

Virus in us!

A Self-testing for God's Servants

R. Stanley, 30 April 2020

As the Coronavirus spreads uncontrollably, Doctors and Health Workers are concentrating on TESTING and TREATMENT. Insufficiency and inefficiency of the testing tools are a major concern. No sure-shot medicine is invented yet. While we keep seeking the face of God to bring the crisis to an end, let's specifically pray for His hand on Testing and Treatment.

Whereas COVID-19 affects the body, there's a *virus in us*, more dangerous and deadly, which sickens our soul and spirit, and of course our body also. That is SIN that "dwells" in us (Rom 7:17,20). The accurate testing tool for this virus is the **Bible**. The medicine for treatment is the **Blood** of Jesus. Due to national lockdown each of us Christians is blessed with lot of time to undergo this spiritual testing. But this write-up is mainly for those of us who are Servants of God, serving Him, fulltime or partime, as Pastors, Preachers, Missionaries, Leaders of various Ministries, and so on. Our regular ministerial activities by assembling our congregations are now banned. Until then we were primarily ministering to our people, but God has now given us ample time to review and repair our own lives. Our story is in the confession of the Shulamite in the Song of Solomon: "They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but *my own vineyard* I have not kept" (SS 1:6b).

We may not have gross social sins like adultery, murder and theft. But in God's sight, "partiality" and "murder" are equally serious (Js 2:8-11). He views "lustful look" and "adultery" alike (Mt 5:27,28). He does not categorize sins as small, medium, large and extra-large. Sin is sin before His all-seeing eyes (2 Chr 16:9). His standard of "holiness" as well as the extent of His "forgiveness" are higher than ours as the heavens are higher than the earth (Isa 55:7-9). This gives us both reverential fear to "tremble" and holy boldness to "rejoice" before Him (Psa 2:11). God is both a Consuming Fire and a Compassionate Father (Heb 12:29; 2:17,18; 4:14-16).

I have given below a set of 50 Questions under 10 Sections for "Self-testing." Each of these Questions is given two or more Bible references. The Biblical mirror gives a true picture because it's perfect (Js 1:22-25). "COVID-19 & PSALM-19." You would need atleast two days to complete this Testing if you desire accurate results. I suggest that you work with the first five sections on the first day and the next five on the following day. Fasting atleast one meal would enliven this exercise. It would be profitable if both the spouses go through the self-examination, first individually and then together. Do minimise the domestic works and the mobilephone usage during these days.

Each of the Bible references is chosen prayerfully. Resist the temptation to skip through them because you are familiar with those verses. The Word of the Lord is fresh like "green pastures" everytime we feed on it. Do not think about another Servant of God when you go through this questionnaire. Let our prayer

be, “Search ME, O God, and know MY heart, try ME, and know MY thoughts; and see if there is any wicked way in ME, and lead ME in the way everlasting” (Psa 139:23,24). Allow the Word of God to do a deep searching (Heb 4:12,13). Confess your sins and shortcomings then and there, as the Holy Spirit convicts you, and seek the instant cleansing by the Blood of Jesus (1 Jn 1:8-10). Note down the names of those with whom you have to set matters right, and don’t delay doing it. Honestly, I am the first beneficiary of this exercise while preparing the material and proofreading the text (2 Tim 2:6).

As we come out of our prayer closets after this searching and cleansing exercise, we would feel as if we had a refreshing shower in a waterfall! Jesus told His Father, “I sanctify Myself, that those whom You gave Me also may be sanctified” (Jn 17:19). This would be the blessing our congregations and coworkers would experience when the lockdown is lifted! All believers can take up this Testing.

