

*Surviving...overcoming...tests in the wilderness*

*Testing in the Wilderness*

**1 Cor 10:1-13** / Exodus – Deut [ESV]

April 27th, 2014, Ken Dyck

**Intro**

**1 Cor 10:13**

**Q.** what kind of temptation do you think this is referring to?

Turn in your Bibles to **1 Cor 10:1-13**

Context: the apostle Paul is addressing various problems/issues faced in the Corinthian church and begins chapter 10 with a stern warning from history. **10:1-5** All under the “cloud” (explain the presence/direction aspect of the cloud). All passed through the sea...the OT salvation story. All ate and drank directly from the hand of God...miracles daily. **Yet**, God was not pleased with *most* of them! Ouch!!! **10:5. Why?** ...they were overthrown or “failed” in the wilderness!

2x recent men’s retreats: 6 lessons I have learned in my life

Lesson 6: *in prolonged times of wilderness testing, what is in our hearts will eventually come out.*

Application: wonder how many of you are in a season of wilderness?

Marriage, relationships, work, health, \$\$\$, family, unhappiness,...

**Kd:** wilderness season the last 4 years of my life. Most intense.

Not been proud or pleased with all that has come out of my heart.

Grace God can still use us in our wilderness seasons.

If you look at **10:6-11** and if you have a basic understanding of the OT, you will quickly realize Paul is referring to the ~ 40 yrs & experiences of Israel between the time God delivered them out of Egypt (slavery) and into a season of blessing. The journey was actually only supposed to take just over a year (Exo 12:1 cf Num 10:11) but because God’s people continued to fail the tests God intended them to endure/pass, the journey took 40 years and the lives of some 600,000 men.

**There is a consequence** when we fail to pass the tests God sets before us.

And in his mercy, whenever His children (or churches) fail to pass one of these tests, God often (some would say always) brings the same test around again.

**Q.** SO why does God even test us? Why/how is that mercy?

Same reason your teachers tested you in high school?

To force us to learn lessons we would not otherwise learn. // God

**A1.** to strengthen us and equip us for the **good works** (Eph 2:10) He has prepared for us in advance.

Accomplishing the purpose(s) for which God has created you and left you on earth will invoke a spiritual battle. There will be opposition. There will be casualties.

**A2.** To ensure we can handle the blessing and responsibility He is about to give us. (Deut 4:6-8) Make sure we give Him glory rather than mistake the blessing of God as our own creation and right.

And that is the context of 1 Cor 10:13.

And since life is too short to learn everything by experience, God has preserved these wilderness tests for us as examples so the rest of my message will be looking at a few of these tests and applying the lessons to our lives today. **PRAYER**

Actually, about 12 wilderness tests we could look at but we’ll focus our time on what I see as the most relevant five...not necessarily in order.

Review: God supernaturally released an entire nation from Egyptian slavery & promised them a land of their own where God would abundantly bless them. They would be the most powerful/richest nation on earth, lend to many, borrow from none.

Israel was excited/stoked...and then they became thirsty...and they began to grumble.

**Exo 15:22-24**

What the people of Israel (and we) failed to realize is that **God had a bigger plan in mind** than merely keeping Israel comfortable/happy. [it's not about you...]

**TEST 1: God is looking to use/bless people who are willing to be tested, be seasoned and to be trained rather than grumble.**

It was through Israel, that all people on earth might be saved as they watched/saw what happened to a nation that was fully dependent upon and obedient to God Almighty.

It was through Israel that God would exercise judgement and discipline upon the sin of nations who had rebelled against God's leadership.

So **God needed to first develop in Israel a character** strong enough to protect them from becoming like the very nations He needed to discipline / deal with.

*Lesson 3: often, the people God intends to use will experience an initial season of success during which it becomes obvious that their gifts, abilities and talents have outgrown their character.*

// same with churches.

God's testing helps develop our character as people and as churches.

**Q.** for RECC: **had God answered your prayers and the vision with which you started out and given you the harvest you were asking for, could you have handled it?** (yes/no; sure worth a shot?)

**Personal Appl** Is there a character quality...honesty, integrity, purity, patience, faithfulness, trust (giving the benefit of doubt), calmness, humility, kindness, considering others as better than self, faith, etc. God has been trying to develop in your life?

