

Two Marks of True Religion

Dr. Jeff Bucknam | James 1:27

NOTE: As a guide, use these questions to help with group discussion. Not all questions are needed. Select the ones that will best serve your group as you grow in Christ together through His Word. Soli Deo Gloria.

ICE BREAKER:

What are some characteristics of a person in your life that you would define as a genuine Christian?

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT IN CONTEXT:

We refer to God as our Father constantly, and He self-identifies as our Father in Scripture. What significance does this have to our lives? How might this affect how much He cares about how we treat one another? How might this affect how much He cares about our behavior and our earnest belief in Him?

CONNECTING TO JESUS AND HIS GOSPEL:

For more on the Old Testament background for this text and how Jesus identifies with those who are poor and 'in Him' as 'brothers,' read Deut 10:18; Zechariah 7:8-10; and Matthew 25:31-40. How does this also highlight what our motivation should be?

LIVING OUT THE TRUTH:

How would others looking from the outside describe your 'religion'?

What does 'visiting orphans and widows in their distress' look like in today's context, and how might you reshape your budget and priorities to take a concrete step in reflecting God's concern for justice and mercy toward the powerless, overlooked, or vulnerable in our society? Consider supporting Hope Centers or Compassion International, and Harvest's area of focused ministry (See the 'Further Study' below).

Where do you feel the strongest pull to think and live according to the world's values instead of God's? How have you seen worldly thinking creep into the church, and how can you guard your own heart against it?

What marks a 'world-centered' mindset in contrast to a 'Kingdom mindset'? (Compare James 4:4, 1 John 2:15-17, and Romans 12:1-2).

PARENTING MOMENT AND FAMILY FOCUS:

Read James 1:27 together. Discuss the two main points of application to show 'pure and undefiled' religion (Caring for the Oppressed and Remaining Unstained by the World). How can you, as a family, grow in those areas? Prayerfully, identify specific steps. And ask for the Father's blessing, to bless others since we are so blessed.

FURTHER STUDY:

At DesiringGod.org, search for 'All the Poor and Powerless' by David Mathis.

Support the poor through Compassion International. If you are sponsoring a child, pray for him or her and write a letter to the child. You can sponsor a child in an area where Harvest Bible Chapel is focusing its efforts. For more information, go to: harvestbible.org/compassion/

True Religion

THE BOOK OF JAMES

This page gets us into the text for the next sermon. The more familiarity we have with God's Word, the better we can see God and all that He has for us.

In the days leading up to next week, set aside a few minutes to read the text and reflect on these questions. A prayer to start: 'Open my eyes that I may behold wonderful things out of your law' - Psalm 119:18

- 1. After reading the text (James 2:1-13), list the ways 'brothers,' 'the poor,' and 'the rich' are described.**
- 2. What example – what scenario – does James describe in verses 2-4?**
- 3. When James refers to 'the royal law,' what does he then specifically quote (v. 8 and 11)?**
- 4. What phrases does James use to describe Scripture in verses 8-12?**
- 5. Why does James focus so much on Scripture in verses 8-12 in order to address the problem of partiality in verses 2-7?**
- 6. What in this text confuses you?**
- 7. What in this text compels you?**
- 8. Spend some time in prayer to God, asking Him for wisdom to rightly apply His 'royal law,' His 'law of liberty.'**