



## Sermon Discussion Guide

April 26 & 27, 2025

“What Makes Organized Religion Bad...or Good?”

[James 1:22-27](#)

**10 Big Questions About the Christian Life** is a new sermon series inviting us to wrestle with the most important questions of faith that shape how we live every day. Each week explores a key question that draws us deeper into God’s truth and calls us to live out the hope of the resurrection. This series challenges us to move from belief to action, building a faith that transforms both our lives and the world.

### PRAY & CONNECT

Open in prayer and invite the Holy Spirit into your conversation. Ask God for wisdom and discernment and trust him to guide you. Take time to recap the message or view it on [hopeonline.tv](#). Did you have any ah-ha moments where you felt convicted, compelled, or inspired during the sermon? What’s been on your mind this week? Have you been able to apply the message to your everyday life?

### GROW

#### Read [James 1:22-27](#) – “Listening and Doing”

- What emotions surface when you hear the call to not just listen to God’s word but do what it says? Why do you think action is so important to faith?
- What does James mean when he says true religion is caring for widows and orphans?
- Reflecting on the sermon, why is it easy to focus on appearance (like “clean cups”) instead of transformation?
- Why does James connect resisting corruption to active faith, not just belief?

#### Read [Luke 24:45-48](#) – “Jesus Appears to the Disciples”

- What reaction stirs in you when you hear Jesus call you his ambassador, as the sermon emphasized? How does it change your view of everyday life to think of yourself as a witness?
- Why is it significant that Jesus opened the disciples’ minds to understand Scripture before sending them out?
- When have you hesitated to share your faith, even though you believed it? What gives you courage according to this passage?
- How can misunderstanding Jesus’ mission lead to judgmental religion?

#### Read [John 15:1-17](#) – “Jesus, the True Vine”

- What reaction do you have when you hear Jesus say you are a branch connected to him, the true vine?
- Why do you think remaining in Jesus is essential to bearing fruit? How does it challenge you emotionally to think about being “pruned” to bear more fruit? Why does Jesus connect obedience to love and joy, not just duty?
- When have you experienced “fruit” from abiding in Jesus, even if the season felt dry or difficult?
- How does Jesus’ command to “love one another” redefine what success looks like in Christian life?

#### Read [1 John 1:8-9](#) – “Living in the Light”

- What rises up in you when you honestly consider your own need for forgiveness? Why is admitting sin often harder than it should be?
- How might seeing confession as a gift rather than a duty change your view of repentance?
- When have you experienced the healing power of naming your struggles before God or others? What difference does it make to believe God is faithful and just, not just merciful? Who could be a trusted person to walk with you in accountability?
- Why do people sometimes prefer hiding to healing? What’s one way you could model honest faith for others this week?

### APPLY

Pick one of the applications below to put into practice this week ...

- **Practice active faith:** Pick one small way to act on your faith this week rather than only think about it. (Example: Write a note of encouragement, serve a neighbor, forgive someone you’ve struggled with.)
- **Abide more intentionally:** Set aside 10 minutes each day to intentionally remain in Christ—through prayer, reading Scripture, or silent reflection—trusting him to bear fruit in your life instead of striving by your own strength.
- **Confess and restore:** Spend time asking God to reveal any hidden sin or burdens you’re carrying. Write a private confession letter to God, then destroy it afterward as a symbol of receiving his forgiveness. If needed, take the additional brave step of seeking accountability or reconciliation with someone you trust.