Self-testing kit

1. Personal Purity

- (a) Do I keep myself as a clean vessel to be used by God? (*Isa 52:11; 2 Tim 2:21,22*)
- (b) Do I live in any secret sin? (*Psa 32:3-5; 51:3,4; 1 Tim 5:24,25*)
- (c) Do I wholeheartedly desire holiness? (*Psa 45:7a; Isa 64:5a*)
- (d) Do I run away from all sources of temptation?
(*Gen 39:10-12; 1 Cor 6:18; 10:13,14*)
- (e) Is my conscience clear? (*Prov 20:27; Acts 23:1; 24:16; 1 Jn 3:20,21*)

2. Devotional Habits

- (a) Do I keep my quiet time regularly for Bible meditation and prayer?
(*Psa 55:17; 119:148; Dan 6:10b*)
- (b) Do I delight in God’s Word? (*Psa 1:2; 40:6-8; 119:97; 1 Pet 2:1-3*)
- (c) Is my prayer life getting deepened? (*Eph 6:18; Col 4:2; 1 Jn 3:22; 5:14,15*)
- (d) Do I value praying with my coworkers? (*Dan 2:17,18; Lk 9:28; Acts 3:1*)
- (e) Do I substitute work for worship? (*Mk 1:32-35; Acts 13:2; Col 3:16,17,23*)

3. Social Relationships

- (a) Am I an easy person to live with? (*Col 3:12,13; 1 Thess 5:14,15; Tit 3:2,3*)
- (b) Am I a habitual fault-finder and an unloving critic?
(*Psa 57:4; Mt 7:4; Lk 6:41,42*)
- (c) Do I willingly accept corrections or justify myself always?
(*Prov 15:32; 27:5,6; 30:12*)
- (d) Do I find it difficult to appreciate others openly?
(*Ruth 2:11,12; Mt 25:21,23; 1 Thess 5:12,13*)
- (e) Am I dead to casteism and regionalism in order to maintain
the oneness of the Spirit? (*Acts 6:1; 15:8,9; Eph 2:11-14,18,19*)

4. Family Life

- (a) Am I faithful to my spouse? (*Mal 2:15; 1 Cor 7:2,5; Eph 5:33*)
- (b) Do I keep a distance with the opposite sex?
(*Prov 6:27-29; Eph 5:3,4; 1 Tim 5:1,2*)

- (c) Do I endeavour to spend quality time with my spouse
and help her/his growth? (*1 Sam 1:8,19,20; Eph 5:28,29; 1 Pet 3:7*)
- (d) Am I free and friendly with my children? (*Job 1:4,5; Psa 128:3,4; Col 3:21*)
- (e) Do I motivate my children by word and deed to pursue a missionary career—
if I believe that serving the King of kings is the greatest of all professions
and privileges? (*Ex 13:2; 22:29; 1 Sam 1:27,28; Jn 3:16*)

5. God's Work

- (a) Do I serve the Lord with the first love and maintain the initial enthusiasm?
(*Acts 20:24; Heb 6:10,11; Rev 2:3,4*)
- (b) Am I becoming lazy? (*Jer 48:10; Jn 9:4; Rom 12:11*)
- (c) Am I easily discouraged by fruitlessness in the ministry
or difficulties in the work? (*Eccl 11:1-6; 2 Cor 4:8-10; Gal 6:9*)
- (d) Am I patient and kind towards people? (*Col 3:12,13; 1 Tim 6:11; 2 Tim 2:24*)
- (e) Am I a man-pleaser? (*Mt 15:12-14; 22:16; Jn 6:60,66; Gal 1:10; 1 Thess 2:4*)

6. Honesty in Dealings

- (a) Am I honest in reporting or do I exaggerate?
(*Mk 6:5,6; Jn 21:11; Rom 15:18,19*)
- (b) Am I faithful in financial matters? (*Mt 22:17-21; Rom 13:5-7; 2 Cor 8:18-21*)
- (c) Are my words dependable? (*Mt 5:37; Eph 4:25; Js 5:12*)
- (d) Can my coworkers trust me that I will stand with them in any situation?
(*Psa 55:12-14; Prov 17:17; 2 Tim 1:16-18*)
- (e) Is the reputation of others safe in my hands?
(*Gen 6:9; 9:20-23; Jer 18:18; Js 5:19,20*)

