LESS THAN AND GREATER THAN

It’s interesting how the so-called not-so-bad sins rank worse in the Word of God than they often do in humanity’s view. The serpent of old used a lie to entice Eve into the first sin in history. The devil was kicked out of heaven for being prideful and refusing to let go of his faulty view of himself. Showing favoritism and partiality denies the inestimable value Jesus has placed on every life by giving His own. It also shows a worldly mindset based on worldly standards. Put that way, it’s easier to see how it actually is quite grievous.

Instead of telling his listeners to simply “not be partial,” James gives a clear example of how it can look: When people come over to your house, and you give preferential treatment to someone who appears to be rich, and then treat someone who looks poor in a negative way, you’re showing partiality (James 2:2–4). Furthermore, you’re holding “the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . with partiality” (v. 1). This is not just a social issue. It’s a spiritual one.

Though James’s focus is on economic comparisons, this principle extends to all comparisons. Giving preferential treatment to those perceived as prettier, smarter, taller, shorter, thinner, bigger, more articulate, or any other comparison that society brings to one’s attention is just as damaging and just as contrary to the faith of Jesus. It uses a worldly paradigm of categorizing people as less than or greater than one another.

In the kingdom of God, all are bought by the same unfathomable price of the blood of Christ. No amount of money, looks, communication, or status can alter a human’s value one bit—neither to increase or lessen it.
Write out James 2:1–13 from the Bible translation of your choice. If you are pressed for time, write out James 2:8–10. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map the chapter.
Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

Circle repeated words/phrases/ideas

Underline words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you

Draw Arrows to connect words/phrases to other associated or related words/phrases

What special insights do your marks seem overall to point to?

Memorize your favorite verse in James 2:1–13. Write it out multiple times to help with memorization.

What are some assumptions you’ve grown up believing about rich or poor people? Where did those ideas come from?

How can you maintain the “eyes of faith” to see people and God as they really are?

Read more at www.inversebible.org/jam04-3
After looking at your scribed and annotated text, what special insights do your marks overall seem to point to?

What questions emerge after studying this passage? What parts are difficult?

What other principles and conclusions do you find?

Are there any struggles that you’re tempted to excuse because you’re good “in other ways”? What are they, and how can you surrender them to Jesus?

Read more at www.inversebible.org/jam04-4

What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Matthew 18:1–5
Luke 18:9–14
Galatians 5
Matthew 6:26
James 4:17

What other verses come to mind in connection with James 2:1–13?
Where do you see Jesus in James 2:1–13?

What is Jesus saying to you through these texts?

Why do you think Jesus came in such an “undesirable” way?

How do you see Jesus differently or see Him again?

Prayer: How do you respond to seeing Jesus in this way?

Read more at www.inversebible.org/jam04-6
Review the memory verse. How does it apply to your life this week?

After this week’s study of the passage, what are personal applications you are convicted of in your life and your sphere of influence?

What are practical applications you must make in your school, family, workplace, and church?

Read more inSight from the Spirit of Prophecy at www.inversebible.org/jam04-7
The Sin of Treating Someone Well

Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

What are some ways that you’ve seen people categorized as greater than or less than? What truths do these categorizations miss?

How can we overcome ingrained stereotypes or ways of treating people with partiality?

Share a time that you were treated unfairly and/or less than. What did you learn from the experience?

How can we learn to distrust our judgments of other people and trust God’s view and justice instead?

What are a few examples of things God has asked you to do that are relatively easy for you? What are a few that are harder?

How can we know if we’re “selectively obeying” Christ?

How was Jesus’ ministry counter-cultural to today’s culture and ways of doing ministry?

The Sin of Treating Someone Well