

THIS AIN'T NO COUNTRY CLUB!

James 2:1-13

“An unprejudiced mind is probably the rarest thing in the world.” (Andre Gide)

In many ways, James is more of a sermon than a letter. William Barclay writes, *“The main aim of the ancient preachers was not to investigate new truth, it was to awaken sinners to the error of their ways; and to compel them to see truth which they had deliberately neglected or had forgotten.”* Here the sin James is attacking is the old problem of prejudice – the measuring of people’s worth by externals.

What Does It Say?



My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. ² Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. ³ If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, “Here’s a good seat for you,” but say to the poor man, “You stand there” or “Sit on the floor by my feet,” ⁴ have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

What Does It Mean?

There are only 2 references to Christ in this book: 1:1 and 2:1. Are there any references to the Holy Spirit?

There are lots of commands in James – 60 of 108 verses contain at least one. What does that tell you about James and his style of leadership?

Note: the Greek word for **“favoritism”** literally means *“to receive by face.”*

A gold ring denoted people of the prestigious Roman equestrian order, the 2nd level of aristocracy. The more rings, the more wealth a person had. Christians were urged to wear just one, with a dove, fish, or anchor on it.

The words for **fine clothes** literally meant “bright & shining” – like the angel in Acts 10:30 who appeared to Cornelius.

What seems to be God’s attitude towards the poor throughout the Bible? (see **Proverbs 14:21**)

What points does James make in each of these 4 paragraphs?

1. (1-4)
2. (5-7)
3. (8-11)
4. (12-13)

⁵ *Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?* ⁶ *But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court?* ⁷ *Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong?*

Make a list of some blatant, and some subtle, ways in which we practice favoritism as Christians.

Look up these other 3 uses of "**favoritism**" – Rom 2:11, Eph 6:9, Col 3:25. What do they tell us?

What do you think Jesus meant when he said, "*the poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me.*" ?

There are few physical descriptions of Jesus in the Bible, but there is a picture of the Messiah in Isaiah 53:2,3. What does it reveal?

Verses 5-7

Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-30 How does it apply to this passage?

How do you tend to respond to the poor? Are you compassionate, overwhelmed, calloused, to busy to care?

Does the Bible condemn the rich? Can you think of any examples of godly rich people in Scripture?

"It is not that Christ and the Church do not want the great and the rich and the high and the mighty ... but it was the simple fact that the gospel offered so much to the poor and demanded so much from the rich, that it was the poor who were swept into the church."

William Barclay

The movie [The Mission](#), (Robert De Niro, Jeremy Irons) had a lot to say about guilt and grace, rich and poor. Your group might want to rent it and discuss it.

⁸ *If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. ⁹ But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking 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 commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.*

¹² *Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, ¹³ because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!*

"Don't start a big program. Start personally, and start in your homes. I dare you in the name of Jesus Christ.

L'Abri is costly. In about the first three years of L'Abri all our wedding presents were wiped out. Our sheets were torn. Holes were burned in our rugs. Blacks came to our table. Orientals came to our table. Everybody came to our table. Drugs came to our table. It couldn't happen any other way.

How many times have you let this happen in your home? Don't you see this is where we must begin? This is what the love of God means."

Francis Schaeffer,
The Church at the End of the 20th Century

Verses 8-11

Rabbinic saying: "Whoever fulfills only one law, good is appointed to him; his days are prolonged and he will inherit the land."

4 Maccabees 5:20: "To transgress the law in matters either small or great is of equal seriousness."

Which of these two extra-Biblical sayings above agrees with verse 10?

Verse 10 is a key verse for understanding the gospel. Why?

Verses 12-13

What is the "law that gives freedom"?

Find some other passages that help explain **verse 13**. (such as Matthew 6:15)

Have you ever been turned away from an eating establishment because of your clothes?

Have you ever been the victim of discrimination in the secular world?

Have you ever been the victim of discrimination in the church?