

EPIC FAIL: Real Faith

Sermon by Todd Lester

March 20, 2016

Life is a series of tests. This week we looked at the life of Abraham and the tests he went through in life.

There are four kinds of teachers in life:

1) i _____ 2) i _____ 3) i _____ 4) i _____

James 1:2-3, 12 Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind 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...God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation.

THE FOUR TESTS OF REAL FAITH

TEST #1: A _____

Hebrews 11:8 For study: Genesis 12:1-7

Real faith is following God without knowing _____.

TEST #2: A _____

Hebrews 11:9-10 For study: Genesis 13-14

Real faith is waiting for God's timing without knowing _____..

TEST #3: AN _____

Hebrews 11:11-12 For study: Genesis 17:15-22, 18:1-15, 21:1-6

Real faith is expecting a miracle without knowing _____..

TEST #4: A _____

Hebrews 11:17-19, 39-40 For study: Genesis 22:1-19

Real faith is trusting God's purpose without knowing _____..

Pop Quiz

As Todd said, life is a series of tests. Here's one about Westheights that you can try.

1. How many messages are there in the current series "Epic Fail"?
2. What year is on the cornerstone of the church?
3. What is the name of the Westheights blog?
4. What is the colour of the 4 feature chairs in the foyer?
5. What is Todd Lester's real first name?
6. At Westheights, the colour purple means what?
7. How many staff (paid and unpaid) work at Westheights?
8. Standing looking out the front door of our church faces which direction?
9. How many House Churches are there at Westheights?
10. What is the last name of the couple who prepare the coffee each week?

Your score: /10

Rankings

- 0 to 3 **Mmm** – You're either new here or need to be more focused
4 to 6 **Regular** – Thanks for paying attention
7 to 9 **Keener** – You've obviously been around a while
10 **Lifer** – Do you work here? Would you like to?

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Icebreaker/Introduction

The 'Pop Quiz' activity is just a fun way to emphasize Todd's point about life being a series of tests. Give time for participants to attempt the questions and then take up the answers. Scoring and ranking is optional. (Answers are on the Scriptures page)

Ask if there was anything from this week's message that stood out – either a point that was made which really resonated with them, or perhaps a question or difficulty that came up for them.

Read [James 1:2-3, 12](#) – Discuss the challenges of how “great troubles” can be considered an “opportunity for great joy.”

There are four kinds of teachers in life:

1) [interruptions](#) 2) [inactivity](#) 3) [inconveniences](#) 4) [irritations](#)

Discuss these 4 kinds of experiences/teachers. Can you understand/see distinctions between them? Is there one that stands out as particularly challenging for you?

THE FOUR TESTS OF REAL FAITH

TEST #1: A MAJOR CHANGE

Focuses on [Hebrews 11:8](#) For study: [Genesis 12:1-7](#)

Real faith is following God without knowing WHERE.

What major changes has God led you through in your life?

Do you agree with Todd's statement that if your faith hasn't led you to take risks then it's not faith? Discuss.

Recall the 'where' questions Todd mentioned we often ask (where should I work, live, go to school) and add to that list.

Have you asked yourself the 'mission question': Where should I serve? (not just in a broad, here or overseas sense, but also where should I serve in my local church?)

Abraham's comfortable life in Ur was interrupted by God's call to go to the Promised Land. How open do you feel you are to new directions God may be calling you to?

TEST #2: A DELAYED PROMISE

Focuses on [Hebrews 11:9-10](#) For study: [Genesis 13-14](#)

Real faith is waiting for God's timing without knowing WHEN.

Give an example from your life when you have had to wait on God to see a promise fulfilled.

Recall the 'when' questions Todd mentioned we often ask (when will things get better in my marriage, when will I get married, have a baby, get well, solve my problems, children return to God, have prayers answered) and add to that list.

Are you a patient person? Explain. Does it depend on what you are waiting for?

Todd asked: What have you been waiting for God to do in your life and He hasn't done yet?

Is it encouraging or discouraging to hear that Abraham had to wait 3 generations to see the promise fulfilled?

