

“Trusting or Testing?”

Close personal relationships stay at a standstill if one of the parties, because of lack of trust, stays in a place of “I am not sure if you are in this wholeheartedly.” When there is doubt over the level of commitment - the relationship can’t grow. Trust that moves beyond “prove it to me everyday” must exist for a relationship to mature.

Satan tries to lure Jesus into “testing instead of trusting” His heavenly Father in his second temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. He tried to get Jesus to move from “I trust you Father” to “prove it to me God”!

READ Matthew 4:1-11 to get the entire temptation account and then reread the second temptation vs. 5-7 again to get a feel for the text.

There is something about this temptation that resonates with my humanity and I think Satan was hoping it would resonate with Jesus’ humanity. I think I would have fallen for it because my humanity is broken, Jesus’ humanity is not.

It seems Satan is trying to tap into that part of us that doesn’t want to trust. The part that wants proof and proof and more proof of our own choosing in order to for us to be convinced that God is who He says He is. There is a part of me that resonates with setting up my own test lab for God to show His faithfulness and then have God perform on my queue. I then can judge the results as to whether God performed well enough - whether He was a God I could count on. That is exactly what Satan was tempting Jesus to set up – a “lab test” designed by Satan, administrated by Jesus to see whether God would act on queue.

Here lies the problem – and Jesus sees through it. At first it seems Jesus would almost be doing God a favor setting up a “test” so He would be able to prove Himself. In reality, and Jesus knows it, if Jesus did do that He would be taking control of His life and not be surrendered to His Father’s will. What Satan doesn’t get is that being the “Son of God” means Jesus submits and surrenders to His Father in Heaven. His mission on earth was to “not be in charge” but to be surrendered to His Father. Satan tried this “take charge of your own life” tactic before on humanity – and it worked. Adam and Eve fell for it and we have all followed suit. We have been testing God ever since. At first we might think that setting up our own test for God to perform for us would help us trust – it doesn’t - in fact trying to “test” God puts us in charge - it puts us in charge of God – it works against trust.

Discuss the implications of “testing” verses “trusting”.

What is the difference between “looking at evidence of God” – like testimonies which encourage us to trust - and setting up a test for God to perform in?

For another biblical reference that could have very well have been in Jesus mind and in the mind of Matthew’s readers, we turn to the Old Testament. Jesus quotes Deut. 6:16 to combat Satan.

Read that passage.

You will notice it refers to an incident at Massah. Turn to Exodus 17:1-7 to read about that incident. Spend some time contemplating and discussing our human proneness to wanting to “test” God as opposed to His call to have a relationship of “trust”. Which way has a future? Which way is born out of love? Which one is born out of fear?

Perhaps spend some time praying for protection in this area of vulnerability.