

Seeing Is Believing

Studies in James

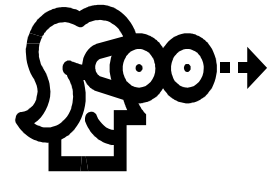


Smoke and Mirrors

Introduction to James 2-3

Many of the illusions that magicians perform are accomplished with smoke and mirrors. What seems to be real is not; smoke and mirrors have covered up the deception. Likewise, among Christians much that appears to be real is really nothing more than an illusion. In the study from James 2-3 this week there are four areas mentioned that show whether our faith in Christ is real, or just smoke and mirrors. The first of these is in the area of how we treat people. James argues that we must consider everyone, both rich and poor, equally. The natural tendency is to defer to those who have money; however, for those who are governed by the "royal" law, the law of the King, such actions are wrong. James says that to

show partiality to the rich over the poor breaks God's law as much as murder or adultery does. Instead of judging the poor, we should show them mercy by treating them equally. Secondly, the reality of our faith is seen when we actually obey God, not just when we say we believe. Even the demons believe, but they do not possess life-giving faith. Living faith results in faith-originated works and such works born of faith make us right before God, just as they did Abraham. James then tells us that we must control our words if our claim to be God's child is more than an illusion. Salty words don't come from a fresh water spring. If the tongue is uncontrolled we potentially deceive ourselves about the genuineness of our faith. Fi-



Genuine faith will be seen by all that we say and do.

nally, we are encouraged to cultivate true wisdom as James delineates between the earthly and heavenly types. Earthly wisdom revolves around selfish ambition and jealousy, while God's wisdom is gentle and peaceful, and full of mercy and refreshing fruit. As we cultivate this wisdom, consider everyone equally, combine our faith and works, and control our words we show the reality of our faith; there is no need for smoke and mirrors.

The 5 Purposes of the Purpose Driven Life

- **Worship**—You were planned for God's pleasure
- **Fellowship**—You were formed for God's family
- **Discipleship**—You were created to become like Christ
- **Ministry**—You were shaped for serving God
- **Evangelism**—You were made for a mission

Daily Study Questions for James 2-3

(For answers to questions attend an ABF or go to www.thehospitalchurch.com/small_groups/ABFs/morehere/leader_resources)

1. According to James 2:1-4 what attitude towards different people should we avoid (v1) and why (v1, 4)? Give examples of this today.	
2. Read 2:5-8. Why should we not favor the rich over the poor (v5, 6, 7)? What is the standard we should follow (v8), what is it called, and why?	
3. From 2:9-13 why is the sin of partiality so bad (v10-11)? By what law will we be judged (v12) and how should that make us act (v13)?	

James 2-3 Daily Study Questions (cont)

4. Using 2:14-19 what is the test of genuine faith (v14, 18)? Describe the difference between “live” faith and “dead” faith (v15-17, 19).

5. Based on Abraham’s example in 2:20-23 how do faith and works go together (v21-22)? When was his faith in God revealed (v23), and what were the results (v23)?

6. Read 2:24-26. By what means is a man made right (justified) with God (v24)? How did Rahab illustrate this (v25)?

7. Looking at 3:1-6 what area of self-control is vital to our Christian maturity (v1-2)? List some of the ways that our words affect our lives (v3-6)? How can you apply this?

8. Using 3:7-12 how is the tongue described (v7-8) and what inconsistency does it sometimes show (v9-10)? What is the source of this (v11-12)?

9. From 3:13-16 what is true wisdom’s attitude (v13)? Describe the opposite of true wisdom (v14, 16) where it originates (v15), and its results (v16)?

10. List the characteristics of true wisdom found in 3:17-18. What do these mean to you?

11. Using James 2-3 write a sentence or two about how to treat different people, how faith and works relate, how to control our words, and how the truly wise person thinks and acts.

Scripture to Remember

“For judgment will be merciless to the one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.”

James 2:13 (NAS)

Celebration Fellowship

Help—Hope—Healing

We’re on the web

www.thehospitalchurch.com

Life Group Questions—Clue—Who You Gonna Trust?

(Using questions based on today’s message, Life Groups meet in homes to build supportive relationships with others at Celebration Fellowship that enable us to grow in Christ.)

1. Share with the group an idol that you had growing up—an athlete, musician, movie star, etc. Why do you think we tend to adopt idols?
2. What are some common idols that we replace God with? Talk about your experience of disappointment in trusting idols, or the domination that idols can exert.
3. Which false picture of God are you most drawn to—resident policeman, gentle grandfather, absentee owner or “the force”? Why is Jesus is better?
4. Read Heb 11:1. How does faith give us hope for the future and why is that good? What kind of fulfillment in the present does it give, especially compared to idols?
5. Hebrews 11:2-3 tells us that faith in God gives us His favor and it gives us a framework for understanding. Explain how that helps us win at the game of life?
6. Bring up anything else important to you from the message today if you have time.