7. Spiritual Growth

- (a) Do I periodically evaluate my spiritual life?
(*2 Cor 13:5; Phil 3:12-14; 1 Tim 4:13-15; 2 Pet 1:5-8*)
- (b) Do I give my fellow-workers, juniors or seniors, the liberty to correct,
warn and develop me? (*Prov 27:17; Eccl 4:13; Eph 5:21*)
- (c) Do I obey the voice of God as it comes through personal meditation,
sermons and literature? (*Neh 1:4; 2:11,12; Psa 16:7,8; 32:8,9*)
- (d) Am I too proud to confess my weaknesses and failures?
(*2 Sam 12:13; Job 42:5,6; Rom 7:15-20*)
- (e) Am I ready to sacrifice my personal interests in order to edify and strengthen
my coworkers? (*Jn 15:13; 2 Cor 12:15; Phil 2:17*)

8. Organisational Loyalty

- (a) Am I loyal to my organisation? (*2 Sam 19:24; 1 Cor 4:1,2; 2 Tim 2:4*)
- (b) Do I submit myself willingly to the leaders?
(*Judg 5:2; 1 Ki 19:21; 2 Ki 3:11; Neh 2:17,18*)
- (c) Do I backbite my leaders when their decisions do not please me?
(*Num 12; 16:1-3,28,31-33*)
- (d) Do I have a party spirit? (*1 Cor 1:11-13; Jude 19*)
- (e) Am I grateful to God and the organisation for the blessings or do I murmur?
(*1 Cor 10:1-6,10; Phil 4:10-12; 1 Tim 6:6-8*)

9. Missionary Vision

- (a) Is my heart burdened with God for those who have not yet heard the Gospel?
(Lk 4:42,43; Jn 10:15,16; Rom 9:1,2; 10:1)
- (b) Am I updating informations about what God is doing the world over?
(Acts 9:31; 11:19,20; 13:13,14; 14:24-27; Rom 10:18; 1 Thess 1:8)
- (c) Do I pray for the persecuted Church and those ill-treated unjustly?
(Acts 4:23-31; 2 Thess 3:1,2; Heb 13:3)
- (d) Is my concern for the poor practical? *(Job 29:12-17; Acts 11:28-30; Js 2:15-17)*
- (e) Do I appreciate the good work done by other Churches/organisations and cooperate with them wherever possible? *(Lk 5:6,7; Jn 4:37,38; Gal 2:7-9)*

10. Future Hope

- (a) Do I trust God for my future or worry unduly?
(Mt 6: 31-34; 19:27-29; Jn 12:26c)
- (b) Do I compare myself with the affluent and turn material-minded?
(Phil 3:17,19; 2 Pet 2:1-3; Jude 11)
- (c) Do I hesitate to take up the cross of misunderstanding and loneliness?
(Job 19:13-19; Psa 88:8;18; Mt 26:56; 2 Tim 4:16,17)
- (d) Do I turn a deaf ear to the voices that call me to come down
from my ministerial vision? *(Neh 6:1-3; Lk 9:51-53; Acts 20:22-24)*
- (e) Am I aware of the welcome and the reward that await me in Heaven
if I serve the Lord of the Church faithfully till the end?
(Mt 25:21,23,34; 2 Tim 4:8; 1 Pet 5:2-4)

After Testing & Treatment...

The above questionnaire is applicable to any Servant of God, whether he is a Pastor, a Preacher, a Missionary or a Leader of a Christian Organisation. It is not enough if we are treated and we become well. We need to maintain good health and strength in all the years to come, so our ministries please God and bless the people in the Bible way. **Pastors** are crucial in this scene, because ultimately we are members of the church, the Body of Christ, for which Pastors are the key leaders. Here below are some of the vital decisions any Pastor should make to bring his congregational members to maturity and fruitfulness (Eph 4:11-13). These decisions are under 10 sections —

Health-kit for Pastors

1

I will lead my sheep by example and not by authority.

I will endeavour to live above reproach.

I will keep a distance with the opposite sex.

I will not be upset by criticisms but handle them objectively and examine myself honestly whether I am to correct myself.

I will voluntarily commit myself to a few godly leaders for accountability.

