

FAITH REJECTS PARTIALITY

YEAR: TRANSFORM / FOCUS: LIVING FOR JESUS / SERIES: JAMES

BIG TRUTH: FAITH REJECTS PARTIALITY

2 Chronicles 19:7; Job 32:21-22; Proverbs 24:23; Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11

BIBLE VERSE: JAMES 2:1

"My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory."

BIG IDEAS

- Partiality is choosing to value one individual over another.
- People of faith love their neighbor as themselves.
- People of faith know mercy and generously show mercy.

BIBLE PASSAGE: JAMES 2:1-13

TRANSFORM: LIVING FOR JESUS

In High School, the Transform Year is an exploration of what it looks like to have transformed influence as we seek to live for a Kingdom that is greater than our own. First, we recognize that we will never be transformed if we are not Living for Jesus. To do this, we must first know who Jesus is by looking at who He says He is (John 8:58), and then look at what the Bible says about how in Him, we live by faith (James 1:6). Next, we recognize that to have transformed influence means that we must live as disciples in pursuit of Christ and His Kingdom over ourselves and our own kingdoms.

SERIES AIMS



Every student should know...

- God is a God of compassion and mercy.
- We are prone to self-deception.
- If our faith does not have works, it is dead.



Every student should feel...

- Joy, even in trials, because of God's goodness.
- Thankful for every good and perfect gift from the Father.
- Responsible to use their influence for Jesus alone.



Every student should strive to...

- Read the entire book of James.
- Memorize the Bible verse each week.
- Reject and repent of faith without works.



Every student should want...

- To grow in their understanding of biblical faith.
- To practice religion based on what Scripture says, not the world, culture, or our feelings.
- To know and generously show mercy.

GUIDES AND WORKOUTS

The Guide provides a commentary page on each week's Bible verse and on each Big Idea that unpacks the Big Truth. Each week also includes a Student Workout as a resource to help the student pursue spiritual disciplines on their own. Additionally, each week has a Family Workout that helps equip parents and guardians to have spiritual conversations with their student.



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BIBLE VERSE: JAMES 2:1

“My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.”

Believers know they have been redeemed in Christ.

“My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.”

- James begins chapter two of his letter to the tribes of Israel by bringing to their attention the sin of partiality. He addresses them as his brothers in the faith when he calls them “my brothers”. He also reminds them to “hold the faith” which serves as a reminder of their own redemption through Jesus.
- Believers know they are redeemed people. They know they have been bought with the blood of Jesus. Because of this knowledge, they do not have a false view of themselves or think more highly of themselves than they should. Instead, they are humbled before Jesus and live humbly before the Lord.

Believers live with other believers and treat them as redeemed people.

“My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.”

- It’s not enough for a person of faith to know they are redeemed, but they must also live with others as redeemed people also. James addresses his fellow believers as his brothers and sisters in the faith. When we live with fellow believers as the redeemed people they are, we will treat them as we ought.
- Believers do not mistreat others when they have a right view of God, themselves, and others. When we see other believers as redeemed just like us, we will live with them as the valuable and precious people that they are. We will know that Jesus gave His life for them just as He did for us.

Believers reject favoritism.

“My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.”

- People of faith reject the sin of favoritism. Because they have a right view of God, themselves, and others they do not show favoritism. They do not value one person over another. Instead, they see all of people as valuable and bearers of God’s image.
- Believers live showing mercy to all because they are redeemed people. As they live with others as fellow image bearers and with other believers as their brothers and sisters in Christ, they do not allow rank, wealth, status, or position to lead them to value one person or group of people over others.

FAITH REJECTS PARTIALITY

BIG IDEA #1: PARTIALITY IS CHOOSING TO VALUE ONE INDIVIDUAL OVER ANOTHER.¹**[THIS]**

James makes a connection to his previous statement on what is pure and undefiled religion in James 1:27 to the sin of partiality in the beginning of chapter two. Partiality is an inherent part of every person. We fool ourselves if we think we have no partiality in our hearts, or that we never show favoritism. All of us are born favoring ourselves above others and in loving ourselves the most, we favor the people who benefit us, flatter us, or prefer us the most. Deep within us are our own prejudices. In James 2:1, James is speaking specifically of favoring wealthy people over poor people. In verses 1-4, James elaborates on the way favoritism is shown in church. When we value a person who appears to be wealthy or more established over a poorer person, we're showing favoritism and sinning against God.

[THEREFORE]**How do you see the sin of partiality in your own heart?**

Often, we show favoritism to people who are like us or who benefit us in some way. Scripture speaks against this as seen in Galatians 3:28 and Leviticus 19:15.

Read James 2:1-7. How does the church today favor the wealthy over the poor? What effects on the body of Christ does partiality have?

Often today, the church programs and plans in a way that favors those who are better established financially. How we dress for worship, the activities we plan for our different ministries, and even the way we collectively sing and read the Bible can cater to those who are not considered disadvantaged. Partiality is detrimental to the body of Christ because it causes separations that aren't beneficial to the purpose of God.

[THIS]

Every single person has value because every person is made in the image of God. Being an image bearer of God is no small thing. God chose to place His image upon mankind. He did this for His glory and His purposes. This means that every person in the world reflects Him in some way, though sin has distorted that image. When we show favor to one group of people, we make a statement that God does not make. We show by our actions that we have decided that one particular person or group of people is more important or valuable than another. Often, in our world, this looks like our choosing people who look like us, act like us, dress like us, are in the same group as us, or hold the same opinions as us. We choose the people who make us comfortable or do the things we deem acceptable. We choose to order our lives to cater to what we favor. James speaks against this because people of faith reject this. Just as the kingdom of God is made up of much diversity, so should our lives be made up of people from all walks of life.

