



Spiritual Growth From Testing

In Mark 1:16-18, Simon Peter and Andrew accepted Jesus Christ as their Messiah and became believers. In Mark 1:17, “I will make you” is the future active indicative of ποιέω (poieō) and means to make ready, to prepare. Our Lord would teach them. They were students, learners.

“As He was going along by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.” (Mark 1:16-18, NASB)

In Mark 1:19-20, James and John accept Jesus Christ as their Messiah and become believers.

“Going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending the nets. Immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him.” (Mark 1:19-20, NASB)

In Mark 1:22 and Mark 2:2, they hear our Lord teach and quickly become aware of His authority.

“They were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” (Mark 1:22, NASB)

“And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room, not even near the door; and He was speaking the word to them.” (Mark 2:2, NASB)

They watched Him in action in Mark 1:27 and Mark 1:29-31.

“They were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves, saying, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.”” (Mark 1:27, NASB)

“And immediately after they came out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever; and immediately they spoke to Jesus about her. And He came to her and raised her up, taking her by the hand, and the fever left her, and she waited on them.” (Mark 1:29-31, NASB)

In Mark 1:34, they watched Him cast out demons and command them to not speak. The demons all recognized our Lord's deity and immediately obeyed.

“And He healed many who were ill with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He was not permitting the demons to speak, because they knew who He was.” (Mark 1:34, NASB)

In Mark 1:41-42, our Lord healed the leper. Our Lord was demonstrating to His disciples His divine authority over disease and fallen angels.

“Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, “I am willing; be cleansed.” Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed.” (Mark 1:41-42, NASB)

In Mark 3:13, our Lord selected those who He would designate as His disciples - the 12.

“And He went up on the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him.” (Mark 3:13, NASB)

In Mark 3:14, “He appointed twelve” is the aorist active indicative of ποιέω (poieō) and refers to our Lord's disciples. “Send” is the present active subjunctive of ἀποστέλλω (apostellō) and “to preach” is κηρύσσω (kērussō). James and John had fiery dispositions. Mark 9:38; Luke 9:54.



“And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach,” (Mark 3:14, NASB)

“John said to Him, “Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to prevent him because he was not following us.”” (Mark 9:38, NASB)

“When His disciples James and John saw this, they said, “Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?”” (Luke 9:54, NASB)

Not until a year later did they begin to minister. They went out and then returned. There was constant pressure from the people. Mark 6:7; Mark 6:30-31.

“And He summoned the twelve and began to send them out in pairs, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits;” (Mark 6:7, NASB)

“The apostles gathered together with Jesus; and they reported to Him all that they had done and taught. And He said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while.” (For there were many people coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.)” (Mark 6:30-31, NASB)

Testing of the Disciples

It was to the disciples’ advantage to maximize their spiritual growth before the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ. Their spiritual growth was slow even after hearing our Lord’s many lessons given to many crowds including many spectacular miracles. In many ways, they illustrate our own limitations in learning Bible doctrine and growing spiritually.

Grace Orientation Test

The disciples couldn’t understand how the 5,000 were fed even after being a witness to the miracle. They still didn’t conclude that our Lord was in fact also God. Mark 6:32-44.

“And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed the food and broke the loaves and He kept giving them to the disciples to set before them; and He divided up the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up twelve full baskets of the broken pieces, and also of the fish.” (Mark 6:41-43, NASB)

The disciples were still not grace oriented in Mark 6:45-52. They had not learned what they should have from the earlier miracle of feeding the 5,000. They had not yet accepted the fact that our Lord was both perfect man and the creator of the universe in one person.

“Seeing them straining at the oars, for the wind was against them, at about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea; and He intended to pass by them. But when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed that it was a ghost, and cried out; for they all saw Him and were terrified. But immediately He spoke with them and said to them, “Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid.”” (Mark 6:48-50, NASB)

“Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were utterly astonished, for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened.” (Mark 6:51-52, NASB)

Our Lord chastised His disciples regarding what He had just said to the crowd regarding what defiles a person. Mark 7:1-23.

“And He said to them, “Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever



goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?" (Thus He declared all foods clean.)" (Mark 7:18-19, NASB)

"And He was saying, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. "All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."'" (Mark 7:20-23, NASB)

In Mark 7:24-30, they did not accept the fact that our Lord should be talking to the Syrophoenician woman because she was a Gentile and a believer. This was the first time that Jesus Christ taught His disciples that He was the Savior to both Jews and Gentiles.

