



The Epilogue | James Powell | 01.20.2024

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.

**If someone wanted to share the epic story of your life with the world, would you want it to be turned into a movie or a book? Explain?**

**During the toughest moment of your story, who is someone that really stepped up, had your back, and helped you more than they realized?**

**What has been the most extraordinary part of your life's story so far? How do you want your story to end?**

## GROW

Welcome to week three of our series, *The Story You'll Tell*. In week one, Doug reminded us that we can change. Last week, Shawn showed us how to change. This week, Pastor James taught us that when we make the middle matter, the end of our story can be extraordinary. In his message, *The Epilogue*, Pastor James shared four essentials for a better ending.

The four essentials for a better ending are:

1. GOD-CENTERED: What I give the center of my life to, I give power to. Are you the main character of your story, or is God?

**Read Romans 8:7 MSG**

**What area of my life do I need to give God the center? What's there right now?**

2. FAITH-FOCUSED: "Within each of us, there are two wolves at war with each other. One is full of darkness and despair, the other full of light and hope. The one that wins is the one you feed." - Cherokee Legend

**Read Psalm 91:14-15 ISV**

**What has your attention right now? This week, this month, this year?**

3. SERVANT-HEARTED: What if we gave to others what we needed most for ourselves?

**Read Luke 6:38 NLT**

**What are you in most need of right now? What would it look like for you to give that to someone else?**

4. FUTURE-ORIENTED: A mindset focused on the past is ruled by fear and asks, "What if...?" A mindset focused on the future is fueled by faith and proclaims, "Even if..."

**Read Romans 8:18-21 NIV**

**What is God calling me to build/grow in today, in hopes of a better tomorrow?**

M O V E

**Read Matthew 16:24-25 NIV, Isaiah 48:10**

There is a burden that must be felt in life - a price that must be paid. The thief came to steal, kill, and destroy. We've been deceived into believing that if we sacrifice what we want most and settle for what we want now, we can avoid the pain of life altogether. But that pain must be felt one way or another. Because of the fall, this pain is the price for life that must be paid. In an attempt to avoid daily doses of pain and discomfort, all we've managed to do is allow it to manifest itself into a mountain of regret positioned to crush us when we reach the end of our story, as the abundant life that could have been flashes before our eyes.

**What aspect(s) of your life have you surrendered to Jesus and taken up your cross?**

**What aspects of your life have you sacrificed your faith to maintain a sense of control?**

**There is a daily battle between what you want most vs what you want now. Which wolf are you feeding? Which one has been winning?**

**Read 1 Peter 1:6-9**

A second option is to take up our cross daily, commit to becoming more like Jesus, serve others, and seek discomfort as we embrace the process of refinement. Refinement is a painful process, but the purpose of refinement isn't to inflict pain, it's to burn away the things that don't belong, restore imperfections, heal scars, and reveal the purest, most beautiful, healed, and whole version of itself that can possibly exist - the version of itself that it was always designed to be.

During the refinement process, imperfections and things that don't belong must first come to the surface before they can be Stripped away.

**If you're willing to take a step of faith and share with your group, what does the Lord want to strip away from your life that you haven't let come to the surface yet? Explain.**

**If you're not comfortable sharing, what are the "what ifs" in your mind that prevent you from letting "that one thing" come to the surface so God can strip it away? What are the "even ifs" that you can start proclaiming over your life in place of your "what ifs?"**

The good news is that by choosing to take up our cross daily, inviting Jesus to be the center of our life (Ps. 68:19), and surrounding ourselves with fellow believers (Gal. 6:2), the weight of our burdens is lifted, the level of our discomfort eased, and the transformation we experience is exponential. Are you going to take the easy way out this year and sacrifice what you want most for what you want now? Or are you going to lean in, seek discomfort, welcome refinement, fix your eyes on Jesus, and take up your cross on a daily basis? Are you going to make the middle matter this year so the story you tell at the end is extraordinary?

**How do you want to be “future-oriented” this year?**

**What are three small ways you can “seek discomfort” this year in an effort to learn and grow?**

P R A Y

God, thank you for reminding us of the premises you have established over our lives this week. Will you help us make room for you, not just in our life but at the center of our life. God, will you strip away our spirit of fear that says, “What if XYZ...,” and give us a faith like Daniel and the courage to proclaim, “Even if XYZ...,” you are still good, and we still believe in what’s to come. Will you give us the heart of a servant and an opportunity to offer someone else the very thing we need most in our own life, trusting that you will provide tenfold what we offer? God, we love you, we praise you, we fix our eyes upon you this week. Amen.