(Jn 10:4; 1 Pet 5:3; 1 Cor 11:1; 1 Tim 3:1,2; 5:2; Tit 2:3,4; 2 Sam 12:7-9)

2

I will set aside a definite time each day
to pray for the members of my Church.
Just as the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were engraved
on the breastplate of the High Priest,
I will carry the burden of my sheep on my heart
to see them grow in the purposes of God.
I will not stay indifferent even if one member backslides.
I will consider visiting those who are sick and suffering as my top priority.
(1 Thess 1:2-4; Ex 28:29; Phil 1:3-6; 2 Cor 11:28,29; Lk 15:4; Js 5:14)

3

I will spend not less than two hours each day for the study of the Scriptures.
I will freely consult Study Bibles, Commentaries and other study aids.
I will not believe the devil's lie that I am great if I preach without notes.
Instead of dwelling on pet topics,
I will teach my congregation the whole counsel of God
and serve a balanced diet.
I will not allow business matters to steal my study time.
(Mal 2:7; Lk 9:10,11; Mt 10:27; Acts 20:20,27; 6:2-4)

4

I will strive to make every member of my congregation a minister.
I will help each one to identify his/her gift(s) and operate them.
I will not play solo but delegate responsibilities.
I will trust people and tolerate their mistakes.
I will introduce Bible study aids to the believers.
I will be a servant-leader.
I will be open to corrections and welcome new ideas
and changes for the better.
I will be a friend of the youth.
*(Eph 4:11-13; Rom 12:4-8; Mk 3:14; Jn 13:13-15;
1 Cor 3:21-23; Acts 6:14; 1 Jn 2:14b)*

5

I will show no partiality but treat the rich and the poor,
the educated and the illiterate, the affluent and the downtrodden alike.
I will not be influenced by the size of anyone's offering.
I will give special attention to destitutes and the marginalised.
I will die to casteism and play no politics in my dealings.
(Js 2:1-5; Lk 21:1-4; Js 1:27; Col 3:11-14)

6

I will be honest in financial matters.
I will account for all monies received whether as tithes
or offerings or contributions or whatever,
and submit audited accounts to the government.
I will not buy with the Church money any moveable or immovable property
in my personal name or that of my family members.
I will simply receive a maintenance allowance
and leave all financial matters with a trusted committee.
(2 Cor 8:20,21; Rom 13:6,7; Mt 22:21)

7

I will share leadership of the Church with a couple of Associate Pastors, remembering that the single-pastor system is unscriptural.

(“Pastors” and “Elders” are interchangeable words.)

I will have atleast one Associate Pastor even if the congregation is small.

I will not allow my ego to clash with collective decisions.

I will not consider any fellow leader as a threat
if he becomes more popular than I.

I will not lust to bring my son as the next leader.

(*Tit 1:5; Acts 20:17,28; 1 Pet 5:1; Acts 15:22,27; 1 Sam 18:7-9*)

8

I will cordially relate to the Pastors of other Churches
and leaders of para-church organisations.

I will gladly join hands with them for common programmes.

I will let my people go to other meetings
so they will find pasture “in and out.”

I will rejoice over the victories of others and openly acknowledge them.

I will warn my congregation against false doctrines.

(*Eph 4:11-16; 1 Cor 3:5-9; Jn 10:9; Lk 9:49,50; Phil 3:2; 1 Jn 4:1*)

9

I will make my Church missionary-minded.

I will arrange to lead teams of our believers to visit pioneer mission fields.

I will periodically invite missionaries and mission leaders
to challenge the congregation.

Supporting missionaries will be the first item in our Church budget.

I will encourage young people to go as missionaries to difficult places.

I will not hesitate to release efficient workers for missionary work.

(*Rom 10:13,14; 15:20; Mt 10:35-38; Eph 6:19,20; Acts 13:1-3*)

10

I will spend sufficient quality time with my family.

I will take my wife with me for house visits.

I will have an outing with my wife and children atleast once a week,
and won't talk about Church or ministry during those hours.

I will keep Monday or any one of the weekdays for rest and relaxation
and let the congregation know it!

(*Gen 18:17-19; 1 Cor 9:5; 1 Tim 3:4,5; Mk 6:31,32*)

(This article is available in Tamil also.)