



DIGGING  
DEEPER  
SERIES

# HEAR AND DO

An Inductive Study in James

Formerly titled *Small Group Studies: James*

**Barry  
Shafer**



## Setting the Heart

Congratulations! As you finish today's session prep, you're one-third of the way through this study in James. In the last three weeks as you've thoroughly studied the first chapter of James' letter, it's quite possible you've been spending more time than usual in God's Word. As you've studied, have you noticed an elevated desire to know and obey God? The real purpose of an in-depth Bible study isn't simply to know more about the book, but to know God himself. As we know God, our desire to obey him—follow him wholeheartedly—naturally increases.

You've probably noticed that James doesn't leave much room for guesswork on how we are to obey God. As you prepare for today's study in James 2, take a moment to hear what the apostle Peter—a guy who knew a lot about obedience—had to say about letting the Word change your behavior.

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. For, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever." And this is the word that was preached to you. (1 Peter 1:22-25)

## Digging In

*Favoritism 101*

Read James 2:1-13 from your Scripture sheet. As you read, mark each of the following with a unique symbol or color:

- references to favoritism, the poor, and the rich
- references to the readers of James' letter
- references to God

Now take a moment to process what you've read by answering a few classic *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how* type questions.

What instructions does James give his readers?

What do you learn about favoritism?

What do you learn about God?

What conclusions can you draw about the situation of the recipients of James' letter?

How are the recipients described?

What's been done to or for them?

What have they been doing that runs counter to God's desires?

How are they like you?

How are they like the students in your ministry?

## **Taking It Inward**

*The Poor—Near and Dear to God's Heart*

The message of the gospel is the great socioeconomic equalizer. The external stuff—clothes, salary, house, car—really doesn't matter. God sees nothing but the heart when he's dishing out grace and mercy. When we're carrying out the ministry of the gospel, he asks us to look at the same thing. Our tendency, however, is to focus on externals and gravitate toward those who are most like us—which is the first step in showing favoritism.

The significance of this next exercise is huge. To guarantee that you don't rush it, grab a glass of your favorite beverage and spend some time letting the Lord speak to your heart about one of his favorite subjects: the poor. As you read each of the following passages, jot down anything you learn about ministering to the poor.



**WHAT GOD SAYS ON THE SUBJECT**  
**Leviticus 19:15**

**Deuteronomy 15:7-11**

**Zechariah 7:8-12**

**WHAT JESUS SAYS ON THE SUBJECT**  
**Luke 4:18-19**

**Luke 12:29-34**

**Luke 14:12-14**

**WHAT THE FIRST CHRISTIANS SAY ON THE SUBJECT**  
**Acts 10:1-2**

**Acts 24:17**

**Romans 15:25-26**

**Galatians 2:9-10**



## WHAT YOU SAY ON THE SUBJECT

What conclusions are you coming to concerning the priority of ministering to the poor?

How do your priorities compare with God's priorities?

### Taking It Inward

*Of Course You Don't Discriminate...or Do You?*

Consider the following take on James 2:2-4:

You're hosting an outreach event in order to launch an evangelism effort at the local high school. Through the door walks a student who's the son of a prominent family in your community and a favorite among the faculty and students. Behind him is a teen who's introverted and quiet. This student is actually disliked at the school because he's unmotivated and disrespectful. If you make every effort to establish a relationship with the first student and hope that your volunteers make contact with the second student, have you discriminated among the students and become a judge with evil thoughts?

Well, have you? Take a moment to reflect on any situations in which you've operated with even a hint of the discrimination James describes. In the space that follows, write what comes to mind.

Think about the poor who are involved in your student ministry. (You may need to broaden your definition of the poor to include those who are poor in social skills, leadership abilities, intellect, athletic abilities, or interpersonal relationships.) Have you ever, even momentarily, looked at such a student and thought, *This isn't somebody I can build a program around?*

If you spend time on a school campus connecting with students, consider that setting for a moment. With whom do you seek to build relationships? Is it with student leaders? Popular kids? Athletes?

What is God saying to you about the poor around you?

#### **WEB SUPPORT:**

Don't forget to check out Web support for *Hear and Do* at [www.inword.org](http://www.inword.org). You'll find updated media suggestions such as music and video clips along with more prep helps and specific application ideas. Look for the Digging Deeper series icon. You'll find password information in the Instructions at the front of this book.

What is he prompting you to do regarding the poor in your student ministry?

## **Wrapping It Up**

*Thus Saith the Lord: No Cliques!*

Before wrapping up today's study, select the appropriate Teach It guide for your session. (Full Teach It guides are on the CD-ROM accompanying this book.) Then read through the guide so you're familiar with the flow of the group session and confident with each exercise. Be sure to allow time for printing or photocopying the Scripture sheets and student journal pages, and pulling together any materials needed.

Finish your prep time by praying for your students—that their hearts will begin to break for the same things that break God's heart. Heartbreak for the poor is a good place to start.

### **EXERCISE HEADS-UP**

High School 1 Session 4 contains a Large-Group Option (for the opening) that involves collecting video interviews before the session. This will take some additional prep.



## James 2

- 1 My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism.
- 2 Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby 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: 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 insulted 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 slandering 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, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do 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!
- 14 What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?
- 15 Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food.
- 16 If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?
- 17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.
- 18 But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.
- 19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.
- 20 You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?
- 21 Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?
- 22 You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.
- 23 And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend.



- 24 You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.
- 25 In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction?
- 26 As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.