

JAMES

A Faith That Works

Study 7

The Christian and the Poor

James 2:5-17

1) Comprehension question. Based on James 2:5-17 and the video lecture, God gives us reasons why we (as Christians) should not discriminate against the poor. Fill in the blanks.

#	Summary	Reason	Supporting verses
1	God's choice		
2	Insult/ Dishonour		v. 6a
3	Persecution		
4	God's law		
5	The law is indivisible		
6	Life and death		v. 12-13
7	Faith's function		

Note: If any difficulties are faced answering Q1, return to this question after attempting the rest of the questions below.

A. We should not discriminate against the poor because God regards them highly

James 2:5

“Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?”

1) a) Objective question. Based on the video lecture, we can be deceived to become judges with evil thoughts (or reasonings). In what way are we deceived when we desire to treat the rich well? Select all that apply.

- A. For personal benefit and gain
- B. They are better than the poor
- C. The rich are not susceptible to death
- D. Only the poor will steal things from us

b) Reflection question. The poor are mistreated every day (they are discriminated against). In your life, share a moment that you have observed this.

2) Objective question. “Poverty is the primary fact of human existence.” Job says “naked came I out of my mother’s womb”. Based on the video lecture, which of the following shows that we are born poor? Select all that apply.

- A. We are born beggars
- B. We are born with a silver spoon in our mouth
- C. We can choose to be born
- D. We can choose where to be born
- E. Birth is a gift
- F. We are nurtured by parents
- G. We naturally know how to communicate as babies
- H. We know right from wrong when we are born
- I. We are taught language
- J. We are taught morality

b) Objective question. Based on the above, why do the rich treat the poor differently? Choose one.

- A. They have forgotten that poverty is the state they are born in
- B. The rich are human beings but the poor are not human beings

B. Our discrimination insults the poor

James 2:6a
"But you have dishonored the poor man."

3) Discussion question. Should we
(a) approach the poor or
(b) wait for them to come to us?
Which is insulting / dishonouring and why?

C. It is illogical to honour the very people who usually do you harm and persecute believers.

James 2:6b-7
"Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?"

4) a) Discussion question. In what way do the rich oppress/harm/persecute others?
b) Discussion question. Give one example in the Bible of the rich oppressing the poor.

Luke 16-19-31 - the rich man and Lazarus.

D. Discrimination against the poor breaks the heart of God's law

James 2:8-9
"If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors."

5. Discussion question. What does it mean to “love your neighbour as yourself”?

Care for them with the care we expend on ourselves.

Consider Luke 10:25-37 - the Good Samaritan.

E. We cannot pick and choose which laws to obey

James 2:10-11

“For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. For He who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.”

6. Objective question. An example of social injustice is treating the poor/fatherless/widow with injustice. In terms of God’s law, is social injustice better/worse/equally bad to the sin of murder?

- A. Better than murder
- B. Worse than murder
- C. Equally bad as murder

F. How we treat the poor is a life and death matter

James 2:12-13

“So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.”

7. Comprehension question. Based on the video lecture, in what way are we freed in the law of liberty? Fill in the blanks.

Freed from the _____ of the Law.

Freed to _____ the Royal Law.

Freed to _____ our _____ - _____.

G. How we treat the poor is a function of our faith

James 2:14-17

“What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”

8. Reflection question. If we do not know how to show mercy, have we truly been recipients of mercy before?

Takeaway

1. We should not discriminate against the poor because God regards them highly (v. 5)
2. Our discrimination insults the poor (v. 6a)
3. It is illogical to honour the very people who usually do you harm and persecute believers (v. 6b-7)
4. Discrimination against the poor breaks the heart of God's law (v. 8-9)
5. We cannot pick and choose which laws to obey (v. 10-11)
6. How we treat the poor is a life and death matter (v. 12-13)
7. How we treat the poor is a function of our faith (v. 14-17)

Case Study

Case 1 – Choosing who to serve

Inja Stees is the ministry leader for the **Serving Others** ministry in the All Nations Church. She has been faithfully serving in the church for many years and has only been recently given this responsibility due to the previous ministry leader stepping down.

The **Serving Others** ministry focuses on helping the community around the All Nations Church which is located in SS71. There are many poor, fatherless, and widows who come from the flats nearby that have benefited from their efforts for the past few years. However, many of them just come to take essentials for their needs but only very few respond to Gospel preaching.

Within a week of her appointment, she decided to cease operations of **Serving Others** in SS71. Instead, she wanted the ministry to focus their attention on the poor, fatherless, and widows in USJ 50.

Injas feels that they are wasting their efforts to help the poor in SS71 since they are not responding to the Gospel despite their continued handouts and support. She feels it is a waste of manpower and funds, which could be channeled to “better areas”, where they might possibly respond more positively to the Gospel.

1) Discussion question. Is Injas’ decision correct? Why or why not?

2) Discussion question. Was Injas discriminating? If yes, who was she discriminating against?

3) a) Discussion question. The Lord Jesus told us to “love our neighbour as ourselves”. Was Injas being loving towards her neighbour?

b) Discussion question. What would constitute a “loving” response for Injas?

4) Discussion question. Should Injas still serve the community in SS71 even though they were not responding to the Gospel?

5) Discussion question. If you were Injas, what would you do?