

# How to Live: An Introduction to James

Study Guide for Small Group Discussion and Personal Application  
Lynn Haven UMC – September 6, 2020 – Pastor Craig Carter

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This week we begin new sermon series titled “**How to Live**” based on the New Testament Letter from James. As a congregation we will be following a reading plan through James and discussing our studies. Check out [mylhumc.net/grow](http://mylhumc.net/grow) for more information.

## Discussion Starters:

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus made this claim, “*A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit...Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions.*” (Matthew 7:17, 20 NLT)

⇒ Can you think of a time when you were really impressed with someone’s actions or words? Why? And what did it tell you about their character and who they were?

⇒ Or can you think of a time when you were shocked by someone’s poor actions or words (including perhaps a social media post)? What did it tell you about their character?

From Jesus’ words in Matthew 7 we understand that Christianity is not a philosophy or religion, it is a lifestyle. Our faith is not simply something we believe in; it is something we do.

*Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn’t obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand.* (Matthew 7:24, 26 NLT)

## Background on the Letter of James:

*This letter is from James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.* (James 1:1a NLT)  
- Traditionally the half-brother of Jesus, leader of the church in Jerusalem

*I am writing to the “twelve tribes” – Jewish believers scattered abroad.* (James 1:1b NLT)  
- Not written for a specific congregation, but to Christians everywhere

*My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ...* (James 2:1a NIV)  
- Audience assumed to be followers of Jesus

## Primary Message of the Letter of James:

*But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it. (James 1:22-25 NLT)*

### 1) Christian living requires us to KNOW what needs to be done.

First you must hear the word of God and understand what is expected of you. Do you know how you are supposed to be living? This knowledge comes from studying the Bible and learning from (and with) other Christians.

### 2) Christian living requires us to DO what needs to be done.

There is a big difference between knowing and doing. A teenager might know that he is supposed to clean his room and mow the lawn, but that is different than actually doing it!

*Don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. (James 1:22 NLT)*

What we *do* with what we *know* determines *how we live*.

## Join us on the Journey through James:

⇒ Do you have a copy of the James reading plan? Download it here: [mylhumc.net/grow](http://mylhumc.net/grow)

⇒ Do you have a time each day where you read the Bible and pray? Now is a good time to start this practice.

⇒ Do you have a group of people with whom you can discuss what God is teaching you as you read James? If not, reach out to a friend, or to [Mindy@mylhumc.net](mailto:Mindy@mylhumc.net).