[THEREFORE]**How can you reject partiality in yourself and the church?**

James 2:1-4 helps us see that within the body of Christ, favoritism can be detrimental. It can make wealthy people feel puffed up and poor people feel invaluable. Acts 10:34 reminds us that our example in Christ is to reject partiality. God shows no partiality in His judgment, grace, and mercy and we should not either.

1. James 2:2-3: Favoritism is showing favor to one person because of how they look or what they have while devaluing another.

BIG IDEA #2: PEOPLE OF FAITH LOVE THEIR NEIGHBOR AS THEMSELVES.²**[THIS]**

Rejecting partiality is more than denying it or deciding not to favor one person over another. In order to live a life free of favoritism, a person must fulfill the greatest commandment, which is to love God and to love others as themselves. This requires action. James makes the connection between our faith and works by connecting a rejection of partiality with being a hearer and doer of the Word of God. His listeners would have been familiar with the two great commandments to love God and love their neighbor as themselves, but James was teaching them that their actions had to prove that they were not just hearing this Word, but were acting on it. Partiality prevents a person from fulfilling these commandments. We cannot love our neighbors as ourselves if we are showing favoritism. If we aren't loving our neighbors as ourselves, we aren't loving God as we should either.

[THEREFORE]

Why does the sin of partiality prevent us from loving our neighbor?

Colossians 3:11 teaches us that in Christ there are no class, race, or trivial distinctions made among God's people. When we choose to make those distinctions, we are doing something that God Himself does not do. Jude 1:16 teaches us that there is no room in the believer's life or heart for partiality if they are to please God and love others.

[THIS]

In order to love our neighbor as ourselves, we must love sacrificially. We must be willing and act sacrificially on behalf of others. We will not sacrifice for others if we value one person or group of people more than others. God does not set this example for us. When He sent His Son, He sent Him for anyone who believes. He requires a heart that humbles itself before Him, not a life of distinguishment. Our neighbors are all people we encounter, not just those in close proximity to us. We love them by counting them all as more important than ourselves. When we look to their needs and desires above our own and consider their lives as more significant, we are loving them as God has commanded us to love them. By setting aside personal preferences, we open ourselves up to meet the needs of others and to share the love of Christ with all people.

[THEREFORE]

Read James 2:8-9. Who are your neighbors? How do you love them?

God commands His people to love Him with all of their being. This means our lives should be about Him, His glory, and His kingdom. This works itself out in a love for people. When He commands us to love our neighbors, he means all people because we are all neighbors in this world.

What are some things about other people that you tend to judge them for? How does this keep you from loving them like you should?

Often, we judge based upon physical appearance or what is presented to us. 1 Samuel 16:7 teaches us that God knows the heart of a person while we know only what is on the outside. While we may think we know a person, we really can only know what is shown to us, but God knows all. Our own preconceived ideas and notions lead us to judge and show partiality to people. In order to not show favoritism, we must set these aside and seek God's wisdom and guidance.

2. James 2:8: God requires that His people love their neighbors as themselves.

BIG IDEA #3: PEOPLE OF FAITH KNOW MERCY AND GENEROUSLY SHOW MERCY.³**[THIS]**

A danger believers face is falling back into a reliance upon their own righteousness. This righteousness is a perceived goodness because we are not holy at all. James teaches about the danger of thinking we are righteous in verses 10-13 of chapter two. We may keep God's commands in one area of our life, but this can lead us to a prideful, judgmental arrogance. In other areas we will fail miserably to keep God's commands, yet not see our hypocrisy. People of faith know they are undeserving recipients of God's mercy. This mercy is His Son and the forgiveness of their sin. They understand that this redemption is a remarkable gift that they have done nothing to deserve. People of faith live knowing that it is not they who have made themselves clean, but God who has provided a way for them to be made righteous according to His great mercy. By this they understand and know what mercy is and live humbly for Him.

[THEREFORE]**How have you defined mercy before?**

Mercy can be distorted and defined by the world as something from man, but mercy is from God. 1 Peter 1:3 helps us understand what mercy truly is when we see that it is God's gift of cleansing us and making us new people. When He opens our eyes to our condition and transforms us through Jesus, He is showing us mercy.

[THIS]

When a person knows mercy, they show mercy. It would be impossible to have a true understanding of God's mercy on our own lives and not show mercy to others. There may be moments and times when we fail to be merciful to others, but our lives will not be marked by a lack of mercy. James speaks to this lifestyle of mercy in 2:12-13. A person who has really received the mercy of God and understands it will show it to others. Those who judge others without showing mercy and spend a lifetime of judging without mercy most likely have never really experienced God's mercy. James is teaching that God's wonderful display of mercy transforms a person and doesn't allow room for a lack of mercy for others. We won't stand in judgment of others, deeming them as unworthy or unvaluable when we understand the mercy we've received. He also teaches that we can't live this way and expect to receive mercy ourselves. Those who know God's mercy show mercy generously. We live lives marked by generous forgiveness and love towards others because that is what we have received ourselves.

[THEREFORE]**How has God's mercy transformed your attitude towards others?**

Luke 6:36-37 shows us that a life transformed by God's mercy is one that loves others and shows mercy to others. When we have been redeemed by God, we will love others showing them mercy generously.

What is the difference between judging others and holding someone accountable for their sin?

Overlooking sin and pretending that sin is not sin is not showing mercy. God sets the example of forgiving us for our sin when we confess it and we should do the same to others. Proverbs 28:13 and Psalm 86:5 help us understand that we can hold someone accountable for their sin, yet not judge them by not holding their sin against them when they have repented of it. We are not their ultimate judge; therefore, we do not get to have the final say on their lives.

3. James 2:13: Those who know God know mercy and they show mercy.