

Russell Kelfer

Testing: To Teach Us To Pray

522-A

Series: Testing

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10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230 • (210) 226-0000 / 1-800-375-7778 • www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org

Testing: To Teach Us to Pray

We are examining testing in the lives of God's children, looking at how and why God tests His children. In the last few lessons, we have been examining the "why", the reasons God tests His children.

1- God tests His children to develop the mind of God in us. He wants us to learn to think as He thinks and respond as He responds. He brings certain tests into our lives so that through these tests we might learn the mind of Christ.

2- God tests His children to surface our weaknesses. Sometimes we simply do not accept the areas of our lives that need attention. God then brings tests into our lives. Through those tests things we did not know or would not admit to come to the surface, and we have to deal with them.

3 -God tests us to humble us and remind us of our need of Him.

4- God tests His children to advance the kingdom. He strategically places us where others have need.

5- God tests us to draw us to the Word.

6- God tests us to progressively enlarge our vision of Him. In the midst of a circumstance, we need to realize that "This is a test!" We then can come to the glorious realization that "God is." He is all we need, so therefore we can rest in the test.

7- God tests His children, oftentimes, to equip us to minister to others. II Corinthians 1:1-11 was the Scripture reference we used. God brings tests into the lives of His children in order to create a need for comfort. God gives us comfort, which is a reusable item. We can then store it up for re-use as other members of the body have the same need. You will have the comfort to give them, if you are willing to be available.

In the last lesson I asked if you had ever experienced comfort in some areas. The first was loneliness. Have you ever been lonely and the Spirit of God, through people or the Word or circumstances, comforted you? Have you been through a divorce? Have you had a physical illness? Have you had an emotional illness? Have you

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had problems with children? Have you been through a financial disaster? Have you experienced the death of a loved one? Has there been a crisis in your marriage? Have you ever had a difficult time discerning the will of God in a major decision? Have you ever had problems or ministered to those who had problems with drugs or alcohol? Have you been involved with a cult or the occult? Have you ever had a problem with self-image? Has God ministered to you through others or through the Word or through His Holy Spirit in any of these areas?

The crux of the last lesson was that God intentionally allows us to pass through these crises to be comforted and therefore be equipped for the ministry. All of you are in the ministry. The ministry you are equipped for is to minister to those about you with a similar crisis or need.

In the last lesson I asked you to simply accept your calling. Assess your message and begin to pray. Become available to share your life. This is a vital reason that God tests us, to give us a certain ministry.

In this lesson, I want us to think through the eighth reason God tests His children. This reason is that He wants to teach us, experientially, how to pray. You may say, "I know how to pray." He wants to teach us really how to pray with our body, soul and spirit. He wants us to pray with the mind, emotion and will communicating with and relying on and expecting from God.

We learn something about how to pray from the instructions of the Word. We learn something of how to pray by hearing others pray. This is one reason, I believe, that we have examples of the vocalized prayers of Jesus in the Scripture. We learn something of how to pray through nature, when we are involved with spiritual highs. However, there are dimensions of depth and discernment of prayer that are experientially a reality only in the midst of the tests of life. There are treasures of God that come in the clouds of life that are only released in the storms of life that drive us to our knees at the foot of the King.

Sometimes God tests us just to teach us how to pray. Look through the lives of a great many Christians who pray. Read their biographies, and you will find a life of crisis and victories. It was in the crisis that they learned to pray. Oftentimes you may say, "This is a test, but God is. Let us pray."

Job learned how to pray in the midst of a test. It would be an

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interesting study, on your own, to evaluate the transition in Job's prayer life throughout the book. There was a change, not just in the words he used, but also in the spirit in which he prayed.

It would also be interesting to take the great men of victory in the Bible and examine their crises prayers. We could look at Jesus in the garden. We could look at Stephen as he was stoned. We could look at Paul as he was in prison. Peter. Daniel. David. Abraham. Moses. All of these situations were different, but there are amazing similarities as to how they prayed in the midst of crisis. You and I can learn a great deal about how to pray through a test by watching the men and women in Scripture who were in the midst of a crisis and seeing how God enabled them to pray.

Since we cannot spend more than one lesson on this subject, let us instead learn how to pray in a crisis from the most graphic Scriptural illustration of prayer that we have. We will turn to God's fire extinguisher, the book of Psalms. I am convinced of two things. The first is that we can, in a crisis, turn to the book of Psalms for comfort and direction probably more than any other single place. Secondly, we can, by studying the Psalmist's prayers, find a pattern to follow when the sky is falling and we need help. This week I found at least five things the Psalmist nearly always did in a crisis in the way of prayer.

