

DEVOTIONALS FOR JAMES 2

PARTIAL FAITH

My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in.

JAMES 2:1-2

Like the start of a bad joke, James makes a hard point that isn't hard to miss. "So two guys walk into a church. One guy is very rich, and the other guy is very poor . . ." But the punch line is a punch in the face of the presumptuous man who shows partiality! His point is that our eyes see only in part. The human eye never sees the whole picture. But what is seen can result in rapid assumptions and presumptions about the person of another. In this situation, James is concerned that our visual perception might impact our spiritual perception, which leads to drawing the wrong conclusions. This is because in God's family physical status and special treatment will misrepresent the character of God and the community of faith.

The Christian faith looks beyond the physical signs that our world uses to measure status. Our community is driven by a different set of values that sees without partiality because we are aware that we are all sinners, made holy only by God. We

LIVING A CONSISTENT LIFE

must retrain our thoughts in order to fully perceive the view of faith.

ASK THIS: Where do you see partiality in your life?

DO THIS: Pray for an impartial heart that sees with the eyes of an impartial faith.

PRAY THIS: God, may I look beyond what is natural and see the people around me in the way you see them.

THOUGHTS OF EVIL JUDGES

*Have you not then made distinctions among yourselves
and become judges with evil thoughts?*

JAMES 2:4

Some judges do not judge fairly. This is because their thoughts about the world and their motives shape their judgments, which impact their interpretation and decisions on the law. As a result, they make distinctions that favor their preferred future. This is frustrating because it results in an unstable law from judge to judge. What we want is a predictable law and judges who judge predictably.

But in some way, we are all judges. We are people who judge. We make judgments and distinctions among ourselves based on our experiences, likes, and preferences. We make distinctions based on the chemistry we have with others, their character and competency. Often we will have an evil thought as we judge. Right at this moment, we must acknowledge that we, too, will be judged. But as Christians, we know there is only one Law and one Judge. One Law that declares all of us guilty, and One Judge that by his mercy extends grace to a world filled with evil thoughts.

ASK THIS: What evil thoughts do you have in your judgments of others?

DO THIS: Cleanse your thinking, attitude, and action by bringing your judgment to the only fair Judge.

LIVING A CONSISTENT LIFE

PRAY THIS: God, cleanse me of every evil thought and unjust judgment. May I represent your truth and righteousness by being fair in every judgment I make today.

JUST A SMALL DEVIATION

*For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point
has become guilty of all of it.*

JAMES 2:10

Just when you thought perfection was in reach, James writes this. It's a law about the Law: fail once and you're guilty of it all. That's the fatal blow of the law of sin. Sin once and you become a transgressor of the whole thing. But this leads to all kinds of questions. Why do I try so hard to be righteous and avoid failure? Why bother to be righteous when one sin corrupts my whole nature? Why do I still feel guilty after another sinful failure? The answer to each question is Jesus and his sacrifice for the sin of all humanity. His sacrificial death saved, and in Him do we trust.

*Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all
men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification
and life for all men.*

ROMANS 5:18

ASK THIS: What unrighteousness is keeping you from God?

DO THIS: Give your sin to God and ask him for salvation.

PRAY THIS: God, I need you today. I acknowledge that my life is corrupted by sin. I bring my unrighteousness to you and receive your righteousness. Be the Lord and leader of my life today and every day.

WHICH DO YOU WANT? MERCY OR JUSTICE?

For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

JAMES 2:13

Strict judgment is what we want for other people, but not for ourselves. What we want for ourselves is mercy. So why the duality? Usually this is because we have innocently suffered the sin. Therefore, we think, *“They deserve strict judgment.”* But remember, we are not free from accusation. We, too, are sinners. We, too, have caused unfair suffering. And we deserve justice. So don't opt for strict justice when you want mercy. Instead, show mercy and break the cycle, so that the final judgment you receive is not without mercy.

ASK THIS: To whom do you need to show mercy?

DO THIS: Show mercy.

PRAY THIS: God, may I learn to be merciful in an unmerciful world. And through this may I know your mercy and with it the freedom of merciful judgment.

WORKING FAITH

*What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith
but does not have works?*

JAMES 2:14

While we may not see the inclination of a person's faith, we can definitely see its impact. While works never earn a person's salvation, our faith should display works. Faith should have a noticeable impact on the people around us. It should make visible what is invisible, by our word and deed. So, if you have faith, work it out! Don't be a person of faith who lacks work. What good is that?

ASK THIS: What step of faith do you need to take today?

DO THIS: What action will result from this step?

PRAY THIS: God, may my faith be visible. May my work be the evidence of my faith. And may I only do this work for your glory. In Christ's name, Amen.

DON'T IGNORE THE NEED

If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?

JAMES 2:15-16

I hate to admit it, but I have done this. I have ignored people in need. I do it most when I am most consumed with myself. I rationalize my time, concerns, and needs, and therefore I elevate them above others' needs. But let's not ignore the divine importance of each and every moment. We are spiritual beings having a physical experience. Therefore, as we are presented with a physical need, we should not be dismissive, but respond with a spiritual urgency. Why should we act? Because this is what faith looks like. Faith recognizes that God has placed a person (with a specific need) before us because he knew only we could fulfill it.

ASK THIS: Who is a brother or sister in Christ with a physical need?

DO THIS: Today, as you see a need—fulfill it—and you will discover how meeting a physical need changes the spiritual trajectory in others and yourself.

PRAY THIS: God, show me a need. May I act immediately. May I have the resource to fulfill it.

EVEN DEMONS BELIEVE

You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!

JAMES 2:19

This is a shocking verse. A shocking truth that our belief may be no different than that of a demon? We see that demons, spiritual beings opposed to God, still actively believe. But hopefully our belief is different—we believe that God is real and so act on this belief. For belief without action is no different from that of demons. Don't shudder or convulse in fear at the coming of God. Demonstrate an active faith! Don't put on a show but live out a faith that is different than demons.

ASK THIS: Is your faith merely belief without action?

DO THIS: Activate your unseen faith and fuse it with action.

PRAY THIS: God, I believe. Show me today one thing I need to do. Make my faith and its action a witness for the world.