Series: Influence

November 4, 2018

Message 6:

**Passing the Tests**

Genesis 22:1-2

*Guests - Handout designed with you in mind - Info and notes especially for you - won’t call or visit -*

*Next Steps*

*Generosity*

*Notes on Handout and in YouVersion App*

**Intro:  *Opening illustration on pressure?? - Smash grapefruit and rock? …***

When something is tested pressure is applied to see if it will do what it says it will do. Will it hold up under stress? When we seek to influence other people, as God desires us to do, God will allow these tests of pressure to happen.

**Big Idea: God is more impressed with how we hold up under pressure than simply with what we SAY we will do.**

Education or polish are not the most important characteristics of spiritual leadership. What happens during times of testing? Endurance and persistence is developed and impurities are drawn out. Passing these tests develops the character that God desires us to have.

**T.S.:** 7 tests that we need to pass in order to be as effective as we can in influencing other people for Jesus —

**> The Test of Trust**

Genesis 22:1-2 - Some time later, God tested Abraham’s faith. “Abraham!” God called.

 “Yes,” he replied. “Here I am.”

 “Take your son, your only son—yes, Isaac, whom you love so much—and go to the land of Moriah. Go and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will show you.”

Are you kidding me? Abraham must have thought, “Are you kidding me God? After all we’ve been through? Haven’t I proven my trust in you yet?”

There is nothing like a strong relationship between father and son … true of fathers and daughters as well - every relationship is unique - my love for my son is no different than my love for my daughter … not stronger … but different -

When I dropped Randy off at Union … I kissed him …

I love my son - I’m proud of my son -

When my kids were little - watching a cartoon example of this … BAWLED!!!

The outcome … God was never interested in the sacrifice … Abraham didn’t know that - God was just beginning to reveal Himself and His character to Abraham - the first person who had any kind of a relationship with God for generations - Abraham’s faith was that God would even raise Isaac up …

**Here’s the test: Will you trust God when nothing makes sense?**

If you had all the answers there would be no need to trust God. Our mind wants to understand everything. We want all the difficult questions answered before we jump—but if God tells us to jump, will you jump and trust him without having all the answers our minds like to require?

This is a test in which influencers set the example for others. When prayers don’t SEEM to be answered, when the provision doesn’t seem to come, when waiting on God’s promise to come to pass, the person of influence must set the example of trusting God.

**> The Test of Rejection**

John 15:20 - Do you remember what I told you? … Since they persecuted me, naturally they will persecute you…

Jesus Himself was rejected. It was prophesied in

Isaiah 53:3 - He was despised and rejected—

a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief.

We turned our backs on him and looked the other way.

He was despised, and we did not care.

The rejection may not just come from enemies or potential friends or followers, but from actual friends and followers. The pain is like a knife in the back. Judas betrayed Jesus—He continued on with His purpose. When rejected, stay focused on the purpose God has given you. Becoming angry, bitter or discouraged because of the rejection will cripple your ability to be a powerful influencer of other people for Jesus.

Passing this test means we must have a heart of love and a thick skin at the same time. One of the greatest problems in Christianity is that we can be so thin-skinned and sensitive to these kinds of hurts. It sounds cold, but every once in a while we need to realize we need to “get over it” and move on!

We need to realize that our spiritual enemy wants us to wallow in self-pity because of rejection. We have to decide that he will not win! It is true that -

**It is not what happens to us that defeats us, but our wrong response to what happens can defeat us!**

**> The Test of Loving Difficult People**

Here is a powerful and challenging statement of Jesus:

Luke 6:32-33 - If you love only those who love you, why should you get credit for that? Even sinners love those who love them! And if you do good only to those who do good to you, why should you get credit? Even sinners do that much!

In all of our lives there are individuals whose personality clashes with ours. They may be great people with great gifts, but they are so different in background, outlook, etc., that we struggle to get along with them, be patient with their differences, and love them.

God allows people in our lives who will hurt us to give us the opportunity to practice forgiveness! God allows people to come into our lives who may be like sandpaper on us to smooth out our rough edges.

***Have some sandpaper & something that needs to be sanded…***

To have influence requires patience in these situations. Passing this test requires that we not only exercise patience in merely getting along, but that we look for their God-given gifts and potential and seek to find ways in which they can release them for the benefit of the Kingdom of God.

**> The Test of Time**

“God’s trains may not run on our timing, but they’re never late!” Time is a part of the existence we know now — but what will be the impact of time in the world to come?

