

## Avoiding an “F” on Life’s Tests

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The Making of a Leader: Leadership Lessons from the Life of Moses

Exodus 15 and 16

On Thursday morning my 5-year old granddaughter called me on my cell phone. She was super-excited and yelled into the phone, “Grandpa, Grandpa, I passed! I passed!” See, she had just taken her swimming test at the pool and she said, “I graduated. I did a tummy float and a back float and I swam under water! Next week I’m going to be a ‘turtle!’”

Don’t you wish you had something as exciting to look forward to next week as being a turtle? She is just beginning what will become a lifelong experience of testing. We’re tested in kindergarten for school readiness. We take thousands of tests throughout school. We take certain big tests – proficiency tests, SAT, LSAT, GRE, MCAT, Bar and CPA exams, driving tests – big tests that forever mark out for us a rite of passage on our journey through life.

But whatever pressure we experience on exams in the US, it is nothing like the pressure felt by students overseas. Listen to this recent NY Times story about a Korean student named Kim Soo-yeon. Soo-yeon is 19 years old. She was just accepted by Princeton. She said that she developed ferrous study habits early by watching her mother scold her older sister for receiving a score less than a hundred on tests. Even a 98 or a 99 brought a severe tongue lashing. Her mother said:

Most Korean mothers demand that children get 100 on all tests in all subjects all of the time.

She scored perfect 800’s on the SAT verbal and math tests and a 790 in writing. She was scheduled to take 9 advanced placement tests in calculus, physics, chemistry, European History and five other subjects. One challenge was she has taken none of these courses, instead she is teaching herself between classes at this elite Korean prep school where she buys and devours text books.

So she is busy. She rises at 6:00 a.m. and heads for her school bus at 6:50. Arriving at her school, she grabs a broom to help classmates clean up the classroom. Between 8 and Noon she hears Korean instructors teach supply and demand in economics, Korean soils and geography, and classical poets in Korean literature. After lunch she joins other girls at a hallway sink to brush her teeth before reporting to French literature, French culture and English grammar classes. At 3:20 her English language classes begin; evening study hall begins at 7:45; at 10:50 p.m. a bell rings and Ms. Kim heads for a bus that will take her back to her apartment in Seoul.

How does this 19-year old feel? She says:



I feel proud that I endured another day.

The interesting thing that we discovered from the Bible is the notion that all of life contains tests arranged by God for us. CS Lewis, my favorite Christian writer, once said that:

Every time we make a choice [moral choices] we are turning the central part of ourselves into something a little different than it was before.

So when you add up the choices that you make in life – the choice to sleep with your boyfriend or girlfriend, or not sleep with them; the choice to date someone or not; the choice to lie your way out of an embarrassing situation or to tell the truth; the choice to spend your money on another shirt or to give it to the cause of the kingdom – Lewis says every little moral choice you make turns a central part of you into something a little different than it was before. And slowly you either become a heavenly creature in harmony with God and with other people and yourself, or you more and more become a creature of hell; someone who is at war with God, with other people, and with yourself.

All of life presents to us a series of tests. And so what we discover is that biblical characters become heroes or villains based on how they handle tests. This is how we remember the people in the Bible. It is how they handled moments of specific testing.

Adam and Eve are famous chiefly for failing the test posed by the serpent in the Garden. We remember Abraham for passing the test of loyalty when he offered his son, Isaac. Joseph resisted the test of sexual temptation. David failed the test of sexual temptation. Ruth passed the test for remaining loyal to her mother-in-law. We remember Esther for remaining loyal to her nation during their time of testing.

When you start reading the Bible through the lens of testing, you realize that it is virtually impossible to list all of the things that God uses to test us. All of life becomes a source of testing. Nature and the weather can test you. If you are a farmer, or if you have plants, the weather outside can test you. You can be tested by nature. Personal relationships can test your loyalty and your integrity.

There is a wonderful promise attached to passing God's tests in the New Testament book of James. We read in James 1:12:

**James 1:12**

Blessed are those who persevere under trial, because when they have stood the test, they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

We've been doing this series on leadership drawn from the life of Moses, a series that I've called "The Making of a Leader." And today we're going to look at the ways that God develops a leader and people through various tests – not just academic tests that



you take in school, but once you're done with school, tests in life because you know that you can get straight "A's" in school and yet fail at life. Lots of smart people have made total messes of their lives. All you need to do is go to work at a university or at a hospital or at a law firm, or at the top levels of government or business and you will find lots of smart people whose lives are a total wreck.

