

SERMON NOTES

SERIES: Exodus: Set Free, Live Free
TITLE: Christian Test-taking

SCRIPTURE: Exodus 17

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We are in a series on the Book of Exodus from the Old Testament. Why study this book? Exodus is the Old Testament story of the salvation of God's people that points forward to the great salvation that comes to us by faith in Jesus. Exodus helps us better understand what it means for God to *set us free* from our broken, messy lives so we can *live free* in loving, personal relationship with God.

Do you remember how nerve-wracking it was to take tests in school? The prep, the procrastination, the material, the temptation to cheat off of your really smart friend. There was so much involved that it was hard to understand that those tests were for our maturity and growth. It's very similar with God. He tests us to teach us and grow us. And the tests of life might be nerve-wracking, but if we patiently pay attention to what he's doing, there is beauty there. Tests are often God leaving us a breadcrumb trail into deeper intimacy with him.

So, if we know that the tests are coming, what's the best way to get ready for them before they get here?

Israel was tested three times in the wilderness in between the waters of the Red Sea and the mountain of Sinai; once in chapter 15, once in chapter 16, and once in chapter 17. And God told them how to do good healthy test-prep, and they didn't really listen. Rather, they presumptuously asked, "Is the Lord even among us?"

How did God tell them to get ready for the tests in the wilderness? He asked them to keep his statutes, listen to his voice, and walk in his law. Meaning...

God's word to God's people grants God's strength to endure the tests and temptations we face.

But Israel didn't do well with this. They flunked every test. And we can learn from Israel's bad example.

How should we NOT prepare for the tests of life?

1. **Neglect God's word.** If you'd like to remain stagnant in your faith, fail the tests of life, and stay immature, let your Bible collect dust.
2. **Presume on provision.** Like Israel, tell yourself that God owes you. Cultivate a sense of entitlement that you and your feelings are the center of the universe. This is a sure way to fail a test.

3. **Grumble all the time.** Ten times, in Exodus chapters 15-17, it says Israel grumbled, and they failed every test. A grumbling heart cannot be a grateful heart.
4. **Desire comfort over faith.** Ease and luxury and comfort are some of the worst study partners for the tests of life. God is way more interested in your trusting him than in your being comfortable.

It sure would've been nice to have a positive example of someone passing the test in the wilderness. Israel's negative examples can only get us so far.

Enter Jesus. In between the waters of his baptism and the sermon on the mountain, he too was tested in the wilderness three times. And he passed every test! And he did so with Scripture!

It's possible to have peace in the wilderness. It's possible to study well, prep well, and then pass the tests when they come, but not on our own! We need Jesus. Because with Jesus, we can overturn Exodus 17:7 and now say, "Surely, the Lord is among us!"

Looking to Jesus as the one who passes the test in the wilderness, we should start to develop a gospel logic. Gospel logic says: **If God can bring life out of death by raising Jesus from the grave, then what is bothering me now is not too big for him and doesn't get the final say.**

He understands. He went through the wilderness too. On the cross, he cried out, "God, are you even here? Why have you forsaken me?" And because death couldn't hold him, gospel logic means...

- No wilderness is too dry for him to provide water.
- No hunger is too strong for him to provide manna.
- No sin is too ugly for him to forgive.
- No struggle too hard for him to understand.

Jesus passed the test. And now he should be our focal point and the object of our trust as we wade through the tests of life.

For Discussion:

1. When are you most tempted to grumble about your life circumstances?
2. What are some upcoming tests making you nervous? Why?
3. What are your primary excuses for not pursuing God in his Word?
4. Where in your life do you most need to apply gospel logic?