VALUE REBOOT
JAMES // REAL RELIGION
James 1:27-2:13 // Craig Smith
May 21, 2017

CRAIG: Good morning. Welcome to Mission Hills. Whether you’re here in the big room or here in the Mill or joining us on... streaming Facebook live. So got to add that into the welcome. We’re just so glad that you’re here. And I’m super excited about this weekend because today is our Love in Action Sunday and I see some red shirts around. We’re sending almost 1500 people out into the community to love on our neighborhood and I just think that is awesome.

Yeah, and I didn’t plan it this way, but I think the planning happened a little bit higher level than me. Though the passage that we’re looking at in the book of James today is actually directly applicable to a day where we’re gonna scatter from this place and really go love on people. If you got your Bible, let’s have you joined with me in James chapter 2. And, while I’m turning there, let me just say this, that what James has to say today not only is directly applicable to our Love in Action weekend, but it’s a really good example of what I think makes James a difficult book to deal with in some ways.

Because what James has to say to us this morning is really not hard to understand. It’s not complex theology, it’s a pretty simple reality. The problem comes in how do we put that into practice. How do we take the truth that James says and how do we actually let that play out in our lives. And the thing that we’re gonna look at today, in particular, is a great example of that because it’s unnatural to do what James is gonna tell us that we’re supposed to be doing as followers of Jesus.

And so as we begin to unpack what God has to say this morning, what I want you to do is really be just kinda be mindful and be prayerful of not just the need to understand what he says, but the need to make whatever changes underneath need to happen so that we can actually live it out. We’re actually gonna begin this morning in chapter 1, verse 27 and the reason we’re doing that, the reason I’m kind of breaking the passage and what might feel like a strange way is I really believe that 1:27 is the beginning of this next section of James. I don’t know if you know this, but when God first inspired the Bible, he didn’t give them verse numbers and chapter numbers. Like James wasn’t writing going, “Okay, verse 22.” Those actually came much later. The chapter divisions in the Bible we didn’t get until 1227, that was the first time that a man named Stephen Langton actually came in and put chapter divisions in the Bible. And then we didn’t get verses until 1551 when Robert Stephanus divided the Bible that way. And then those section headings that we often have in our Bibles, those came even more recently. In fact, they’re sort of unique to each particular translation of the Bible.

And the reason I’m telling you this is just that I wanna make sure we understand that while those numbers and those kinds of divisions can be very helpful, very useful when it comes to dividing God’s Word for study, we always need to be careful to remember that they’re not inspired and sometimes the divisions are in places that I don’t think necessarily capture the full thought of what God was saying. And in this particular case, I really believe that 1:27 is the beginning of the next section. And I think as we start to read it you’ll see why I say that.

He begins in 1:27 this way, he says, “Religion that God, our Father, accepts us pure and faultless is this, to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.” And what James is doing there is he’s setting the stage to deal with an issue that he knows his audience struggles with. And it’s not unique to James’s audience. I think it’s something that I struggle with, I think it’s something we all struggle with, throughout the centuries of the followers of Jesus, and that is, it’s the struggle to think and to act according to God’s priorities, rather than the world’s priorities, okay.

You notice that he says, he says to look after orphans and widows and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. Understand, that’s not two separate things, okay, these are actually the same thing. They’re not two separate calls, he’s not
saying “Real religion is looking after orphans widows,” and, on the other side of the page, he’s says other kind of thing. No, no, they’re actually... They’re two things that joined in the middle. What he’s saying is, real religion that God accepts and that God looks at and approves of, it looks after orphans or widows and specifically, it’s able to do that because it has not been polluted by the world. Does that make sense? What he’s really saying is this, the world has a way of assigning value to people. And in the world’s approach to assigning value to people, orphans and widows are considered valueless.

Because the world’s way of assigning value to people is based on what they can do in return. We consider people valuable if they can return the favor, if they can bring something of value back to us. And so we tend to look at people and go, you know, “What do you have to offer me?” and if the answer is you’ve got something to offer me, then I care about you, I’m concerned about you, I’m gonna be kind to you, I’m gonna invest in you because I expect that that’s gonna come back. That’s how the world assigns value, but that’s not how God assigns value. And so he says, “Getting on board God’s priority is real religion. It focuses on widows and orphans because it has not been corrupted by the world’s value system.” Does it make sense? You see how those two go together?

