



## STUDY TOOLS

Sunday, June 15, 2025

**Teaching Title:** Impartial Faith

**Key Scripture:** James 2:1–13

# CEDAR VALLEY

### 5-DAY READING PLAN WITH QUESTIONS:

**Monday:** James 2:1–13; 1 Samuel 16:1–13

**Tuesday:** Romans 2:1–11

**Wednesday:** Deuteronomy 10:12–22; 2 Chronicles 19:1–7

**Thursday:** Acts 10

**Friday:** Galatians 3:15–29

1. What does this passage tell you about God?
2. What does this passage tell you about people?
3. If this is God's word, what do I need to do?
4. What's your takeaway?
5. Who would you tell?

### MEMORY TOPIC:

Impartiality

### MEMORY VERSE:

James 2:1 NLT

My dear brothers and sisters, how can you claim to have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ if you favor some people over others?

### LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION:

#### Introduction:

We live in a very partial world. We have favorite foods, favorite restaurants, favorite sports teams, and favorite music. It seems to be part of our nature to have favorites! In many ways, this is a normal part of life. But what when we show favoritism toward people? What if our favoritism is based on wealth, race, appearance, or status? In James 2:1–13, James shows us that this kind of favoritism is not just inappropriate, it's a serious sin. As followers of Jesus, we are called to reject the partiality so common in the world and to extend impartial love to all people equally. James challenges the early church—and us—with the truth that discrimination dishonors those whom God values, especially the poor and marginalized. True faith, James teaches, doesn't only love the lovable, it loves everyone with the same grace we've received. This kind of radical, impartial love is a core expression of obedience to God's Word, the "royal law" to love our neighbor as ourselves. Real faith shows real love to real people.

#### Questions:

Icebreaker: You have to sing karaoke, what song do you pick?

1. Read James 2:1–13 together as a group. Why do you think favoritism and bias are often overlooked in church settings today? Why does James call favoritism a sin? (See Digging Deeper on the word "favoritism")
2. What types of people do you tend to judge or "size up" quickly without even realizing it? (Be honest!) How does the world typically view poverty and wealth? How should Christians view them?
3. In verse 1, James refers to Jesus as "our glorious Lord Jesus Christ." What significance do you think this full title has in the context of this passage?

4. What does James mean when he says, "God has chosen the poor to be rich in faith" (v.5)?  
—See Matthew 11:2–5 and Luke 4:18 for additional insight.
5. Why do you think James refers to "Love your neighbor as yourself" as the "royal law" in verse 8?
6. What specific steps can we take to make sure we are not showing favoritism or judging others based on social status, appearance, or clothing?
7. In what areas of your life—work, family, church, neighborhood—are you most tempted to show partiality? What practical steps can you take this week to recognize and resist bias?

## Digging Deeper

### Question 1—

Note that the Greek word for favoritism (προσωποληψία) is used here in the present tense imperative form (imperative = command). The present tense is used with a practice that is already in progress. James' audience was already showing partiality toward the wealthy and James is condemning it.

"The word [for favoritism] itself is curious – *prosopolempisa* [Greek word]. The noun comes from the expression *prosopon lambanein*. *Prosopon* is the "face"; and *lambanein* here means "to life up." The expression in Greek countenance was to regard him with favor, in contradistinction perhaps to casting down his countenance. Originally it was not a bad word at all; it simply meant "to accept a person with favor." Malachi asks if the governor will be pleased with the people and "will accept their persons," if they bring him blemished offerings (Mal. 1:8-9). But the word rapidly acquired a bad sense. It soon began to mean, not so much to favor a person, [but] to show favoritism, to allow oneself to be unduly influenced by a person's social status or prestige or power or wealth. Malachi goes on to condemn that very sin when God accuses the people of not keeping his ways and of being "partial in their judgments" (Mat. 2:9)."

—William Barclay. *The Letters of James and Peter*. Westminster Press: Philadelphia, 1976. Pgs. 62-62

"Roman laws explicitly favored the rich. Persons of lower class who were thought to act from economic self-interest, could not bring accusations against persons of higher class, and the laws prescribed harsher penalties for lower-class persons convicted of offenses than for offenders from the higher class. Biblical law, most Jewish law, and traditional Greek philosophers had always rejected such distinctions as immoral... Roman courts always favored the rich, who could initiate lawsuits against social inferiors, although social inferiors could not hope to win lawsuits against them. In theory, Jewish courts sought to avoid this discrimination, but as in most cultures people of means naturally had legal advantages: they were usually able to argue their cases more articulately or to hire others to do so for them."

—Craig Keener. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*. IVP: Downers Gove, 2014