



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Most people have felt the sting of favoritism. Who hasn't slinked their way through the first class section of an airliner to find their cramped seat tucked far back in coach! Or who among us hasn't looked down with envy from the dizzying heights of section triple D hundreds of feet above the wealthy patrons in their courtside seats awaiting the beginning of a playoff game!

But what if someone was invited to enjoy such special seating based on appearing wealthy rather than actually being rich enough to pay their way? That wouldn't be right at all! That's what James called *favoritism*. And he wanted to make clear that it's a form of prejudice totally unacceptable among those who follow Christ.



Getting Started: No Playing Favorites with God

When searching the Scriptures, a helpful first step is to gather resources that will guide you in your study. Make certain you have a Bible dictionary and a concordance handy, as well as a reliable commentary on the book of the Bible you're studying. For this study of James, we recommend you get a copy of *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter*. You'll find a description of that and other resources on the last page of this study.

NOTE: From time to time throughout this study, you'll notice bolded page numbers in parentheses next to a question or comment. These page numbers correspond to the section in *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter* where that particular point is discussed.

Read through all of James chapter 2. Read it slowly, as if you're reading it for the very first time.

Quotable

*Prejudice is
inconsistent with
God's method.
God doesn't look at
the face and say,
"I receive you" or
"I don't want you."
That's partiality.
He looks at the
heart.*

— Charles R. Swindoll





Helpful Hint

Remember: *Observation* is a critical beginning technique you will want to use to put together the pieces of a passage of Scripture. Paying particular attention to James 2:1–13, make some initial observations about what you see—for instance, *are there any repeated words? Did James use any connecting words that offer clues into what he was emphasizing?* Take some time to make notes on a separate sheet of paper about what you discover.



Your Turn in the Scriptures

Take a few moments to read through the material on James 2:1–13 in your commentary or in that section of your study Bible. Also, look up this passage in either a Bible dictionary or a Bible background commentary. Make some notes about the cultural and religious context surrounding James' teaching (**pages 48–55**).

Now take a few minutes to respond to the following questions using the study resources you have available.

Try to imagine what it may have been like to be a Christian in Israel and throughout the Roman Empire during the days in which James wrote. Based on what you have read, what might a typical worship service have been like? Where did Christians go for worship?

Were you able to discover anything about how the poor were treated under Roman rule? If so, what did you learn that would help understand James' teaching here?



Read James 2:1–13. As you read, underline or note on a separate sheet of paper any words or expressions James used to describe his concern regarding showing favoritism. What stands out to you as significant?

How many questions do you find in James 2:1–13? What do you think is significant about James' questions for these Christians to whom he wrote?

Doing a careful word study of a key term in a biblical passage helps you understand what the passage means. James used the Greek word *prosopolempsia*, from the root word meaning “face.” James warned against showing favoritism toward people who *looked* wealthy (**page 48**).

Have you ever felt that someone was given special attention by a ministry leader or individual based simply on outward appearance? If so, describe the setting. According to James, why is this a problem in the church?

James' exhortation against favoritism finds its roots in the knowledge of God and in His righteous nature. Read James 2:8–13. Underline in your Bible or make a note on a separate sheet of paper the places where James quoted from Old Testament passages.

Take some time to turn to the Old Testament passages James quoted. Write down your observations about the context and significance to James 2 for each passage. Read a few verses prior to and after each Old Testament verse to find clues.

Leviticus 19:18

Context: _____

Significance: _____



Exodus 20:13–14

Context: _____

Significance: _____

James desired that the Christians to whom he wrote replace their tendency toward prejudice with the virtues of righteousness reflected in Christ. He exhorted them and us to follow three worthy principles for relating to all people, regardless of their standing in society or their cultural, ethnic, or socioeconomic situation.

1. *Let Scripture be your standard.* Rather than relying on political correctness, gut instinct, or cultural norms, let the Word of God be the standard by which everyone is received (James 2:12a).
2. *Let love be your law.* When encountering all manner of people, especially in regard to welcoming them into Christian worship, love is our ultimate motivation and law (James 2:12b).
3. *Let mercy be your message.* There is no place for severity of judgment or rigidity in practice in the body of Christ. We are all in need of mercy, and we ought to be joyful and generous dispensers of it to everyone we encounter (James 2:13).



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, how thankful I am that You looked at me in my sinful condition and offered mercy, not judgment, grace, not condemnation. By Your Holy Spirit, enable me to be a consistent and loving example of mercy and grace to those who need it most. In the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ, amen.



JAMES Hands-On Christianity

Prejudice Is a Sin

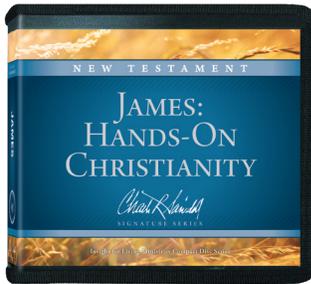
James 2:1–13

SEARCHING
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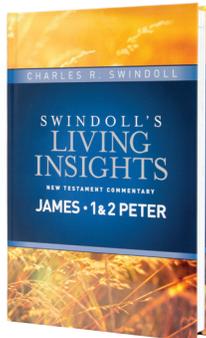
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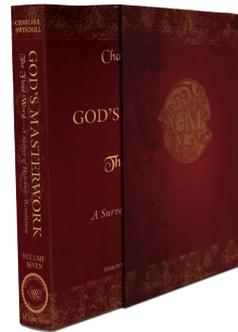
Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2016 broadcast, this Searching the Scriptures study was developed by Mark Tobey in collaboration with Charles R. Swindoll based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts. It was released as a Message Mate through Insight for Living Ministries.



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