

How to Live with Power

Study Guide for Small Group Discussion and Personal Application
Lynn Haven UMC – November 15, 2020 – Pastor Craig Carter

Watch or read sermons online at mylhumc.net

This fall we are exploring the Letter of James. As a congregation we are following a reading plan through James and studying selected passages. Check out mylhumc.net/grow for more information.

James is full of practical advice and shows us “How to Live” as Christians. James has argued against a type of “alien Christianity” that is mostly head knowledge (think extraterrestrial creatures with large heads from a science fiction movie). James pushes us to act on our faith and demonstrate what we believe to be true. James also argues against a “muscle man” type of Christianity, where we rely on our own strength and effort to get us through life. Instead James argues that we are to live by faith, relying on the power of God.

We need the power of God if we are to live as real Christians. We need power to live with patience in the face of adversity, we need power to live in victory over sin and temptation, we need power to live with others and enjoy healthy relationships, we need power to live with controlled tongues and speak in God-honoring ways, and we need power to accomplish all of the other things we’ve talked about in this study. So James concludes his letter by addressing how we access the power of God.

¹³ Are any of you suffering hardships? You should pray. Are any of you happy? You should sing praises. ¹⁴ Are any of you sick? You should call for the elders of the church to come and pray over you, anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ Such a prayer offered in faith will heal the sick, and the Lord will make you well. And if you have committed any sins, you will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results. - James 5:13-16 NLT

1) Pray

Think of prayer as a relationship with God; it involves an on-going dialogue. Because of this relationship we have access to the abilities and resources of the other party.

Elijah was as human as we are, and yet when he prayed earnestly that no rain would fall, none fell for three and a half years! Then, when he prayed again, the sky sent down rain and the earth began to yield its crops. - James 5:17-18 NLT

2) Praise

Praising God lifts us above our circumstances and helps us keep a proper perspective.

But you are holy, you inhabit the praises of Israel. - Psalm 22:3 WEB

Come close to God, and God will come close to you. - James 4:8a NLT

3) Profess

*Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.
- James 5:16a*

If we confess our sins to God, he can always be trusted to forgive us and take our sins away. - 1 John 1:9 CEV

Confessing our sins is powerful because it brings sin out into the open, and darkness hates the light. It also increases our accountability before others and helps us find victory. Confessing our sins is also powerful because it helps us know that we are not alone.

We live in a world that tries to convince us that power is found in a position or by accumulating wealth or knowledge or fame. James gives us a radically different formula for how to live with power and it is described in our passage under investigation.

What will you do about it?

⇒ How have you experienced God's power through prayer? What prayer need(s) do you currently have?

⇒ What can you be thankful for, and offer praise to God for? Even in times of trouble, we can thank the Lord that He is with us and will never forsake us.

⇒ Have you ever confessed your sins to another person? If so, what was the result? What precludes us from sharing the "secrets" in our lives with others? Do you have something you need to profess/confess? Who can you confess to? Will you commit to sharing your challenge with that person this week?

Don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. (James 1:22a NLT)