

“A Better Way” James 2:1-13

Small Group Discussion Guide

*gospel on
the ground*

Share a story about a time when you felt judged or witnessed poor judgment. Why do you think it's so difficult to withhold judgment?

In James 2:1-4, James explains that favoritism is actually a form of judgment. Do you agree? Why or why not?

An ancient synagogue had two purposes: it was the local place of worship and also the local courthouse. The word for “meeting” in verse two is actually the word “synagogue.” In his own clever way, James is pointing out that their meeting has become a place of judgment in more ways than one. Today, many still see the church as a place of judgment instead of a place of acceptance. Why do you think this is?

People are bad judges.

In Matthew 7, Jesus emphasizes the importance of seeing clearly in judgment. What does this tell us about our judgement compared to God's judgment?

Have you ever made a judgment about someone only to find out you were wrong? What happened?

People are guilty judges.

James explains that when it comes to the law, we are all lawbreakers. How does this alter our tendency to judge?

The Solution: Mercy

“The law that gives freedom” is the gospel—God's extravagant expression of mercy toward us. Because of this, we are free from the law and from the penalty of breaking it.

The more we grasp the depths of God's mercy shown toward us, the more we will naturally show mercy to others. In what areas of life, society, or culture do you think we (the church) need to be more merciful?

How does stopping to empathize—to show mercy—change our inclination to judge? Where have you seen mercy triumph over judgment?

1 My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. 2 Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. 3 If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, “Here's a good seat for you,” but say to the poor man, “You stand there” or “Sit on the floor by my feet,” 4 have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

5 Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? 6 But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? 7 Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong?

8 If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right. 9 But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. 10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. 11 For he who said, “You shall not commit adultery,” also said, “You shall not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.

12 Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, 13 because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

MERCY:

an emotional response and resulting action after encountering the affliction of another

William Mounce

MERCY TRIUMPHS OVER JUDGMENT.