

Tested by Jesus (John 6:1-15)

By David Soper

Jesus soon saw a huge crowd of people coming to look for him. Turning to Philip, he asked, "Where can we buy bread to feed all these people?" He was testing Philip, for he already knew what he was going to do. John 6:5-6

Are you Google material? The only way you'll know is to submit yourself to the gauntlet of employee testing that Google is famous for. They test rigorously to ensure that Google hires only the best and brightest, which is critical to their success. You may think that when you finished school you were done with tests, but all of our life we face tests, and this is not a bad thing! We may not look forward to tests, but the challenge of a test helps us grow, it helps us to measure our progress in the things that are important to us. It helps us to assess if we are prepared for a higher level of performance. A genuine test is the only way to truly examine our strengths and weaknesses. If you want to go scuba diving, you better make sure you pass the certification test, or you are taking your life in your hands!

Testing is also a critical part of our spiritual growth. The scriptures say that God blesses those who patiently endure testing (James 1:12). Philip was tested by Jesus to help prepare him for the challenges he would face as an apostle. When Jesus asked him, "where can we buy bread to feed all these people?", he obviously wasn't asking for the location of the closest market. Jesus was getting to a much deeper point. Jesus wanted to know if Philip really understood who He was. He wanted to know if Philip instinctively knew that Jesus, the creator of the universe, had the power to supply any need. Unfortunately Philip didn't pass the test at that moment, but he sure learned from it. As Philip witnessed the miracle of the feeding of 5000 people from 5 loaves and 2 fish, the unlimited resources of Jesus Christ would be forever stamped in his soul. Later, when Philip became a missionary to Asia, I'm sure he had unshakable confidence and trust in the power of Jesus.

Spiritual testing is not always about big, earth shattering events, in fact it usually happens in the context of our everyday lives. When that thing you expected to happen is suddenly delayed by something outside of your control, how will you respond? When you have to do what seems impossible with little money or resources, how will you respond? When you are faced with a decision pitting Christian convictions vs. short term personal gain, how will you respond? When we are tested by Jesus it is always designed to accomplish a purpose in our lives. It's not to see how smart or skilled we are, it's to see if we will trust him. Like with Philip, Jesus already knows what he's going to do, but the test is to see if we are willing to walk with him. He wants to know if we will instinctively rely on him. Spiritual testing IS the process of discipleship. Learning spiritual information is helpful, but until we are tested in the crucible of real life, we haven't yet grown.

If you desire to follow hard after God, you will be tested. In fact, the scripture says that we should test ourselves to see if our faith is genuine (2 Corinthians 13:5). The disciples were just ordinary men who were used by God in extraordinary ways. And like all disciples, then and now, they were tested by Jesus.