

## The Sin of Elitism

*James 2:1-13*

### Introduction

Elitism is defined as “the attitude or behavior of a person or group who regard themselves as superior to others.” Elitism is illegitimately elevating yourself and as a result looking down on others who you perceive to be less than you are. This particular sin relates to an attitude that views and treats others as inferior because of their race, culture, economic status, education, or even religious preferences. Elitism seeks to say, “I’m better and so are my experiences and my ways of doing things.”

In James chapter 2, the rich in the body of Christ were putting down the poor and yet were instructed not to show favoritism. Showing preference to the economically privileged is one form of elitism but exclusivity can be shown based on race or culture as well. While people use external markers to determine the value of a person, God makes His judgment calls based on the internal, obedient response of one’s heart. In fact, verse 5 tells us that He has chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom. This stands as further evidence that God operates contrary to the standards of the world. James goes on to highlight the inconsistency of their elitism in verses 6 and 7; the Christians were giving honor to the rich, while dishonoring the poor yet many who were rich oppressed the Christians without justification.

This type of elitist value system persists today, when a group of people oppresses another based on their race, economic status, or culture. We must be very careful to have right attitudes and actions towards others no matter their “status.” Verse 9 tells us if we show favoritism based on worldly external markers, then we sin! Since believers are commanded to love our neighbors as we love ourselves, showing elitism and partiality goes directly against this high commandment of God. Elitism is on the same level as the sins of murder and adultery! Therefore, this sin, like others, has its consequences. Those who do not show mercy will also not receive mercy (vs. 13) and those who do, will.

### Getting Started

1. How has “Second,” our current series on loving your neighbor, changed your attitude thus far?
2. In your words, explain why elitism is a sin.
3. Is there anything from today’s message that surprised you or that was new information for you? If so, explain.

### Let’s Get Personal

1. Do you have a spirit of elitism? Are your attitudes and actions towards others ever based on race, culture, or economic status? Share your self-assessment with your group.
2. Do you notice people treating others with elitist attitudes in your church? Share what you have witnessed.
3. Last week, you were asked to think about specific opportunities to tangibly show love to others. Now that you have heard more about the sin of elitism, are you more aware of other opportunities to show love that you have not taken in the past because you were showing partiality based on someone’s status?

### Take the Next Step

1. Share in a time of prayer and confession as a group. If you or others present have discovered that you are guilty of this sin, pray for one another. Ask God for forgiveness. Also ask for His help to see people as He does and to think and act accordingly moving forward.
2. Want to dig deeper? Look at Matthew 23:1-12 and 1 Timothy 6:17 & 19. How do these passages shed light on the topic of loving your neighbor and the sin of elitism?

### Renew Your Mind

*“But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.” James 2:8*

---