

## Do Not Test the Lord Your God

Scripture Reading: Luke 4:1-13 Text vs. 12 *"It is said: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"*

In your faith journey, which is your personal path for spiritual discovery and growth, have you ever had moments that challenged your belief of God's presence in your life? Have you ever wondered about God's promise for your protection? You know, like when you're really sick. When you're physically suffering. Emotional pain is causing you to question God's presence in your life. Or maybe you don't actually feel God's presence at all when the support system you had hoped for isn't there. Where is God? Your prayers seem unanswered. When things come out differently than you expected you doubt God's even aware of you! You worry about your future plans that are unclear. And all that's questioning your surrendering to God's will. You recognize you should seek support from your church, your community. And begin to pray and meditate, study scripture, or maybe even seek professional guidance.

You see, building trust in God can be a gradual process. It requires patience. Thought. A willingness to hold on when things are uncertain. And in our lesson today, Luke gave a great lesson from Jesus' own experience when *"Jesus answered Satan and said: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"* That's from Deuteronomy 6:16 when Jesus used it to give a timeless lesson on how to have unwavering faith *without* testing God. After Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan River, He was filled with the Holy Spirit and led by the same Holy Spirit into the Wilderness to be tempted by the devil. The Judean Desert's rugged terrain and waterless condition was an empty desert. Out there for forty days, Jesus ate *nothing!* And His final temptation, as recorded in Luke 4:9-12, was with the devil urging Jesus to throw Himself off the top of the Temple in Jerusalem so God's angels could catch Him. That was an attempt to have Jesus test God's promise of protection. It was subtle. Yet perilous! Because by encouraging Jesus to act recklessly in order to have a Divine rescue, the devil misled genuine faith into improper testing to cast doubt on God's faithfulness. And to require proof of God's commitment. Jesus refused! Which underscores the importance of trusting God without signs of His miraculous involvement.

True faith accepts God's promises without seeking more evidence. Because testing God shows a lack of trust and attempts to control and manipulate Him. Believers are called to trust God's timing and methods, even when His ways are beyond understanding. That phrase *"God's ways are not our ways"* is correct. It's from Isaiah 55:8-9, where God declared that His thoughts are not our thoughts. And His ways are not our ways. That means, God's ways are sinless. They are forgiving. They are merciful. And God's ways are always best, even if you can't make sense out of them at the time. You know, like when you do something you don't know why, but when it's all over it was for the best!

However, *expecting* God's protection is a form of spiritual arrogance. While God *is* your protector, deliberately placing yourself in harm's way to force God's Divine intervention is neither faithful, nor is it wise. It's like jumping out of an airplane without a parachute and saying, *Okay God, here I am. Save me.* The devil's misuse of Scripture in this temptation highlights the necessity of how to understand and apply God's Word *correctly*. When Satan, standing on the highest point of the Temple with Jesus said, *"If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here. <sup>10</sup> For it is written: He will command His angels concerning You to guard You carefully; <sup>11</sup> they will lift You up in their hands, so that You will not strike Your foot against a stone."* (Psalm 91:11,12)

Now, a believer must be sensitive to recognize and resist mistaken beliefs that lead to mistaken actions. Throughout the Bible, several individuals made significant mistakes that have lessons for believers today. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, which led to the Fall of humanity and serves for understanding the human condition and the need for redemption. Abraham lied about his relationship with Sarah his wife, claiming she was his sister in order to protect himself in Egypt. Fearing Sarah's beauty might lead the Egyptians to kill him to take her, Abraham instructed her to say she was his sister. So, Pharaoh took Sarah into his palace and treated Abraham well, giving him livestock and servants. However, God caused serious diseases to come on Pharaoh and his household because of Sarah. And upon discovering the truth, Pharaoh confronted Abraham, returned Sarah to him, and ordered them to leave Egypt with all their possessions. Which highlights Abraham's lack of faith in God's protection. Despite Abraham's lying, God protected Sarah and upheld His covenant with Abram, which ensured the future fulfillment of His promises to Israel. And then Moses struck the rock, instead of speaking to it as God commanded, resulting in Moses not entering the Promised Land. King David committed adultery with Bathsheba and planned the death of her husband Uriah, which resulted in the death of their child, continual violence in David's House and public humiliation for David, all which showed the severe results of David's actions that affected his reign and his family. Then King Solomon, King David and Bathsheba's son, despite his wisdom, turned away from God by worshiping idols. Solomon's later years were marked by personal and political struggles. He married numerous foreign wives, which led him to worship other gods and wander off from his devotion to God, which angered God and ultimately led to the division of the united kingdom of Israel after Solomon's death. The Apostle Peter denied knowing Jesus three times during