So today as we continue this series on leadership development, I'm calling my talk "Avoiding an 'F' on Life's Tests." Let's pray.

In the book *The Making of a Leader*, Professor Bobby Clinton, from Fuller Seminary, lists some of the tests that God uses to develop a leader's character:

Because character development has many facets there are a variety of integrity checks. This is a sampling of the many that I've identified: values (which determine convictions), temptation (which tests conviction), conflict against ministry vision (which tests faith), and alternative and guidance situations (which test calling), persecution (which tests steadfastness), loyalty (which tests allegiance), and restitution (which tests honesty).

#### 1. The test of leaders

Exodus 15, 16 and 17 are linked together by the repeated concept of testing. And lest we miss the theme of testing that binds these three chapters together, it is made explicit in verses like Exodus 15:25:

##### **Exodus 15:25**

Then Moses cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water, and the water became sweet. There the Lord issued a ruling and instruction for them and put them to the test.

We read this in Exodus 16:4:

##### **Exodus 16:4**

Then the Lord said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions.

And finally in Exodus 17:2, we read:

##### **Exodus 17:2**

So they quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses replied, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the Lord to the test?"

And in verse 7:

##### **Exodus 17:7**



And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the Lord saying, “Is the Lord among us or not?”

Indeed, the incident that is recorded in chapter 17 that we’re not going to look at today occurred at a place called Massah which means “testing” or to put a person to the test.

Massah = testing or to put a person to the test

These three chapters are all about various tests providentially arranged by God through occurrences in life.

Now, why in the world would God test us?

Tests reveal our spiritual condition

Certainly, one reason God tests us is so we will know where we are at. If you struggle with feelings of inadequacy and insecurity, standing up in a tough situation where you normally folded in the past, can bolster your confidence regarding your own personal and spiritual development. When you succeed in a test that you used to fail in, God is showing you that you aren’t the same person that you used to be. There’s been some movement in your life. It is particularly important for you to discover this especially if you struggle with feelings of inferiority or inadequacy.

On the other hand, if you struggle with feelings of superiority being tested is a good reality check that you aren’t nearly so far along as you thought you were.

Tests strengthen our spiritual muscle

God allowed the children of Israel to wander in the wilderness for 40 years it says in the book of Deuteronomy to test them.

### **Deuteronomy 8:2**

Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.

God puts us in the wilderness and has us wander through this world to test us in order to develop our spiritual muscle. Our earthly wilderness experiences are designed to develop us into men and women of faith and integrity. Let’s face it, in the wilderness, in the desert, the roots of trees go down very deep because of the heat and the wind. God wants our roots to go down deep. Take away the tests and we are spiritual wimps. We are so fragile. We throw in the towel with the least bit of pressure unless we are strengthened through testing.

So what are the tests we discover in these chapters? Well, first of all, we have:



## The test of success

### **Exodus 15:1-6**

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord: “I will sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. Both horse and driver he has hurled into the sea. “The Lord is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father’s God, and I will exalt him. The Lord is a warrior; the Lord is his name. Pharaoh’s chariots and his army he has hurled into the sea. The best of Pharaoh’s officers are drowned in the Red Sea. The deep waters have covered them; they sank to the depths like a stone. Your right hand, Lord, was majestic in power. Your right hand, Lord, shattered the enemy.

What happened at the Red Sea was an overwhelming success for Moses and for the children of Israel. Their victory was greater in military terms than the victory of America over the Iraqis in the first Gulf War. The Egyptians were completely annihilated and the Israelites didn’t lose even one person – complete, total, overwhelming success!

So where is the test in the experience of success? Why do I call success a test?

Some of you are surely saying, “Oh God, if success is a test, may you test me repeatedly with success. Lord, please test me with great wealth and enormous popularity and fantastic looks. Test away, Lord. Test me with fame and fortune, healthy, wealth and prosperity. Test me with private jets and weeks at private spas.”

But success is a test, friends. And it is a test that the vast majority of people get an F in. The greater the success, the fewer the people are who pass the test.

I read a marriage survey once in which some family researchers discovered that marital affairs are directly related to people’s money and power. They said the majority of senior executives in companies have had marital affairs. As you climb the ladder of success, you can expect more and more temptation to infidelity.

