

LIVING out LOUD

# James

*Studies in Practical Christianity*

*Session #3 Fundamental Flaws with Favouritism*

James Chapter 2 Verses 1-13

*“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves.  
Do what it says.” – James 1v 22*

Sladebrook Evangelical Church

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## **Introduction and Aim of this Teaching Series:**

The book of James is often considered to be the most practical book in the Bible. Apart from the logical lessons of the Proverbs and, of course, the unavoidable challenges we find in the Sermon on the Mount that is probably true! As the half-brother of Jesus, James shoots from the hip; having witnessed firsthand what a life before God should be lived like, he speaks clearly with penetrating truths that leave little room to manoeuvre or excuse.

James wrote with divine insight that cannot be compromised. His epistle, written to scattered saints in need of encouragement, comes fresh upon each reading. Some books of the Bible require not only careful examination, but also careful interpretation, as different views can surface and political persuasions are formed. Not so with James. The challenge of this short book of 108 verses is not so much interpretation, but application! The meaning is all too clear and the challenge unequivocal. James' message throughout is clear: Practical Christian living reflects genuine faith that goes on to transform our lives. So says James, if you believe it, your life should show it!

The aim of this series is to highlight this teaching and the need to "Live it out Loud" personally and within our corporate context. James wrote to Jewish Christians facing all sorts of trials and who due to their heritage, were tempted to resort to the thankless task master of law keeping, rather than to Christ. James' message is clear: We are to aim for all that God intends us to be; not by merely verbalising a creed, or looking back to law, but by expressing a radical, counter cultural Christ-life that defies the wisdom and ways of this world. As a local church, we need to hear James' words again and heed their heart beat if we are to embrace all that Christ would have for us, both within the fellowship and as we reach out to those yet to see what genuine faith looks like: As God's people, may we learn to "Live out Loud" the truths we discover during the time we spend in the book of James.

### **LIVING out LOUD #3: Introduction**

Everyone has favourites. Whether it is songs, places, food types or colours, something in us naturally leans one way over another. After all, God didn't create clones; He gave us different personalities, abilities and the freedom to choose. Now whilst this is natural and perfectly acceptable within the fickle flavours of personal preference, it should have no place among the people of God when it comes to how we perceive and treat each other.

James describes a hypothetical situation (but probably based on actual events) where two men come to church. Neither is denied access and, to that extent, both are welcomed. However, the way in which both guests are subsequently treated betrays something completely alien to the warm welcome of the Gospel. The first protagonist is obviously rich; outwardly he is well dressed and no doubt successful. He is made much of and granted a premier seat with open arms. Enter the second man. He is poor; his clothes are ragged and dirty and a strange smell accompanies him wherever he goes. This man is ordered to take a lowly place, preferably far away on the fringe and certainly a good distance from the respectable "Christian" in-crowd.

This section of James' letter challenges some fundamental flaws in congregational life. Firstly, he reminds his hearers that they are not to treat people differently, or discriminate based on appearance. (V1-4) Secondly, James reaffirms that God's view of things is not ours. (V5-7) Finally, he states that God alone is judge and champions the law of Christ which gives freedom over the bondage and futility of law-breaking hypocrisy. (V8-13)

The church is called to be a counter-cultural community. When worldly values undermine the Gospel we must swiftly snuff them out and reignite a warm flame of grace for all in their place. James spoke forcibly into a world that still penalised women, foreigners, children and slaves. The Gospel, he says, should pierce such paper thin preferences. He calls us all back to basics: to the great Gospel pillars that uphold and exemplify the Christian life: that **Sin is the Great Leveller** – not some, but all have sinned, that **Christ is the Great Redeemer** – His call was to all; not just the lovely but the lost and that **God is the Great Welcomer** – He runs with outstretched arms to receive the most pungent of pig-smelling prodigals and seats them at His side. As glad recipients of such grace ourselves, says James, so should we.

## **Fundamental Flaws with Favouritism**

*This section of James' letter challenges us to shun the shabby standards of the world. Christians are not to have favourites, show preferential treatment or to form biased and unworthy judgements. We are to "live out loud" as grace-filled recipients of God's wonderful pardon and love which is for all.*

### **1. V1-4: Scrap the Seating Plan: How we must all look beyond the label**

*As God's people, we must never fall into the worldly trap of discriminating on grounds of looks, age, gender or class. We are all one in Christ.*

### **2. V5-7: Look through the Lord's Lens: How we must get a God's eye view**

*James reminds us that God looks beyond the outward and values the heart. We are responsible to promote what God prioritises over what man pursues.*

### **3. V8-13: Make much of Mercy: How we must let God be God and Judge**

*Law exposes and incarcerates its worshippers. We should exalt in the grace and mercy of God and find acceptance in Christ who makes us one and set us free.*

## **LIVING out LOUD:**

- *Have you ever been the recipient of the treatment that James warns of here? What happened? Alternatively, have you ever been guilty of overlooking someone in the Body of Christ for someone else?*
- *In what ways does the world show favouritism and form judgements about people? In what ways does the church do the same?*
- *Imagine what a radical, Christ-like community should really look like. Outline some ways in which we can ensure that everyone is not only included, but actively involved and invested in.*
- *In what ways can Christians lapse into law? Think of some ways we can combat this tendency and again, think of some alternative ways in which we should exemplify Gospel grace in the way we treat others instead.*
- *Are you currently aware of anyone who is left on the fringe in the church? Spend some time praying for that person and think of a practical way you can seek them out this week and include them within the heart of church fellowship.*