faith and being in a relationship with God. Remember you're going to be tested by both, and it's only when you have a true understand of God's word that you will be able to overcome this test!