

"In the beginning
was the Word,
and the Word was
with God, and the
Word was God."
~John 1:1

The Lord's Flock
Growth
DIGEST
PASTORAL GROWTH SERIES



“ The Four Tests of Faith ”

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We, who were cleansed, liberated, and received the sacrament of reconciliation, must always be watchful. We are easy prey, if we do not watch for it is written in Matt 12:43-45, “When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none. Then it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first...”

The Lord's commands are demands so we must always obey. Satan knows that every time you disobey, you give him room. I.e an opening– the very thing he is lying in wait for him to enter. He is always watching and waiting for you to disobey God, so he can have the right to attack to you. God said, 1 Peter 5:8, “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

The moment we disobey God's commands, we give in to temptation and grieve the Holy Spirit. When this happens, we will fail to do what the Lord has commanded, because the devil will make us forget about it and cause us to procrastinate.

Always remember that the Lord rewards those who obey him. It is

written in Psalm 37:3-4, “Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.” There is always a good result when you obey.

In Matt. 8 and 14, God commanded the apostles to go to the other side of the sea and they obeyed. In both instances, their faith was immediately tested. In Matt. 8:24, it is written, “And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep.” And, in Matt. 8:24, “...But the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by waves, for the wind was against them.” The storm and the waves symbolize trials and testings. But, we must not worry or be afraid for God said in Matt. 14:27, “...Do not be afraid.” Also, remember that God will always be there to rescue us when we call on Him just like what He did with the apostles in Matt. 8:25-26, “...” Save us, LORD; we are perishing.” And He said to them, “Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?” Then He rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.”

They obeyed and were tested, and were rescued by God on both accounts.

When He demands us to do something, there will always be testings. When will trials come? It will come to us while we are completing our assignments to Him.

Why? It is because the Lord wants to see whether we are consistent, for He is a constant God just as He said in Mal. 3:6 "For I, the LORD, do not change..." The main point is that the Lord wants to see whether we will put ourselves first by doing what we want to do when we want to do it ,or if we will consult and obey Him every step of the way.

Sometimes, when we are in the middle of trials, we do not see God. In times like these, we must keep in mind that He is our intercessor, seated at the right hand of God, like He said in John 17:9,"I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours."

Always bear in mind: Our Lord is always watching. He will answer when we call. Sometimes when the Lord asks us to do something for Him and suddenly we find ourselves faced with a trial, we let ourselves be overtaken by fear. We are afraid that we might commit mistakes. That is why we must consult Him every moment in our life when beset by problems.

In Matt. 14:29-30, God said, "...Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "LORD, save me!" The Apostle Peter was able to walk on water despite the waves and the wind because he was focused on Jesus. It was only when he started to pay attention to the wind and the waves that he began to sink. So, fix your eyes on God alone. Whenever you have problems and are waiting on the Lord, wait for His time because it is the best time. It is written in Ecc. 3:11, "He has made everything beautiful in its time..."

When we are tasked to do something, we will be tempted to be afraid, give up, and not pursue what the Lord wants us to do. When God demands something from us, Satan is always there because he is going to destroy. Satan is very angry with all the good works we are doing for the Lord. Let us not open any room for Satan to attack the community.

A good example of this is the Great Wall of China. It was built to keep out conquerors from infiltrating their country. In the end, they were conquered by their enemies. Why? Was it because the wall was not high enough? Or was the wall not sturdy enough that it crumbled when the conquerors came? It was neither. The wall was high enough and sturdy enough to keep out China's enemies. China was conquered because a guard of the wall let them in. So, we must be watchful so that we will not become like the guard of the Great Wall who let the enemy in.

There are two sources of membership in the church:

- *Sent by God – These people were sent by God to help the church grow and unite.*
- *Sent by Satan – These people are the wolves in sheep's clothing described in Matt. 7:15. They came to destroy and cause division in the church.*

Gossip is a sin of the tongue and two of the seven things God hates are:

- *Lying tongue(Prov. 6:17)*
- *Slandering tongue – "A false witness who pours out lies and a person who stirs up conflict in the community." (Prov. 6:19)*

God unites. It is the devil who divides. So, rebuke the spirit of alienation the moment you feel it ,for it is not fit in the community that belongs to God.

Four Tests of Faith

1. God tests our faith with money.

- *Money is one of the greatest tests of character and faith.*
- *Satan even used money in tempting Jesus in Matt. 4:8-9, ““Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.””*
- *It is not money that is evil; it is the love of money, as it is written in 1 Timothy 6:10, “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”*
- *In Matt. 6:24, God declared, “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”*
- *The Lord warned us against being friends of the world. In James 4:4, He said, “You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.”*
- *We worship 24/7. We worship whoever or whatever we give our time and attention to. Do we spend most of our day running after the Lord or money? Are we friends with God or the world? Who do we really worship?*
- *Some people love money so much that they willingly spend money to attend seminars that claim to teach them how to get more. Always remember: Only*
- *God will bless you with wealth, and there is no substitute to it. It is written in Prov 10:22, “The blessing of the LORD brings wealth, without painful toil for it.”*

- *The Lord said in Matt. 6:33, “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”*
- *Nowadays, many people put money first before*
- *God. However, for me, my*
- *contentment in what God has given me is perfect. Be content with what the Lord has given you for according to 1 Timothy 6:6, “...godliness with contentment is great gain.”*
- *The Lord uses money to test us. In Luke 16:11, He said, “So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?”*
- *So, if you are a good*
- *steward*
- *over the money that the Lord gives you, He will bless you more. He determines how much He can bless your life by the way you handle the money He puts on your lap.*
- *We must never withhold tithes for, in Mal. 3:10, it is written, “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.”*

Brief Sharing:

Early in our marriage, Bobby and I were tested on this. The Lord allowed the devil to destroy our finances. We were well-off and then suddenly things/ events changed. Our finances collapsed and we lost all our money. Despite this, we never stopped tithing. Now, look at us. He has blessed us generously and we have never lacked anything. As I mentioned earlier, my contentment in what God has given me is perfect.

Tithing is a test of faith. The more giving hurts, the more pleasing it is to the Lord

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