

06/14/26 Message

Part of Real Religion A Journey Through the Book of James
June 13, 2026

Message: General Admission

Series: Real Religion

Background

This series is an exposition of the book of James, written by Jesus' brother who "found faith" after His death, burial, and resurrection. James was writing to a persecuted church, and he wanted them to understand the difference between man-made religion and true, genuine, real religion.

We see something happen in James that should be what happens to us once we grasp who Jesus really is. James became full of the Holy Spirit who lit a fire inside him that made people notice this man was changed!

—Pastor Chad

James is shouting:

- Walking with Jesus is not about RELIGION it's about RELATIONSHIP!

No Favorites

James 2:1-13 (NLT)

1 My dear brothers and sisters, how can you claim to have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ if you favor some people over others?

2 For example, suppose someone comes into your meeting dressed in fancy clothes and expensive jewelry, and another comes in who is poor and dressed in dirty clothes.

3 If you give special attention and a good seat to the rich person, but you say to the poor one, "You can stand over there, or else sit on the floor"—well, 4 doesn't this discrimination show that your judgments are guided by evil motives?

5 Listen to me, dear brothers and sisters. Hasn't God chosen the poor

in this world to be rich in faith? Aren't they the ones who will inherit the Kingdom he promised to those who love him?

6 But you dishonor the poor! Isn't it the rich who oppress you and drag you into court?

7 Aren't they the ones who slander Jesus Christ, whose noble name you bear?

8 Yes indeed, it is good when you obey the royal law as found in the Scriptures: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

9 But if you favor some people over others, you are committing a sin. You are guilty of breaking the law.

10 For the person who keeps all of the laws except one is as guilty as a person who has broken all of God's laws.

11 For the same God who said, "You must not commit adultery," also said, "You must not murder." So if you murder someone but do not commit adultery, you have still broken the law.

12 So whatever you say or whatever you do, remember that you will be judged by the law that sets you free.

13 There will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others. But if you have been merciful, God will be merciful when he judges you.

James paints a picture that many of us have seen before in churches. You have to dress different, act different, and talk different in church! You have to be reverent because this is God's house. The whole time James is screaming, God should live in you because He for sure isn't living in this building! And if He lives in you, isn't He with you 24/7? And if He does, why dress different, act different, or talk different one day a week! Last time I checked, that is called an imitator or a pretender and not a real follower of Jesus Christ! I think James agrees with me on that one!

—Pastor Chad

- Favoritism CONTRADICTS the GOSPEL

James 2:1-5 (NLT)

1 My dear brothers and sisters, how can you claim to have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ if you favor some people over others?

3 If you give special attention...—well, 4 doesn't this discrimination show that your judgments are guided by evil motives?

5 Listen to me, dear brothers and sisters. Hasn't God chosen the poor in this world to be rich in faith? Aren't they the ones who will inherit the Kingdom he promised to those who love him?

- The royal law has NO EXCEPTIONS

James 2:8-10 (NLT)

8 Yes indeed, it is good when you obey the royal law as found in the Scriptures: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

9 But if you favor some people over others, you are committing a sin. You are guilty of breaking the law.

10 For the person who keeps all of the laws except one is as guilty as a person who has broken all of God's laws.

Full disclosure, I struggled a bit with this passage. It uses phrases like royal law and that's hard to swallow when I believe so strongly against and I'm preaching against legalism and traditionalism. But like I always try to teach you, never take one or a handful of verses out of context. That's not the way God intended for us to read His Word. You have to look at that verse or handful of verses and consider it in light of the whole of Scripture from cover to cover, not just on its own. If I do that, then it all makes sense. Jesus was asked which of the 613 Jewish laws was the most important. To that, He said love God above everything else and love others the way I do! He didn't abolish the law; He made it concise and clear. He didn't tell them not to follow the law, He said do these two things and it'll satisfy the requirements of the law. What about this in the argument against legalism? Legalism is when we try to make our man-made laws, rules, priorities, goals, objectives an idol and they replace the two basic yet comprehensive laws that Jesus told us were the absolute most important! Should we religiously follow God's two laws? Wholeheartedly! James is telling us to know the difference and live it out!

—Pastor Chad

- When it's about relationship instead of religion: Love governs how we treat others, poor, rich, or anywhere in between. Love governs how we

speak, how we forgive, how we serve, how we give...

Real religion isn't measured by how loud we sing, how faithfully we attend church, or how carefully we guard tradition. It's measured by whether the love we've received from Jesus overflows into the way we treat the people He puts in our path. The test of real religion isn't how much you know about God, it's about how much the heart of God has changed the relationship you have with Jesus! It's how much the heart of God has changed the way you treat others.

—Unknown

- Real religion requires MERCY

James 2:12-13 (NLT)

12 So whatever you say or whatever you do, remember that you will be judged by the law that sets you free.

13 There will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others. But if you have been merciful, God will be merciful when he judges you.

The word James uses for mercy is eleos and it means compassion, loyalty, and love. Here's the crazy thing. James is using it to describe how we should treat others, but that word was used in Scripture to describe the attitude God has toward us!

—Pastor Chad

– Read Titus 3:5

– Read Hebrews 4:16

When I read what James wrote, I see both a warning and a promise of hope. The warning is this, there will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others. If you don't give it, you won't get it! But here's the hope, if you show mercy to others, God will be merciful when you are judged. If you give it, you will get it!

—Pastor Chad

Challenge

- Who gets the best seat in your world?
 - Be honest about the social norms and the methods you use to sort people and choose who you love on, serve, and show mercy to.
- Look at those in your community, not where you live, but those you do life with.
 - Who is absent? Whose voice is not in the room? What would it take to change that?
- What happens when you give deliberate attention to someone who offers you nothing in return?
 - You give it, you'll get it!

There's no VIP section at the foot of the cross, and there's no VIP section in heaven. It's general admission for those who follow God's law. I mean, really follow it and live it out! Those who love, forgive, serve, give, and worship like Jesus! That's real religion! So, who gets the best seat in your world?

—Pastor Chad