



MAIN POINT	MAIN BIBLE VERSE
Real faith doesn't play favorites.	James 2:1-13
Students will understand that following Jesus changes how we treat people, especially those who are overlooked or excluded.	
Teaching Script / Guide	

HOOK

- **Start with a relatable moment:**
 - Have you ever walked into a room and tried to figure out where you fit in?
 - Lunch table
 - Group project partners
 - Which team do you hope you get picked by
 - Birthday party
 - Where do you sit on the bus
 - Some of you may have even done it today while you were looking for a seat.
- We all have times when we have to decide – often very quickly – who we want to be around and who we don't. And we do that in fascinating ways:
 - Sometimes we treat people differently based on...
 - The way they're dressed
 - How popular they are
 - Or whether they are our "type of person"
- I know it's easy to think this is just something that happens in middle school or only in 2026, but the truth is, this is a natural human tendency.
 - It even happened this way back in James' day. And the Book of James has something really important to say about that.
 - According to James, **Real faith doesn't play favorites.**

TRANSITION:

- James is writing to followers of Jesus who believed the right things about God but didn't always treat others the right way. And because James cared so deeply about the body of Christ, he – in love – called them out on this.

BIBLE:

- Think about this...
 - Two people walk into a church:
 - One looks wealthy and important – Nice clothes. Confident. Seems to be popular.
 - The other looks poor – they aren't wearing the nicest clothes. They're easily ignored and easily overlooked.
 - James invites us to answer an important question: Which one are you more likely to pay attention to?

- ***Either read, summarize, or invite a student to come up and read James 2:1-13.***
 - Walk through and highlight anything that stands out and supports where the rest of the message is headed.
- Favoritism means treating someone better than someone else simply because of how they look, what they have, or what they can do for you.
 - James makes it clear in 2:1 that following Jesus and favoritism don't go together; instead, we are to love our neighbor – ALL OF THEM – as ourselves (2:8)
- Here's why this matters:
 - When we follow Jesus, He changes how we see people.
 - Before Jesus, we usually see
 - Popularity
 - Clothes
 - Talent
 - Social status
 - But the more time you spend with Jesus, the less those sorts of things start to matter less.
 - Once Jesus changes our hearts, we start to see something different.
 - We see men and women made in His image.
- Every person you meet was created by God, is loved by God, and matters to God.
 - And if we want to be like God, that means we should love them and they should matter to us as well.
- Favoritism says, "You matter more than they do." But Jesus says, "Everyone matters and has value."
 - Think about it this way: Don't say their name out loud, but who's someone at your school that is often and easily overlooked?
 - What would it look like if someone treated them like they really mattered?
 - Can you believe that if Jesus came to your school at lunch time, they'd be the ones He's looking for? Because they would be! We see Jesus do that exact thing all the time.

APPLICATION/SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION SET UP:

- And because that's the way Jesus would live, James encourages us to pursue the same people He would:
- Real faith changes how we treat everyone, but especially:
 - The unnoticed
 - Sit with someone new
 - Include someone
 - Learn and say their name
 - The different
 - Different interests
 - Different background
 - Different friend group
 - The inconvenient
 - Someone who can't help your reputation
 - Someone who isn't "cool."
 - Someone others overlook
- Jesus didn't love others based on popularity. He loved them based on purpose and identity. And He calls us to do the same.

GOSPEL MOMENT/CLOSE:

- The reason we often treat people differently is that we naturally think of them by categories and labels, but Jesus never treats you that way.
 - He doesn't love you because of what you bring. He loves you because of who you are.
 - And when His love changes your heart... You start loving others differently, too.
 - That's what inside-out faith and love look like.
 - Real faith doesn't play favorites. Because Jesus never played favorites with you.
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