

## BIBLE DISCUSSION GROUP STUDY QUESTIONS

In preparation for Sunday, Aug. 14, 2011

Passage: James 2:1-13

Memory Passage: James 2:13

### DAY 1 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

### READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read James 2:1-13.** What does the word “partiality” mean in v. 1? If James stopped with 2:1, and you did not have the rest of the book, to what would you think he was referring?
- (b) What is the meaning of the three statements in v. 3 that are spoken to the rich & poor men? What are the differences, and why do these statements show that distinctions are being made?
- (c) In what other ways can we as 21<sup>st</sup> century believers make distinctions among us or show partiality? What ways have you made distinctions between believers or shown partiality to certain people? Don’t answer this question glibly! Be honest and ask yourself things like: Do I initiate conversations with or invite to my home for lunch after church visitors who are: Unkempt as often/easily as those who are dressed nicely? Overweight as often/easily as those who are physically fit? Disciplining or schooling their children as I think they should as often/easily as those who allow their children more freedom or school differently? Young as often/easily as those who are old? The list could go on but I think you get the picture! To look at it a little differently: Who are the people you have less desire to approach or get to know and why do you make these distinctions, and who are the people you have greater desire to approach or get to know and why do you show them partiality?
- (d) *Family:* Before the lesson you should prepare 5 or 6 pairs of items from which your family will choose their preference. These can be food items, games, clothing items, colors, books, or any other items. Tell your family that you will show each pair together and they are to write down the one item of the pair they prefer and write why they prefer it (if you have kids who can’t yet write, lead in a discussion as you present each item). Then **Read James 2:1-4** and explain the situation presented. Ask questions of your family so you can make sure they understand what is going on: “What is the difference between the two people? What is the difference between the way they were treated?” etc. Then return to their preferences and discuss their reasons for choosing each one, and explain that it is ok to choose food or books by which one you like more, or which would be more fun, but choosing people to welcome into our church by those same criteria is never ok.

### DAY 2 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

### READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read James 2:1-13.** Why have these believers become “judges with evil thoughts” when they discriminate? How do their actions compare to God in the way He judges (cf. Lev. 19:15; Deut. 16:29; Job 34:16-20)?
- (b) Explain what James is saying in v. 5. What similarities do you see between this verse and previous verses in James? What connections do you see between James 2:1-13 & Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7)?
- (c) Why do their actions dishonor the poor man (v. 6)? Are the rich mentioned in vs.7-8 believers or non-believers and how do you know? What three actions have the rich inflicted upon the poor and should we be surprised by their actions (see. Matt. 5:11; 10:17-18; 1 Pet. 4:1-16)? Are these attacks still being carried out against the universal church today, and if so, by whom, the rich or poor? Why do you think this is so?
- (d) Have you ever been ignored or treated differently at church? What was the reason? How did you feel? Have you ever seen anyone given preferential treatment at church because of their wealth, status, appearance, or other reasons? How would you respond to the situation if you saw or experienced either one of these situations this Sunday?
- (e) *Family:* **Read Matt. 7:12.** Discuss this verse and how it should affect us as we minister without showing partiality. **Then Read Matt. 8:1-4, 28-34** and discuss how Jesus applied this verse. **Finally Read James 2:1-4** and discuss the differences between Jesus’ actions and these believers’ actions as a means to understanding why James is so strong against them.

### DAY 3 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

### READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read James 2:1-13.** Why does James refer to the law as “royal?” Is he referring to the entire law or is he referring specifically to the quote from Lev. 19:18 that follows? Upon what do you base your decision?
- (b) How does one fulfill the royal law? According to vs. 9-11, what is the result when one shows partiality?
- (c) **Read Matt. 13:8-10.** How do these verses relate to what James has said in 2:8-11? Does your interaction with your neighbors (which means everyone, not just those who live next door to you) reflect obedience or disobedience to these verses? In what ways might you change your interaction with your neighbors to fulfill the royal law of love?
- (d) *Family:* **Read Matt. 13:8-10.** Explain these verses to your family, tie them into James 2:8, and then lead your family in a discussion which (1) identifies your family’s “neighbors,” (2) evaluates how your family loves them, and (3) identifies ways you as a family can better fulfill the royal law of love. Write these actions on your white board so you are reminded throughout the week of your ideas.

**DAY 4 – ASK FOR INSIGHT****READ THE PASSAGE**

- (a) **Read Matt. 18:21-35.** What is the main point of this parable? With which character(s) do you identify most and why?
- (b) What do you learn about forgiveness in this parable? What do you learn about mercy?
- (c) How do you explain Jesus' statement in v. 35 (see also Matt. 12, 14-15)? Does one sin of being unforgiving cause us to be fearful of judgment because we won't be forgiven by God? What bearing does Jesus' work on the cross have on our sin of being unforgiving, and how does it affect our response to others whom we do not want to forgive in our flesh?
- (d) Write down the names of anyone you need to forgive, and then pray for God to grant you the mercy to extend forgiveness to them. Then, if you need to approach them to let them know of your forgiveness and seek reconciliation, write down which day of the coming week you will meet with them and send them an email or make a phone call to set up the appointment.
- (e) *Family:* Work through (a)-(d) above with special focus on forgiveness in your family, what it means to extend mercy and forgiveness to others, and actually pursuing forgiveness if there are instances of not showing forgiveness in your family.

**DAY 5 – ASK FOR INSIGHT****READ THE PASSAGE**

- (a) **Read James 2:1-13.** James has referred to the "perfect law" (1:25), the "royal law" (2:8) and the "law of liberty" (1:25; 2:12). What does he mean when he uses each phrase? Is he speaking of different laws or different aspects of the same law?
- (b) How are believers to be "judged under the law of liberty?" Are believers judged (see, for example, Romans 2:6-11)?
- (c) What is meant by "mercy triumphs over judgment?" How would you answer someone who said that this verse proved that God, in the end, will not judge anyone because he is a merciful God and His mercy will overcome His judgment? What Scripture passages would you use to defend your position?
- (d) Reflect on your study of this week's passage. Write down 3 specific, concrete actions that you will implement beginning today as a result of the Holy Spirit's work of conforming you to the image and likeness of Christ (your sanctification).
- (e) *Family:* **Read James 2:12-13** and explain them to your family as you are taking them to a mall or a park or any other place they will be able to watch many different people. As you watch people, help them to see how people interact with each other. Identify those who might be being discriminated against, such as someone who looks like a homeless person, someone who needs clean clothes and a shower, someone who looks or acts a little strange, someone who looks dangerous or threatening, someone who is not as good at a sport (e.g. if you are in a park watching a baseball game), or how a group of teens look at or talk about people they pass. Help them to understand what God thinks about this kind of partiality being shown, and how they can avoid it in their own life as they continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ.

**DATE: Aug. 14, 2011****PASSAGE: James 2:1-13***Fulfilling the Royal Law*