The reality is that in the ancient world, and I think to a certain extent even today, we tend to look at this class of people and he’s just using them as an example of any group of people that, from the world’s standards, we look at and we go, “You don’t have anything to offer me. So why would I pour time and energy and kindness and money and all those things? Why would I pour it into these kinds of people, they’ve got nothing to return. I’m gonna pour in this, it’s gonna be like a black hole. I’ll keep pouring, I’ll keep caring, I’ll keep loving, I’ll keep investing, but it’s never gonna come back to me” and he says, “It’s precisely those kinds of people that God values deeply. And that was an issue for his audience, I think it’s an issue for all of us. So he says, “My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes. And a poor man in filthy clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and you say, ‘Here’s a good seat for you,’ but you say to the poor man, ‘You stand over there’ or, ‘sit on the floor by my feet.’ Have you not discriminated among yourselves? And become judges with evil thoughts?”

That last phrase is interesting, “Judges with evil thoughts.” The Greek word for judge is exactly like the English word and that is we can have two related but distinct meanings for it. We can talk about judging as declaring guilt, but we also talk about it as determining value. To judge something is either to declare its guilt or its innocence or it’s to determine its value. And he’s using it kinda of that second sense here. He says, when you look at rich people rather than poor people and you go, “These people, these rich people have value,” you’re judging their value, but he says you’re doing it with evil thoughts. You’ve been polluted by the world. You’ve allowed the world’s value system to affect the way that you think about people. And he draws an interesting contrast, which I think begins to help us understand why it is that we struggle in that area, he draws a contrast between two very different kinds of glory.

He starts off by talking about believers in the glorious Lord Jesus Christ. And, literally, in Greek it says, “Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious one.” He’s saying, “Okay, this is one kind of glory.” But then he begins to show us another kind of glory and that’s the glory of money and power. And you see that in the rich man who came in, who’s got gold rings on his fingers. Literally, there it says, “He’s gold fingered,” suggesting it’s not just one ring but he’s like covered, it’s an ostentatious show of wealth. So, clearly, he’s got money but he also says he has fine clothes and in the ancient world the kind of clothes you wore was directly related to your status in society. And so just the very kind of clothes that he’s wearing indicates, this is a man who not only has money, but he has power.

And so he’s giving us a contrast between two very, very different kinds of glory. There’s the glory of Jesus and then there’s the glory of the world. And what he says is that when you exchange the glory of Jesus for glorifying and for being enamored of and attracted to and thinking in terms of what the world calls glorious, what you’ve done is you’ve bought into a counterfeit. And so he reminds us of the kind of people that Jesus cared about. He says, “Listen, my dear brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith? And to inherit the kingdom He promised to those who love Him?”
What he’s saying is if you look back on God’s history of interacting with people, what you see is that the people He values are often very different than the people the world values. Where God assigns glory is very different than the world assigns glory. What God considers glorious is very different than what the world considers glorious. He says, basically, God’s got a long track record of this. I mean God called Abraham to be the father of the Jewish people through whom we eventually got Jesus. But Abraham had nothing to offer God. He wasn’t rich, he wasn’t privileged, he wasn’t powerful. But God selected him to become the father of the Jewish people. Throughout the history of the Jewish people, you have people like David. He’s a shepherd and yet he becomes the king because God moved him into that position.

Jesus came and in and who did he call to be his disciples? Fishermen. The poor. Those who had no particular status in society, Jesus said, “You come with me.” All those people that we tend to go like, “You’ve got nothing to offer,” God says, “Yeah, I’m not looking for people who have something to offer Me, that’s not how I make value decisions.” Interestingly enough, He also reverses it. The people that we tend to look at and say, “Yeah, they’ve got glory, they’ve got what’s valuable, they’ve got something to offer.” And God tends to look at those people with a certain amount of ambivalence, even concern.

I think at the time a very rich man came to Jesus and said, “What do I have to do to inherit eternal life?” and Jesus said, “Well,” I mean, “You know what the scriptures say, you don’t obey the commandments,” and he said, “Well, yeah, I’ve been doing that,” and Jesus goes, “Well, you’re missing one thing. Sell everything you have, give it to the poor, and then come follow me.” And as Luke tells it, “The man went away sad, because he had great wealth.”

