

BAND of BROTHERS

SUMMER SERIES 2026 – WEEK 3 HANDOUT

WEEK 3 – Faith Without Favoritism

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?

- James 2:1 NLT

- **Remember: this is not a self-help book**
 - Or an exhaustive list of spiritual dos and don'ts
 - In an effort to make James **applicable**...
...we've made it **doable**
Talk less • Listen more
Be joyful • Get wisdom
Don't give up • Don't get angry
Tame your tongue • Take care of the needy
 - But the religion God is looking for is...
...pure and undefiled (1:27)
 - It's not man-made or self-produced
 - It's a work of the Spirit, not the flesh
 - A message meant for Jews

To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations.... – James 1:1b NIV

- James is writing to Jewish Christians
 - They are familiar with the Mosaic Law
 - They have been steeped in law-keeping
 - So, Paul keeps bringing up “the law”

But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. – James 1:25
ESV

For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. – James 2:10 ESV

So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. – James 2:12 ESV

- James is building off the Mosaic Law

*“You must be careful to **keep all of my decrees and regulations by putting them into practice.** I am the LORD.” – Leviticus 19:37 NLT*

*“However, if you do not listen to me or **obey all these commands...**I will punish you” – Leviticus 26:14, 16 NLT*

- Perfect obedience was mandatory
- To break one law was to break them all
- God doesn’t grade on the curve
- So what is James trying to say?
 - ~ Is he demanding perfection?
 - ~ Is their salvation based on their works?
 - ~ The key is found in James 2:8

*If you really fulfill **the royal law** according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well. – James 2:8 ESV*

- Peter is recalling an incident with Jesus
 - ~ A Pharisee asked Jesus a question:

“Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?” – Matthew 22:36 NLT

~ Jesus replied:

*“You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ **This is the first and greatest commandment.** A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.” – Matthew 22:39-40 NLT*

If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. – 1 John 4:20 NLT

- **The royal law** – Leviticus 19:9-18
 - “...you shall love your neighbor as yourself...” - vs 18

How?

- Leave some of your harvest for the poor
- Don't gather the fallen grapes in your vineyard
- Don't steal from one another
- Don't lie to or slander one another
- Don't oppress your neighbor or rob him
- Don't withhold pay from an employee
- Don't insult the deaf or cause the blind to fall
- Don't use the courts to enact injustice
- Don't be partial to the poor or defer to the great

- God expects His people to live differently

*"...if you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the peoples on earth; for all the earth belongs to me. And **you will be my kingdom of priests, my holy nation.**" – Exodus 19:5-6 NLT*

- o Peter picked up on this theme

*...you are a chosen race, **a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him** who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. – 1 Peter 2:9 ESV*

My fellow believers, do not practice your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of partiality [toward people—show no favoritism, no prejudice, no snobbery]. – James 2:1 Amplified Bible

- o We serve as priests for the King
- o We have been **called** and **consecrated**

*He [Jesus] gave his life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, and to make us his very own people, **totally committed to doing good deeds.** – Titus 2:14 NLT*

- o As **Christ-followers**, they were to be **Christ-like**
- o They were to obey the royal law: Love God, love others

"You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor....you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord." – Leviticus 19:15, 18 NLT

- Partiality in practice
 - o Remember what James said:
*Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: **to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.** – James 1:27 NLT*

- Partiality is **ungodly** and **non-Christlike**
God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. – Acts 10:34-35 NLT

*“You [Jesus] aren’t swayed by others, because **you pay no attention to who they are.**”*
– Matthew 22:16 NLT

- Partiality...involves **making distinctions**
 - ...is **self-serving**
 - ...is **externally focused**
 - ...is a form of **prejudice**
 - ...promoted **temporal priorities**
 - ...turns people into **commodities**
 - ...is **sin!**

*...if you show partiality, **you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.** For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.* – James 2:9-10 ESV

- Favoritism is a form of **judgment**
 - But Jesus warned against judging others

“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” – Matthew 7:1-2 NLT

“So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.” – Matthew 7:12 NLT

“Our obedience to God’s will cannot be on a selective basis; we cannot choose that part that is to our liking and disregard the rest. God’s will is not fragmentary; the entire law is the expression of His will for His people; it constitutes a grand unity.” – Edmond D. Hiebert, James. Chicago: Moody Press, 1992.

