

9-17-2016, COTR Texarkana

- Title: Pass the Test
- Purpose: Provoke people to see life's challenges as a spiritual test that must be passed to become extraordinary.
- Spiritual Truth: Extraordinary people "Pass the Test".
- Text: Genesis 22:1-18, Genesis 37
- Topic: Joseph, Silence, Temptation, Test, Success
- Series: Not Your Average Joe
- Series Purpose: Provoke people to live an extraordinary life by following the example of Joseph.

Pass the Test

I. Introduction

- A. Review Sermon Series: "Not Your Average Joe". We're learning how to live an extraordinary life by following the example of the OT character, Joseph.
 1. Listen to live stream @ChurchOnTheRock.org or the COTR iPhone/ Android app
 2. An average Joe def.: Someone who is just like everyone else; a completely average person. Contrast extraordinary, def.: Someone who goes beyond what is average; someone who is exceptional and stands out in the crowd, e.g. Valedictorian at graduation, Movie: McFarland, runners who win the cross country.
 3. Last week we Joseph showed us how extraordinary people follow The Master's Plan
 4. Today Joseph will show us how extraordinary people "Pass the Test". By test I mean the challenges in life that can either stop us or promote us into an extraordinary life.
- B. Title: Pass the Test
- C. Purpose: Provoke people to see life's challenges as a spiritual test that must be passed to become extraordinary.
- D. Spiritual Truth: Extraordinary people "Pass the Test".

II. A spiritual test reveals what we really believe

- A. Context: 50 years after God made Abraham a promise to become the father-of-faith. He now takes his final exam. Genesis 22:1-18 (NIV) Some time later **God tested Abraham**. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. 2 Then God said, "Take your son...whom you love—Isaac—and...Sacrifice him...on a mountain I will show you...10 Then he...took the knife to slay his son. 11 But the angel of the Lord called out...12 Do not lay a hand on the boy...**Now I know** that you fear God...16... because you have done this...17 I will surely bless you...18 and through your offspring **all nations on earth will be blessed**, because you have obeyed me.
 1. God tested him to reveal his character and what he really believed.
 2. Def. spiritual test: to examine a person to learn the true nature of their character; a means to reveal what we really believe, e.g. ACT score for college admission; Movie Courageous, employee offered a higher position if he'd lie when asked to.
 3. Not all tests come from God; sometimes satan attacks us; sometimes just living in a fallen world is a test. Regardless of the source, extraordinary people pass the test.

III. Joseph passed 3 major tests on his way to an extraordinary life.

- A. Extraordinary people pass the test of silence

1. Video, <https://vimeo.com/18325618>, 1:13:08- 1:14:25
 2. Context: Joseph's jealous brothers. Genesis 37:19–24 (ESV) They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer. 20 Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits...23 So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe... 24 And they took him and threw him into a pit. **The pit was empty; there was no water in it.**
 3. The pit was a deep, dark, empty place. When his brothers left he pit was eerily silent; he probably felt God was also silent. I believe he did what we all do in similar circumstances. He asked where God was and why was this happening? Psalm 42:9–10 (MSG) Sometimes I ask God... "**Why did you let me down? Why am I walking around in tears?...**
 4. Why is a tormenting and often unanswerable question made worse when God is silent. You can ask God a question but you can't make Him speak.
 - a Job experienced this silence but his faith kept him connected to God: e.g. Job, after satan killed his children and stole his wealth. Job 1:21–22 (NLT)... The LORD gave me what I had, and the LORD has taken it away. **Praise the name of the LORD!"** 22 In all of this, **Job did not sin by blaming God.**
 5. The key to passing the test of silence is to keep on believing, praying and praising God until you hear His voice again. Extraordinary people pass the test of silence.
- B. Extraordinary people pass the test of temptation
1. Video: <https://vimeo.com/18325618>, 1:23:32- 1:24:35
 2. Genesis 39:3–9 (NCV) Potiphar saw that...the LORD made Joseph successful in everything he did. 4...He put Joseph in charge of the house...6...Now Joseph was well built and handsome. 7 After some time the wife of Joseph's master began to desire Joseph...she said to him, "**Have sexual relations with me.**" 8 But Joseph refused and said...9... How can I do such an evil thing? **It is a sin against God.**"
 3. This was more than an offer of a few minutes of pleasure. It was a test of character to see if he would remain loyal to God when no one was watching.
 4. All of us face temptations that seem innocent and pleasurable but they lead us to sin against God and often causes a lifetime of pain and regret, e.g. Adam Eve ate the forbidden fruit that promised to make them wise but caused pain and death instead.
 - a Temptation never gives what it promises.
 5. 1 Corinthians 10:13 (NLT) The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, **he will show you a way out** (*ESV way of escape*) so that you can endure.
 6. Joseph took the way out and passed the test of temptation. We can do the same.
- C. Extraordinary people pass the test of success
1. Picture of Joseph in charge of Egypt

2. Context: Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream: Ge 41:39–43 (NLT) Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has revealed the meaning of the dreams to you, clearly no one else is as intelligent or wise as you are...41 Pharaoh said to Joseph, "**I hereby put you in charge of the entire land of Egypt.**" 42...He dressed him in fine linen clothing and hung a gold chain around his neck. 43...wherever Joseph went, the command was shouted, "Kneel down!"...
3. When you're a slave in prison the test is to not give up on God in your struggle to survive. The test of success is different. It involves the test of pride, self-sufficiency, misuse of power, independence and taking credit for what God has done.
4. Many people fail the test of success. I have a pastor friend who had 10k members 30 years ago and today he doesn't even have a church to pastor. A mutual friend told me "The air gets thinner the higher up you go on the mountain." It's called altitude sickness. You don't think clearly, you have shortness of breath, get dizzy and tired.
5. As we climb the mountain of success money, power and influence can make us think too highly of ourself, e.g. King Nebuchadnezzar: Daniel 4:30–32 (NLT)... 'Look at this great city of Babylon! By **my** own mighty power, **I** have built this beautiful city as **my** royal residence to display **my** majestic splendor.' 31... a voice called down from heaven...You are no longer ruler of this kingdom. 32...You will live in the fields with the wild animals...until you learn that **the Most High rules** over the kingdoms of the world and gives them to anyone **he chooses.**'
6. There's an antidote for altitude sickness that will keep us from becoming proud when we become successful; it's called humility. Acts 17:28 (ESV) '**In him (Jesus Christ) we live and move and have our being**'...

IV. Conclusion: Whenever we're being tested satan tries to make us fail.

- A. The Bible is clear how we respond to him: Ephesians 6:11–18 (NIV) ...For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but...against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to **stand your ground**, and after you have done everything, to **stand**. 14 **Stand firm** then, with...(truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith, salvation, the Word of God and prayer.)
 1. Def. stand: to be steady in your faith and not waver. It means when you're being tested and satan tries to make you fail you can stand and pass the test!
- B. Prayer: Are you being tested? Is satan trying to make you fail a test?
- C. Souls: God had a plan for Joseph and He has a plan for us. It starts when we receive Jesus as our Savior and follow Him as our Lord.
- D. *** *Logos Bible Software and library, Greek English Lexicon of the NT, Webster's 1828 Dictionary, A Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Ephesians were used to prepare this message.*