But he wasn’t the only one that was sad, Jesus was saddened as well. And what he said next to... It wasn’t... It wasn’t... I don’t think it was under the declaration of guilt. It was a statement from his heart of sadness. He looked at his disciples and he said, “Guys, you know what? It’s easier to get a camel through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter into the Kingdom.” It’s not because wealth is inherently evil, but because wealth has this tremendous capacity, this gravity to it, that draws us into orbit around it and cause us to trust in wealth, rather than in God. And so, it’s interesting that we tend to look at people who have money and we envy them. We want to pursue them, we want to be friends with them, we want to build relationships with them. Whereas the people who don’t have much to offer us, you know, we just pity them, and yet God seems to flip this whole thing around that God pursues those the world pities. And He pities those that the world pursues. Isn’t that interesting. God pursues those that the world pities and God pities those that the world pursues. This is very interesting and powerful reversal of our value system.

And what James was getting at here when he was talking about the way that we show favoritism to the rich is he’s saying, “The world’s standards for judging value have no place in the church.” The world’s standards for judging value have no place in the church because it’s not God’s standards. God has a completely different set of priorities by for judging worth and value and significance. And the world’s standards for judging value don’t belong in the church because it’s God’s church. He says, “But you, you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong?”

And what he’s saying there is... This is not hypothetical, guys. He’s not saying, you know, “If you were to do this to the rich man, give him the best seat in the house but tell the poor man ‘Yeah, why don’t you sit over there? We don’t have any seat for you, sit on the floor.’” He’s not...

...you would have disvalued or dishonored the poor. He says, “You’re doing it, it’s happened, it’s happening right now. It’s going on, you’re actually doing this.” He’s talking about a real issue. And interestingly enough, he says, “The irony is you’re using the same value system in the church for assigning value to people that is used against you in the world. You’re bringing into the church a broken value system that is causing you so much difficulty out there.”

As I’ve said over the last couple weeks, James’s original audience was a group of followers of Jesus who had been persecuted
and had to flee their homes in Jerusalem. So they were in the place of refugees and immigrants in the world, which meant that they didn’t have money, it meant that they didn’t have influence, they didn’t have rights and they were often used and abused by rich landowners in the places where they were living as immigrants and refugees. And it was a difficult place to be in because what would happen is, you know, they would have to find jobs in any way they could and that often meant working in the fields. And they were completely at the mercy of the rich as to whether or not they would actually pay. And sometimes what would happen at the end of the day is the rich would say, “Yeah, you know, my cash flow’s a little light right now, I’m not gonna be able to pay you. But, you know what you can do here, we actually have some housing option, so you can stay in this housing. It’s a very low rent kind of a place. It won’t cost you much. And so that’s how we’ll do it.” And honestly, they weren’t great places to live. They were slum lords in the 1st century.

And so they would put them in these housing complexes and then they would charge a rent and then the rent would keep climbing and the problem is that they didn’t have any other way to make money, so the rich people weren’t paying them but they were charging them rent. And so they found themselves in this real deep well of poverty. And sometimes what would happen is that the rich would go, “Okay, well, the rent’s due,” and they were like, “Well, you didn’t pay me.” “But you tell me you don’t have the money.” “Well no, because you didn’t pay” “You don’t have the money is that’s what you’re saying? I’m taking you to court.” And they would take them to court and they would have them declared debtors which meant that they were enslaved, they really became the property of the rich landowners at that point. It’s a difficult place to be in, right? And you understand what, what’s happening is it’s an incredibly difficult place to be in because from the world’s perspective these people were, basically, cattle. They had no intrinsic value. And the rich didn’t look at them and say, “Well, you know, I need to treat you well, I need to be kind to you because it’s going to come back to me in some way,” they said, “No, you got nothing to offer, so I don’t owe you anything.”

What James says is, “Guys, do you not get it? The same value system that is giving you so much difficulty in life you’re bringing into the church.” Now, we understand why it would happen, you know, a rich person would come into the church and they would go, “You know, what if I’m kind to him maybe he’ll go to bat for me. Maybe he’ll get his other rich friends to drop the lawsuit that’s going to have me declared a slave, a debtor slave. Or maybe he’ll help me with the rent or maybe he’ll let me come work for him and he will pay me at the end of the day.” So we get that, from the world’s perspective it makes sense that you would pour kindness on people who had something to offer you. But James says, “You’re bringing the world’s broken value system into the church. It’s the very system that’s causing you so much heartache out there.” And so really what he says is, “Don’t bring the world’s broken value system into the church. It has no place here.”