The apostle Paul tells us that he had to learn how to handle success over a long period of time:

### **Philippians 4:12**

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

According to the apostle Paul, and indeed, according virtually all religious traditions, people don’t need to simply learn how to handle disappointment, pain and loss. We also need to learn with great difficulty and with much effort how to handle success well.



There is a book out titled *The Success Syndrome* by a psychotherapist named Dr. Berglass. Dr. Berglass writes about his treatment of hundreds of people who, in his words:

Hit bottom when they reach the top.

The patients in his Boston practice include physicians, judges, venture capitalists, investment bankers, models, movie stars, professional athletes – all of whom hit bottom when they reached the top.

Why is success such a test? Why do most people get an F on the test of success? It is because success creates a temptation to lose touch. Success acts as a buffer. It is like trying to scratch your back with oven mitts on. You can't ever quite get at the itch. Success acts as a buffer.

Success creates the temptation to lose touch with your basic values

I read an account recently in the *NY Times* about a 33-year old guy named Bill O'Donnell. At 33, he was the vice president of a software company. He had an annual salary of \$350,000. He owned two Mercedes and an expensive house in an exclusive suburb. He also cheated on his wife, missed meetings that he had called, and used 4 grams of cocaine a day. Bill said:

I was pursuing the American dream and I thought cocaine would get me there faster. I was funning through life so fast that I didn't see my role as a husband a father to my three sons was disintegrating and that my business abilities were crumbling.

Psychotherapists say there are too many people who are being coaxed into work habits that throw their lives completely out of balance. The worst thing is that many people through their jobs are encouraged to betray their deepest values – their desire, for example, to have a good family, their basic integrity. Many people tell their therapists that they have lost any sense of themselves, who they are and what they believe. They feel like hollowed out frauds. Even as they have grabbed the gold ring of power and success, they've lost themselves as part of the process. Certainly, professional athletes confess that. People in Hollywood confess that. I've got all the toys now, but I've lost myself in the process.

Jesus talks about losing touch with yourself and with your basic values 2000 years ago when he said this in Mark 8:36:

**Mark 8:36**

What good is it for you to gain the whole world, yet forfeit your soul?

Success creates a temptation to lose touch with people in need



The chaplain at Harvard University was asked about the test that success created for his parishioners at Harvard. He said:

America has changed since its founding. I hearken back to John Winthrop's famous sermon preached in the 17<sup>th</sup> century that we must share one another's burdens; we must be good to the poor so they will not be given to violence or envy, and the poor must honor the rich because the rich will be able to do things for the general good that the poor alone can't do. These lines reflect a social contract in which wealth brought people together rather than divided them.

He went on to say:

In my view, however, we are in a period of time in which our faith in capitalism has combined with a radical sense of individualism to create a dangerous degree of selfishness. I've got mine, you get yours. I'm going to hold on to mine! Oh, I'll support a system that allows you to get yours, but there is no way I'm going to give you any of mine.

And now with the way that communities are divided up so that the wealthy and successful do not ever have to see the poor except for, perhaps, hanging out in a parking lot next to a posh restaurant in the Short North, or sitting next on a curb next to the State House, we've come to a place where the rich don't even have to really see the poor. Success creates a temptation to lose touch with people in needs.

And worst of all:

Success creates a temptation to lose touch with God

Here is what we read in Deuteronomy 8:10-18:

**Deuteronomy 8:10-18**

When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you. 11 Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. 12 Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, 13 and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, 14 then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. 15 He led you through the vast and dreadful wilderness, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. 16 He gave you manna to eat in the wilderness, something your ancestors had never known, to humble and test you so that in the end it might go well with you. 17 You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." 18 But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce



wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.

Now all of this leads to the second great challenge of success:

Success creates a temptation to take credit for what God and others have done

If you ask most people why they've succeeded, they will tell you. But you can listen for hours and with many successful people, you will never hear the name of God or the contribution that other people made to their success. But when Moses composes the song in Exodus 15, it is entirely about God. Moses is not mentioned by name in the song in Exodus 15, even though the people celebrated him as leader.

### **Exodus 14:31**

And when the Israelites saw the great power the Lord displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant.

Moses had led the people into the sea. He held out the staff and the sea parted. But Moses was simply God's instrument. He realized anyone could have held their arms up. You see, he passed the test of success. He refused to draw attention to himself. Instead, the song mentions the Lord 13 times and he and him and you and your 33 times.