I had an interesting experience last night. I got sick. My first choice was to call a friend and ask him to teach for me this morning. My second choice was to talk to the Lord about it. I began to moan to myself, "Why, Lord, is this happening like this?" I opened my notebook and on the top of the page it said, "God Tests His Children To Teach Them How To Pray." I said, "Lord, You're not talking to me, this is for them." Very gently the Lord said, "No, I think I'm talking to you." I began to pray through this outline and these five things. God did minister to my heart in a very special way. I would like to encourage you to take note of these five things the Psalmist always seemed to do when God was testing him.

1- He almost always began by asking God specifically for mercy and grace. Now most believers don't do that when they pray, at least vocally they don't. I very seldom do. In fact, I seemed somewhat intimidated at the thought. They learned to ask for mercy at the beginning of their prayer. Mercy means to ask to be dealt with, not according to what is deserved but according to the love of God. They began their prayers in general by asking

for mercy.

In the Old Testament we find the word “mercy” basically used to encompass the meaning of mercy and grace together. Grace is the ability to be enabled to perform and become, not according to our abilities, but enabled and empowered by a supernatural God.

In the New Testament the word “grace” came to life and took on a whole new meaning. The facets of the diamond began to glow in a new dimension and a new direction. We began to see both aspects of the mercy and the grace of God. Someone has said that mercy is not receiving the punishment we deserve and grace is receiving what we do not deserve in blessings. These are oversimplified definitions, but all of us realize that the mercy and grace of God are made available to the believer without deserving it. In the New Testament both words are used, but in the Old Testament we find the word “mercy” encompasses both grace and mercy.

Have you ever specifically begun your prayers by asking God in general for grace and mercy? Very few of us do. I never fully grasped this before because it almost seemed like blasphemy to me. By definition, these two things are elements of the character of God that we don’t deserve. To ask God for something I didn’t deserve seemed wrong to me until I realized the difference between deserving and asking. Parents are delighted, oftentimes, when their children come to them to ask for something. Maybe they haven’t been the best parent in the world, but if they come to you and ask for something, what a delight it is to give it to them not because they deserve it, but just because you love them. You do it because they asked. God is the same way with us. More than that, He has told us to ask. The reason is that asking for what you know you do not deserve in itself creates dependence and humility. We are to ask the Lord, when we come into His presence, for grace and mercy. We must understand those two terms and ask Him for those two benefits of His person.

You can listen to Paul’s prayers and salutations. These are found in Romans 1:7; I Corinthians 1:3; II Corinthians 1:2; I Timothy 1:2 and I Peter 1:2. In fact, the opening passages of all the New Testament Epistles always begin with “Grace and mercy be unto you.” Paul was praying that the grace of God, the mercy of God and the peace of God would descend upon those for whom he prayed.

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Secondly, I think we come to the realization of this principle of asking for grace and mercy by studying Hebrews 4:16. It says:

Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in time of need.

(Hebrews 4:16)

This tells us that there is a throne where Christ is. Christ has an abundance of mercy and an abundance of grace to give to us. Because of His blood, we have been enabled to come with boldness before His throne. The New American Standard says “to draw near with confidence” to that throne so that we may obtain and receive by seeking grace and mercy. When? To help in time of need. So when the need comes, we are told to go to the throne to ask God specifically for mercy and grace. He will give it to us. I think oftentimes in our prayer lives we do not do that. We miss a blessing because we do not want to maintain an attitude of dependence and realization that He is and we are not, that He can and we can't. But He loves us, so we seek after mercy and grace which are things we do not deserve but we are asking for because of who God is.

Let's see the pattern in the Psalms. I want to start with chapter 4. This is a good verse to memorize.

Oh God, You have declared me perfect in your eyes; you have always cared for me in my distress; now hear me as I call again. Have mercy on me. Hear my prayer.

(Psalm 4:1 TLB)

I want to give you others that I won't read. Psalm 6:2; Psalm 9:13; Psalm 25:16. Let's turn together to Psalm 30:10,

Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me: LORD, be thou my helper.

(Psalm 30:10)

Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble:

(Psalm 31:9)

Have you ever prayed like that?

O loving and kind God, have mercy. Have pity upon me and take away the awful stain of my transgressions.