And he offers an alternative. He says, “If you really keep the royal law that’s found in Scripture, to love your neighbor as yourself, then you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin. And you’re convicted by the law as lawbreakers. Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. For he who said, ‘you shall not commit adultery,’ also said, ‘You shall not commit murder.’” If you do not commit adultery but you do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker. Couple things here to understand what he’s saying, it’s really not that complex. First off, he’s saying, “What I’m telling you to do when I’m telling you to treat people in this particular way is I’m really just telling you to obey what God called the Royal Command.” He says what the Royal Command final scripture and tells us exactly what that command is, right, he says, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” He says, “That’s the Royal law, that’s the Royal Command.”

Okay, why is that the Royal one? Well, I think it’s because when Jesus was teaching, at one point some teachers and other experts in the law came up and they said, “Hey, we just kinda wanna see where you are on, you know, the landscape of belief. Are you with us? So, Jesus, what do you think, what’s the greatest commandment?” And Jesus said, “So love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.” And at that point his audience would’ve gone, “Okay, okay, yeah,” I mean, “That’s the right answer.” They sort of all agreed that’s the greatest commandment. But Jesus said, “Yeah, but I’m not done. The second one is like it,” and they were like, “What do you mean, ‘Second one?’ I asked you what the greatest command was, there’s no a runner-up.” And he said, “Yeah, the second one is like it,” meaning not just that it’s similar, but it’s really closely connected to it. He said, “The second one is like it, to love your neighbor as yourself.” Because our love for God is most clearly exhibited in our
Our love for God is most clearly demonstrated in our love for others. Because loving God is not an abstract theological thing, it’s not like God’s going, “Okay, do they love me?” Or, “How loud did they sing that last song?” Okay, it’s not, “How many warm fuzzies do they feel?” Okay. No, whether or not we have an authentic love for Jesus is demonstrated by how we treat other people. And so what James says is, “Listen, when you favor the rich because of what they can do back for you and you demean or you care nothing for the poor because they can’t do anything back for you, you’re not loving your neighbor as yourself. Because you wouldn’t wanna be judged that way, you wouldn’t want people to care for you and love you, be kind to you on the basis of what you could do in return.” He says, “That’s not love.” He says, “You wouldn’t wanna be treated like that, but you’re treating other people like that and in doing that, you’re breaking the commandment.”

Now he goes on and he starts to talk about, you know, if you break one law, you’ve broken all of it. If you commit adultery but not murder you still become a law-breaker. And really all he’s saying is, “Guys, this is serious business. This is serious business, you can’t claim to have a real religion, you can’t claim to be pure before God just because you obey certain commands but not these.” And I think what he’s probably dealing with here is the temptation for them to go, “Come on, James, is this really that big a deal? Is it really that big a deal if I show favoritism to the rich? Come on its not like I killed somebody. It’s not like I did this horrible thing.” And what’s happening is, something I think we all struggle with, which is the temptation to think that the sins that we struggle with are not that big a deal compared to the other ones. We tend to go, “You know what, yeah, I know this is not ideal but is it really a big deal?” James says, “Yeah. Yeah, it is because there’s no such thing as partial purity.” Okay, there’s no such thing as partial purity. James said, “Don’t be polluted by the world. Don’t let your religion, don’t let your value system be polluted by the world.” And we go, “Yeah, it’s not. I mean, yeah I’m showing favoritism to the rich, but it’s okay in all these other ways.” He goes, “No, you can’t do that. There’s no such thing as partial purity.”

I mean think about it this way. If I offered you a bottle of water, you’re really thirsty and I go, “Oh, I got water for you. This bottle, this is 50% pure.” You’re like, “Well, wait a minute.” Well, I say, “Well, yeah, it’s 50% free of cat pee.” Nobody’s gonna buy that bottle of water, right? Just work with me for a second here. Even if I said, “Well, it is 80% free of cat pee. Anybody takers? 95% free?” Exactly, that’s what James is saying, he’s like, “There’s no such thing as partial purity. You can’t claim to have not been corrupted by the world’s value system when you’re showing favoritism to the rich.” And also, I mean he’s kinda making sort of a theological point there, but he’s got to making a practical one too, which is that, “And that would be true even if what I’m telling you wasn’t extremely important.” If it was just like one of all of the laws, it would still matter that you’re showing favoritism. But it’s not just one of all laws, it’s the Royal Law, it’s the king of the laws. It is the number one way that we demonstrate that we love God, Himself. Because the way we demonstrate it in loving others. He says, “Yeah, it’s a big deal.”