"Jesus got up and went away from there to the region of Tyre. And when He had entered a house, He wanted no one to know of it; yet He could not escape notice. But after hearing of Him, a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately came and fell at His feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, of the Syrophoenician race. And she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. And He was saying to her, "Let the children be satisfied first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." But she answered and said to Him, "Yes, Lord, but even the dogs under the table feed on the children's crumbs." And He said to her, "Because of this answer go; the demon has gone out of your daughter." And going back to her home, she found the child lying on the bed, the demon having left." (Mark 7:24-30, NASB)

The disciples hadn't yet passed the grace orientation test in the miracle of healing the deaf man who could not speak very well. Mark 7:31-37.

"They brought to Him one who was deaf and spoke with difficulty, and they implored Him to lay His hand on him. Jesus took him aside from the crowd, by himself, and put His fingers into his ears, and after spitting, He touched his tongue with the saliva; and looking up to heaven with a deep sigh, He said to him, "Ephphatha!" that is, "Be opened!" And his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was removed, and he began speaking plainly." (Mark 7:32-35, NASB)

"They were utterly astonished, saying, "He has done all things well; He makes even the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."'" (Mark 7:37, NASB)

The disciples were fairly hard headed in that after so many miracles, they still couldn't understand who Jesus Christ really was. Mark 8:14-21.

"And they had forgotten to take bread, and did not have more than one loaf in the boat with them. And He was giving orders to them, saying, "Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." They began to discuss with one another the fact that they had no bread. And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet see or understand? Do you have a hardened heart? "HAVING EYES, DO YOU NOT SEE? AND HAVING EARS, DO YOU NOT HEAR? And do you not remember, when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces you picked up?" They said to Him, "Twelve." "When I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of broken pieces did you pick up?" And they said to Him, "Seven." And He was saying to them, "Do you not yet understand?"'" (Mark 8:14-21, NASB)

Peter finally understood and passed the grace orientation test in Mark 8:27-29 and in Luke 9:18-20 with his reply to our Lord's question.

"Jesus went out, along with His disciples, to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way He



questioned His disciples, saying to them, "Who do people say that I am?" They told Him, saying, "John the Baptist; and others say Elijah; but others, one of the prophets." And He continued by questioning them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered and said to Him, "You are the Christ." (Mark 8:27-29, NASB)

"And He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered and said, "The Christ of God." (Luke 9:20, NASB)

The principle of grace was demonstrated in the parable of the laborers in the vineyard. Matt. 20:1-16.

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard." (Matthew 20:1, NASB)

"But he answered and said to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go, but I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own? Or is your eye envious because I am generous?'" (Matthew 20:13-15, NASB)

Mastery of the Details of Life Test

The disciples had not mastered the details of life in Mark 8:31-38. They could not believe in the work of Christ and the details of His coming crucifixion until they were grace oriented to His person. Until they had grown enough spiritually, they could not take this advance in teaching. In Mark 8:32, "And Peter took him" is the aorist middle participle of προσλαμβάνω (proslambanō) and means to take by the hand in order to lead aside. "And began to rebuke him" is ἐπιτιμάω (epitimaō) and means to censure, to admonish.

"And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And He was stating the matter plainly. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him." (Mark 8:31-32, NASB)

Peter was challenged in Luke 9:23-26 regarding his level of spiritual growth involving whether he had mastered the details of life that compete for attention and priority over Bible doctrine in the spiritual life. This involved daily study in the Word of God. Mark 8:34-38.

"And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels." (Luke 9:23-26, NASB)

Peter failed during the transfiguration test in Luke 9:27-36. Instead of being occupied with Christ, he felt the detail of rock tabernacles was the answer.

"But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God." Some eight days after these sayings, He took along Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And while He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing became white and gleaming. And behold, two men were talking with Him; and they were Moses and Elijah, who, appearing in glory, were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and his companions had been overcome with sleep; but when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men standing with Him. And as these were



leaving Him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles: one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah"—not realizing what he was saying. While he was saying this, a cloud formed and began to overshadow them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. Then a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!" And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent, and reported to no one in those days any of the things which they had seen." (Luke 9:27-36, NASB)

He also failed in Luke 9:37-43 where he couldn't handle the details of service. Mark 9:18.

"On the next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met Him. And a man from the crowd shouted, saying, "Teacher, I beg You to look at my son, for he is my only boy, and a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly screams, and it throws him into a convulsion with foaming at the mouth; and only with difficulty does it leave him, mauling him as it leaves. "I begged Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not." And Jesus answered and said, "You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you and put up with you? Bring your son here." While he was still approaching, the demon slammed him to the ground and threw him into a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the boy and gave him back to his father. And they were all amazed at the greatness of God. But while everyone was marveling at all that He was doing, He said to His disciples," (Luke 9:37-43, NASB)

Luke 9:57-62 is an illustration of failing the details of life test. This involves the detail of where to live and being tied down, the detail of family and extended family such as in-laws, and the detail of explanation to your family as to why you do this or do that.

