

# TENSION and TRIUMPH

## Sermon Study - 2.22.2026

### Leader's Corner

The Ground is Level

James 2:1-13

James gives a clear and challenging reminder: followers of Jesus must learn to see people the way Jesus sees them. Favoritism, comparison, and ranking others have no place in the Kingdom because every person bears God's image and stands on level ground at the foot of the cross.

This week helps the group reflect on how we view others, where subtle favoritism can creep in, and what it looks like to live with mercy instead of judgment.

### Prayer and Praise

#### Opening Prayer (with Worship Option)

Jesus, help us see people the way You see them.

Search our hearts for pride, comparison, or hidden favoritism, and teach us to love with mercy and humility. Amen.

#### Optional Worship Songs:

- "The Heart of Worship" — refocuses our posture before God
- "Build My Life" — centers our lives on Jesus and His love for people
- "O Come to the Altar" — reminds us the ground is level at the cross

(Play one song before discussion, or close with one as a response.)

#### Scripture Reading:

Primary Text: James 2:1-13

#### Supporting Scriptures (optional as time allows):

Genesis 1:26-27

Matthew 5:3

1 Corinthians 1:27-29

Matthew 25:31-40

## Teaching / Reflection

James speaks directly to how we view people. Favoritism isn't just a social issue — it's a heart issue that reveals whether we see others through human scales or through the eyes of Jesus.

First, James gives a consistent command: no favoritism.

Every person carries the image of God (Genesis 1:26–27). Throughout Scripture, God shows deep anger when people exploit or dismiss others. The prophets warned about it, and Jesus confronted it when the temple became a place that pushed people aside instead of welcoming them (Matthew 21:12–13).

Second, James reminds us of God's pattern.

God often chooses the overlooked, the weak, and the poor to demonstrate His power. The Kingdom runs opposite of human rankings (Matthew 5:3; 1 Corinthians 1:27–29). What the world minimizes, God often elevates.

Third, Jesus makes this deeply personal.

In Matthew 25, He tells us that how we treat “the least of these” is how we treat Him. Mercy toward others is not optional — it is evidence of a transformed heart.

Finally, James gives a sober warning.

“Judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful.”

The way we extend mercy reveals whether we truly understand the mercy we've received.

The ground is level before God.

No one is above another.

We are all recipients of grace.

## Group Discussion

1. What part of James 2:1–13 stood out to you most and why?
2. Where do you see favoritism or “human ranking” showing up in our culture today?
3. In subtle ways, where can favoritism creep into our own hearts or relationships?
4. Why do you think God often chooses the overlooked or weak to work through?
5. How does seeing Jesus in “the least of these” change the way we treat people?

# Practice

Ask God to show you one person you might normally overlook, avoid, or quietly rank beneath you.

**This week:**

- Notice them
- Speak to them
- Show kindness or care in a tangible way

Practice seeing them through the eyes of Jesus.

**Closing Prayer:**

Father, thank You for showing us mercy when we didn't deserve it.

Help us become people who extend that same mercy to others.

Teach us to see every person as made in Your image and loved by You.

Form in us hearts that reflect Yours. Amen.