

International Bible Lessons
“Teaching the Truth in Love”
Sending International Sunday School Lessons and Bible Studies Around the World
L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

Do You Express Partiality Toward Others?

The *International Sunday School Lesson* for Sunday August 10, 2008
James 2:1-13

“My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favoritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ?” (James 2:1—NRSV).

“My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons” (James 2:1—KJV).

In the Bible, God challenges us to live according to right beliefs, beliefs based on truth and reality, beliefs consistent with His words and acts throughout history. James wrote that if believers show favoritism or partiality toward those who are rich; then perhaps they do not really believe in Jesus Christ as “our glorious Lord.” If believers truly believe that Jesus now reigns as the true King over all creation, then they should be demonstrating their sincere belief by obeying Him as their Lord.

The Bible does not command believers in Jesus Christ to obey Him slavishly, but to “so speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty” (James 2:12). What is “the law of liberty”?

Through Christ’s death and resurrection on their behalf, when believers repent of their sins and place their faith in Him, He frees “those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death” to love and serve God (Hebrews 2:15). Jesus shows His sacrificial love for people on the cross, a love that liberates believers from slavery to sin and death. He wins their hearts and fills them with His Spirit. He empowers them to love and serve God and others according to His perfect will. He gives them true liberty or freedom to love their neighbors as themselves. He turns their focus from lists of rules, and helps them maintain a loving relationship with God and others. At the same time, He warns them not to fall back into violating any of God’s laws, such as God’s law against showing partiality (James 2:9). — Copyright 2008 L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

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Questions for Further Thought or Class Discussion

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Think about your answers to the questions below before your Sunday school class meets, discuss in class, or use for further study. In some cases, I do not always write the questions to have a definitive right or wrong answer. In most cases, the questions should encourage everyone to think about how to apply biblical truths to their daily lives. Before beginning to answer the questions below, read the entire Scripture lesson in your favorite translation or compare translations. Write your thoughts in the space provided and take them to your Sunday school class for discussion.

1. Have you ever been in a church where the leaders or people expressed partiality toward others? How did that make you feel? What did you do about it?
2. In what ways can people express partiality without really understanding what they are doing? How might you help someone who does this?
3. Toward what kind of people do Christians tend to show partiality? What kind of people did James mention specifically? Do you think some in our churches might face the same temptation that those in James' day faced? Why or why not?
4. How can believers emphasize the importance of obeying God without falling back into the ways the scribes and Pharisees acted toward those they thought disobeyed God?
5. How would you describe "the law of liberty"? How does this law differ from the laws we find in religions other than Christianity? How might a church begin to teach in ways that are contrary to "the law of liberty"? How might you recognize this problem?

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