- Is Peter promoting law-keeping?
 - Is he advocating salvation by works?
 - Consider what Peter said at the Jerusalem Council
*“God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He did not discriminate between us and them, for **he purified their hearts by faith.**”* – Acts 15:8-9 NIV

“...why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.” – Acts 15:10-11 NIV

- And James agreed
“It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood.” – Acts 15:19-20 NIV

- **Free to love and live like Christ**

- James is calling them to a life of **faithfulness**
 - Attitudes and actions that reflect their faith
 - Marked by selfless, sacrificial love
 - And characterized by mercy

mercy – *eleos*

kindness or good will towards the miserable and the afflicted, joined with a desire to help them

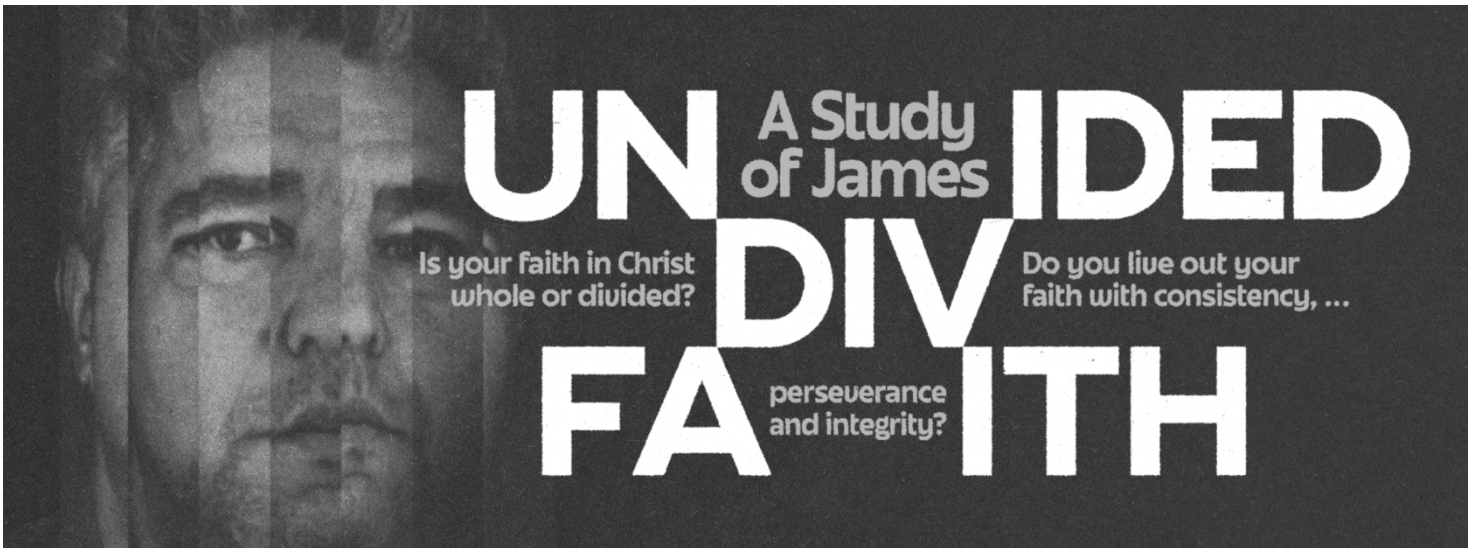
- James repeated the words of Jesus
“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.” – Matthew 5:7 ESV
- He complimented the words of Paul
So let’s not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don’t give up. Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith. – Galatians 6:9-10 NLT
- And echoed the words of David
With the merciful you show yourself merciful; with the blameless man you show yourself blameless; with the purified you show yourself pure; and with the crooked you make yourself seem tortuous. For you save a humble people, but the haughty eyes you bring down. – Psalm 18:25-27 ESV

- **Discussion questions**

Why do you think James made such a big issue out of showing favoritism? What is the real danger?

“God has chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom.” Why?

God doesn’t extend mercy based on our perceived worth? Discuss.



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SUMMER SERIES 2026 – WEEK 4 HOMEWORK

WEEK 4 – Faith That Works

In this lesson, James confronts the danger of a faith that exists only in words and not in action. He makes the sobering claim that faith which does not express itself through obedience is not merely weak, but dead. While works do not earn salvation, they do reveal a mature, genuine faith, showing whether belief is alive and actively shaping a believer's life.

- In Ken's Devotional™ on the Book of James, please read pages 29-32 sometime this week. They cover the section of James that we will be studying in week.
- Read **James 2:14–26** several times this week. Read it slowly and prayerfully, asking God to reveal whether your faith is something you primarily profess or something that actively directs your obedience and daily decisions.
- Read **James 2:14-17**. Then read the following passages from the letters of Paul. Beside each one, describe how it appears that Paul and James disagree.

Romans 3:27-31

Romans 4:1-8

Galatians 3:6-9

Ephesians 2:8-9

According to verses 15-16, what example does James use to show the emptiness of faith without action?

In verse 17, how does James define the condition of faith that does not produce works?

- Read **James 2:18-20**. How does James respond to the claim that faith and works can be separated?

What does James mean when he says that belief without obedience is no better than the faith of demons?

What does this section reveal about the difference between intellectual assent and true saving faith?

- Read **James 2:21-25**. How does James use **Abraham** to illustrate faith that is expressed through obedience?

What does it mean that Abraham's faith was "completed" or "made mature" by his works?

Why is **Rahab** a surprising but powerful example of living faith, and what does her story add to James's argument?

- Read **James 2:26**. How does this serve summarize James' teaching on faith and?

Where are you most tempted to substitute words, knowledge, or good intentions for obedience? What is one specific area where God may be calling you to take a step of faith that moves belief into action this week?