(Psalm 51:1 TLB)

There often must be a need in our lives for a general plea for mercy and grace as we begin to pray. The Psalmist used it. I would encourage you, in the midst of your test, to try it. Ask God. Cry out to God, “Lord, have mercy on me. Grant me grace according to the measure of the richness of Yourself.” Then expect it.

2- We learn from the Psalmist that, having asked for mercy and

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grace, we can honestly review the circumstances with God. The Psalmist would share with God what had happened, objectively. Then, he would tell Him how he felt about it, honestly. If necessary, he would also tell Him how he felt about it emotionally.

This is one place for emotions. I'm afraid that so many of us are so afraid of emotions that we are afraid to be emotional with God. We need to learn to weep in the presence of God, not artificially, but we need to let our spirits go ahead and weep, if necessary, over our sins and over the needs of others. We need to learn to laugh with God at ourselves and at our circumstances. We need to learn to rejoice and get excited with God over the things that are coming and are promised in His Word. We need to allow our emotions to enter into our prayer life.

Most of us are hypocrites by nature, and we are tremendously that way when we pray. I love to pray as the Pharisee prayed, "Oh dear Lord," and use many other expressions. Then I begin to ignore the real needs of my life. I cover them up with some sort of religious foolishness. We need to learn to pray to God as the Psalmist did. We need to begin to ask God for mercy. We need to say, "Lord, this is a tough situation I'm going through. I called home a few minutes ago and one child fell out of the window, and the other one got kicked out of school. My wife cut her finger and it is bleeding all over the place. I went back to work to ask off early and got fired. Lord, I realize that other people have worse situations than I do, and I realize that this is for a purpose, but I am at the end of my rope. I need to tell you about it, Lord, because I'm about to pop." Have you ever prayed like that?

We tend to be so religious. We go to the Lord in the midst of those kinds of feelings and say, "Dear Lord, how great Thou art." He is great, and we need to say that, but we need to be honest with Him about what is going on and how we are feeling about it. He knows, but He wants that total honesty of our spirit because it exposes us as we are and shows Him and us the needs of our lives. Yet, we can be so hypocritical.

Be honest with the Lord. You can say, "Lord, this is a tough deal. I'm tired of it. I know it is right, and I know that You know what is best, but boy am I weary." That is not blasphemy. It is honesty. We can also say, "Not only this, but Lord, I feel hurt inside because I know by the Word that You care, but I can't sense it. I want You to show me. Would You do that?" God is our best friend, and He wants us to speak to Him respecting Him as

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the King but being aware of His friendship with us. If you need to cry, cry. The Psalmist said,

Lord, You have collected all of my tears in a bottle and labeled it. You know when I cry inwardly and outwardly.

(Psalm 56:8 paraphrased)

Psalm 38:1-11 gives us a picture of this. Out of the Living Bible it says:

O Lord, don't punish me while you are angry!

Your arrows have struck deep; your blows are crushing me.

Because of your anger my body is sick, my health is broken beneath my sins.

They are like a flood, higher than my head; they are a burden too heavy to bear.

My wounds are festering and full of pus. Because of my sins I am bent and racked with pain.

My days are filled with anguish.

My loins burn with inflammation and my whole body is diseased.

I am exhausted and crushed; I groan in despair.

Lord, you know how I long for my health once more. You hear my every sigh.

My heart beats wildly, my strength fails, and I am going blind.

My loved ones and friends stay away, fearing my disease. Even my own family stands at a distance.

(Psalm 38:1-11 TLB)

This is honesty in prayer.

Save me from being overpowered by my sins, for even fools will mock me then.

Lord, I am speechless before you. I will not open my mouth to speak one word of complaint, for my punishment is from you.

Lord, don't hit me anymore—I am exhausted beneath your hand.

When you punish a man for his sins, he is destroyed for he is as fragile as a moth-infested cloth; yes, man is as frail as breath.

(Psalm 39:8-11 TLB)

The rest of the Psalm goes on to acknowledge the reality of a God of love. In this moment the Psalmist is hurting, and He tells God about it. I wonder if we are sometimes too proud to do that. I am. Psalm 55:1-8 again in the Living Bible says,

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Listen to my prayer, O God; don't hide yourself when I cry to You.

Hear me, Lord! Listen to me! For I groan and weep beneath my burden of woe.

My heart is in anguish within me. Stark fear overpowers me. Trembling and horror overwhelm me.