If you know that God would bring you back to face the same situation if you fail now, would that make a difference?

**Exo 15:25** -26

**Exo 15:27**

**Appl** God was not oblivious to the needs of His people and isn't oblivious to yours.

Don't even think He would have minded the question: "What should we drink?" It was the grumbling and the attitude, the silent accusation that God didn't care for them that God had difficulty with.

The people failed this test many times in the wilderness. Like a few days later when they ran out of bread, which brings me to our second test.

**TEST 2: God is looking to use/bless people who, in times of testing, will not return to Egypt.**

**Exo 16:2-3** are you kidding me?

Their memory was seriously distorted.

Egypt is a place of bondage, slavery, imprisonment and hopelessness...

**(p)** in times of testing, "Egypt" is a place a lot of us return.

We know that returning to our old ways is not healthy, but at least it's familiar

...and we justify it by accusing God of not caring. We blame God for it!

**Q.** to make this practical, **What is your Egypt?**

**\* to what unhealthy way of thinking, acting or living are you tempted to return to when being tested or tempted?**

**Appl** addictions

Pornography, alcohol/drugs, blaming/resentment, withdrawal, control, anger/yelling, food, TV, sloth, toys, work, shopping...

You cry out to the Lord for His leading, His guidance, His permission...a relationship, a job, a career, a house, a ministry, attempt to rebuild trust.

You start out and adversity strikes and you cry out to God, *why did I ever trust you? Why did I take this road?* I would have been so much better off had I just stayed single, at my old job, coming to church and tossing a few bucks in the offering. *What am I sacrificing for? Why not just live the good life. What was I thinking?*

\-> returning to Egypt is often our way of "getting back" @ God.

**What is your Egypt?**

So what should we do instead of grumbling and threatening to return to Egypt? FS 😊

Ask God: *What are You doing in this situation* with an honest?

*How do you want me to respond so you can complete Your work in me / others?*

*James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God who gives generously to all without finding fault. But when he asks he must believe and not doubt for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.*

Is this difficulty because of sin in my life? Is it because of foolish or impulsive decisions? Behaviours, etc.? Are you testing me? If so, what are you trying to develop in me? Is this a spiritual attack? How should I pray? All of the above?

Application: sometimes it's good to invite others into the discernment process

Trans: move on to test #3 (a bit more difficult)

Context: Typically, when God wanted to speak with Moses, he would ascend the mountain into the presence of God where God would speak to Moses, face to face. Moses then relayed the messages to God's people. There would be a boundary at the base of the mountain where the people could not pass...

One day, when Moses and God were talking, Moses tells God the people promised to do all God asks of them, so God decides He'd like to speak to the people in person.

**Exo 19:9-11** God gave them three days to deal with any sin in their lives/camp. Long story short, God utters the 10 commandments to the people.

**Q. what would you have to clean up?**

**20:18-19** here the people made a fatal mistake...the same mistake we often make.

**(p)** We want a r'ship w God but we're not sure we want to live holy / set apart lives.

**TEST 3: God is looking to use/bless people who are willing to STAND in His presence and let the accompanying fear of the LORD purge sin from their lives.**

**John 3:19-20** *And this is the judgement: the light has come into the world and the people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light lest his works should be exposed.*

Throughout the entire OT, Israel made the same foundational mistake many N.A. Christians make today: We think we can have it all. We think we can live in two kingdoms – God's and the worlds. We cry out for the presence and blessings of God. We ask for the filling of His HS; we long for the miracles & power of NT. At the same time, we think we can keep our vices, our control, bitterness, indulgences, and secrets. The only way we can do that is if we keep God at a distance.

**Q. Have you ever cried out 4 God to heal you, to use you, 4 your life to make a diff?**

Then **consecrate yourself** and **make ready** for the coming of the LORD in your life.

Appl If there is sin in your life or character flaws that you are unwilling to deal with, God will often bring you through a season of testing until He has stripped away everything you've trusted in so that you are willing to listen.

**III** a famous pastor who'd fallen into immorality was asked: *when did you stop loving the Lord?* *I never stopped loving the Lord; I stopped fearing Him.*

III Hamilton AA: a bottle vs picture of family; *"one or the other, but not both!"*

**1 Cor 10:21** *You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.*

**1 Cor 10:13** *No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear, but when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.*

Application: look for the way out and take it!!!!