2nd Peter 3:8 - But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day.

The eternal God who has always existed, always will exist, and is leading us into our own never-ending life of eternity, is not trapped by what we know as “time” in this life! Often when we try to influence people we desire to reach certain goals and see results at a different pace than what actually happens. We have to place our goals and plans in the hands of God and trust that as we do all we can then God will bring about the results in His timing.

“Work like it all depends on you and pray like it all depends on God.” As a person of influence, set the example before those you influence that we must not constantly go before the Lord asking “When” and “Why,” but we must lead them in believing and remaining faithful that He who called us will perform His will in our lives in His time.

Today is the most important day of all!

**> The Test of Serving**

John 13:14 - And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other’s feet.

Whose feet are you willing to wash … and what are you willing to do besides washing feet? If you are going to influence people, you must serve them. You cannot reject opportunities to serve people, especially those you want to influence, but you must relish those opportunities! Your example of leaping at the chance to serve others will be contagious. Soon you will be influencing people who are constantly serving one another … cutting in line to get the next opportunity to serve one another … and that will make for a healthy body which will reproduce more servants in the Body of Christ!

Why are we given these opportunities to influence, anyway? Is it to be seen … to be noticed … to have a position of power or leadership? Influence has been given to us that we might serve.

In passing this test we are willing to do whatever God wants to do, to be used in whatever way He wants to use us, regardless of whether or not anyone ever notices. Be a servant at all times … serve your family, friends and neighbors as well, not just those in your place of ministry.

The Servant’s Chair …

**> The Test of Our Will**

Jesus prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane before He died must also be our prayer:

Matthew 26:42 - Then Jesus left them a second time and prayed, “My Father! If this cup cannot be taken away unless I drink it, your will be done.”

What in the history of the world has been more influential than what Jesus did on the cross? People wear crosses around their neck who don’t even understand or acknowledge what Jesus did - this act has influenced the world for 2000 years - only because Jesus passed the test of His own will. He did something that was far off from His personal desire.

Along with the test of trust, surely Abraham had to pass this one as well. God may ask us to do something completely contrary to our own desires. The idea had to come from God because it could not have come from us!

From childhood, we have difficulty not getting our own way! Throughout life, we learn that we do not always get our own way. This is also true in our relationship with God! It could be an issue of time. It could be an issue of process. It could be an issue of being overruled by a supervisor. It could be an issue of realizing that your way is simply not working and you have to find another way to reach your goal. Whatever it is, it is painful, and we must surrender our will to the will of God.

We have to die to ourselves and our own desires. We have to die to our plans that are born from our natural selves and not born from the Spirit of God. Sometimes it takes brokenness to bring us to the place where our will is surrendered to His will. But when we are in the place of doing whatever it is He wants us to do, there is nothing more satisfying!

Then - our influence becomes powerful!

**> The Test of Faithfulness**

2nd Timothy 4:7 - I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful.

This is not just tasing about maintaining your belief until you die … You can maintain your belief and never influence anyone -

CONSISTENCY!

Winston Churchill was the Prime Minister of England during the Second World War. I have personally known individuals who lived in England during that time and testified to the fact that his powerful oratory and speechmaking kept the hopes of the British people alive when all others thought their cause was surely lost.

After the war it is reported that Winston Churchill made one of his most famous speeches, and in it he simply said, “Never give up. Never give up! NEVER GIVE UP!”

Every person of influence has moments when they are tempted to give up. It is only through perseverance and faithfulness that we see the greatest results. Often those who throw in the towel, do so just prior to the moment of breakthrough. I have known many who have wanted to give up on a commitment, but when they held tough it was not long before things were going better than ever and they were so glad they stuck it out!

When God works in people’s lives, it takes time. We have to know that as we are faithful to do what we are called to do, God will be faithful to do His part! Understand what is in your power to do and trust God with that which only He can do!

**> The Test of Trust**

**> The Test of Rejection**

**> The Test of Loving Difficult People**

**> The Test of Time**

**> The Test of Serving**

**> The Test of Our Will**

**> The Test of Faithfulness**

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As you pass these tests you will come to know the sustaining and undergirding presence of God. You will know that He is with you in your opportunities of influence! You will prove the fact that you are never alone — you always have a “Senior Partner,” the Holy Spirit who is with you, in you, empowering you and gifting you to accomplish the work, influence others for Jesus, and be successful! No one wants you to succeed more than the One who called you!