



MEETING AGENDA

WELCOME (10 MINUTES)

This week we continue our series, *Light in the Darkness*. In our second week, we're talking about real and counterfeit faith and the different qualities of each. We're also considering how important obedience is to a healthy faith, and we're looking at the qualities of genuine faith. Daniel and his friends were severely tested, but their experience illustrates that we may be pushed to the limit, but we will never be pushed over the limit.

This week we are including a bonus question to help us think about reaching two as we approach Easter. We will reference a chapter from *Sharing the Gospel with Ease* by Thom S. Rainer that we included in our H.O.S.T. Kit. This is an optional going deeper opportunity for your group.

Please don't forget to take attendance via the attendance reminder email.

ICEBREAKER (10 MINUTES)

Have you ever had a recurring dream or one you remembered after waking up?

INTRODUCTION (5-10 MINUTES)

(Feel free to use one or all the following introductory questions)

Was there one idea from Pastor David's message that particularly stood out to you? Share that with the group.

David said that faith which has not been tested, cannot be trusted. How did that statement strike you? Since many writers in the New Testament say how valuable the testing of our faith really is, what should our perspective be toward trials and hardships?

H.O.S.T. GUIDANCE:

[It's easy to talk about the value of proven faith, but embracing the trial or testing and being grateful for what God does in our hearts through trials is difficult. If someone in your group has gone through such a trial or hardship, try to have them share what that was like and what they learned from it.]

INTO THE WORD (25 MINUTES)

Read James 1:2-4 and 1 Peter 1:6-7. What truths about the role of testing in our lives from the two passages stick out to you?

H.O.S.T. GUIDANCE

[Faith is not the absence of failure. It is comforting to remember as we face many life trials and challenges. God is working on us where we are, and we also can develop genuine faith as we faithfully follow God even amid our failures. Hardships can produce authentic Christ-like character that equips us for God's work. Peter experienced failures but learned and grew from his experiences, developed perspective, seeing the value of genuine faith through hardships.]

Read Matthew 13:3-9. Jesus here explains four soil types as a metaphor for hearing versus living out the Word of God. As David said, a faith that isn't tested can't be trusted or counterfeit faith. This can look like the following:

- **Having good intentions but not following through.**
- **Having high morals but not applying the word of God to your life.**
- **Having dramatic starts but not finishing well.**

What sticks out to you about the soils mentioned in Matthew 13 or the examples of untested faith listed above?

H.O.S.T. GUIDANCE

["To summarize the point of the Parable of the Sower: 'A man's reception of God's Word is determined by the condition of his heart.' A secondary lesson would be 'Salvation is more than a superficial, albeit joyful, hearing of the gospel. Someone who is truly saved will go on to prove it.' May our faith and our lives exemplify the "good soil" in the Parable of the Sower." (gotquestions.org) When our faith is tested, and we remain, we can develop deep-rooted genuine faith.]

APPLICATION (25 MINUTES)

[Hosts: don't feel pressure to cover all the questions below. Pick the one or two questions that might lead to the best conversation, but if discussion fades, include the others.]

We see in Daniel 2:12-16 that Daniel responds to the dangerous situation facing him with perspective and prudence rooted in God. Are there any difficult situations in your life currently? What would responding with perspective and carefulness look like for you in your situation?

In verses 17-19, Daniel trusted God and built endurance. He included his community in praying for God to show Daniel the king's dream. Is there an area or situation where you can invite your community to help pray? Is there an area or situation that you need to keep trusting God for a response?

Where in your life do you need to take a step towards obedience?

PRAYER (10 MINUTES)

Father God,

We thank you for being in control even when it can feel like our worlds are out of control. Remind us that testing our faith helps reveal counterfeit faith and builds a genuine faith that builds us up and draws us closer to You. As we walk through many hard and difficult situations, we may grow in our endurance and faith, knowing that You are at work and will be glorified regardless of the outcome. May the way we endure shine a light on our communities and point others toward You. Please bring people into our lives that can put their faith in You, Jesus. We pray all of this in Jesus' name, Amen.

REACH 2 EMPHASES (BONUS)

(As we get closer to Easter, we want to think about people we can invite to Easter and share the Gospel. This is an opportunity to discuss and get more comfortable with the idea of sharing our faith. As you navigate this discussion, see the page numbers for information on how to come alongside your group. Each group leader received a copy of this book with their H.O.S.T. Kit.)

In chapter 6 of Thom S. Rainer's book, *Sharing the Gospel with Ease*, he shares eight common objections people have about following Jesus:

- **I'm not a bad person.** (pg. 111-113)
 - As long as the scales tilt in their favor because of the good they have done, they will be accepted into heaven.
- **I've done too many bad things.** (pg. 113-115)
 - I feel like the scales are tilted too far because of what I have done. I don't believe I will be accepted into heaven.
- **I'll think about it later.** (pg. 115-117)
 - I have plenty of time to surrender my life to Christ. I can decide later – maybe.
- **How can a loving God let bad things happen to people?** (pg. 117-120)
 - I have difficulty believing in a God that allows bad things to happen.
- **There are many ways to get to heaven or God.** (pg. 120-121)
 - This feels exclusive, and I want to be as inclusive as possible.
- **I believe in God.** (pg. 121-122)
 - I believe in a God, but I don't believe that Jesus is God.
- **The church has hurt me.** (pg. 122-124)
 - How can I believe in Jesus when His followers are sometimes terrible?
- **How can I believe the Bible is true?** (pg. 124-127)
 - How do you deal with all the contradictions and errors in scripture?

Which objection do you find most prevalent with people you live with who do not know Jesus? Which one do you feel most ill-equipped to have a response for?