



JAMES 1:26-2:13

THE SIN OF PARTIALITY

BEGIN BY READING JAMES 1:26-2:13 TOGETHER:

²⁶ If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. ²⁷ Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

2 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.

NOTE: *After you read the passage together, pray, and then allow for a few minutes of silence so that you and your students can read over the passage again and start to think about it. This may feel*

awkward at first, but it's vital to allow for some reflection time before diving into the questions.

When you're ready, begin the discussion by going through the following questions:

CONTEXT QUESTIONS

1. How does James 1:26-27 connect back to James 1:19-25?

NOTE: *James 1:19-25 was all about hearing, receiving and doing God's Word. Starting in 1:26 James then shifts and begins to look at different practical ways we put God's Word into practice.*

2. How does James 1:26-27 connect forward to James 2:1-13?

NOTE: *James 1:26-27 is a key section in the book that introduces major themes that James is going to unpack in the rest of the letter. These include: controlling your tongue, caring for the needy without partiality, and moral purity. James 1:26-27 functions kind of like a table of contents for what is to come. Specifically in James 2:1-13 the author expounds upon his call to care for widows and orphans by writing against the sin of partiality.*

OBSERVATION QUESTIONS

NOTE: *As you go through these questions, give your students time and silence to really look at the text to see what God is revealing to them personally. Be patient with them as they seek to flesh out what they are seeing in God's Word.*

1. **What is something that encourages you as you read this passage?**
2. **What is something that challenges you as you read this passage?**

RESPONSE QUESTIONS

NOTE: *In these verses James is writing to believers who lived in a culture organized around honor. A person's social status and*

reputation was based around not only their own honor but also the honor they showed to other people. Often it was by showing honor to the wealthy and important people that a person was able to boost their own reputation and honor.

So at dinner parties or other gatherings the host would reserve the best seats for the wealthiest or most “honorable” guests. The poor, the orphan, and the widow, would hardly be invited let alone given a seat of honor at the table! This giving of honor to only the wealthy or important is called “showing partiality.”

James writes to Christians to make clear that they should not show partiality in the church. In the assembly of believers there is no place for favoring some and excluding others. God Himself has a special heart for the poor and needy, and much of His Law deals with caring for the least of these in our midst.

So rather than rejecting or dishonoring the poor and needy, Christians are called to welcome them, serve them, even honor them.

Use the following questions to help students unpack these ideas:

- 1. What does this passage say about *religion*?**
- 2. What does this passage say about *partiality*?**
- 3. What does this passage say about *mercy*?**

CHRIST CONNECTION

NOTE: *Jesus Christ, the Son of God, deserves infinite honor and glory. He alone deserves to sit at the head of the table. But He who was infinitely rich in His Father’s presence, “did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” (Philippians 2:6-8)*

Jesus, who deserves all honor, gave up that honor and took on our shame. He went to the cross to have mercy on poor and needy sinners like us. He didn’t show partiality but instead mercifully bore our death and shame to bring us into His Father’s house and give us a seat at the table.