Oh, for wings like a dove to fly away and rest!

I would fly to the far off deserts and stay there.

I would flee to some refuge from all this storm.

(Psalm 55:1,2,4-8 TLB)

Have you ever wanted to tell God that? Sometimes we will tell our neighbors, but we won't tell God. We will tell our best friend or our husband or our wife, but we won't tell God. Then we wonder why there is no vision, no joy and no comfort from God. We are unwilling to be honest with Him. Look at Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. You will find total honesty coupled with an awareness of the sovereignty of God.

3- We learn how to cry out for help and forgiveness. It is probably the most important of all. Crying out for help is not a sign of weakness, it is a sign of strength. In the midst of the test, in the midst of the trial, we need to be able to cry out honestly and emotionally to God and say, "Help!"

I did that this week. I have to admit it is not normal and natural for me because I like to be proud enough to feel that I don't need that kind of help. So the flesh enters in and I will go through the motions of all of these ritualistic kinds of prayers when in reality what I needed to do was to say, "Lord, I'm going under, help!" And He will. There is a Psalm we read earlier in another translation, but in the Living Bible it says,

the very day I cried for help the Lord heard me and delivered me.

(Psalm 56:9 TLB)

Psalm 18:4-19 is very important. We need to learn where some of these passages are. You might get a notebook and make a list of all of the Psalms that apply in each of these categories so that when you need to pray, you can go to these Psalms to pray and be comforted by them. Listen to Psalm 18:6-17. This is a beautiful passage to memorize because it tells of the response of God to the cries of His children.

In my distress I screamed to the Lord for his help. And he heard me from heaven; my cry reached his ears.

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Then the earth rocked and reeled, and the mountain shook and trembled. How they quaked! For he was angry.

Fierce flames leaped from his mouth, setting fire to the earth; smoke flew from his nostrils.

He bent the heavens down and came to my defense; thick darkness was beneath his feet.

Mounted on the cherubim, he sped swiftly to my aid with wings of wind.

He enshrouded himself with darkness, veiling his approach with a dense clouds dark as murky waters.

Suddenly the brilliance of his presence broke through the clouds with lightning and a mighty storm of hail.

The Lord thundered in the heavens; the God above all gods has spoken—oh, the hailstones; oh, the fire!

He flashed his fearful arrows of lightning and routed all my enemies. See how they run!

Then at your command, O Lord, the sea receded from the shore. At the blast of your breath the depths were laid bare.

He reached down from heaven and took me and drew me out of my great trials. He rescued from deep waters.

He delivered me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me—I who was helpless in their hands.

(Psalm 18:6-17 TLB)

This is what God delights to do for His children when they cry out for help.

O my God, save me from my enemies. Protect me from these who have come to destroy me. (Psalm 59:1 TLB)

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. (Psalm 51:1,2)

Many times did he deliver them; but they provoked him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity.

Nevertheless he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry: (Psalm 106:43-44)

I wonder if we are sometimes simply too proud or too unfamiliar with the mind of God in the midst of trial to just cry out to Him. Psalm 56:9 is the verse I shared earlier. In the Living Bible paraphrased it says,

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In the very day I call for help, the tide of battle turns. My enemies flee. This one thing I know: God is for me!

(Psalm 56:9 TLB)

Psalm 34:4 is a very important passage. I can't help but share it because about 3 years ago I was in the depth of a personal crisis that involved a number of different circumstances and tests. All had seemed to come within a period of a few weeks. I can remember going alone with the Lord as many of you have, closing the door and just weeping and weeping and weeping before Him. I was saying, "How long, oh Lord, how long?" For the first time in a long time, I laid myself bare before the Lord and cried out, "Lord, I'm at the end of my rope. Circumstances are beyond what I can cope with. Help." I asked Him for some comfort from the Word. I opened the Bible to Psalm 34.

I will praise the Lord no matter what happens. I will constantly speak of his glories and grace.

For I cried to him and he answered me! He freed me from all my fears.

Others too were radiant at what he did for them. Theirs was no downcast look of rejection! (Psalm 34:1,4,5 TLB)

This was the verse that set me free. It says,

This poor man cried to the Lord—and the Lord heard him and saved him out of his troubles.

For the Angel of the Lord guards and rescues all who reverence him.

Oh, put God to the test and see how kind he is! See for yourself the way his mercies shower down on all who trust in him.