So he says instead, “Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom. Because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.” He does something interesting here, he begins to talk about something that we spoke about a little bit last week, he talks about the law that gives freedom. And I kinda unpacked that last week, so I don’t spend too much time on it today, but I want to make sure we’re on the same page with understanding what he means. The law refers to the Old Testament Commandments. But when he talks about the law that gives freedom, what he’s talking about is the Old Testament sort of brought to completion in the gospel. Because the gospel, the gospel changes everything. The Old Testament told us what heavenly righteousness would look like in earthly relationships, but it also shows us that we fall short over and over again.

And so it pointed us to Jesus who came and by his death on the cross forgave us for all of our law-breaking. But also made it possible for us to be transformed from the inside out so that we can actually begin to live in the way that the law points us to. And so he talked about the law reinterpreted by the gospel brought to forgiveness and fulfillment by the gospel as the law that gives freedom. So he’s talking about the gospel. The good news that salvation is available through faith in what Jesus did on the cross. But he saw something really important here, he says, “You need to speak and act. You need to live in concrete ways as somebody who will be judged by the gospel.” In other words, what he’s saying is, “Listen, those who have been judged with
mercy are supposed to judge with mercy.”

If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, you have been judged with mercy. God looked at you and he didn’t say, “Oh, you’ve got something I need, so I better save you.” No, he didn’t have anything to offer God. He didn’t look at you and go, “Well, you’re actually really good compared to these other people, so I guess I’d better...” No, no, no, that’s not the gospel. Gospel says that we’re all sinners. We’ve all been law-breakers in little ways and in big ways and the wages of sin is death. God didn’t look at us and go, “You deserve it in some way, you’ve got something to offer me,” he said, “Doesn’t matter, I love you.”

You’ve been judged with mercy. You’ve been judged with kindness. And he’s saying, “Those who have been judged with kindness are supposed to judge others with kindness. We’re supposed to assign value with kindness. It’s the way that we demonstrate the reality of our faith and in that way, do you see, James loops back to the very beginning. He started off with saying, “Who are we supposed to be assigning value to, who’s worth to be paying attention to?” Orphans and widows, people who have nothing to offer you. Because you were orphans and widows. You were in the same class with people who had nothing of value to give to God, and yet your lack of value-added had nothing to do with the love felt. God loves you in spite of the fact that you don’t have anything to offer him. God loves you in spite of the fact that you didn’t earn his favor. And he says, “That’s how you’ve been saved. You’re supposed to live that out, you’re supposed to look at other people and assign value in the same way.” And really what he kinda boils the whole thing down to is this very clear idea that real religion leads us to be the most kind to those who have the least to offer us. And that’s really, that’s really the summation of everything James was saying. He was saying, “Real religion, if you really have a relationship with God, real religion leads you to be the most kind to those who have the least to offer you.”

That’s the way the gospel works. And that’s the way the gospel is supposed to work itself out in our lives. Which is not complex, right? But that’s not a hard truth to understand, is it? But it’s a really hard truth to live. Because the reality is that it’s unnatural. It’s not what the world teaches us. It’s not how the world has shaped us. And so, to embrace this idea that we’re supposed to be the most kind to those who have the least to offer us, really requires a reboot of the whole value system that is underneath everything else. And that’s difficult.

So what I wanna do is I wanna give you four steps that I think are important steps to follow for a value reboot. Because what James says is clear, “Real religion leads us to be the most kind to those who have the least to offer us in return.” But how do we get to the place where we can actually live on a regular basis in light of that? We have to reboot our value system. We have to reboot the way that we think about what has value and what doesn’t.

So four things I wanna challenge you to wrestle with along with me, I’m wrestling with these too. The first step is this, we have to evaluate our values. We have to have some awareness of what it is that we care about and what’s important to us. We have to evaluate our values, that’s the first step. And there’s several different ways you can do that. You can just ask the question like, “What do I think about a lot? What occupies most of my attention, most of my thought life?” That’s a pretty good indicator of what you value, what’s important to you. Looking at your bank statement? That’s a pretty good indicator of what you value, what’s important to you.

