

Study Guide for the Week of April 27, 2008

This study guide is designed to help you to become more familiar with the Bible. Study these passages on your own, with a friend, or with a group. If you or someone you know needs a Bible, please take one from under a chair in the Worship Center. They are there for you to take home and use! Sermon manuscripts are available at www.spwired.com.

Monday, April 28 – Through this series we're going to memorize one verse each week. Memorization helps put God's word in our minds and hearts. Memorize James 2:1. *"My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism"* (James 2:1, TNIV). **Read James 2:1-4.** James is afraid that snobbery will invade the early church. This would be even more tragic because of how the early church was such a diverse gathering of the rich and poor, slave and free, men and women. It was also diverse ethnically. How do you see favoritism at work in our world today? How is the church different?

Tuesday, April 29 – Go over the memorization passage for the week. **Read James 2:5-11.** A theme that runs through both the Old and New Testaments is what some theologians call "God's preferential option for the poor." While God loves people, rich or poor, scripture shows that God expects those who have, to care for those who have not. God expects those who are rich to avoid lording power and money over those who are poor. James says that to love your neighbor as yourself is the royal law. What does this imply? What happens if we break this royal law? How can you live it out tangibly?

Wednesday, April 30 – Hit the memorization verse again. **Read James 2:12-13.** James makes an important point here. Christians don't live life pressured by a list of rules and regulations imposed from the outside. Instead, the Christian lives by an inner drive to love and show mercy. What's the difference between these two ways of thinking? How does it relate to favoritism in the church? Have you made an attempt to show mercy to someone in your life that you might have been ignoring? Make 5 minutes to do so. Go beyond and have coffee or even a meal with that person, if it is appropriate to do so.

Thursday, May 1 – How are you doing on the memorization verse? Is it locked in? **Read James 2:14-19.** James has shifted gears as he talks about the relationship between faith and works. The New Testament is clear that our good works don't save us. We are brought into a relationship with God by accepting the free gift of Jesus' sacrifice for us. But James is clarifying that if our faith stops at belief and is not put into action, then we have not fully grasped God's love for us. What is your view of the balance between faith (believing in God) and works (doing good things because we have chosen to follow Christ)?

Friday, May 2 – Hit James 2:1 one more time. **Read James 2:20-26.** James gives several illustration of faith combined with works. Once again James is saying that faith and works are inseparable. No one will ever be moved to action without faith; and no one's faith is genuine unless it moves him or her to action. Faith and action are two sides of the very same coin. How is your life a combination of these things? How might you do better in each?