

Application Guide: “Tests of Trust” (Mt. 8:18-34)

February 6, 2005: “Test of Trust” by Joe Bartemus, Pastor of Adult Education. Today Pastor Joe gave a heart-penetrating message based on the second half of Matthew 8. His message focused on four areas in our lives where, like the characters in the stories, we need to choose to trust Christ instead of give in to worry, anxiety, fear, or insecurity.

As Pastor Joe pointed out, trust is faith in action. As you review the four areas Pastor Joe covered in his message, note that they reveal the true treasures (idols) of our heart, and they serve as a litmus test for determining if the faith that we *profess* is authentic in our daily *actions*.

The overall question for today’s message is, “What does it mean to seek ye first the Kingdom of God?” (Matthew 6:23) With this as a backdrop, Pastor Joe contrasted trust in Christ vs. worry over material needs, anxiety over our relationships with others, fear for our physical well being, and our insecurities over loss of what we treasure most in life.

1. **Material needs:** To the first “disciple” who came up to Jesus, Pastor Joe noted, Christ essentially said to him, “My priority system is different than yours. I’m after God’s Kingdom rather than setting up shop here in the world’s system.” (8:18-20)
 - a. Do you trust God to provide what you need in life, or do you worry about meeting your material needs? How is that played out in your everyday life?
 - b. Do your thoughts and concerns over material needs and possessions ever get in the way of wholeheartedly following Christ? How would your life look differently if you were seeking *first* the Kingdom of God?
 - c. In Randy Alcorn’s book, *The Law of Rewards*, he notes that if you own a car, have a roof over your head, any level of education, and clothes to choose from, you’re one of the top 15% most wealthy people in the world (if you have two cars and a whole closet of clothes, you’re in the top 5%). How are you being a steward of this exorbitant amount of wealth and using it for the advancement of God’s Kingdom?
2. **Relationships:** In this second test of trust, the man who came to Jesus was committed to his dad first, and then wanted to follow God...someday...(8:21-22)
 - a. When given the opportunity to serve Christ, what kind of excuses do you find yourself making that prevent you from doing so - (Some examples – “I’ll start tithing once I pay off my debts...”, “I’ll start working at the church more once my kids are out of the house...”, “I’ll really commit to Christ once I retire...”)? How are you serving Christ *now*?
 - b. With regard to personal relationships, do you trust in God to help you in your relationships with others, or are you filled with anxiety over how things are going? What would happen differently if you took it to the Lord in prayer and sought His divine guidance?

3. **Physical Health, Safety:** In the next story, we find a test between trust and fear. The disciples were in a boat, fearing for their lives and safety (8:23-27).
 - a. What life circumstances are you currently going through in which you find yourself choosing fear over trust (read 2 Tim. 1:7)?
 - b. Why is it so easy to lose our focus on Christ when our personal health and safety become endangered? How have we bought into the world's value system in this way?

4. **Treasures:** In the story of the demon-possessed men, the people of Gadara failed the test concerning treasures as they preferred their swine over the Savior. The following questions serve as a good litmus test to examine if you are clinging to a treasure/idol over Christ:
 - a. What activities do you find yourself spending the greater part of your time and energies and why? For example, take a look at your schedule, checkbook, or your thought life and see if you can find where you might be out of balance.
 - b. What are the things in your life that if you totally lost them in some disaster would cause you to respond in anger towards God?
 - c. Are there any things in life that you want so badly that you would be willing to do most anything to achieve...even if it meant committing sin in order to obtain?