

TOGETHER



TAKING STRIDES SERIES

TOGETHER WE CARE

FOR DISCUSSION

"A religion that gives nothing, costs nothing, and suffers nothing, is worth nothing." ~ Martin Luther

What do you think about this quote? Has North American culture and its ease/benefits made it hard for us to understand or relate to this quote?

Has our view of Christianity been watered down? Explain.



Encounter

 read God's Word so that He can speak to you.

READ JAMES 1:27-2:13

²⁷ Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

¹ My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. ² Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. ³ If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," ⁴ have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

⁵ Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? ⁶ But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? ⁷ Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong?

⁸ If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself,"^[a] you are doing right. ⁹ But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. ¹¹ For he who said, "You shall not commit adultery,"^[b] also said, "You shall not murder."^[c] If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker. ¹² Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, ¹³ because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

Explore God's Word

asking questions of what you saw.
The notes which follow may help you to think through these questions

1)

James 1:27 - 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 characterize the widows and orphans?

- How does caring for people in need illustrate undefiled religion?
- What does a religion without care of others reflect?

2)

Who are the widows and orphans in our area? 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?

Explore (cont.)

3)

Looking at James 2:6-9, how does showing favoritism disrespect both man and God?

4)

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?

5)

"Faith always expresses itself through love." Let's apply this personally.

- How does our view of Christ affect how we view others?
- 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?
- 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?