

This fifty day season is often a time of divine testing



10For examples of patience in suffering, dear brothers and sisters, look at the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11We give great honor to those who endure under suffering. For instance, you know about Job, a man of great endurance. You can see how the Lord was kind to him at the end, for the Lord is full of tenderness and mercy. James 5:10-11

The Tests of God

When YHWH selects someone to be a representative of His blessing, this opportunity usually comes through a test. While His tests are intended for our good and ultimately a release of greater blessing, the devil tests us in order to ensnare us and to harm us.

During the Israelites sojourn from the triumph of Passover in Egypt to the power of Shavuot on Sinai came a series of divine tests. They had no water twice and no food another time. They were attacked by their enemies. God intended these tests for good and greater growth in the lives of the Israelites, but they usually did not pass these tests by doubting God's leadership and

goodness. The entry point for failing these tests came through their own grumbling and complaining against God and Moses. By contrast greater breakthroughs come through implementing "crazy praise" in times of difficulty. (For reference see Paul & Silas's prison story in Acts 16:16-34)

Over the years, I have noticed that this time between Passover and Shavuot is often a time of greater testing in the lives of God's people. In the times when I have failed these tests, it is usually preceded by a mouth filled with grumbling and complaining. My bad attitude and actions then most naturally follow the trajectory of my words.

The last two years some of us have attempted to anticipate and wisely brace for these challenges by setting our hearts on a special season of consecration during this 50-day period as we pray for YHWH's blessing and Shavuot outpouring again. During this time we do without certain things (like choice foods or certain media). A main reason we do this is not just to purge our lives of some superfluous elements or to learn some new hobby with our extra time, but to spend that extra freed up time and focus on more wholeheartedly seeking Him. We also don't have to feel especially inspired in these set apart times of seeking Him. As we continue drawing near to Him, He has promised us that He will certainly reward us as we do.

In closing, if you're growing weary in this season, don't give up! If you've failed, get back up, and start again. I have noticed that in these consecrated seasons I am especially mindful of my weakness and failings. Without the props of our usual go-to foods and entertainment that we unconsciously lean on, it is easy to feel off-kilter or irritable. My encouragement is not to try to think our way out of our funk but to actively talk to God and tell him how we are feeling and ask for His help. When we have sinned against Him or someone else, quickly repent, make it right if we can, and then hit delete, get back up and keep pursuing the Lord.

Also, it's not too late to jump into this time of consecration. If so, here's a two page sheet that you can go through and tailor-make for yourself over the next 30 days.