Jesus' trial. And in Leviticus 10:1–2, Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, when worshipping God offered "unauthorized fire" before the Lord, which can be translated as "strange fire" which shows that Nadab and Abihu used fire that was not allowed by God for their incense offering. It was a direct violation of Divine instructions that showed a complete lack of reverence for God's holiness. It led to their immediate death. They were consumed by Divine fire, which points out why you should stay exactly with God's commands. Especially when worshipping God.

These human weaknesses all highlight the importance of obedience and faithfulness in your personal faith journey with God. So, what can you do about it? Well, first of all, you need to develop a better relationship with God that relies on His faithfulness without your requiring any signs. An example of relying on God's faithfulness without seeking signs is found in the Book of Daniel, chapter 3, verses 8–30. It's the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, three men who refused to worship King Nebuchadnezzar's golden image. Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem in 586 BC, which led to the destruction of Solomon's Temple and the exile of the Jewish people to Babylon. Enraged, Nebuchadnezzar ordered the three men into a furnace heated seven times hotter than usual. Witnesses saw four figures in the flames. The fourth appeared to be Divine. And when the three men emerged from the fiery furnace unscathed, King Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged their God's power and promoted them which serves as evidence to the rewards of unwavering devotion. Their story continues to inspire believers today to maintain faith when things aren't going well and to make decisions that reflect your trust in God. Don't do something that recklessly demands God's intervention. Again, jumping out of an airplane without a parachute. And you have heard me say over and over through the years, read your Bible so you can understand God's Word accurately! It will help you make wise decisions about your life's challenges.

So, Jesus' response to the devil's temptation was a powerful reminder for you to trust God wholeheartedly, without having to test His faithfulness. The main doctrine in Christian faith is summarized in the command to *"love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength."* (Luke 10:27) That's bringing every piece of your being into line with God's will and purpose. When you place God at the front of your life, it ensures that your decisions, your actions, and your desires will show His teachings and commandments by holding Him above all earthly relationships and possessions. Psalm 119 demonstrates this when it says, *"With my whole heart I seek you; do not let me stray from your commandments."*

Live your faith through your actions. Demonstrate your love of God by serving others. Stand for Christ-like values. Loving God wholeheartedly should naturally develop into loving others, as true love for God is selfless action and kindness towards those who are created in His image. Overcome difficulties that slow down your relationship with God, such as being distracted, having misplaced priorities, or unconfessed sins. Overcome those difficulties by having an intentional prayer life, being accountable for your actions, and lining up your lifestyle with Biblical principles. Because you need to cultivate a heart of worship and gratitude. Express your love and appreciation of God through regular worship, prayer, and thanksgiving. It will give you a deeper commitment to God. When you bring all this into your daily life, you're going to develop a deeper love for God. Fulfill the Second Greatest Commandment. *Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.* But don't forget to do the first: *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment.*

Have a wonderful relationship with God. Live a life of faith that's confident in His promises. That brings wisdom to your actions. And is deeply rooted in your understanding of Scripture. Because when you do that, you honor God. You strengthen your relationship with Him. And you will have mature and loyal faith in God. Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, we come before You with hearts full of gratitude. Your unwavering faithfulness and love. helps us accept Your will by resisting the temptation to demand signs or miracles as proof of Your presence. Help us have a spirit of obedience by keeping our lives in line with Your Word and trusting that You are always working for our good, even when we cannot see it. We ask You to guide our daily lives so we may walk worthy of our calling, showing Your love and grace to those around us. And may our faith be a testament to Your goodness, leading others to seek and trust in You. In Jesus' name, we pray. AMEN