

James

A STUDY ON THE BOOK OF JAMES

UPSTATE GROUP MEMBER GUIDE

WEEK 4 - *JAMES 2:1-13*

LEADER NOTES

In chapter one, James instructs us that true religion looks like caring for widows and orphans, but in chapter two, we see the opposite happening in the lives of James's audience. The sin of favoritism occurs when we fail to see others the way God sees them. God is merciful and good, lavishing his creatures with grace and love. As Christ followers, we must likewise view others with the same love and kindness, reflecting true faith in our creator.

Please continue to complete the Gospel Connection's and Conversations form. You can find the form [HERE](#).

You can find other sermons from our Teaching Pastor's [HERE](#).

SCRIPTURE

TAKE THIS TIME TO STUDY THE BIBLE TOGETHER. REMEMBER, THE GOAL IS NOT JUST TO CONVEY INFORMATION, BUT TO HELP PEOPLE IN YOUR GROUP LEARN TO READ THE BIBLE FOR THEMSELVES.

THE POINT

THE GROUND IS LEVEL AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS.

James 2:1-13

My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. 2 For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, 3 and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet," 4 have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? 5 Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? 6 But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? 7 Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?

8 If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. 9 But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. 10 For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. 11 For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. 12 So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. 13 For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), James 2:1-13.

STUDY NOTES

James concluded the first chapter by saying we must be not only hearers of the Word but also doers. Otherwise, we settle for an impure, defiled religion that's focused on our own interests. Today's text stands in stark contrast to caring for widows and orphans. Instead, the stain of worldliness was polluting the church with favoritism for the rich. Simply put, they weren't putting the teachings of Jesus into practice.

Visible faith shows no partiality.

Though this is the situation James addressed, this kind of favoritism happens in every area of life. From our work, to the playground with our families, to church on Sunday, we walk around with hidden prejudice and bias. Favoritism is an especially heinous sin because it suggests that God has made some to be more special than others. It is a failure to regard people the way God sees them. God is not interested in the exterior, but the interior (1 Sam. 16:7, Jer. 17:10).

God doesn't play favorites because God is loving, and love and prejudice don't coincide. He sees all on the basis of their relationship with Him. Favoritism is theologically inconsistent with Christian faith. God looks to the heart of a man, which is the reason we play favorites and God doesn't. We are able to hide much of our sin from others so they don't know what goes on in those quiet moments when no one's watching. We can't see the heart, so we apply our judgment to what we can see. However, if the goal of the Christian life is to be like Christ, we should desire to be like God, which means we need to regard others the same way God does.

Visible faith prioritizes mercy over judgment.

James alluded to the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:7 to warn that those who show no mercy will receive none in the final judgment. Stated positively, this means mercy triumphs over judgment. This does not mean we receive mercy from God only when we show mercy to others. If that were true, it would make salvation a matter of God's payment for our good deeds. For those who have given themselves in faith to Christ, God's mercy triumphs over our guilt and judgment. If we have received God's grace, we will stand in the coming judgment. Mercy can rejoice in its victory over condemnation.

God is a good Father who has brought us forth by His word, and He expects we obey Him. Faith without mercy toward others is not genuine faith. Genuine faith means there's progress, not perfection. In your remembrance of God's forgiving grace and mercy, extend it to others.

If you need more resources for this week's sermon and curriculum, click [HERE](#).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- *Why should we obey the command not to judge or show partiality as individuals? As a church community?*
- *Why should Christians, above all others, be willing to look beyond the surface to see the heart?*
- *How should what Christ did for us motivate us to live?*
- *Why do we think treating others as “less than” is a less serious sin?*
- *What areas of your life do you need to repent of for the sin of favoritism?*
- *How does showing prejudice and favoritism endanger our witness before a non-believing culture?*