Test #4 is tricky and it's one that deserves much more unpacking...almost left it out but I felt it was just too important and far too rarely spoken. It has to do with l'ship.

[2 sides to it]

**TEST 4: God is looking to use/bless people who can discern when God has appointed leaders and when He is leading them.**

All through the book of Exodus, the people grumbled against their leaders. At one point, Aaron & Miriam grumbled against their leader/brother. Criticizing leadership is a national sport in Canada. Unfortunately, it's also worked its way into the church. Sometimes it has been earned; abuses of power, mistakes, ambition, authority w/o accountability. And yet, on a human level, much of what happens in our world and in our churches rises and falls on leadership; **1 Tim 3:1** desire OS = noble

The people's criticism of Moses' leadership was understandable...but wrong. They were afraid. They had families who were afraid. They were hurting.

So **here's a challenge** for those of us who do lead:

***When those we lead are afraid and lash out at us, how do we respond?***

Like Moses or like Aaron?

**Aaron** Exo 32 – give in to the demands of the people & save face

**Moses** – intercedes for the people. (Exo 32:11-14; 33:12ff)

Fasts 40 days/nights for them (Deut 9)

Even suggests that if God would not forgive them, that God also blots Moses' name out of the book of life (Exo 32:31-32)

Application: the church; marriages (PPH); children; \_\_\_\_\_?

**Here's another challenge:**

Do we recognize / believe our leaders have been called by God to lead us?

Do we want our leaders **to lead** or to implement / execute our desires?

One of the most critical errors of Israel was when God tested them right before crossing the Jordan River into the promised land in Numbers 13...12 spies sent out to map the land b4 battle

2 leaders – Joshua and Caleb trusted Moses and trusted God to fulfil His promises – borrowed on their experiences of God's faithfulness in the past and believed God for the impossible

10 "leaders" or spies saw that the land was good but only saw obstacles. **(p)** the people went with the 10; they voted.

Appl the crowds, when given the chance, will always return to Egypt. (comfort) **(p)** so did Aaron (Exo 32 the calf)

**Q. Can you recognize when a leader is anointed and being led by God?** Appl pray; watch (accountability/ feedback); discern; character; be careful

\* watch your grumbling

On the other side, here's another challenge for those of us who lead (corporately):

As best as I understand it, there are no Moses leaders among us. Moses was unique.

In the OT, God's spirit typically dwelt and rested upon His appointed l'ship...ONLY

Today, God's spirit indwells and rests on all believers.

For leadership, God has established a five-fold ministry (Eph 4:11) and an oversight model of elders...(1 Tim 3) and we HAVE to learn to work together. It is so easy to become blinded in leadership, to not see where our pride, ambition past hurts and character flaws stand in the way. It is easy to request submission and use Scripture to support our demands...and do all this with a very shallow prayer life.

I know. I've been there. And I've been there more than once.

And as leaders, we need to learn the balance of leading and serving and submitting ourselves or we become dangerous and unsafe. (w/o accountability, no protection). And God will not be mocked. He will not give His glory to another.

All the while, we must still lead...but realize we must earn that right by our love / integrity and purity before God. We too must learn to stand in the presence of a holy God. (iii remember Moses was not allowed to enter the promised land Num 20:12). To who am I truly accountable? To whom will I submit? Do I invite feedback from people I've asked to speak truth into my life? Have I dealt with the wounds in my own heart that could cloud my leadership motives? Am I currently dealing with any character flaws? Secret sins? Do I love the people I lead? Am I willing to interceded for them? Do I? Would I follow me?

And finally,

**TEST 5: God is looking to use/bless people who won't forget God in times of blessing and think the blessing is for them.**

It's called entitlement. It's called forgetting where we came from, taking God and His blessings for granted. It's called compromise, blending into our culture and taking upon their values. It's called not adequately teaching our children to love and to fear the Lord.

And it always turns out badly

#### **Deut 4:5-9**

One of our biggest problems individually and as a church is that we cannot handle success. It goes straight to our heads. Comfort becomes our God. Sacrifice is delegated to the fanatics and the Christian crazies...

