

James Small Group Guide 3

James 1:26–2:13 (ESV)

²⁶ *If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.*
²⁷ *Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.* ¹ *My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.* ² *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,* ³ *and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet,"* ⁴ *have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?* ⁵ *Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?* ⁶ *But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court?* ⁷ *Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?* ⁸ *If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well.* ⁹ *But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.* ¹⁰ *For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of 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 murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.* ¹² *So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty.* ¹³ *For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.*

True and acceptable religion must include controlled speech, sacrificial care for the needy, and clear separation from the world, all as a manifestation of faith expressing itself through love.

Martin Luther said "A Religion that gives nothing, cost nothing, and suffers nothing, is worth nothing."

Questions for Discussion/Application:

How can you set an example for other followers of Christ by your speech and conversation?

What habits of speech do you need to repent of?

What is the danger of separating personal holiness from compassion for those in need?

Which one of these do you find yourself ignoring?

What has your attitude been toward orphans and widows?

What are some practical steps you could take to begin to care for those around you?

What are some ways you have shown favoritism, maybe even unintentionally, to those in your circle of influence? How have you seen favoritism play out in your church?

How should Christ's judgment on the last day affect your words and actions today?

Does this contradict God's grace?

Why does showing mercy depend on receiving mercy, and how does the message of the gospel fit into this?