

Test Time

Overview	Life's struggles are actually discipleship training.
Title	Test Time
Metaphor/Image	Bubble test with timer and pencil
Treatment	Jesus' temptation in the wilderness was a personal test that empowered him for his coming life. Similarly, spiritual formation is about choosing to enter into times of testing in order to strengthen us for radical discipleship.
Human Need	When we face tough times we struggle to understand the meaning behind what is happening.
Experience	This story invites us to find sources of spiritual support and consolation around us and to learn dependence on God by entering into the spiritual wildernesses of our lives, particularly in the Lenten season.
Word	
Primary Scripture	Mark 1:9-15
Lectionary Week	1 st Sunday in Lent, Year B; Genesis 9:8-17, Psalm 25:1-10, 1 Peter 3:18-22
Related Scripture	Genesis 22:1-19 (God tests Abraham), Deut. 8:3, Deut. 6:13, Deut. 6:16 (Israelites in the wilderness), Psalm 81:6-10 (Testing in the wilderness) Luke 4:1-13 and Matthew 4:1-11 (Gospel temptation stories)
Topics	
Primary Topics	Testing, discipleship, temptation, evil, pain, discernment
Related Topics	Preparedness, spiritual formation, wilderness, Satan

Movie Clip Suggestions

1. *Men in Black* (1997)

Plot: Two men who keep an eye on aliens in New York City must try to save the world after aliens threaten to blow it up.

Clip: Edwards (Will Smith) takes a test along with other candidates. After struggling with a place to write on, he finally grabs a table and pulls it to his chair. Funny.

Time: (VHS) 25:24-26:56, (DVD) Chapter 6 7:13-Chapter 7 1:23, length 1:32

2. *The Man Without a Face* (1993)

Plot: A boy worried about his future forms a bond with a man (Mel Gibson) haunted by his past.

Clip: The student Charles wants to know the truth of his teacher's mysterious past. His quest leads him to a final "test." Good clip!

Time: (VHS) 1:35:42-1:37:45, length 2:03

Clip: The very next scene. Following his true test, Charles must take his military school examination. Test scene.

Time: (VHS) 1:38:38-1:39:37, length :59

Music Suggestions

1. "Wonderful World"—Sam Cooke; 50s hit; great for an opener
2. "Spirit of the Living God"—contemporary praise/hymn
3. "You are My All in All"—contemporary praise
4. "Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days"—hymn
5. "If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee"—hymn

Lumiclip Description

This piece takes the viewer back into the classroom on test day. It is brought to life by the instructions of a teacher who prepares students for the questions to come. Grab your Number 2 pencil, and begin...now! Tense, Reflective. Running time :44 Volume 7 Clip 8

Integration

Call to Worship

"Does this sound familiar?"

Begin character voice of standardized test facilitator:

"Everyone clear your desks. Take out your number 2 pencils. There will be no talking during the taking of this test. You will have 30 minutes to complete this test. Do NOT open the test until I give the word. When I say begin, work until you see STOP sign in the lower right corner. Begin, now." (*ad lib as needed, or*

consult a teacher)

Normal voice again: "Give you the creeps? Getting tense? Adrenaline rising? Not many of us enjoy being tested."

"However difficult they may be, tests are a necessary part of our development. Even Jesus was driven out into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit to be tested. It was his time of spiritual preparation for his mission. Let's worship the God who is with us in our test times."

Closing Words

"You have passed today's test. Congratulations! You've learned a new level of dependence on God. Go in the confidence that God will be with you in whatever wildernesses you will encounter today, this week, and forevermore."

During the benediction, play "Pomp and Circumstance."

Prayer

Conduct a test! Have the congregation make a list of the times in the past week in which they have experienced signs of God's grace. Have them identify wild beasts that have filled them with anxiety and terror. Have them name personal wildernesses. Lastly, have them name ways in which Satan has tested them.

Hand out no. 2 pencils and blue books to everyone as they enter the sanctuary. Invite people to write their prayers in the blue book and hand it in during the offering or at the end of worship. Give them 3 minutes, or whatever is appropriate, and ask for silence (just like the old tests). As a setup, say:

"This is an anonymous test. We will not check your answers. God is the only one reading your prayers."

Display

An old-fashioned wooden desk with no. 2 pencils and test like blue book sitting on the top

Keywords

Testing, discipleship, temptation, evil, pain, discernment, preparedness, spiritual formation, wilderness, Satan, pencils, blue books, tests