



O&A Youth.

CURRICULUM

THE BOOK OF JAMES WEEK THREE - HIGH SCHOOL

April 16th-22nd, 2023

THE LESSON IN A SNAPSHOT:

This final month of the semester of Community Groups before we launch into Summer will be focused on walking through the book of James in the New Testament. This week is finishing up is going through the first part of chapter 2. Do not feel like you have to get through everything, it is a LOT of content to cover and will be nearly impossible in your group, especially with highs & lows. What we are trying to do is let the Word of God be the Word of God and the main focus this month. Simply reading the passage and letting everyone take it in and ask questions, make some observations and interact with it a bit will be more than enough.

OPENING QUESTIONS - BEGIN WITH HIGHS & LOWS

(Begin with Highs & Lows. Use these if you want to get them talking more before playing the lesson.)

ICE BREAKER (Optional): Count Up, Stand Up - To play, first, choose a number that the group is going to count up to. The bigger the number, the more difficult the task. A good number to start with is around 5. Next, tell students that their challenge is to count to 5. To do so, one student must stand up and say the number 1. Then, another student must stand up and say the number 2, and so on up to five. Any student can stand up at any time and say the next number, but if 2 students stand up at the same time, then they lose. If the group is able to get to five without 2 students standing up at the same time, they win. Next, make it harder by changing the number to a higher number.

- 1| Did you start any new habits or try anything new this last week?
- 2| If you were a candy bar, what candy bar would you be and why?
- 3| What do you have the most in common with your bestfriend?
- 4| If you could choose your age forever, which age would you choose and why?
- 5| Who are some of your favorite people in the world? Why?

SCRIPTURE

Read through the passage slowly out loud, let everyone take in what the Bible is saying. During the question time, information on the verses has been provided below for you.

James 2:1-26

The Sin of Partiality

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. (ESV)

- 1) After reading the passage, if you want to, you can set a timer for two minutes. During the first minute let everyone sit and read the passage to themselves. During the second minute, let them sit and meditate on what the passage might mean. (Silence is uncomfortable for many people, you set the tone by being at peace and calm yourself during this quiet time).

LESSON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Before we start talking about what the passage means, we have to understand it's setting (Author/Theme/Why it was written). I have done that work for you. The book is written by James, the half-brother of Jesus & leader of the Jerusalem church to talk to house churches about conflicts they have been having and the fact that a lot of people have been wandering between honoring God and living in sin so his point is to live out your faith.

The main ideas of chapter 1 are all about the testing of our faith and hearing/doing the Word.

1. **What are some questions that came to mind when you were reading this passage?**
(When first reading a passage you should come up with more questions than answers. Overhype them when they say their questions; validate that they are asking good questions).
2. **What title does James give to Jesus?** (“Lord” means is powerful. “Christ” means “anointed one” or God’s chosen.)
3. **How do people show favoritism to others?**
4. **Why should we not judge others?**
5. **Who did God choose to be rich in faith?** (V. 2:5)
6. **Do you really believe that doing what God says brings freedom?**

PERSONAL APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What is this passage telling us to do?
2. How do you treat others? Do you treat people differently? Why or why not?
3. Why is it so difficult to treat everyone the same way?
4. How do you feel when people judge you?
5. How can you “honor others” today or this week?
6. How would living out this passage change your life?
7. Is there a verse that would be good to memorize in these verses?

Close in prayer.

- **Notes on the passage in focus, James 2:1-26**
 - 2:1: The sin of partiality - the problem of the poor and the rich was brought up in 1:9-11, 27, is now focused on more intensely warning us not to discriminate against the poor in favor of the wealthy in Christian assemblies. The Christian gospel make everyone equal.

- 2:2: **Assembly** is the Greek word for synagogue but probably is meaning a gathering of believers at a house church. It is weird they didn't use the normal word for gathering in the NT, *ekklesia*, where we get our word church from. This was probably because it was still early in Christianity's development that it wasn't clearly seen as separate from Judaism just yet. The **gold ring** was a symbol of Roman rank referred to as the upper-level "equestrian" or horse riding class but James is probably trying to generically describe a rich man. **Wearing a gold ring** is only word in the Greek, a really strange word, *chrysodaktylios*, and is what is called a hapax legomenon which just means it is only in the NT one time. The word describing clothing is lampira in Greek meaning bright or shining or glistening, where we get our word lamp from.
- 2:3: The rich person is put in a place of honor and the **poor man** is shown disrespect and told to probably stand in the back or **sit at my feet** like a servant.
- 2:4: People who make **distinctions** among themselves show that they are **judges with evil thoughts**. It might be talking about their motives but is mainly talking about how their standards for judging others is wrong. The word for **made distinctions** is the same word used for *with no doubting* in James 1:6. So James could be saying that the distinctions made in the group is manifested from their divided hearts and attitude towards following God.
- 2:5: The **poor** Christian is rich in the sense that they are part of the church, and one day will have eternal life. They receive God's promise as those **who love him**. Poor here has both a spiritual and material sense. They are poor in the eyes of the world but also humble in spirit.
- 2:6-7: There was a pretty massive gap between the poor and rich in the first century where the merchants and landowners would take land and possessions from the poor a lot. It is these **rich** unbelievers that **blaspheme the name** of the Lord who is often for the poor. They used the **court** system to steal from the poor. This was a big reason why there were revolts in Galilee that led up to a war in AD 66-70.
- 2:8: Favoritism and discrimination violate the godly kingdom law of love. **Royal law** or "law belonging to the king" and God's law in Lev. 19:18 to love your neighbor and then Jesus' words in Matt. 22:34-40. This was the apex of God's kingdom rules for ethical conduct.
- 2:9: Showing **partiality** is the opposite of the command of love; it breaks the OT command on how to treat the poor as well.
- 2:10-11: The **law** was complete and inter-connected; if you broke any part of it then you broke the whole thing. Jesus said that not a dot will pass away until all is accomplished. James is not saying that we have to obey every single law from the OT either. Nothing in his letter makes us think he holds a really uptight idea like this. This "law" is the OT law but as understood through Jesus' fulfillment of it. That is why James probably chose two more weighty laws from the ten commandments.
- 2:12: In following the **law of liberty** we find true freedom in obeying God and doing what pleases him. The law of Christ gives us freedom from our sin through the gospel. James is also seeming to suggest that God's law will help set free the poor from prejudice, oppression, and exploitation. Both "speak" and "act" are in a Greek tense that stresses the continuing nature of these actions: "be constantly speaking," "always be acting."
- 2:13: **For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy** is a wisdom saying that sums up what vv. 1-12 are trying to say. This is a big part of

God's law, that what you do to others will be done to you in the judgment such as reward for good and punished for evil. **Mercy triumphs over judgment** is not talking about God's mercy to believers at judgment. It means that acts of mercy like caring for the poor will be vindicated or justified at the judgment. So it is talking about human mercy, not God's mercy here. Being "merciful" is not just a feeling for others but an active doing to show love to others.