### **Exodus 15:1-6**

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord: "I will sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. Both horse and driver he has hurled into the sea. 2 "The Lord is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him. 3 The Lord is a warrior; the Lord is his name.

4 Pharaoh's chariots and his army he has hurled into the sea. The best of Pharaoh's officers are drowned in the Red Sea. 5 The deep waters have covered them; they sank to the depths like a stone. 6 Your right hand, Lord, was majestic in power. Your right hand, Lord, shattered the enemy.

### **Exodus 15:11**

Who among the gods is like you, Lord? Who is like you— majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?

One of the toughest tests for a leader is to handle success well, to keep pointing attention and credit away from self and on to God.

The test of the wilderness

Here is what we read in Exodus 15:22-25:



**Exodus 15:22-25**

Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea and they went into the Desert of Shur. For three days they traveled in the desert without finding water. 23 When they came to Marah, they could not drink its water because it was bitter. (That is why the place is called Marah.) 24 So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What are we to drink?" 25 Then Moses cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water, and the water became sweet. There the Lord issued a ruling and instruction for them and put them to the test.

The incident at Marah followed just three days after this incredible triumph at the Red Sea. The children of Israel moved in three days from triumph to trouble, from blessedness to bitterness, from contentment to complaining. Three days! We see this test in the life of Jesus who moved immediately from his baptism where the Spirit of God came on him and he was affirmed as the beloved Son by the Father. He was immediately sent out into the wilderness.

We see this test of the wilderness repeatedly in the lives of new Christians. After an initial period of great joy, there is some difficulty that enters a new Christian's life, often a period of isolation where the person is tested and challenged regarding their new loyalty, their new allegiance to Christ. I remember that happened to me. I came to Christ as a college freshman and I knew that I was born again by God's Spirit. My life was turned completely upside-down by God. And I was filled with incredible joy. I went off like a rocket. I knew I was saved. And for three months I was surrounded by warm fellowship and the support and love of other Christians who took me under their wing. And then I went out to California to spend a summer working for my father, who was really hostile to my new faith.

In California I had no Christian fellowship. For three months I was completely left alone. Those were months of me putting down roots into Christ. The isolation was a test of my new allegiance to Christ: Was I going to be loyal to Jesus, walk out my faith in a difficult situation when I was alone, or was I going to be simply a chameleon Christian conforming to the environment wherever I was?

Marah, where the children of Israel tasted the water and it was bitter, is a picture of all of the things that make life hard and bitter for us: A loveless marriage, crushed dreams, a sick child, physical infirmity. Someone once said, "A mother is only as happy as her most unhappy child." Marah.

But must it be this way? Your circumstances of your life or even the bitter circumstances of your child's life have to determine whether or not you can find joy in the Lord? Must we complain like the children of Israel when we are tested with the bitterness of life in this fallen world?



There is a great alternative to complaining and drinking in the bitter circumstances of your life so that your heart becomes bitter. There is a great alternative. The great alternative is practicing saying “thank you” to God for the blessings we do have in our lives. Let me give you one completely trivial example from my own life.

Years ago when we were still meeting in the old gym, I was standing in the back of the church where I usually stand during worship. Instead of worshipping God, I was watching people come in late. There were folks walking in during communion, right before the message. I’m not saying any of this to make you feel guilty this morning. But I was standing in the back complaining in my heart when I should have been worshipping. “What’s the matter with these folks? They don’t come to worship God; they just come for the sermon.” The Holy Spirit interrupted my complaining and said to me, “Would you rather that they weren’t here? I can arrange that.” I said, “Oh no, Lord, I want them to be here. I’m so sorry.”

Complaining about our present situation – how about saying thank you for the blessings you do have. God could certainly arrange to remove those blessings from your life.

Which leads to the third test:

#### The test of provision

In chapter 16 the children of Israel are, again, in need. This time they aren’t thirsty, they are hungry. We read in Exodus 16:1-4 these words:

#### **Exodus 16:1-4**

The whole Israelite community set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt. 2 In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. 3 The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the Lord’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.” 4 Then the Lord said to Moses, “I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions.

And in Exodus 16:13-16:

#### **Exodus 16:13-16**

That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. 14 When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. 15 When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, “It is the bread the Lord has given you to eat. 16 This is what the Lord has commanded: ‘Each one is to gather as much as they need. Take an omer for each person you have in your tent.’”



