

How to Live with Wealth

Study Guide for Small Group Discussion and Personal Application
Lynn Haven UMC – November 8, 2020 – Pastor Craig Carter

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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. This week James is addressing the challenges of handling wealth.

Jesus made it very clear that material possessions pose a threat to a person’s spiritual well-being and went so far as to say, *“You cannot serve both God and money.”* (Matthew 6:24c NIV) The problem with wealth is that if we don’t have it, we are tempted to want it. And, if we do have wealth, we are tempted to use it in unwise and ungodly ways.

How do we live when we do not have wealth?

“Believers who are poor have something to boast about, for God has honored them.”
(James 1:9 NLT)

Why would James make such a statement? Because those who lack material wealth in this world can take comfort in knowing their condition is only temporary. In contrast, the riches of God’s kingdom, both present and future, are eternal.

How do we live with wealth?

And those who are rich should boast that God has humbled them. They will fade away like a little flower in the field. The hot sun rises and the grass withers; the little flower droops and falls, and its beauty fades away. In the same way, the rich will fade away with all of their achievements. (James 1:10-11 NLT)

Those who have wealth in this world need to remember that what they possess today could be gone tomorrow. Therefore, they are to remain totally dependent on God, acknowledge Him as the source of their worldly wealth, and be generous.

In summary, whether poor or rich, we should all live the same way – seeing ourselves as belonging to the Lord and realizing He is the source of all we need.

Seek the Kingdom of God above all else...and he will give you everything you need.
(Matthew 6:33 NLT)

James has more to say to the wealthy in chapter 5:

Pay attention to this if you're rich. Cry and moan about the misery that is coming to you. Your riches have decayed, and your clothes have been eaten by moths. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be used as evidence against you. Like fire, it will destroy your body. You have stored up riches in these last days. The wages you refused to pay the people who harvested your fields shout to God against you. The Lord of Armies has heard the cries of those who gather the crops. You have lived in luxury and pleasure here on earth. You have fattened yourselves for the day of slaughter. (James 5:1-5 GWT)

The dangers of wealth

- Storing up treasures on earth, where nothing lasts forever
- Living in luxury and pleasure while others are struggling
- Not offering fair wages or cheating workers out of income due them
- Placing our sense of security in what we have accumulated

The Challenge

“Gain all you can, save all you can, and give all you can!” (John Wesley)

What will you do about it?

⇒ Pastor Craig argued that all of us as Westerners are actually quite wealthy in comparison to how the rest of the world lives. How is wealth a danger for you or your family?

⇒ How are you going to live with whatever amount of wealth God has entrusted into your care? How do you insure you're gaining, saving, and giving all you can?

⇒ How could your family demonstrate that they are clinging more tightly to God tightly than you are to your possessions? How and where are you giving?

⇒ What one aspect of this lesson would you most like to apply to your life this week?

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