



## God Has an App for That!

Leaders Notes Week 3

### “Break Down the Walls that Divide”

James 2:1-13

1. The gauge used to discriminate was the physical appearance of the person (i.e. gold ring and fine clothing vs. shabby clothing). The problem of the poor and the rich, already emphasized in 1:9–11, 27, now comes to center stage with this warning about discriminating against the poor in favor of the wealthy in the Christian assembly. The danger becomes un-Christian behavior, as well as those who make such distinctions show themselves to be judges with evil thoughts. Christians are not to “judge” each other (Matt. 7:1–5; Rom. 14:4; 1 Cor. 5:12), and to do so can only mean one’s mind is consumed with evil “thoughts”.

2. In today’s culture, we see this played out in various ways. The rich and the poor, the color of our skin, models who are skinnier, employers hiring someone who is younger, someone’s hierarchal position...etc. These are some ways we see it played out, but do not limit your group to these answers. Go around and allow members to share how they have seen this lived out.

3. Go around and share. This question may prompt some personal, maybe even hurtful, past experiences. Make sure to be encouraging and allow everyone to share. The point is for members to begin to identify how this is common in our culture, and how we have all been casualties of someone else’s bias.

4. The “rich in faith” are the poor as described in this passage. They are rich in an eternal sense because they are heirs of the kingdom (cf. “poor in spirit, ... theirs is the kingdom of heaven,” Matt. 5:3).

James challenges his Christian readers as to why they would honor the rich in the assembly when it is the rich unbelievers of the world who blaspheme the name of Christ, as they “drag you into court”. As frequently recorded in the OT (e.g., Amos 4:1; Hab. 1:4; Mal. 3:5), the

wealthy often used the court system to steal from the poor. When you show favoritism toward these “rich”, you slander God’s name just as they do.

5. This is referring to the Royal Law of Love. Favoritism and discrimination are violations of the kingdom law of love. When we fulfill this law by proper Christian living, then nothing can overcome Love. In loving others as we love ourselves, we begin to see God’s Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. This is the antithesis to favoritism. Against love, there is no law.

6. Favoritism toward the rich breaks the OT commands to treat the poor equitably (Lev. 19:15; Deut. 16:19; Job 34:19) and is a serious transgression of God’s law. The law was considered an interdependent whole, and any infraction constituted a breaking of the law as a whole. Jesus said, “not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished” (Matt. 5:18). Thus, favoritism (James 2:9) makes one “accountable” (Gk. *enochos*, a legal term for “liable” or “guilty” before God’s court) for the whole law.

7. In Romans 13:8-10, Paul cites several OT commandments regarding responsibility to others, all of which are summed up in the call from Lev. 19:18 to love your neighbor as yourself. When asked by a lawyer in Matthew 22, Jesus responded that loving God and loving people were the greatest commandments. This has been the heart of God from the very beginning of time. He has been fulfilling His promise to His people since the beginning of time to restore them and restore this earth. In Matthew 22:37, “Heart,” “soul,” and “mind” do not represent rigid compartments of human existence, but rather, together refer to the whole person. Showing favoritism is the direct opposite of who God is and what He commands us to do.

8. Believers must speak and act in accordance with the law of freedom and with a view to the coming judgment. True freedom is freedom to obey God and do what pleases Him. The law of Christ provides freedom from sin through the gospel. In the context of James’s discussion of rich and poor (vv. 1–7), he may also be suggesting that God’s law will set the poor free from prejudice, oppression, and exploitation. Every Christian will be judged by God (1 Cor. 3:12–15; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Pet. 1:17). The freedom that we have been given has been given with a responsibility to love and see others as Christ sees us.

9. This proverbial saying sums up the implications of vv. 1–12 and leads into the “faith without works” discussion in vv. 14–26. It was the core of Roman law (*lex talionis*, “the law of retribution”), but more importantly, it is central



to God's law: what you do to others will be done to you in the judgment (i.e., rewarded for good and punished for evil). "Mercy triumphs over judgment" does not, in this context, mean that God's mercy is extended to believers at the judgment. Rather, believers' acts of mercy (e.g., caring for the poor and hurting) will mean that they are vindicated at the judgment (cf. Matt. 25:34–40). Mercy was an essential OT requirement for dealing with the poor (Mic. 6:8; Zech. 7:9–10). Mercy is likewise, a requirement of believers in the NT (e.g., Matt. 5:7; 6:15; 18:32–35), or they will experience God's judgment rather than His mercy.

10. Go around and share. Allow members to freely express their convictions with this lesson. As previously mentioned, God gives us freedom from sin and guilt. He has paid the price for ALL of our sin. Therefore, our response should be that of gratitude and grace to others. Our treatment of others should be reflective of God's character, mercy and grace. No favoritism, no bias...but ALL Love!

### **FURTHER STUDY |**

There is a reoccurring theme throughout scripture for each one of these topical studies. Take this week as the Leader of your group to immerse yourself in the reading of the Word and see how these verses can help you download God's app to break down the walls that divide.

- Proverbs 13:20
- Proverbs 28:23
- Proverbs 14:7
- 1 Corinthians 15:33
- Galatians 5:15
- Galatians 5:19
- Ephesians 4:31-32
- Hebrews 12:15