So where is the test in God's provision? We read later on in the book of Numbers that the children of Israel complained about the bread that God provided them from heaven. Here is what we read in Numbers 11:4-6:

**Numbers 11:4-6**

The rabble with them began to crave other food, and again the Israelites started wailing and said, "If only we had meat to eat! 5 We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost—also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. 6 But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!"

Why is God's provision for you a test? Again, it comes back to this whole issue of having a grateful heart before God. Provision tests the level of greed in our hearts. Because instead of enjoying the current blessing we have now from God, we want more than God is currently giving. We are not grateful to God because we want more. It is not enough what he is currently giving us now.

We're like children at Christmas, who after opening up a room full of presents, look around and say, "Is that it?" Even though they have a mountain of presents sitting next to them, they say, "Is that it? I don't get any more?"

Greed crushes a grateful heart. What do I mean by "greed"? Greed is the internal attitude that whatever I have from God is just not enough. I can't say thank you for the husband I do have, instead I grumble because my husband is not spiritual enough, or he is not affectionate enough, or he is not communicative enough. I can't say thank you, God, for the wife I do have. Instead, I complain and grumble because my wife is not sexual enough, or she is not supportive enough, or she is not thin enough, or she is not as young as she used to be.

There is always this demand for me. Yes, I have a job, but it is not good enough. Yes, we have a house, but it is not nice enough. Yes, we have clothes, but they aren't fashionable enough. Not enough... not enough... not enough! That is the heart of the children of Israel. That's why we get an F often on the test of provision. We cry out to God and say, "God, please, I beg you to open your hand to me in this particular area." God opens his hand, as he did with the manna in the wilderness. There is initially some pleasure in God's provision, but after a short period of time we say, "That's it?"

You know, thankfulness is something we have to practice. It is like learning how to play the piano. You have to practice the scales over and over again. It is like learning a foreign language. Thankfulness does not come naturally to self-centered, greedy people like the Israelites or us who believe that all the good things in life are ours by way of entitlement. People like the Israelites and us who grumble and complain because things don't go exactly our way and to our tastes. Thankfulness is something we need to practice. It is like a foreign language.



I want to challenge you to practice, to get into the practice of writing thank you notes to people who have helped you, or who have assisted you, or who have blessed you. Just take time to pause and acknowledge the contribution of people to your life. Take time to verbally say thank you to God. Every time you enjoy something, when you are standing in a hot shower, "Thank you, God!" when you rest, "Thank you!" when you have food, "Thank you." "Thank you for a nice day, God!" "Thank you that I have a car!" "Thank you that I have a back yard!" "Thank you that I have a comfortable pair of shoes." "Thank you that other people appreciated what I did!"

That leads to the last test:

The test of dailiness

#### **Exodus 16:4**

Then the Lord said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions.

And verses 17-20:

#### **Exodus 16:17-20**

The Israelites did as they were told; some gathered much, some little. 18 And when they measured it by the omer, the one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little. Each one had gathered just as much as they needed. 19 Then Moses said to them, "No one is to keep any of it until morning." 20 However, some of them paid no attention to Moses; they kept part of it until morning, but it was full of maggots and began to smell. So Moses was angry with them.

The manna was a test. In what way? They had to daily collect it – literally. God didn't give the children of Israel a Wonder Bread factory, or a manna warehouse. He gave them a little bit of food every day and they had to engage in this mundane task of going out with a bucket or container and collecting that little bit of food every day if they were going to eat and survive in the wilderness. Day in and day out the daily task of gathering, if they were going to survive.

Most people get an F on the test of dailiness. There isn't a pastor in America who hasn't had dozens of people come to them over the course of years saying things like this: "Pastor, can you help me? My marriage is falling apart." "Well, tell me about it," I would say. And they answer, "Well, the problem is I know that over the past 20 years I've been really insensitive. I've been non-communicative. I've been totally caught up in my job, or in raising the kids. I have not invested in my marriage. And now my spouse is threatening divorce. Is there a marriage seminar that you can send me to that will give me a great marriage?" Or, "Pastor, is there a book that you can recommend that will give me a great relationship with God?" Or, "I want to get in shape. My breakfast consists of Tim Horton's donuts. I drink big glasses of Pepsi and eat double



burgers at Wendy's every day with large fries. My dinner consists of a bucket of KFC and a 6-pack of beer. I wonder if I should consider liposuction."

