

Facilitator

1. Open with Prayer

2. Welcome any newcomers

3. Read James 2:1-13 and give a five-minute review of the sermon using Peppy's sermon notes.

Facilitator: Please don't feel you have to cover every question. Try to keep your discussion to an hour and a half at the most.

### **CONNECT Group study questions, James 2:1-13**

**May 4, 2014**

#### **Title: The Evil of Favoritism in the Church**

**Read to the group:** According to something I read on the Internet, you can't believe everything you read on the Internet. A website called snopes.com has gained quite a reputation for verifying or exposing so-called urban legends that make their rounds on the Internet, but I read somewhere on the Internet that even Snopes doesn't always get it right.

A story, discredited by Snopes, tells about a pastor who poses as a homeless man begging for food money outside a mega-church just before Sunday service. This is the church where he is about to be introduced that Sunday as the new senior pastor. The story's gone viral probably because it's an embellished version of James 2:2-3. As it turns out the pastor is introduced by the elders, who are in on the ploy, and the people are shamed by the object lesson. Most ignored him on the church steps or looked on in disdain as he tried to sit on the front row but was ushered to the rear.

Apparently it never happened, but it's still a good tale because it could happen. And it's always good to see those hypocritical church people get their comeuppance. But what about each of us? Do we hope silently that we are never faced with such an uncomfortable situation? Or are we prepared to welcome anyone in obedience to the law of love?

**Question:** Let's play favorites. What's your favorite...anything? Food. Car. Place to live. Go ahead and sing it: 'These Are a Few of My Favorite Things.'

**Question:** Now let's shift to people. What kind of people are your favorite people? Wait just a minute! you say. Verse 1 of our lesson says, "Show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory." Another version (NASB) says, "...do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with *an attitude of* personal favoritism." I'm not trying to throw a trick question at

you, but take a look at the difference between favoring things and favoring people. Why are they different?

**Question:** What does ‘holding the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ’ have to do with favoring or not favoring one person over another?

**Question:** The context of our passage in James, chapter 2, seems to be showing favoritism within the church assembly. Is there a principle here that we can carry with us in our everyday lives? In our neighborhoods? In our workplace?

**Question:** Verses 5-7 turns the table on these Christians to show them how out of sync they are with God who has “chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom.” Does this sound like God chooses the poor over the rich? Is God playing favorites with people, or is he saying that because they are poor it’s easier for them to trust God instead of their wealth, power and privilege? How are wealth, power and privilege barriers to faith in Christ? **Facilitator: Proverbs 28:21 says it’s not good to show partiality because people who do are ready to circumvent justice for a small bribe and Romans 2:11 says there is no partiality with God.**

**Question:** What is the “royal law” James is referring to in verse 8? What is the “law of liberty” in verse verse 12? How would living under the law of love and under the law of liberty affect the outcome when we ourselves are judged?

**Facilitator: Judgement is without mercy to those who show no mercy, without love to those who show no love, without compassion to those who show no compassion, etc. Consider encouraging other godly actions or attributes (fruits of the Spirit—Galatians 5:22-23—perhaps) that follow the same principle.**

**Question:** If we show favoritism for one person over another and are just as much a transgressor of the law as a murderer or adulterer, what hope is there for any of us, rich or poor, black or white, native-born American or illegal immigrant, solid citizen or convict? **Facilitator: Read Romans 7:24-8:2.**