If you belong to the Lord, reverence him; for everyone who does this has everything he needs.

Even strong young lions sometimes go hungry, but those of us who reverence the Lord will never lack any good thing.

(Psalm 34:6-10 TLB)

It was in the afternoon. I can remember it very clearly as there were a lot of tears. It was as though God Himself came, put His arm on my shoulder and said, "This poor man cried and the Lord heard him and delivered him out of all his trouble."

Sometimes God has to bring us to a point of deep testing before we learn how to pray. We need to come to this point before we learn to plead for grace and mercy. We need to come to this point before we learn to honestly ask Him for help. We need to

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come to this point before we will learn to honestly evaluate our feelings before Him.

4- Having sought grace, the Psalmist reviewed his case with God and cried for help. He then began to meditate on the glory of God. This is the most important part. Having cried for help, the Psalmist always began to review in his mind who God was, what God had done, what God had promised and how He worked. We need to remember His worth, His works, His ways and His Word. Meditate on these four things. When you mediate on His Word, you gain confidence. When you meditate on His worth, you gain peace. When you meditate on His works, you gain hope. When you meditate on His ways, you gain discernment.

The Psalmist, always having cried out to God for help in the midst of the trial, turned to the Spirit of God who

...helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

(Romans 8:26)

Once we have cried out to God for help, He, the Spirit, then begins to pray through us, and the Spirit always points to Jesus. We have talked about our problems. We have talked about our need for grace. We have cried to God for help and then the Spirit takes over. Through us and in us, He begins to interpret the mind of God for us. That is what it means when it says He prays for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.

The Spirit will always point you to the worth of God, the works of God, the Word of God and the ways of God. As you begin to meditate on those your perspective changes. It is true that the circumstances still exist, but they no longer are king. Christ is King and the circumstances now rest beneath the cross. It may take longer in your life or in my life than it does in someone else's, and each occasion may be different, but in the midst of the trial, having cried for help, the Spirit now, through us, wants to have the freedom to meditate on the person of God.

Psalm 46:1-11 speaks of this point. It begins,

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

(Psalm 46:1 NASB)

I love it in the Living Bible. It continues,

And so we need not fear even if the world blows up, and the mountains crumble into the sea.

(Psalm 46:2 TLB)

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You may say, "I've got a big problem today." Well, it probably is not *that* big, is it? We don't have reason to fear even if the world blows up and the mountains go falling into the sea.

Let the oceans roar and foam; let the mountains tremble!

There is a river of joy flowing through the city of our God—the sacred home of the God above all gods.

God himself is living in that City; therefore it stands unmoved despite the turmoil everywhere. He will not delay his help.

The nations rant and rave in anger—but when God speaks, the earth melts into submission and kingdoms totter into ruin.
(Psalm 46:3-6 TLB)

Psalm 54:4 is a good verse to memorize. These are verses you can use in the midst of a trial. The Living Bible says,

Come with great power, O God, and save me! Defend me with your might!

Oh listen to my prayer.

But God is my helper, he is a friend of mine.

(Psalm 54:1,2,4 TLB)

But when I am afraid, I will put my confidence in you. Yes, I will trust the promises of God.

And since I am trusting Him, what can mere man do to me?
(Psalm 56:3,4 TLB)

I stand silently before the Lord, waiting for Him to rescue me. For salvation comes from Him alone.

Yes, He alone is my Rock, my rescuer, defense and fortress. Why then should I be tense with fear when trouble comes?
(Psalm 62:1,2 TLB)

In other words, He is something to stand in, stand on, stand behind and stand for.

But I stand silently before the Lord, waiting for him to rescue me. For salvation comes from him alone.

Yes, he alone is my Rock, my rescuer, my defense and my fortress—why then should I tense with fear when troubles come?

O my people, trust him all the time. Pour out your longings for him, for he can help.
(Psalm 62:5,6,8 TLB)

He formed the mountains by his mighty strength.

He quiets the raging oceans and the world's clamor.

In the farthest corners of the earth the glorious acts of God shall startle everyone. The dawn and the sunset shout for joy!

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He waters the earth to make it fertile. The rivers of God will not run dry! He prepares the earth for His people and sends them rich harvests of grain. (Psalm 65:6-9 TLB)

Memorize and meditate on these Psalms when trials come. Begin to look at who God is in the light of your problems and begin to see your perspective turn. The very day you cry for help the tide of battle turns, and you begin to meditate by the Spirit because that is His business as you cry for help. His job is to intercede for you and give you a perspective of God.

