

# “A New Testing Kit - How and Where”

Online Worship Service  
Recorded at New Hope United Church  
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Daniel 1:11-16

11 Then Daniel asked the guard whom the palace master had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: 12 “Please test your servants for ten days. Let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. 13 You can then compare our appearance with the appearance of the young men who eat the royal rations, and deal with your servants according to what you observe.” 14 So he agreed to this proposal and tested them for ten days. 15 At the end of ten days it was observed that they appeared better and fatter than all the young men who had been eating the royal rations. 16 So the guard continued to withdraw their royal rations and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.

2 Corinthians 13:4—5a

4 For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God.

5 Examine yourselves to see whether you are living in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?

John 15:9-11

9 As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. 10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. 11 I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

**This is the Word of the Lord.**

**R:Thanks be to God.**

Good morning! Meeting through screen is not familiar for any of us and the situation that we are facing is a total new situation for everyone: staying home and social distancing with our friends and even with family members. Online worship is also a new brave attempt that we've never tried before. I hope we can join together and worship God in the sanctuary soon. The tremendous impacts of COVID19 are changing all aspects of our daily lives. Our life is more difficult and, if you are fortunate, boring; however, paradoxically enough, this is also a time of creativity and of imagination; imagination of true love and new hope. Let's walk together with love and hope.

Human beings muddled through SARS in 2003, H1N1 in 2009 and MERS in 2015. I believe we can successfully make it through COVID 19. We know medical expertise all over the world are working on it, and we are being updated with good news on the COVID19 vaccine.

Through this time of hardship, we can learn a little more about people during the virus pandemic. Over-purchasing toilet paper and bottled water shows how people are vulnerable and tempted by conformity effect. One of my friends who lives in North York wanted to buy a pack of meat for dinner a few days ago, and failed to buy it because the grocery store she visited had no meat. The shelf for meat was empty, so she was forced to eat like a vegetarian. And I told her, "Practicing to live a simpler life wouldn't hurt you." We have also seen the shameful violence of racism, an expression of weakness and fear in humans, happening even in Canada. The fear of COVID 19 is bringing a social measurement of humanity. It is no question that our humanity is being tested.

And I believe the time of a pandemic, the time of self quarantine, a voluntary participation of isolated life, tests our faith. Is our faith valid? Is our faith alive? Is our faith strong enough not to be swayed? When we hear the word “test,” we naturally get nervous, because we feel like we have to “pass” the test. To pass the test, we need to give extra efforts, so people do not like the word “test.” (If you like the word, you are probably an idiosyncratic teacher who gives hard tests to students and enjoys their surprised faces.) We normally don’t like the word test, right?

Surprisingly enough, the word “test” in the Bible is not uncommon. Daniel from the Old Testament for today, used the word test, voluntarily asking for a test. Jesus also was tested in the Gospel and Apostle Paul urges us to be tested.

They are using the same word, “test,” but the usages and purposes of the word “test” are a little different, though. That is, there are three types of test. Let me walk you through this.

The purpose of the test that Daniel volunteered for was not to pass the test, but for the reveal of divine sovereignty. Daniel and his three friends lived in the time of the Babylonian Empire. The first Babylonian invasion in 605 BCE captured the Israelites and forced them to relocate from Israel to Babylon. The captives were carefully selected and trained. They were young, healthy, and smart enough to be among the Israel’s royal family. Daniel and his three friends- Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah- were part of the captives. When King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon commanded them to train, the assimilation to Babylon culture was one of the prime purposes of

the training. If they followed this training, then they could easily integrate into an elite group in the empire. However, Daniel and his friends decided not to follow the discipline of the assimilation training. So they declared not to eat any meat and to eat only vegetables. After ten days, they testified that they became healthier than the others who had eaten meat. We shouldn't read it as them declaring to be vegetarian.

The Bible didn't mention why they decided that, but we can assume several things: The meat they were given could be unclean meat that Leviticus 11:10-12 prohibits or meat offered in sacrifice for Babylonian gods. Their decision also seemed right to themselves and God showed his glory through them. In this respect, it shouldn't be interpreted as becoming vegetarians. Rather we must understand that their simple resistance of not eating meat reveals God's sovereignty over the world. This is because what they resisted was secular authority for God's authority.

While Daniel's test was a voluntary expression of resistance against the power that may violate divine sovereignty, Jesus was tested in the desert after his baptism by the devil. And it was a Pass-Fail test. Q1. "Can you command these stones to become loaves of bread?" Q.2. "Can you throw yourself down from the top of the temple?" Q.3. Can you worship me? Then I'll give all the treasure in the world to you." You know what Jesus' answers were A: "No. I do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." A2. "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." A.3. "Worship the Lord your God only!"

When tempted to show his sonship of God, Jesus defeated the devil by the Word of God, and he passed the test. I don't want to take anymore Pass-Fail tests in my life –I've had enough tests for a lifetime from school- and I hope not for you either. And yet, the tests by the devil are always around us because even Jesus, the innocent son of God has been tested in his public life.

Apart from Daniel's voluntary test and Jesus' Pass-Fail test, Apostle Paul's test is one of self-examination. He says, "Examine yourselves to see whether you are living in the faith. Test yourselves." He is very clear. Test yourself! Ask the consciousness that God has given you, and that God has resided within.

This test is not a yes-no quiz nor a multiple choice among four options. This self-examination test is not about declaring whether you've traveled to foreign countries in the last 14 days. It is all about our faith in Jesus Christ. Is Jesus Christ in you? Is the divine seed that Apostle Paul mentioned in you, in the bottom of your heart? What convinces you to have this divinity? What is the difference between the bible's standards and secular standards? Apostle Paul employs the Greek verb, πειραζετε to the verb, test, and peirazete is about to look back or to examine contemplatively.

This question is one of the important questions that we, Christians must ask ourselves and answer. And the disciplined man, Apostle Paul, presses us for an answer: Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?

When we hesitate to say yes to the question, Jesus comes to us and gently speaks to us: “As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.” Abide in my love. That is the answer that Jesus gives us.

How can we prove that Jesus abides in us? Live a simpler, therefore more spiritual life. Our fight for a simpler life could not only be “smaller steps in the liberation from over-consumerism”<sup>1</sup> but also a test of our faith of humbleness to see whether we abide in Jesus’ love.

Brothers and sisters, we all know that our humanity, our patience, our social consciousness, our lifestyle, our love and our faith are being tested now. And this test has an answer key: Abide in Jesus. As Jesus resides in God, Jesus asks us to abide in his love. As Jesus is “*in* the world without being *of* it,”<sup>2</sup> Jesus asks us to show a humble Christian lifestyle in and for the world without being of it and without being swayed by it.

I gently ask you to close your eyes and reflect on the Word of God, examining yourself as Apostle Paul requests. Let us pray silently for a moment.

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<sup>1</sup> Dorothee Soelle, *The Silent Cry: Mysticism and Resistance*, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Henri Nouwen, *Bread for the Journey*, June 1<sup>st</sup>. New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997.