
TALK IT OVER

A Faith That Passes the Tests of Life

James: A Faith That Works When Life Doesn't - Part 23

Rick Warren (September 13, 2020)

Open your group in prayer, and remember that this is only a guide. Feel free to discuss each of the provided questions in the message notes, or simply dive deeper into just one. Before you close with prayer, take a few minutes to look over the Three Essential Questions towards the end of the document.

Message Notes

YOUR FAITH IS BEING TESTED THESE DAYS

Talk It Over

"...when tests and challenges come at you from all sides, know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors." James 1:2-3

"God looks down from heaven on the whole human race to test and see who is acting with understanding and truly seeking Him." Psalm 53:2

"Examine yourselves to see if your faith is really genuine. Test yourselves!" 2 Corinthians 13:5 (NLT)

Question 1

What are some of the ways our faith is being tested according to the verses above? How does the Bible help us to develop a faith that works when life doesn't - a faith that passes the tests of life - and enables us to live in God's will rather than our will and the culture's?

ONE WAY GOD IS TESTING OUR FAITH IS THROUGH VIRAL INFIRMITY

Talk It Over

"King Uzziah had a contagious skin disease for the rest of his life and had to live in quarantine. He was not permitted to set foot in the Temple of God. So his son, Jotham, managed the royal palace and governed the nation." 2 Chronicles 26:21 (Mes)

"My friends and companions must keep their distance because of my plague. Even my relatives must stay far away." Psalm 38:11 (ESV)

Question 2

One of the many proofs that the Bible is the Word of God is its ability to instruct appropriate

practices such as “social distancing” and quarantining, as indicated in the verses above, long before science discovered the germ theory of infectious diseases. What other examples come to mind showing the supernatural origin of the Bible?

WHEN DO PLAGUES HAPPEN IN THE BIBLE?

1. When we ignore God’s rules for living

Talk It Over

“The people soon forgot God and what he’d done for them, and they wouldn’t wait for God’s plan. Instead, they became greedy and they let their cravings run wild. They tested God’s patience. So God gave them what they wanted, but he sent a plague along with it.” Psalm 106:14-15 (NLT)

Question 3

Psalm 106:14-15 above tells us how Israel “soon forgot God, and what he’d done for them.” Today the church faces the same dilemma: our consciences can easily be dulled by our culture. How do subtle temptations interfere with our spiritual health and lead to “dis-ease.”

2. When we allow injustice & inequality

Talk It Over

God: *“A short time ago, you repented and did what was right. You freed your countrymen who had been slaves. You even made a covenant with me about this in my Temple. But now you’ve changed your mind and dishonored me. You’ve enslaved them again in a new slavery. Therefore, here’s what I’m going to do: Since you’ve disobeyed me by not giving freedom to all of your countrymen, I’m going to give you some ‘freedom’ - the freedom to die by war or a plague or famine! And you will be considered a disgrace by the other nations of the world.”* Jeremiah 34:17

Question 4

In Jeremiah 34:17 above, God judged Israel for again enslaving their countrymen after doing the right thing and freeing them. Do you hear the anger and even sarcasm in God’s response when he says that he would give Israel “some ‘freedom’”—the freedom to die by plague! Give examples of people not being treated with dignity and even being deprived of liberty around the world. How can you respond to the injustice and inequality you see, hear, or experience? What example is tugging at your heart that you can pray about in your group today?

3. When leaders sin & disobey God

Talk It Over

David prayed to God, *“Was it not I who ordered this? I’m the one who has sinned and done wrong! These people are innocent. What have they done? So, O Lord my God, let your hand fall*

upon me and my family, but do not let this plague remain on your people." 1 Chronicles 21:17 (NIV)

"For when the time of judgment comes, judgment must begin with the family of God." 1 Peter 4:17

Question 5

In 1 Chronicles 21, David sinned resulting in the Lord sending three days of plague on Israel! Then in verse 17, David repented of his sin—acknowledging the consequences of pridefully ignoring God. We may be tempted to judge David and our political leaders, but 1 Peter 4:17 warns that *"judgment must begin with the family of God."* Discuss why God's judgment begins with the church before extending to the world—and how that should affect our judgment.

WHAT SHOULD WE BE DOING DURING OUR PLAGUE?

1. Continue to worship God

Talk It Over

"David built an altar to the Lord there and he gave offerings of worship to God. And the Lord answered his prayer, and the plague was stopped." 2 Samuel 24:25 (NLT)

Question 6

Share how you can continue to give your *"offerings of worship to God"* during this plague.

2. Continue to serve people

Talk It Over

"Aaron the priest stood between the living and the dead until the plague was stopped." Numbers 16:48 (NLT)

Question 7

In Numbers 16:48, Aaron took a courageous stand for the Israelites *"until the plague was stopped."* One of the historical functions of priests is to intervene and take care of the sick. As believers, God also calls us to be priests and to stand for the world beginning with the church. Give some specific examples of what else you can do to serve your community today.

Three Essential Questions

The following questions are intended to be open-ended and encourage members to consider how they felt and what they, or the group, can do as a result of hearing the message!

1. **What did you hear?** *What point in this message was most impactful for you?*
2. **What do you think?** *How did this message challenge, change, or affirm your thinking?*
3. **What will you do?** *How will you or your group put into practice what you've learned today?*