



LEADER'S NOTES

For use with the discussion guides drawing on the Sunday messages.

February 27, 2005
James 2:1-13

OVERVIEW

This may be one of the more challenging discussions you will have with your group. James is writing to us about living out our faith in genuine ways in our day to day lives. As we turn to his words today, we find him touching on something that may impact us deeply—our prejudices and preferences in embracing others.

DISCUSSION

Begin your discussion by talking about vacation preferences. That is a harmless way of opening up the subject of “personal favorites.” But after the issue is raised, transition to the idea that although those preferences may be harmless, James does tell us that preferential treatment of people is not.

Keep in mind the situation of James’ first readers. They have been scattered out of Jerusalem because of persecution. They have had to flee home and livelihood. They are living hard lives; most of them are probably poor. Thus, it’s not hard to see why they might tend to give preferential treatment to someone who appeared wealthy.

But James is offering this as just one example of preferential treatment. What other yardsticks might we use to measure who we will or will not embrace as members of the family of faith? Things like . . .

- Someone’s physical appearance
- Someone’s race or ethnic background
- Someone’s level of education or place in the business world
- Someone’s schooling choice for their children
- Someone’s . . . well, you get the idea.

Make sure your people understand that James is only offering one example, appropriate for his initial readers. What example might he use if he were writing to your group?

James doesn’t mean that we will be “best friends” with everyone. There are natural affinities that cause us to “click” more with some. James’ concern is with how we relate to the broader body of Christ.

What we need to realize is that God welcomes everyone who comes in faith. That’s how we each “got in.” When we show preferences with regard to how we treat those who are part of the family, James says we are sinning against the basic principles of the kingdom.

BIG IDEA

Any yardstick we use to evaluate whether we should love and embrace a brother or sister in the Lord is a wrong yardstick!



DISCUSSION GUIDE

A small group resource for the church drawing on the Sunday messages.

February 27, 2005
James 2:1-13

A weekly discussion guide designed to aid you to hear the Word, understand what you hear, and take it to heart.

Take a few minutes and share with one another your favorite place to go on a vacation and offer a brief reason why it’s your favorite. What do you notice about how personal preferences come into play for selecting favorite places for vacation?

When it comes to vacations, having preferences is no problem. However, James tells us that there is an area of life where personal preferences can cause us trouble. Read James 2:1-13.

James says that some Christians might show preference for those who are wealthy. Considering the situation the believers James was writing to were in, why might they show such preference?

James offers just one example; we can use other yardsticks to “measure” the value of others. What reasons does James offer for not responding to others this way?

It could be hard to be this honest but, if you are able, share with the group which yardstick you may have used in the past to determine who you would welcome as brothers and sisters in the Lord (and who you might shun).

What is going to help us all lay down these yardsticks for measuring value and determining who we will embrace and grow to genuinely love as our brothers and sisters in the Lord?

Prepared for you by

SOUTHSIDE
fellowship

Woodruff Road &
Highway 14
Greenville, SC
864/234-7033
southsidefellowship.org