

Message Discussion Guide

FAITH LOVES

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

September 6, 2009

James 1:27-2:13

This guide is to help you facilitate discussion with your Small Group. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God's Word. There may be questions you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on their relationship with God. Your role is to facilitate this experience not to complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid teaching task list.

Connect . . .

Use one or both of the following options to introduce the discussion time to follow.

Option 1

Read the following quote from Martin Luther: "A religion that gives nothing, costs nothing, and suffers nothing, is worth nothing." Invite learners to respond to the quote.

After a few minutes, encourage learners to share about a time of persecution in their lives and how that persecution strengthened their faith. Then invite learners to share about how the ease of being religious in North American culture could water down our view of Christianity.

Explain that today we will look at what James outlines as part of what we should give to others as a result of true religion.

Option 2

Ask the following questions to learners, allowing a brief time of discussion for each one:

- What is religion?
- Are all religions equal?
- What makes religion real?

Explain that today we will look at what James indicates is true religion in the sight of God.

Review the Message . . .

The Marks of True and Acceptable Religion...

- Controlled _____ speech _____ that displays a changed heart.
 - The _____ tongue _____ is the test of true religion.

Discussion

- Enlist two learners to read James 1:26 and Matthew 12:34.
- According to these verses, what does a person's speech reveal?
- What does a person's speech indicate about his or her religion?
- How can a person's speech give witness to or witness against his or her faith in God?

Application . . .

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- In what ways can we fake a changed heart with our speech? How do we know when we are being sincere?
- Why do we seem to think the values we teach children about their speech (i.e., don't call people names, don't cuss, don't gossip, say "please" and "thank you," be nice) change when we become adults?
- How can we rightly address an issue that requires confrontation or discipline in a way that reflects Christ?

- Sacrificial _____ care _____ for those in need.
 - They are _____ in need _____.
 - We must not _____ neglect them _____.

Discussion

- Enlist a learner to read James 1:27. Explain that to "care" in this verse is more than bringing food or buying clothes, it is investing your life in caring for a person.
- What needs characterized the widows and orphans?
- How does caring for people in need illustrate undefiled religion?
- What does a religion without care of others reflect?

Application . . .

- Who are the widows and orphans in Birmingham?
- Where are most of the widows and orphans in our world?
- What holds us back the most from investing in the care of others?
- Why do we often think that if a form of caring is difficult for us that we shouldn't do it?
- What challenging forms of caring most identify us with God?

- Clear _____ separation _____ from the ways of the world.
 - We are captivated by the _____ glory _____ of Christ.
 - We see His _____ supremacy _____ over the wealthy.
 - We remember His _____ sacrifice _____ for the needy.
 - We are gripped by the _____ grace _____ of Christ.
 - Christ reverses our _____ status _____ in this world.
 - Christ transforms our _____ standards _____ in this world.
 - We are devoted to the _____ law _____ of Christ.
 - Favoritism _____ disrespects _____ man.
 - Favoritism _____ dishonors _____ God Himself.
 - We are cognizant of the _____ judgment _____ of Christ.
 - Our _____ words _____ will be judged.
 - Our _____ deeds _____ (or lack thereof) will be judged.
 - We are a reflection of the _____ mercy _____ of Christ.

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- As we have _____ received _____ mercy, so we _____ extend _____ mercy.
- If we do not _____ extend _____ mercy, we demonstrate that we have not _____ received _____ mercy.

Discussion

- Enlist one or two readers to read James 1:27-2:13. Explain that James 2:1-13 more fully illustrates being unpolluted by the world, as expressed in James 1:27.
- What is the primary issue addressed in Verse 1? How is favoritism for the wealthy an expression of being influenced by the world?
- According to this passage, who is under the law and reign of God?
- Read 2 Corinthians 8:9. If all are sinners, and Christ died for sinners, then rich and poor are both impoverished in sin. Therefore, who is truly needy in God's kingdom?
- Focusing on Verse 5, how does God's grace change the status of His children?
- Looking at verses 6-9, how does showing favoritism disrespect both man and God?
- In what two ways do verses 12-13 indicate that people will be judged?
- How can a person be victorious over this judgment?
- What does mercy in the life of a believer demonstrate about God?

Application . . .

- How does our view of Christ affect how we view others?
- How is our favoritism toward others most prominently manifested?
- How is favoritism usually engrained in external factors?
- How does experiencing God's grace change our values?
- How do these values change the way that we view all people?
- How does our investment in others reveal God's mercy in our own lives?
- If we are unwilling to show mercy to others, what does that lack of action reveal about our experience of God's mercy?

The Manifestation of True and Acceptable Religion...

Faith always expresses itself through _____ love _____.

Discussion

- In one word, describe the expression of faith in this entire passage.
- How is the love of God to be demonstrated through our faith?
- How can we show this love in our neighborhood, community, country, and world?

Remind learners that David challenged the church to pray about the opportunity to care for orphans through foster care for Shelby County. An informational meeting will be held in two weeks. Encourage learners to pray about the great needs there and to seek how they can play a part in meeting those needs.