Or we could do it like James does it, we could talk in really practical like church settings... I mean let’s imagine that it’s a really crowded church service and you’re sitting on the aisle because the aisles are nice, I get it. But it means there’s usually a few seats in the middle and it’s not easy for people to get to the middle ones, but, you know, they’ll find another seat. My question is this, who would you see coming down the aisle looking for a seat maybe for a family that you would go, “Oh, I’ll move into the center, so that you can have my seat right here.” What kind of person would it have to be? Somebody that you know is loaded? “Oh yeah, you have my seat I’ll sit in the inconvenient middle, so that you can have this seat right here.” Or maybe it’s Taylor Swift. Like would you move to the center for Taylor Swift? Okay, that tells you something about the value you put on fame. It’d be nice for her to owe me one?” Right? Even it’s a little one? You understand what I’m saying, it’s a little bit of a silly illustration, but I don’t think it’s an unhelpful one. What kind of person would you make a sacrifice for is really the question. What kind of a
person would you make a sacrifice for? And the answer that question tells you a little bit about what you value.

That’s the first step. The second step is identify what I’m gonna call the God gaps. These are the places where there’s a gap between what God values and what we value. Which requires, of course, that you know what God values. And that means that we read God’s Word, we do what James told us last week, we study God’s Word, we go to hear God’s Word and then put into practice. Let me give you one passage, that’s a great place to begin this process of understanding what God values. It’s Matthew chapter 5, verses 3 to 11. Matthew 5:3-11. It’s a nice little compact passage where Jesus is very clear about some things that God values. And I encourage you to just make it a practice for the next 30 days to just read that short little passage every day and reflect on what it tells you about what God values. Because what we’re looking to do is, once we know what our values are and we know what God’s values are, we need to identify the gap between the two. So that we know where it is we need to close the gap.

That leads me the third step which is just to pray for a value overall. Pray for a value overall because what James is calling us to do here is not possible from a natural perspective. It’s not possible to live this way based upon our experience and our natural ways of thinking about things. It’s a supernatural thing that has to happen. And so we begin to invite God and we go, “Okay, here’s what I value, here’s what God values. There is a gap between God.” Would you close the gap? Would you close the gap between what I value and way you value? We’ll begin to pray and invite God into that process?

And you know I’m not gonna leave it just a prayer, right? Prayer is absolutely foundational to this. But I’m also gonna say, fourth step, you’ve got to cooperate with what you’re asking God to do, you have to cooperate with concrete steps. We’re gonna ask God to come in and reboot our value system, so we can live out what James says here. And we’re gonna begin living on a daily basis in ways that help us move in the direction that God is moving us. So, for instance, I’m gonna encourage you to do something I’ve committed to and that is... For at least the next 30 days, I’m gonna make it a practice that every single day I’m gonna do at least one thing for somebody who has nothing to offer me. Does that make sense? One thing for somebody who has really nothing to offer me, one thing for somebody who’s really not in a position to return the favor or, from my perspective at least, to bless me. I’m gonna be blessing with no thought that they’re gonna be... In fact, I’m gonna look for people that, from my perspective at least, they really... They can’t, they’re not in the position, they don’t have the capacity to return the favor in any way. I’m gonna look to do one kind thing every day for somebody who can’t return the favor.

And I invite you to join me in that for the next 30 days at least. Because what we’re doing at that point is we’re beginning to cooperate with God as we invite him in to reboot our value system. Because what James is calling us to here, it’s so easy to understand. But it’s so hard to practice. To be the most kind to those who have the least offer us. The world would say, “You’re crazy, that makes no sense.” And your response to that has to be, “Yeah, you’re right, it doesn’t. But this was the God that loved us this way. And so this is how we’re to live too.”

Jesus, thank you for loving us in spite of the fact that we didn’t have anything to offer you in return. Thank you for the fact that you poured grace and mercy and kindness upon us, even though we couldn’t return the favor. Lord, in the same way that we have been loved, would you teach us to love? Would you help us to understand where our values don’t line up with yours? And we invite you in right now, we beg you to come in and to transform us. Reboot our value system, so that we can live in the way that we’ve been loved. In Jesus’ name, Amen.