



James 2:1

(1) My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord* of glory, with partiality.

New King James Version

Instead of "[partiality](#)," the King James Version reads "respect of persons." In many ways, "respect of persons" is a plainer translation of the Greek, since that is exactly what the apostle is fighting: church members respecting some people over others. This problem frequently rears its ugly head, causing trouble among brethren, so it is good to know what it is and how it manifests itself in a congregation.

First, we need to make sure that we understand the full implications of partiality by reviewing some definitions of the term. *Webster's Dictionary* defines *partial* as "biased to one party; inclined to favor one party in a cause, or one side of a question, more than the other; not indifferent." A second meaning emphasizes favoring something "without reason," and a third, "affecting a part only; not general or universal; not total," implies dividing or separating things apart from the whole.

Another tool we can use to get a better grasp of a term is to see how other translations of a particular Bible verse use it. Here are several alternate translations of [James 2:1](#):

International Standard Version: My brothers, do not practice your [faith](#) in our glorious Lord [Jesus Christ](#) by showing partiality.

New International Version: My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism.

Good News Translation: My friends, as believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, you must never treat people in different ways according to their outward appearance.

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James Moffatt Translation: My brothers, as you believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Glory, pay no servile regard to people.

William Barclay Translation: My brothers, you cannot at one and the same time believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ and be a snob.

The New Testament in Modern English: Don't ever attempt, my brothers, to combine snobbery with faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ!

Amplified Bible: My brethren, pay no servile regard to people [show no prejudice, no partiality]. Do not [attempt to] hold [and] practice the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, [the Lord] of Glory, [together with snobbery]!

This term, rendered variously as "partiality," "favoritism," "respect of persons," "servile regard," and "snobbery" in [James 2:1](#), means "the fault of one who, when responsible to give judgment, has respect to the position, rank, popularity, or circumstances of men, instead of their intrinsic conditions, preferring the rich and powerful to those who are not so . . ." (Vine's *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*).

Parents almost always display partiality for their own children over other people's children, which is only natural, but sometimes they favor one of their own children over his or her sibling(s). This is bound to have disastrous results at some point.

Of course, there are racial, social, religious, and political prejudices. Many of these kinds of partialities can get one in trouble with the group in question, the law, the community, or the church, depending on how radically a person displays them. Even in supposedly free and equal societies, prejudices abound, as they are part of human nature.

Further, intellectual snobbery and elitism abound. Those who have advanced degrees too often look down their noses at those whose educational achievements were stymied by a lack of opportunity or funds or plain bad grades in school. Though it is more rare, a reverse intellectual snobbery has been known to exist among poorly educated Americans from time to time.

In the church, we often witness the "holier than thou" individual who wears his spirituality on his sleeve for all to see. He is quick to criticize others for their shortcomings, drawing away from [fellowship](#) with them for their "lack of [conversion](#)." Such a person is showing a bias toward his idea of righteousness, which, as we know,

The Berean: Daily Verse and Commentary for James 2:1 (<http://www.theberean.org>) is called "self-righteousness."

There are many other kinds of partiality, and if one keeps an eye out for them, they are easy to spot. Respect of persons is part of the underside of the human condition, so it is not surprising that the Bible presents so many illustrations of it.

— Dan Elmore

To learn more, see:
[The Sin of Partiality](#)

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