Barnes and Noble is filled with books and tapes and videos for people who want greatness in a moment. "Three steps to this" and "The secret to that" and "The key to a happy life." There is shelf after shelf of that kind of stuff. But God tests us with dailiness. Greatness comes a little bit at a time. You don't have a great marriage unless day after day you do the mundane things. You say, "Well, tonight I'm going to be home for dinner." And then, "Tomorrow night I'm going to be home for dinner." And then, "The next night I'm going to be home and we'll have dinner together and we're going to do it again the following night." "And in the morning I'm going to kiss you goodbye." "The next morning I'm going to kiss you goodbye. And in the evening I'm going to empty the dishwasher and refill it." Dozens of little mundane things like, "I'm going to schedule a date night with my spouse." And with God, mundane little things like, "Tomorrow I'm going to set my clock and get up early so that I can spend time reading my Bible and praying. And then I'll do the same thing on Tuesday and then the same thing again on Wednesday."

How do we pass the test? We don't even know sometimes that God is testing us. But you know, Exodus 15 and 16 and chapter 17 which we didn't look at find their ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Here is what we read in Luke 24:25-27:

**Luke 24:25-27**

He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

How do we avoid getting an F in life? It is by connecting our lives to Jesus.

Jesus is our Red Sea victory

What does that mean? We need to make our relationship with God personal. In Exodus 15:2:

**Exodus 15:2**

"The Lord is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him.

The great Protestant Reformer, Martin Luther, once said:

The life of Christianity consists of possessive pronouns. It is one thing to say, "Christ is a Savior;" it is quite another thing to say, "He is my Savior and my Lord." The devil can say the first; the true Christian alone can say the second.

We pass tests when our relationship with Jesus is a living, personal reality to us.



Jesus' cross is our tree

Just as Moses tossed the tree into the water and made the bitter water sweet, so the cross of Christ can transform bitter experiences in our life and sweeten our spirit. Whatever is bitter in your life; whatever has been hard – sins that have been committed against you; sins that you've committed; places where you've been greedy before God, or complaining to the Lord about your situation – whatever is making your spirit bitter, you can take those things to the cross. And as you kneel at the cross, you can find healing for your soul through Jesus' wounds and his death.

And finally:

Jesus is our manna

Jesus said in John 6:35:

**John 6:35**

Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

Jesus, in other words, wants to come to you and to me not only as our Savior, but as our Satisfier. The problem with success of any kind is that it ultimately does not satisfy. Whether we're talking about money, marriage, career, romance, or recognition, these things are not ultimate things. Jesus alone and deep relationship with him alone can ultimately satisfy you. You've got to feed on Jesus daily. You can't just accept him as your Savior and go on trying to find ultimate satisfaction from the things in this world. You've got to keep feeding on Jesus day after day. He is the Bread of Life.

And you know, friends, the wonderful thing about having a relationship with Jesus is that one day the things that you've desired, of which this world is just a pointer, the things that you dream about, friend, one day will come to you through your relationship with Jesus. One day you are going to have the body you've always dreamed of. And through your relationship with Jesus, one day you are going to have the recognition you've always dreamed of. And through your relationship with Jesus, one day you are going to have the significance you've always dreamed of. And you are going to have the work you've always dreamed of, and the love you've always dreamed of, and the friendship and companionship you've always dreamed of. Whatever you have longed for, for which the things in this world are just pointers, they will find their ultimate fulfillment in Jesus. It is only in him that you will be able to pass the tests of life. Let's pray.



## Avoiding an “F” on Life’s Tests

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Rich Nathan

August 2-3, 2008

The Making of a Leader: Leadership Lessons from the Life of Moses

Exodus 15 and 16

### 1. Tested by the Lord

A. The tests of life (James 1:12)

B. The tests of leaders

1. Tests reveal our spiritual condition

2. Tests strengthen our spiritual muscles

C. The test of success (Exodus 15:1-21)

Success creates a temptation to lose touch

1. With your basic values

2. With people in need

3. With God (Deuteronomy 8:10-18)

Success creates a temptation to take credit

D. The test of the wilderness (Exodus 15:22-25)

E. The test of provision (Exodus 16:1-4; 13-16; Numbers 11:4-6)

F. The test of dailiness (Exodus 16:4; 17-20)

### 2. How to pass the test

A. Jesus is our Red Sea

B. Jesus’ cross is our tree

C. Jesus is our manna