

“Do not test the Lord your God.” Luke chapter 4 verse 12

There are two ways of testing people. One way is to test them with tricky or deceptive questions to try to catch them out and prove them false. That's what the devil is doing here as he actually tries to get Jesus to disobey God by using quotes from the Bible. You can make a case for pretty much anything from the Bible, if you want to, and it has been used in the past to justify anything from slavery to misogyny, from war to torture, from terrorism to class privilege, from greed to manipulation.

This wasn't the only time Jesus was tested in this way. A number of times in the gospels his opponents try to catch him out by attempting to make him say something blasphemous, or to say or do something against God's law.

People who test faith in this way are not interested in whether it is the truth or not. They have already made up their minds about that. They just want to discredit the faith of believers in order to justify themselves. This is not an advisable way to attempt to test God.

But there are times in the Bible when God does invite people to test him. This is when genuine seekers of the truth are invited to explore faith for themselves. “Taste and see that the Lord is good,” is how the Psalmist puts it. We can describe and commend something to another person as much as we like, but best way to find out whether something is as good as people say it is, is to try it for ourselves.

To those who believe in him, God invites them to test his willingness and ability to provide all they need in life. He encourages them to honour him with their income, and says “Test me in this and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.”

If you are not a believer, I have no reserve about encouraging you to put God to the test. You will discover that he is all that believers and Bible say about him. And if you are a believer, but feel that you are not really living the Christian life as you ought to be, I am happy to encourage you to test God by reflecting his generosity in your own life with the resources you have, however small and inadequate you may feel them to be. With God, you will always receive far more than you can ever give.

Prayer

Father, thank you for all that you have given me in this world; my life, my gifts, my time, my strength and my prosperity. Small though these things may seem to me in the world's estimation, please help me to share them generously, because I know that you will never leave me wanting. In Jesus' name, amen.

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