

Week 3

8 weeks **TO CHANGE YOUR LIFE >>**

'Mercy triumphs over judgment!'

**James 2:1-13
&
Luke 18:9-14**



Can Attitudes Change? JAMES 2:1-13

In the light of the wonderful mercy that God has shown us, we are called to show mercy to others. James shows us that favouritism is incompatible with being a follower of Jesus: mercy is the way forward.

> The PRINCIPLE... (v1-4)

> The REASONS... (v5-11)

...why we might be tempted to show favouritism:

...why we shouldn't show favouritism:

> The SOLUTION... (v12-13)

>> A CLOSER LOOK

(James 2:1-13)



NOTE: Throughout the rest of the study, there are several questions for discussion. One or two of the questions allow a more creative approach. Feel free to adapt them as you see fit, but they are some ideas to prompt some more creative thinking! **These are marked by an asterisk *.**

>>Recap from last week

If you haven't yet done so, you may like to recap on last week and consider whether you have managed to make any changes in your life as a result? How did the study affect your life throughout the week?

> The PRINCIPLE (v1-4)

- 'Never judge a book by its cover'. We live in a world that is heavily influenced by 'image'. Can you think of times when you have been tempted to judge someone by what they look like? Is it ever a good thing to judge someone by appearances? *(*Take time to look through a magazine or newspaper together. As you carefully look at each page, ask yourself how often you are judging by appearances, and what is it about people's appearance that you are particularly noticing? Why?)*
- James highlights one aspect of judging others that is not appropriate for Christians: showing favouritism. What is the specific situation that James highlights here? Have you ever discriminated in this way? Have you ever witnessed it happening at church?
- What, according to verse 4, are you doing if you show favouritism to the rich over the poor?

> The REASONS (v5-11)

- Are you able to think of some reasons why it might be particularly tempting to favour rich and influential people over poor and uninfluential people? Is it ever a particular temptation for Christians? Why?
- James gives several clear reasons why it is never appropriate for Christians to favour the rich. What are they?
- Do you find these convincing reasons? Why/ why not?

> The SOLUTION (v12-13)

- James talks about the 'law that gives freedom' (v12). Why does the gospel - and knowing that we're saved because of God's mercy - change how we see other people? (**Take time to flick through a magazine or newspaper again. As you flick through, ask yourself how 'seeing with God's eyes of mercy' helps you to see the various people in the stories?*)
- The gospel confronts any sort of favouritism in our society- be it racism, classism, sexism, ageism or 'intellectualism' (this "ism" might be made-up!). In what ways can you, this week, demonstrate something of God's grace to people that are different from yourself?

*(*Are you able to share any stories of how God has been changing you so far? Please feel free to share any stories and ideas with your group leader or with the church leadership.)*

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ALTERNATIVE PASSAGE



The Hope of Change - LUKE 18:9-14

If we find ourselves looking down on other people we won't have learned how to be humble. If we don't walk humbly before God, then we won't have discovered the wonderful mercy of God.

> Two very different people

> Two very different prayers

> Two very different outcomes

What hope is there for us?

James writes: "Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up." (James 4:10). If we are spiritually hungry or thirsty and come to God, He will work in us. It's what he does.

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>> A CLOSER LOOK pt 2. (Luke 18:9-14)



>>Recap from last week

- If you haven't yet done so, you may like to recap on last week and consider whether you have managed to make any changes in your life as a result? How did the study affect your life throughout the week?

> Two very different people

- Jesus has just been speaking to the disciples (18:1-8), who had decided to follow him and were discovering more and more of God's grace. Now the spotlight turns to a very different group - people who were confident of their own righteousness (v9). How would you describe someone who is 'confident of their own righteousness'?

> Two very different prayers

- How does the Pharisee pray? What does he want God and other people to know about his life? What ways might we be tempted to pray like him? Or if we don't pray like him, to think like him?
- **Draw an outline of an 'impressive' person and note down all round the picture the aspects of human nature that we tend to be impressed by.*
- The tax collector could not present a more striking contrast. How is his attitude different as he prepares to pray? How is his prayer different?

>>Two very different outcomes

- Why is Jesus' verdict such a shock (v14)?

(The Pharisee would have been seen as the 'holy man' with a hotline to God, and the tax collector an 'outsider' in terms of winning God's approval.)

>>HUMILITY CHECKLIST

- Are you tempted to think that God should be impressed with you?

- If you feel confident that God accepts you, what is that confidence based on?

- Can you list the areas of your life that you are making good progress as a disciple? What would you attribute this progress to: your wisdom or God's grace?

- Do you find that you compare yourself favourably to others often, sometimes or never?

- Do you throw yourself daily on the mercy of God?

>> MAKING A CHANGE (James 2:1-13)



WHAT CHANGES CAN YOU MAKE THIS WEEK?

It's important to act on what you have studied. Can you think of some specific changes that you can make during this week, as a response to what you have been looking at?

Here are a few suggestions, but there may be others that you would like to define yourself:

- If you haven't already done so, take time to look through a magazine or newspaper that you regularly read. As you carefully look at each page, ask yourself how often you are judging by appearances?
- Think about the people you spend a lot of time with (work colleagues, fellow students, friends, neighbours etc). Do you show favouritism to any of these people? Why? Are there any ways you can change this?
- This week, actively go out of your way to speak with and care for somebody that you wouldn't normally (even if it feels slightly uncomfortable or awkward). As you are doing this (or afterwards), ask yourself - did I learn something about Christ from doing this?

>> MAKING A CHANGE (Luke 18:9-14)



It's important to act on what you have studied. Can you think of some specific changes that you can make during this week, as a response to what you have been looking at?

Take time to slowly read through Philippians 2:3-11. Read it again and prayerfully reflect on how Jesus shows total humility.

Why not memorise verses 5-7, and then keep on mulling over them as you are at work or going about your daily business. How does it change your week?

'Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.'