"As they were going along the road, someone said to Him, "I will follow You wherever You go." And Jesus said to him, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." And He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father." But He said to him, "Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God." Another also said, "I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home." But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:57-62, NASB)

Luke 9:23-26 indicates that they finally passed the mastery of the details of life test.

"And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels." (Luke 9:23-26, NASB)

The believer who is failing the mastery of the details of life test is always afraid of their pastor-teacher. Mark 9:32.

"But they did not understand this statement, and they were afraid to ask Him." (Mark 9:32, NASB)

The only solution to failing the mastery of the details of life test or any other test in the spiritual life is to confess your known sins to God the Father and then focus on the daily intake of Bible doctrine so you can grow spiritually. Only then can you handle tougher testing.



Relaxed Mental Attitude Test

In Matthew 16:22, the disciples failed the relaxed mental attitude test when our Lord told them He had to die on the Cross for the sins of mankind and then to be resurrected on the third day.

"From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You."'" (Matthew 16:21-22, NASB)

In Matthew 18:21-22, they passed the relaxed mental attitude test by their forgiveness of grudges.

"Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."'" (Matthew 18:21-22, NASB)

Capacity to Love Test

Peter was challenged by Jesus Christ to pass the capacity for love test in Luke 22:31-34. He failed this test three times. Luke 22:56-60.

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." But he said to Him, "Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!" And He said, "I say to you, Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me."'" (Luke 22:31-34, NASB)

"And a servant-girl, seeing him as he sat in the firelight and looking intently at him, said, "This man was with Him too." But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know Him." A little later, another saw him and said, "You are one of them too!" But Peter said, "Man, I am not!" After about an hour had passed, another man began to insist, saying, "Certainly this man also was with Him, for he is a Galilean too." But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." Immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed."'" (Luke 22:56-60, NASB)

Peter later passed the capacity for love test in John 21:15-17.

"So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs." He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Shepherd My sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep."'" (John 21:15-17, NASB)

James and John failed the rapport love test when they allowed their ambitious mother to request favors of our Lord in Matthew 20:20-23. This was about worshipping to get something. In Matthew 20:22, our Lord said, "Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" They said to Him, "We are able." This is the present passive indicative of δύνανται (dunamai) and means to have the power to do something, to be able. This test dealt with authority, privilege, dominion, greatness, and slavery. Their focus on rewards was quite important. They wanted the left and right hand of fellowship, rapport, and esteem. Christ's kingdom will not be set up politically like the Roman Empire.

"Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a



request of Him. And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left." But Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" They said to Him, "We are able." He said to them, "My cup you shall drink; but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father." (Matthew 20:20-23, NASB)

The other disciples failed the test when they became indignant with James and John following their mother's request in Matthew 20:24. The disciples were seemingly never able to grasp the fact that our Lord would go to the Cross and die for the sins of mankind. Matt. 20:17-19.

"And hearing this, the ten became indignant with the two brothers." (Matthew 20:24, NASB)

"As Jesus was about to go up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve disciples aside by themselves, and on the way He said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, and will hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up." (Matthew 20:17-19, NASB)

If you do not first have a true rapport love with God, you will not have a true rapport love with close friends or the right one you will marry.

Sharing God's Happiness Test

Peter was challenged to pass this test in Luke 24:36-44.

"While they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be to you." But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit. And He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?" (Luke 24:36-38, NASB)

"Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." (Luke 24:44, NASB)

Note Peter's first sermon in Acts 2:22-24 and his second sermon in Acts 3:13-15. Then Peter goes on after Pentecost to preach God's Word in Acts 2 and Acts 3.

"Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. "But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power." (Acts 2:22-24, NASB)

"The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him. "But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, but put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses." (Acts 3:13-15, NASB)

Peter passed the sharing God's happiness test in John 13:6-10.

"So He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?" Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter." Peter said to Him, "Never



shall You wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head." Jesus said to him, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you."'" (John 13:6-10, NASB)

Examples of Spiritual Maturity

The example of Mary of Bethany's spiritual maturity is found in John 12:1-11. Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were there with our Lord. She was single and a mature believer.

"So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him. Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume." (John 12:2-3, NASB)

The example of Mary Magdalene is found in John 19:25 and John 20:1-2, and John 20:11-14. She was single and a mature believer.

"Therefore the soldiers did these things. But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene." (John 19:25, NASB)

"Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb. So she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."'" (John 20:1-2, NASB)

"But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying. And they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus." (John 20:11-14, NASB)