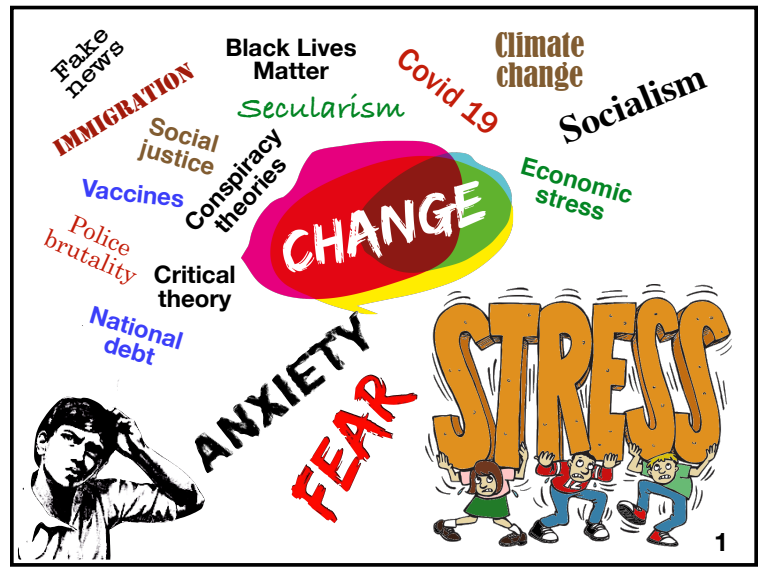


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# THE BEREANS

ACTS 17:11

**James 2:5-7**  
**Lesson #9**  
**Power struggles**  
**04/25/2021**



**Fear** is perhaps the most powerful negative emotion in driving spiritual decisions.

At the heart of all ethics are **FEAR** & **FAITH**

“My key to dealing with stress is simple: just stay cool and stay focused.”

**Ashton Eaton**  
(Olympic Decathlete)

*James* **Developing a Witness in a Broken World**

**2:5-7** **Managing the stress**

This is what we should know 1:1-18	Transition verse	This is what we should do		
	“quick to hear” “Listen up” 1:19-2:13	“slow to speak” “Live out” 2:14-3:18	“slow to anger” “Calm down” 4:1-5:20	

**James 1:19**

“But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger;

*John 16:33*

“These things I have spoken to you, that **in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation**, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

**The world says:**

“No justice,  
no peace”

**The Kingdom says:**

“No Jesus,  
no peace”

6

**Our relationship with Jesus  
will be evident in our relationships  
with those who bear his image.**

**Who we  
pass over**

“the have nots”

**Who we  
prefer**

“the have lots”

**The Great Commandment  
- love God  
and all who bear His Image.**

7

*James 2*

“5 Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God **choose** the poor (have nots) of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? 6 But you have **dishonored** the poor (have nots) man. Is it not the rich (have lots) who **oppress** you and personally drag you into court? 7 Do they not **blaspheme** the fair name by which you have been called?”

8

“5 Listen, my beloved brethren:”

1. James is addressing **believers**.

2. His comments come in a context of:

- **living as aliens in a broken world**
- **knowing the Word of the Cross**
- **following the Way of the Cross**

3. Christians face special temptations:

- **Dishonoring God's choices**
- **Oppressing God's people**
- **Blaspheming God's Image**

9

**The many needs of the “have nots”.**

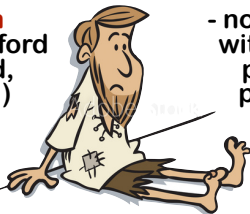
**Material deprivation**  
- not able to afford basics (food, shelter, etc.)

**Spiritual disorientation**  
- not empowered from within to experience personal dignity, power, and hope.

**Social isolation**  
- not connected to a supportive community.

**Political marginalization**  
- not empowered socially to affect change in one's life situation.

**Cultural deterioration**  
- not supported by a healthy family tradition.



10

“5 . . . did not God **choose** (elect) the poor (have nots) of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?”

**1. Make God's choices a priority in your choices.**

Have you considered how messy Jesus social circle really was?



What role does “fear” of discomfort play in your respecting of people?

11

### 1 Corinthians 1

"26 For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; 27 but **God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong**, 28 and the base things of the world and the despised, **God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are**, 29 that no man should boast before God."

The "have nots" of the world were chosen by God, not to become "have lots" within this world **but to mock the world's values.**

The rapid spread of Christianity is a mystery **that cannot be easily explained by natural means.**

12

## We can understand why Christianity **made no sense to many people.**

- **Its founder was a failure** in the world's eye.
- **He attracted "failures"** and did not change their circumstances or status.
- **His followers celebrated his death** more than his life.
- **His followers were called to die to themselves** to follow his example.
- **His followers got no time off** for good behavior.

13

### 1 Corinthians 1:18

"For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."



The Cross exposes two different **views of wealth and power.**

14



**EWTN**  
GLOBAL CATHOLIC NETWORK

As a powerful woman, how do you respond to those who say that women are not free to be ordained in the Catholic Church?

**"Power in the Kingdom of God is love. I don't need a position or a title to exercise that power."**

Agnes Mary Donovan  
Superior General, Sisters of Life



15

"6 But you have **dishonored** the poor (have nots) man. Is it not the rich (have lots) who **oppress** you and personally drag you into court?"

