

1. Question- What is a test of faith? Are we still being tested in our faith?
If this life is about us growing in our faith in God then tests or trials will consistently be a part of our experience. In the New Covenant tests or trials seem to be alive and well. Romans 5:3-4 "For we can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character..." James 1:2-3 says, "When troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow." Endurance is a character trait that helps us suffer well and identify with Christ and know Him intimately through our experiences with suffering and trusting that God is good and will reward us for our endurance. "For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever." 2 Corinthians 4:16-17 This trial in Exodus demonstrated the power of God again to deliver and provide as Moses seeks God, His will, and walks in faith.
2. What did the Israelites lack in this "Wilderness of Sin" experience? They lacked water an essential for survival! When we lack the basics, anxiety can be overwhelming and then we lack peace. Because there were so many trials they also lacked a sense of stability and security, which also brings frustration, anger, or blame. That also caused them to lack self-control and godliness, thankfulness, and a faith that God would provide for their needs: "Is the Lord here or not?" How did this affect them emotionally and relationally? This alienated Israel from their deliverer! It is hard for any self-sacrificing person to be criticized by those they are sacrificing for. Emotions are normal reactions to our circumstances but what we do with them may demonstrate a divine connection.
3. How did Moses feel in this situation? He was upset and fearful. He has spiritualized the meaning of this encounter and views the Jews as missing God and being willful. "Why are you complaining against me? And why are you testing the Lord?" Israel does not seem to be aware of the fact that they are focused on the problem of no water and have completely overlooked God. The threat is that they will die of thirst: they themselves, their children, and their livestock. Moses is afraid but turns to God and asks for help, but is also afraid of death by stoning from this angry, fearful, and alienated people. He is told to face his fears and the people, then given an apparently foolish assignment to strike the rock and water will come out of it. Moses is to walk in faith and obedience, and God will protect him and provide for all.
4. How did God deliver Moses and Israel from their trial? Miracles are answers to hard situations and God answers Moses with water to meet the need. He can do deliverance any way He wants, but seeing that this is God is the faith aspect of deliverance. We have to believe He is there and a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Moses consistently sought God's help and God consistently helped Moses, but trials continued to come. Many blame God for trials or like Israel doubt whether He is there or even cares. Moses knew God and His goodness and walked in faith.
5. How does a lack of faith relate to flunking a test from God? It is difficult to believe that life has a purpose and that it is not just random. To believe that there is a God who is sovereign and has divine purposes in the midst of horrible events like the Coronavirus, it is very hard to believe. For people to seek a God who maybe testing them is counter-intuitive. It seems easier to believe that He is not there or is not good, that this is the devil, the fall, chance, or who knows what? However, if this is a test, it is very important to seek Him and His favor. Moses brings deliverance through seeking God and doing His will and without that Israel would die of thirst in

the wilderness. How many times is suffering alleviated by the prayers of people seeking God? The spiritual is unseen. We are to walk by faith that comes from Biblical knowledge not by sight, feelings, or experience.

What was different about Moses's faith from Israel's faith? Moses knew God and had promises given to him by God. Moses had struggled with his calling and found he could not deliver the Jews in his own strength and was dependent on God. The Jewish people were learning about faith but still dependent on themselves, their leaders, the seen, and full of hurt and trauma from years of abuse in slavery. They flunked their tests of faith in the wilderness and did not receive the promises of God because they did not listen to His voice and hardened their heart against their God. (Hebrews 2-4) To receive God's favor and blessings a person has to choose to walk in faith and obedience, rather than their own way. God is still faithful to bring them into the promised land but through new faith leaders, who help them to know God and His ways, (book of Joshua).

6. How could this apply to the Coronavirus today and why? Maybe all tests give us insight into what would happen in a godless world and invite us to seek a relationship with God. If there was no goodness and only evil, would corruption win? If we as human beings leave God out will there only be defeat and negative consequences?

There can be a lot of ways to perceive why there is this virus. There are diseases in life and having them is a natural part of living in this natural world. Maybe this woman had a really bad day or is mentally ill and her acting out would have been triggered by something else besides the limitations on buying bread. Scientists are not always ethical and do what they can rather than what they should and cause problems. Men and women seek power so they can win wars and ignore the consequences until those consequences come. Did that create this virus? There are many perspectives on the why of this disease. This Coronavirus is caused by a virus we cannot see with our eyes, but we believe it is there even though unseen and have to make decisions to prevent its spread, which also causes economic hardship.

If God allows hardship to call us to Himself so we will know Him, His purposes, and His love for us then ignoring the possibility of hardship as a pathway to know God is dangerous. When I was in high school a friend of mine's mother started reading the Bible. About three months later she was walking up to mail a letter and was hit by a drunk driver and killed. John's response to his mother's death was to ask questions: "Is there a God?" "Can I know Him?" "How can I know Him?" That was his test and John responded to God's call. I was not a devout believer, but the only church going person John knew. John became my test, in that his hardship was not a burden I was yet ready to carry.

John found a faith through our relationship, but I was a bad example because I was still living more for myself than for God. My faith was weak, uninformed and I was hard hearted towards God's voice. Faith is hard to grab a hold of and to hold on to. Most of us shun our crosses. As one of my friends used to say about Christians, "We are more likely to hide behind the cross rather than carry it." Trials cause us to stumble and fall and often flunk the tests. I flunked my test and John fell away, but Christ stayed faithful to me and soon after that I realized I needed to know God, His grace and began to journal and read the Word. I have had many tests and believe I now can make sense of them, most of the time. I believe that God is calling our world to know Him and seek Him so they

can find meaning and purpose in this life. Do you know Him, and are you a light to others in this time of darkness? Are you growing in your knowledge of Him and His ways?