

Can You Pass This Test?

Sunday, June 14, 2020

Key Text: **James 1:19-26 (NIV)**

¹⁹ My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ²⁰ because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. ²¹ Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

²² Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. ²³ Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴ and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵ But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

²⁶ Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless.

Last week we looked at this scripture and asked the question, “Can You Pass This Test?”

Every day we encounter situations that put us to the test and every day, it seems to me that there are many who fail the test. We fail to **guard our tongues**, we fail to **listen** carefully, we fail by reacting with **anger, judgement, and condemnation rather than respond with mercy, discernment, and forgiveness**. We fail by considering ourselves religious but misrepresent the kingdom of God by being hearers of the word of God but not putting it into action in our lives.

Today I want to discuss three more ways in which we fail the test.

We fail the test when we...

Tear down rather than build up

I’m sure you have heard those motherly words of wisdom that say “If you can’t say something good about someone, then don’t say anything at all.”

Listen, those words are more than just a platitude spoken by grandmas... They are scriptural

Ephesians 4:29 (NIV)

²⁹ Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

Listen to those words. This isn't just a scripture about keeping your language clean. It's a principal of God's Word that says rather than tear down we should build up. Whether it's with our words or with our actions.

So much of what I have seen of the "movements" in my lifetime and especially in this last decade does nothing more than tear down. Take a look around at the devastation we have brought upon ourselves. What has happened these last two weeks is just a small example. To make a point people would tear down the whole system. We have done that over and over throughout the years. We tear down, we destroy, and we leave a mess in our wake that not only doesn't accomplish our original intent but hurts countless others who are innocent along the way.

"Let's tear down our president, let's tear down democracy, let's tear down gender, let's tear down perceived white privilege, let's tear down perceived male privilege, let's tear down the family, let's tear down God ordained sexuality and marriage, let's tear down discipline and consequences, let's tear down our history

The crazy thing is that some of the very ones that we say we are trying to build up are the ones that end up getting torn down. I call it "going to the bathroom in our own beds"

Believe me we are good at tearing down, but not so good at building up. We have got to begin to see that tearing down is often reactionary and doesn't take into consideration what good things we hurt along the way

Romans 14:19 (NASB)

¹⁹ So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NIV)

¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build each other up...

We Fail When We...

Confuse personal preference and conviction with God ordained principles and truth

Romans 14:1-13 (NIV)

14 Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters. ²One person's faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. ³The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them. ⁴Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

⁵One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. ⁶Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God; and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. ⁷For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. ⁸If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. ⁹For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.

¹⁰You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister^[a]? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. ¹¹It is written:

“As surely as I live,’ says the Lord,
‘every knee will bow before me;
every tongue will acknowledge God.’”^[b]

¹²So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God.

¹³Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister.

There can be more than one right point of view, more than one right perspective regarding a situation

Last week we quoted the old axiom that “Two wrongs don't make a right” A couple of weeks ago laid a little twist to that axiom on my heart...

Two rights don't make one wrong

In other words, two different people can hold different opinions on something but that doesn't mean that one of them has to be wrong.

Masks, opening churches, worship styles, cremation, systemic racism and on and on

In addition, two different people can hold different opinions on something, and both be wrong.

The most important thing we can do is seek out God's perspective on any given issue, searching the Word of God for principles that lead us in the right way.

I am not suggesting there is not a right and a wrong... There most definitely is. But there is a difference between my personal preference and conviction and God ordained principals and truth. If my personal preferences and convictions seek to change that God ordained principle or truth, then I am wrong. But so often we fail the test because we focus on our personal convictions rather than on God's Truth

For instance, we have forgotten that there are consequences for doing wrong, we have forgotten that there is a right and a wrong

We Fail When We...

Fail to love God with ALL and love OTHERS as ourselves

Mark 12:28-33 New International Version (NIV)

The Greatest Commandment

²⁸ One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

²⁹ "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.'^[a] ³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'^[b] ³¹ The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'^[c] There is no commandment greater than these."

³² "Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. ³³ To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

Without God all our attempts at legislating an end to racism and societal change for the good will not happen

Mark Hitchcock: The universal virus or pandemic is sin that infects the soul of every person. We're all born infected, and there's no human cure or vaccine. The only remedy for the sin virus is the death and resurrection of Jesus who took the full force of the virus for us. All we have to do for a complete cure is accept Jesus as our Savior.

In order to love others, we must first love God with ALL

Jesus tells us how to pass this test

Mark 10:43-45 New International Version (NIV)

⁴³ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

John 13:1-17 New International Version (NIV)

13 It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

² The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. ³ Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; ⁴ so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵ After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?”

⁷ Jesus replied, “You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.”

⁸ “No,” said Peter, “you shall never wash my feet.”

Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.”

⁹ “Then, Lord,” Simon Peter replied, “not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!”

¹⁰ Jesus answered, “Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.” ¹¹ For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

¹² When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. ¹³ “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. ¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶ Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.