**2.**

**See worldly blessings as a stewardship trust.**

Have you considered how little attention Jesus gives to providing for **YOUR** political / economic comfort?

What role do worldly blessings play in **YOUR** life?



16

### 1 Timothy 6

"17 Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. 18 Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to **be generous (community sensitive) and ready (eager) to share**, 19 storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed."

**"Life indeed" is to enjoy this world's wealth by showing God's love for other people.**

17



As a blessing from God be thankful & enjoy.

As an opportunity for ministry be a responsible steward.





As a dangerous deception don't let it be our security or identity.

As a desensitizer to God, people, & our spiritual need don't let it blind us.

18

My challenge with material wealth may not be my lack of love for the needy


**I have no problem being generous with someone else's stuff.**

My challenge is FEAR that I will not endure the suffering that may come to me if I let loose of "my" stuff.

**I fail to believe that I can be secure, fulfilled, and happy without "my" stuff.**

19

"Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power" and wealth or take it from him.



Abraham Lincoln


20

The many blessings of the "have lots".

**Materially wealthy**  
- access to more than enough goods and services

**Socially connected**  
- connected to a supportive community.

**Politically empowered**  
- empowered socially to shape one's life situation.



**Spiritually confident**  
- empowered from within with personal dignity and hope.

**Culturally controlling**  
- leading the way, setting the rules, keeping the score, telling the story

21

**Is there "cultural discrimination"?**

"Morality cannot be legislated, but behavior can be regulated. Judicial decrees may not change the heart, but they can restrain the heartless." *M.L. King Jr.*

Abolition of slavery

Civil Rights legislation


1860s
1960s
?
2021

Jim Crow

We still live in a broken world with too few broken hearts.

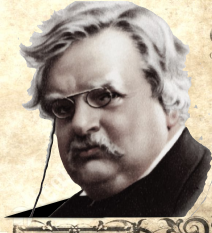
Those who are in control of the culture - set the rules, keep the score, tell the story.

There will always be need for cultural repentance, reform, & refinement.



22

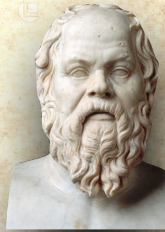
"The poor have sometimes objected to being governed badly; the rich have always objected to being governed at all."



G.K. Chesterton

23

“If a man is proud of his wealth, he should not be praised until it is known how he employs it.”



Socrates

24

**Giving  
is not a gift,  
it is a sign.**

Wealth is  
not a sign,  
it is a gift.



25

The good news is  
**we are offered resurrection  
power in Christ.**



The challenge is  
**we must first share in Christ's death  
(give up this world's power)  
to experience it.**

“7 Do they not **blaspheme** the fair name by which you have been called?”

**3.**

**Ignore the “have nots” and you  
mock God's image  
rather than this world's values?**

Have you considered the correlation of your treatment of the “have nots” with your treatment of Christ?



Social justice is an act of worship!

27

**The Great Commandment - love God  
and all who bear His Image.**

*James 3*

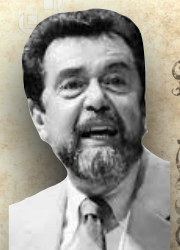
“9 With it (tongue) we bless *our* Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been **made in the likeness of God**; 10 from the same mouth come *both* blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way.”

**Kingdom power and wealth  
has social implications.**

28

“I have a very strong feeling that the opposite of love is not hate - it's apathy, It's not giving a #\*£≠`¡#.!”

Leo Buscaglia



29



“In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.”

Martin Luther King Jr.



30

“Power doesn’t corrupt people, people corrupt power.”

William Gaddis  
(novelist)



31

*1 Corinthians 12*

“25 that there should be no division in the body, but that **the members should have the same care for one another.** 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.”

*Acts 2*

“43 And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. 44 And all those who had believed were together, and **had all things in common;** 45 and they began selling their property and possessions, and were **sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.**”

32

“The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don’t have any.”

Alice Walker



33

*Christians, both poor and rich  
have the same calling and challenge:  
to walk in the Word and Way of the Cross*

People in **high places** need to  
**be stewards of  
their stuff**  
as a witness to their faith,  
hope, and love.

People in **low places** need to  
**take charge of  
their lives**  
as a witness to their faith,  
hope, & love.



34

One of God’s principle tools in bringing people to faith in Christ **is seen in how his disciples responded to the circumstances of their lives and the lives of others.**

*Matthew 5:16*

“**Let your light shine before men** in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

35

- Human government as well as the church bears a role in promoting human dignity and God's purposes.

*Romans 13*

"<sup>4</sup> for it (**government**) is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who **brings wrath upon the one who practices evil**. <sup>5</sup> Wherefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. <sup>6</sup> For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. <sup>7</sup> Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor."

36

*Personal implications for Christian citizens?*

- Take your baptism seriously -
- The Way of the Cross = Caring, empathy, & compassion, will guide action.

*Political implications for Christian citizens?*

- Expectations -
- Immigration policy -
- Welfare programs -
- Tax laws -
- Fair trade laws -
- International social & economic policy -
- Social justice (law enforcement, etc.) 37

"What it lies in our power to do, it lies in our power not to do."



Aristotle

38

*John 14:27*

"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; **not as the world gives, do I give to you**. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful."

39