**Can I handle success? Am I willing to stay as committed to God in prayer, surrender and service when living in His blessing as I am when living through testing?**

III ken 2006 health issue; *"Why didn't you ask what happens if I give you back your health?"*

**As best I understand it, THIS is the type of man/woman and church God is looking to bless.**

#### **PUTTING MYSELF in the PICTURE**

**TEST 1: Am I willing to embrace testing, seasoning and training with gratitude rather than grumbling.**

In times of testing, am I willing to ask God *what He is doing* in my life and how I can cooperate with Him?

**TEST 2: Am I willing to endure testing, seasoning and training without threatening to return to Egypt.**

**TEST 3: Am I willing to STAND in God's presence and let the accompanying fear of the LORD purge sin from my life.**

Am I willing to take a serious look at any known or secret sin in my life and deal with it before God.

**TEST 4: Am I willing to discern God's leadership and bring myself in alignment with it.**

**TEST 5: Am I willing to receive God's blessing and leverage it for the purposes for which He has given it. Am I willing to seek Him and follow Him in times of blessing as well as times of bounty.**

**PRAYER** listen for the nugget of truth God has placed in your heart this AM.



**Testing in the Wilderness**  
**1 Corinthians 10:1-13**  
**Week of April 27th, 2014**  
**Ken Dyck**

**Objective of this study:** To become better prepared for testings in our lives.

**Worship (5 – 10 minutes)**

1. Spend five minutes in silent prayer asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
2. After the five minutes of silence have someone interrupt the silence and read Psalm 138 meditatively to the group. (after each phrase pause and let the Lord speak to you before reading the next)
3. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.

**Welcome (5 – 10 minutes)**

What was your most surprising test result in school?

**Word (20 - 30 minutes)**

Questions to guide your thoughts as you go through the study:

When we are in trial/test/wilderness situation, what options do we have? What responses, choices, decisions can we make that will lead to growth? What responses lead to bitterness or stagnation? What questions can we ask God and ourselves?

Have this in mind as you go through the study. Make note of what you come up with and discuss it again at the end. Write some specific responses in your journal and use them this week when you get the chance :) Discuss how it went, next time you meet as a group.

What stood out for you from the sermon?

Read 1 Cor. 10:1-13 and Exodus 15:19-27.

What do you notice about God and his character in these passages?

**Sermon quote: God's purpose for allowing tests in our lives is to**

**\*teach us and develop our character,**

**\*strengthen us and equip us for good works,**

**\*ensure we can handle the blessing and responsibility he is about to give us.**

**Work (30 - 40 minutes)**

So, when being tested, watch out for these temptations:

**Temptation #1:** to grumble instead of trust God (see Ex. 15:22-24).

4. Why does God dislike grumbling? What's the difference between grumbling and asking honest questions?

**Sermon quote: I don't think God would have minded the question "What should we drink?" It was the grumbling and the attitude of accusing God of not caring for them that God disliked.**

5. What are some questions you can ask yourself and God, to lead you away from grumbling and towards hearing God's heart for you? For example: "How would you like me to respond to this? How would you like to provide for me?"

**Temptation #2:** to run 'back to Egypt' rather than trust God and persevere (Ex. 16:1-3).

6. What is your 'Egypt'?

7. How does running back to Egypt short circuit what God is trying to do in our lives?

8. What are some questions you could ask God at points like this in your life?

Example from sermon: "What are you trying to develop in my life?"

**Temptation #3:** to try to hang on to both worlds, to harbour secret sins, rather than let God cleanse it from our lives.

9. Is there some attitude or other habit God has been convicting you of?
10. What are some questions you could ask God at points like this in your life?  
For example, "How are you trying to refine me?" "How can I cooperate with you?"

**Temptation #4:** to forget God in times of blessing and think we got it by our own cleverness or that it is for our enjoyment only.

11. What are healthy attitudes and responses when we've been blessed? What are God's purposes in blessing us?  
What are some questions you can ask God and yourself in order to stay on track?

12. Go back and discuss the guiding thought questions at the beginning of the Word section. What can you take with you this week? Be specific. Write it in your journal, practice this week when you get the chance and be ready to discuss with the group next week.