



## LEADER'S GUIDE – FEBRUARY 17

***ICEBREAKER:*** *We are all familiar with this phrase: “Don’t judge a book by its cover.” Can you think of a time in your life where you too quickly judged something or someone and were later pleasantly surprised?*



### HIGHLIGHT: *Primary Passage from Sunday*

**James 2:1-13:** My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism.

<sup>2</sup> Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. <sup>3</sup> 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,” <sup>4</sup> have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

<sup>5</sup> Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: 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? <sup>6</sup> But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? <sup>7</sup> Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong?

<sup>8</sup> If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right. <sup>9</sup> But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. <sup>10</sup> For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. <sup>11</sup> For he who said, “You shall not commit adultery,” also said, “You shall not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.

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



### EXPLAIN: *To Be Reviewed before the group gathering*

This week James will discuss the heart behind favoritism and how it goes against God’s heart of mercy in which we have been recipients of.



## APPLY: For Group Discussion

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**GUIDELINES FOR DISCUSSION:** *In this passage, James speaks about favoritism. As we discuss, please be mindful that the perspectives, opinions, and experiences of others in the group may differ from yours. Let us encourage one another not to single out any specific social constructs, any political party's stances, or anyone other than ourselves. A good rule of thumb is to focus on how you personally struggle with this topic of favoritism and how you need Christ to help replace judgment with mercy.*

**1.) Read vv. 1-7. James introduces the topic of favoritism. What does this text tell you about the heart behind favoritism and God's heart for those that may be neglected?** Behind favoritism is a heart of judgment. It also dishonors the person. God exalts the poor and those that we neglect or offer judgment against. Where man responds with a judgmental heart, God responds with a heart of mercy.

**2.) James gives the example of showing favoritism to the rich over the poor. What are some other places that we may struggle with favoritism and judgment? (Remember our Discussion Guidelines)** Race, Religion, Rank, Gender, Age, Beauty. **What are some areas that we see within the church specifically?** In the church, often we make certain sins worse than others and certain acts of obedience more important than others. We then judge people who struggle with the "worse sins" or "more important disciplines."

**3.) Read vv.8-11. What verse or verses stood out to you most and why? What questions do you have surrounding these verses?** V. 8 – If we act on love, we are unable to judge and discriminate. V.9-11 – There is irony in this statement. When we judge others by their merits, we then condemn ourselves because we must face the same type of judgment for our behavior. James says that no matter how small or big, all sins make us lawbreakers because we sin against (v.11) "HE WHO SAID..." Sin is not weighed by the offense, but by whom we offend. (Great Illustration: What happens when you slap your brother? What happens when you slap the President? The consequences are in line with whom you offend, not what you do) Therefore, because we have all sinned, we are all on a level playing field before God which removes a heart of judgment with one another.

**4.) Read vv.12-13. How has mercy triumphed judgment in our relationship with God?** When we deserved judgment for our sins, he was merciful to us in Jesus Christ. Our favor with God is because of mercy. **How does that impact our relationship with others?** When we realize favor was given to us, we then give it to others opposed expecting them to earn it.



## RESPOND: Bringing the discussion to a point of action

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**As we mentioned last week (Hebrews 3:12-13), we have blind spots in our life and we need the Word of God and one another to help us see them and address them. Together, discuss these three questions.** As the leader, use your discernment for how to have these conversations. You may want to do this as a whole group, in smaller groups, coupled off in pairs, or ask them to journal about these questions this week.

- **Awareness:** Where are potential favoritism blind spots in my life?
- **Habits:** What habits in your life are reinforcing that blind spot?
- **Action:** What can you do this week to begin to break this pattern?