



Sermon Illustration 1

Title: Test Me!

Key Text: Malachi 3:10 [NRSV]

When was the last time you took a test? For some of us, it's been a while.

If you are in school, you are used to taking tests, aren't you? As we get older, it seems the tests get fewer and farther between.

We take tests when we first learn to drive or sometimes when we renew our license. We take tests like the ACT or SAT to get into college. We even take those silly tests that pop up on the Internet to see how well we know our movie or music trivia. [Insert your own personalized example here.]

Some of us may long for the day when we no longer need to take tests. Would it surprise you to learn that God takes tests, too?

Would you believe God invites us to be the ones to test God? In fact, God dares us to do so!

It may seem strange to think of God daring us to do something because we usually dare someone when we are afraid to act. God doesn't dare us because God is afraid; God does it because we are afraid.

God dares us to test God by doing something most of us find scary – giving generously.

In Malachi 3:10, we read God's dare to us:

"Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and **thus put me to the test**, says the LORD of hosts; **see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you** and pour down for you an overflowing blessing."

What is God saying? Please test me, God begs of us, as if to say, I dare you!

Go ahead. Give generously to the causes I care about and see if I will not come through for you.

Give generously to my church and see if you can handle all the blessings I pour out on you.

He challenges us again in Psalm 81:10. "Open your mouth wide and I will fill it."

The Psalmist challenges us. "O taste and see that the Lord is good." (Psalm 34:8a)

What will you do with God's dare? How will you respond to God's challenge to give generously and put God's goodness to the test?

How will we as a church respond? Will we dare to give and trust, or will we cling to God's gifts and refuse God the opportunity to show love for us?

Together, we do more when we give generously. When we put God to the test, we put ourselves in position to enjoy the abundant blessings God has so generously promised.



- Choose a way your local church gives to your community and challenge the congregation to expect God generously to bless them for their giving.
- Connect this illustration with God's global interests by sharing a way your church's local giving multiplies through connectional giving with The United Methodist Church:

1. Choose a ministry or need within your local congregation and share how parishioners can give generously to support it and test God's benevolent promises.
2. **Peace with Justice Sunday** is a United Methodist Special Sunday offering that supports programs that advocate peace and justice at home and around the world. Your gift to the annual offering makes an enormous difference in many lives. Together, we can do more as The United Methodist Church addresses diverse issues such as immigration, economic empowerment, nutrition, peace, racial justice and leadership development.

<http://www.umcsgiving.org/ministry-articles/peace-with-justice-sunday>

3. The **Africa University Fund** equips the next generation of Africans to lead and transform a beloved continent. Our giving as a church equips indigenous solution finders who tackle some of their continent's most pressing challenges with wisdom, innovation and spiritual maturity. Because of our willingness to put God to the test locally, we are doing more together globally.

<http://www.umcsgiving.org/ministry-articles/the-africa-university-fund>

4. The **Ministerial Education Fund** is at the heart of preparing people for making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The 13 United Methodist seminaries help students to discover their calling through challenging curriculum. The fund enables the church to increase financial support for the recruitment and education of ordained and diaconal ministers and to equip annual conferences to meet increased demands.

<http://www.umcsgiving.org/ministry-articles/the-ministerial-education-fund>

