



Taking The Test | James Powell | 08.11.2024

Weekly Study

SHARE

As group members get settled, take a few minutes to check in with everyone and see how life is going. Share an exciting story from this week, your highs and lows, an answered prayer, or something you're struggling with. If someone is really struggling, rally the group around them and take a few moments to pray over them.

Share a high and a low from last week.

What is something you're looking forward to learning in this series?

GROW

Welcome to Week Two of Bad Theology. Theology isn't just an academic field for scholars—it's a framework that shapes and reflects your relationship with God and the world. Everyone has a theology, formed by their beliefs, experiences, practices, and understanding of God. It influences how we interpret Scripture, navigate our personal faith journey, respond to our church community's teachings, and make daily life choices.

Our goal for this series is to help you replace bad and incomplete theology with good and complete theology based on the Word of God and His heart for us. When discerning whether we have good or bad theology, a great question to ask is: "Is this thought, belief, decision, or practice leading me closer to or farther away from the heart of my loving Father? During this

series, we're going to classify "Bad Theology" as anything that keeps you away from your loving Father.

In his week two message, "Taking the Test," Pastor James guided us through the story of Shadrach (formerly Hananiah), Meshach (formerly Mishael), and Abednego (formerly Azariah) found in Daniel Chapter Three. He challenged the common but incomplete theological saying, "God will never give you more than you can handle." In this story, we see what it means to have an "even if" kind of faith when faced with an impossible situation—one that was far beyond what they could manage on their own. The story shows that God's power is made perfect in their weakness, and it didn't matter that they couldn't handle the situation because He could.

Read Daniel 3:13-27

How did James's message challenge, convict, or reveal something about your current faith journey? Explain.

The sermon mentions that "incomplete theology when handed off as complete theology, can become bad theology." Can you think of any examples of this in your own life or in the broader Christian community?

Have you ever experienced a "fiery trial" in your life? How did you respond, and what did you learn from it?

M O V E

Read 2 Corinthians 12:9 NIV, 1 Peter 1:3-9 NIV, Psalms 27:13-14 CSB, James 1:12 NIV

In the face of adversity, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego demonstrated unwavering faith. They trusted God completely, even when facing a fiery furnace. Their response, "But **even if** he does not..." reveals a profound truth: our faith shouldn't be contingent on God's actions but on His character.

When tests and trials of various kinds come our way, James reminds us to keep these four points in mind:

1. Trust God with the test.
 - a. He is not trying to trick you, He's trying to train you. What you're going through might not be from God, but you can trust that He is using it to heal, restore, renew, and refine you.
2. Stand strong during the test
 - a. The enemy doesn't waste time and energy attacking people who aren't a threat to him. Stand strong during your difficult seasons because the plans God has for you are not just important for your life, but for the lives of others and the kingdom of God.
3. Take your time with the test.
 - a. Refinement is a process that takes time. Rushing through tests allows for things to follow you from one season to the next that may be a detriment to where God is trying to lead you.
4. Pass the test.
 - a. Too many of us are simply trying to survive the test, but we need to pass it.

Is there something you're dealing with right now that you feel like you can't handle on your own? Explain.

How might God be using these trials/tests to refine your character and deepen your trust in Him? Explain.

Is the strength of your faith more heavily influenced by who God is or by what He does/doesn't do for you? Explain.

How can you cultivate an "even if" faith in your current circumstances? Explain.

PRAY

This week, remember that you know the ending, regardless of how the middle is going. Like in Psalm 27:13-14, will you spend some time giving God the glory and honor as you wait patiently for your unanswered prayers to come to life.