

NEWS AND VIEWS
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*“Southern Baptists with the Full
Gospel for the Whole World”*

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Test time... the thought gives some of us traumatic flashbacks. If you're like me you may have suffered recurring nightmares where we find ourselves taking a test in school and we know we didn't prepare. When I was in school, sometimes we were given choices of courses to take, other than the required courses in our field of study. Those that were not required were called *electives*. Even the name means choices. Some of us tried to take the easy courses when it came to the electives. Some of the electives offered the attraction of no tests. There were no tests all through the course, even a final exam! Who wouldn't line up for that? You can imagine that these electives were almost standing room only. I elected to take a couple of these "no test" elective classes. I can't remember a thing I learned in them...hmmm...wonder why???

Sometimes we don't get a choice in the courses we take in the University of Life. But in the course of our lifetime, there will be tests. And when they come...usually you don't get the option of opting out. It's hard to drop this challenging course called Life and still truly live. Some tests are more demanding than others. Some you are prepared for and some you're not. Some tests simply require knowing what to do when the test comes. The greatest lessons of life are often learned in the most painful trials. These are the lessons when we need wisdom and perseverance from beyond ourselves.

When the test is great and the demands are high, we have a Tutor who comes to be with us. This Tutor is also the Test Administrator...the one who gives the test. One on one with God is a glorious thing to experience in the midst of a time of testing. When God sends a test, He also sends the best...Himself. He has promised He will never leave.

It seems evident to me that the testing of God's people in our culture and in our time has begun. We cannot opt out...but we can prepare...we can know Who has all the right answers. Lean in to listen as we share some thoughts about these tests of life that are coming upon us. Lean in to listen as we lean hard on the Lord. Consider the following scripture from James 1:12 and commentary that follows.

Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

I. TESTING IS THE BEGINNING OF BLESSING. If we are getting blessed through the test, some of us may feel more blessed than others! When the test begins, pray for God's presence to be manifested. Ask Him to show Himself in the test. When He does, the blessing is only beginning.

II. TO BE BLESSED BY THE TEST, WE MUST ENDURE THROUGH THE TEST. For us to learn all that God desires for us, we must complete the test. If we quit in the middle of it, we will never know that God is able to carry us through. Our faith is tested under pressure so the vessel can carry the faith.

III. WE ARE OBEDIENT IN TESTING WHEN WE CHOOSE THE RIGHT RESPONSE. God has not called us to failure or success. Only faithfulness and obedience. Only He can guide us to right choices. When we choose God's way, we have passed the test.

IV. GOD BLESSES OUR OBEDIENCE WHEN WE LOVE HIM.

God *never, never, never* blesses disobedience. Obedience and love go together. If we love Him, we will obey Him. Not for a blessing, but for love. We are either going into a test, coming out of one, or in the midst of one. God blesses us through the testing.

Blessings to you,
Pastor Sam