TEST #3: AN IMPOSSIBLE PROBLEM

Focuses on [Hebrews 11:11-12](#) For study: [Genesis 17:15-22, 18:1-15, 21:1-6](#)

Real faith is expecting a miracle without knowing HOW.

What seemingly impossible problems has God miraculously resolved in your life?

Recall the 'how' questions Todd mentioned we often ask (how will I make ends meet, put kids through university, how will You heal me, repair my marriage, how will You change my husband, get through to my child) and add to that list.

What are some other examples from the Bible of God intervening in miraculous ways?

What kind of miracle do you need in your life?

TEST #4: A SENSELESS TRAGEDY

Focuses on [Hebrews 11:17-19, 39-40](#) For study: [Genesis 22:1-19](#)

Real faith is trusting God's purpose without knowing WHY.

Have you struggled with a senseless tragedy in your life where you have asked God “Why?”

Recall the 'why' questions Todd mentioned we often ask (why did I lose my job, my spouse have an affair, my child using drugs, bankruptcy, miscarriage, death of parents) and add to that list.

Why do you think Todd called this the 'ultimate test'?

What are some reasons we can have for trusting God even when life may be hard?

Have you known people with a 'fair-weather faith'? That is, as Todd said, they have enough faith for when life goes smoothly but not for when something bad happens.

Discuss Todd's statement that “God has the right to make any demand on my life.”

Todd asked how you would grade yourself on these 4 tests. How do you evaluate or score that? Or are they more pass/fail tests?

Discuss Todd's statement that “faith is more than intellectual assent, but is a heartfelt act of trust.”

Have you found it to be true, as Todd said, that God more often will take you through a problem than take away the problem?

How comfortable are you with not having answers to everything? As Todd shared, there is nothing wrong with asking questions but the real test of real faith is how we respond when we don't get an answer.

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Life is a series of tests. This week we looked at the life of Abraham and the tests he went through in life.

There are four kinds of teachers in life:

1) interruptions; 2) inactivity; 3) inconveniences; 4) irritations.

James 1:2-3, 12 Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind 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...God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation.

THE FOUR TESTS OF REAL FAITH

TEST #1: A MAJOR CHANGE

Hebrews 11:8 It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going.

For study: Genesis 12:1-7

Real faith is following God without knowing WHERE.

TEST #2: A DELAYED PROMISE

Hebrews 11:9-10 And even when he reached the land God promised him, he lived there by faith—for he was like a foreigner, living in tents. And so did Isaac and Jacob, who inherited the same promise...

For study: Genesis 13-14

Real faith is waiting for God's timing without knowing WHEN.

TEST #3: AN IMPOSSIBLE PROBLEM

Hebrews 11:11-12 It was by faith that even Sarah was able to have a child, though she was barren and was too old. She believed that God would keep his promise.

And so a whole nation came from this one man who was as good as dead.

For study: Genesis 17:15-22, 18:1-15, 21:1-6

Real faith is expecting a miracle without knowing HOW.

TEST #4: A SENSELESS TRAGEDY

Hebrews 11:17-18 It was by faith that Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice when God was testing him... even though God had told him, "Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted..."

Hebrews 11:19 Abraham reasoned that if Isaac died, God was able to bring him back to life again. And in a sense, Abraham did receive his son back from the dead.

Hebrews 11:39-40 All these people earned a good reputation because of their faith, yet none of them received all that God had promised. For God had something better in mind for us, so that they would not reach perfection without us.

For study: Genesis 22:1-19

Real faith is trusting God's purpose without knowing WHY.

Pop Quiz Answers

1. How many messages are there in the current series "Epic Fail"?
Two (2)
2. What year is on the cornerstone of the church?
1986
3. What is the name of the Westheights blog?
Connect
4. What is the colour of the 4 feature chairs in the foyer?
Gold
5. What is Todd Lester's real first name?
Frank
6. At Westheights, the colour purple means what?
Jubilee
7. How many staff (paid and unpaid) work at Westheights?
Tom & Gillian, Mimi, Todd, Melanie, Charlene, Terry = 7
8. Standing looking out the front door of our church faces which direction?
West
9. How many House Churches are there at Westheights?
Eleven (11)
10. What is the last name of the couple who prepare the coffee each week?
Brown