5- Having asked for grace, having been open with God, having cried out and having meditated on the person of God, the Psalmist always began to praise Him before he saw tangible evidence of the victory. Praise Him.

As I finished this lesson I began to look at the progression of the verses. The whole of the book of Psalms follows almost the same pattern. The pleas for mercy and grace are found in the first eight or ten chapters. The Psalms that dealt with openness with God seemed to come in the next fifteen chapters or so. The ones about crying out to God and meditating on the works of God seemed to come in the middle part of this book, the 50's, 60's, 70's and 80's. All of the passages that were simply overflowing with praise were in the latter part of the Psalms 135- through 150.

This is the place to sing. This is the place to make melody in your hearts to the Lord. You have cried out to God. He has given you the ability to meditate on who He is and change your perspective. At this point, it is good to begin to sing. In II Chronicles 20 the Israelites began to sing and praise. God sent an ambush and defeated the enemy. Not until they began to sing and to praise were they delivered. In the midst of your trial, having cried out to God and having seen your perspective change by meditating on the person of God, it is an appropriate time to begin to sing about the glory of God.

You may say, "You've never heard me sing." Maybe not, but God has heard you sing, and it is beautiful music to Him. Make melody in your heart to the Lord. He is not concerned with the melody that comes forth from your throat because He made it and He understands. He is concerned with the melody that comes forth from your heart. Let's look up Psalm 135:1-4. What do you praise God for? You praise Him for the same four things. You praise Him for who He is. You praise Him for what He has

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promised. You praise Him for what He has done. You praise Him for how He works.

Hallelujah! Yes, let his people praise him as they stand in his Temple.

Praise the Lord because he is so good; sing to his wonderful name (for it is lovely).

For He has chosen Israel (us for himself) as his personal possession. (Psalm 135:1-4 TLB)

Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his lovingkindness continues forever.

Give thanks to the God of gods, for his lovingkindness continues forever.

Give thanks to the Lord of lords, for his lovingkindness continues forever.

Praise Him who alone does His mighty miracles, for His lovingkindness continues forever.

Praise him who made the heavens, for his lovingkindness continues forever.

Praise him who planted the water within the earth, for his lovingkindness continues forever.

Praise him who made the heavenly lights, for his lovingkindness continues forever:

the sun to rule by day, for His lovingkindness continues forever;

and the moon and the stars (to rule by night), for his lovingkindness continues forever. (Psalm 136:1-9 TLB)

Praise Him. Praise Him. Praise Him.

Lord, with all my heart I thank you. I will sing your praises before the armies of angels.

...for Your promises are backed by all the honor of Your name.

When I pray, you answer me, and encourage me by giving me the strength I need. (Psalm 138:1-3 TLB)

This is another beautiful one to memorize. You could spend all week on this whole Psalm, but let's just look at these verses. Psalm 145 says,

I will extol thee, my God, O king; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever.

Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever.

Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable.

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One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts.

I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works.

The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy.

The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.

The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. (Psalm 145:1-5,8,17,18)

If you want to see this whole pattern, you can find it in one chapter, Psalm 56.

Let me just remind you, in closing, that one of the reasons God brings tests into your life is to teach you, experientially, how to pray. We can learn to pray by reading books and hearing others, but we cannot really learn to pray like we can in the valley of need.

As we learn to pray, we can look to the Psalms for comfort and encouragement. We can memorize and meditate on the Psalms. We can also remember that the Psalmist had a basic pattern that he always seemed to follow. When you hear, "This is a test, but God is," we can begin to pray. We can ask God for grace and mercy. We can then visualize His throne and who He is. We can know that He has barrels of mercy He wants to dump upon us if we will ask. We can review the situation confidently and confidentially by telling God just how it is. He wants to hear from us even though He already knows. We can then cry out for help. Some of us are going to have to practice crying out for help because we are so religiously stifled that we cannot, even alone in the presence of God, say, "Help!"

We need to learn to meditate on Him. We need to meditate on His Word, His works, His worth and His ways. Having done this, we need to learn, by an act of the will, to praise Him. When we begin to sing and to praise the tide of the battle turns. The circumstances may not change, but the heart will change. That is all that matters because God never changes. Learn to praise Him. This is a test! The test becomes a blessing as we learn to pray.

dtm DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230

210-226-0000 or 1-800-375-7778

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