



This six-week Bible study traces the tapestry of God's impartial love throughout the Bible—a love grounded in His character, not our abilities or status. In a world darkened by social, economic, cultural, racial, and political partiality, this is an invitation to reflect God's heart for life in His eternal kingdom.

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The Impartial Love of God

When a pastor invited me to teach on James 2 for a women's Bible study, I hadn't spent much time immersed in its words.

I opened its pages anticipating the usual from James—practical wisdom, a challenge to live out faith in real life, encouragement not to see suffering as an obstacle, and so forth. But what I didn't see coming was a direct confrontation and *revelation* that those women and I desperately needed.

What we didn't expect was that a message written to a first-century church could feel so distinctively timely, as if it were written directly to us.

The second chapter of James describes God's often overlooked attribute of impartiality. God's radical and generous hospitality welcomes the undeserving, regardless of their past, position, or power. God's impartiality goes far beyond what God simply does; it's who He is and how He loves. It is carved into His character and displayed in His ways.

And this truth is not isolated to the book of James.

God's impartiality is a central theme running throughout the entire biblical story, pointing us to His glory.

What began as a teaching in the book of James has overflowed into the pages you are now reading, because I wholeheartedly believe that you too

are invited to know and love—even to grapple with—the God who reveals His impartiality and calls us to the same.

Welcome.



Forever Welcomed invites us to lift our eyes and hope as we trace one of God's often overlooked attributes through the grand story of Scripture.

This study offers a cultural and historical lens, reflective questions, and intentional response sections for each day. It guides us individually and collectively, as the people of God, to receive and reflect God's impartial love.

More than just a study, this book is a call to both impartial love and merciful action, an invitation to receive and reflect God's vision for life in His kingdom where all who come are forever welcomed.

In this six-week study, we will discover a powerful antidote to the divisions that often separate us from God and from one another. We will see how we can respond to God's open invitation—His eternal welcome—and be radically transformed so that we too can extend that same love to others.

*“Truly I understand that God shows no partiality,
but in every nation, anyone who fears him
and does what is right is acceptable to him.”*

(ACTS 10:34-35 ESV)

READ, RECEIVE, RESPOND

At times during this study, we'll look through the lens of an ancient Israelite. It's important to note that many of the passages we'll explore weren't typically read but were passed down orally from one generation to the next (Deut. 6:4–7). In Jewish culture, studying Scripture was about both hearing and *living* in accordance.¹ It involved engaging with the text in a way that shaped not just the way someone thought but the *way they lived*.

The Hebrew word *shema*, meaning “to hear” (Deut. 6:4), captures this practice of active listening and responding to God's Word. *Shema* requires full attention with your whole heart, which leads to obedience. The biblical story describes the practice of *shema* as listening so thoroughly that the truth permeates every part of your life, shaping your decisions, relationships, actions, and even words.²

In Hebrew thought, *shema* is closely linked to the word “remember.” And that's intentional. As mentioned earlier, true listening isn't just about hearing and moving on. It's about recalling God's Word in a way that compels a response, even something as simple and powerful as gratitude. It's the idea that hearing and doing are two sides of the same coin. You remember in order to act.

Our approach in this study is designed to guide you through this ancient practice, helping you engage with Scripture in a way that invites deep listening, intentional remembrance, and faithful obedience. To that end, each week we will:

Read—seeking to comprehend the content and context of the text.

Receive—acknowledging who God is and inviting His truth to transform us.

Respond—accepting the call of action and walking in obedience.

As we *shema*—read, receive, and respond—my hope is that we will increasingly embody God’s words.

This study is divided into daily sections. You will also find some Tugging the Threads boxes exploring some of the Hebrew background shaping the rich tapestry of Scripture. But there’s no pressure to complete a day’s work in one sitting. In fact, I might encourage you not to. Pause when you need to, return back when you need to, and reflect as long as you need. The focus here isn’t about ticking boxes or reaching a goal quickly—it’s about savoring the sweetness of communion with God.

Remember, the Bible wasn’t written in our cultural moment. Studying and understanding it takes prayer, time, and effort.

*It’s the hymn since the beginning of creation,
We see resounding through the ages.
Crafted with wisdom and poetry on eternal pages.
It’s the rhythmic drumbeat of the prophets’ plea,
We hear reverberating through the decades,
It’s the anthem of God’s kingdom, we feel ringing out loudly
A forever welcome.
This is God’s decree: to love without partiality.*

– OGHOSA IYAMU

Impartial Creator

*This week, we will trace God's impartial love
demonstrated through His role as Creator.*

*From the beginning, God imprints His image
and bestows equal worth upon both male and female.
Through this act God reveals His character and establishes
the pattern of human dignity throughout Scripture.*

From the start, God welcomed humanity . . .

This is life in the ancient Near East: Families rise in their stone homes, greeted by the melodic chanting of voices as the light of dawn breaks over the horizon.

Grand temples and large buildings line the cities' sand-dusted streets, featuring carved images of different gods and political leaders, each of them objects of worship.¹

The air is dense, mingled with burning incense. The Babylonian, Mesopotamian, and Egyptian creation stories were expressed through everyday life experiences.

Being an Israelite then required moving through a world filled with various conflicting stories about how the world began. The creation narratives of neighboring cultures were the lenses through which many saw and understood their identity, their purpose for existence, and their relationship with the divine.

As we slowly zoom into the Bible's creation story, we will see how God stands apart from the other stories bombarding the ancient Israelites. God's impartial love shapes our understanding of who we are and, more importantly, who God is.

Made in God's Image

Before you begin, ask God to open your eyes to His impartial love, that you may read it, receive it, and respond faithfully.

READ:

Genesis 1:26–28, Deuteronomy 33:2

RECEIVE:

In your own words, how would you briefly describe the cultural setting during the time the book of Genesis was delivered to Moses? *(Use information provided in the opening section to help.)*

According to Deuteronomy 33:2, how did Moses receive the revelation of the creation story?

Refer to the Background Materials on page 203. Who was Moses, and what role did he play in Israel's history and in writing parts of the Bible?

Don't miss this. Moses was raised in the wisdom and influence of Egyptian royal culture. Yet through God's inspiration, he wrote the first five books of the Bible (Deut. 31:24–26). Considering Moses' background, what makes him uniquely positioned to proclaim the true and better story that sets itself apart from the creation myths of surrounding cultures?

The very first line in Genesis 1:1 introduces God by the name of *Elohim*,² which means “God the Creator.” This name reflects God's unmatched power, authority, and sovereign will in bringing the world into existence.

Read Genesis 1:26–27 and fill in the blank:

Then God said, _____, in our likeness. . . . So God created man in his own image, _____ he created them.

In your opinion, what is one way these verses portray God's impartial love?

TUGGING THE THREADS: The word “image” in Hebrew, *tselem* (צלם) describes an object that has been carved out and shaped with intention. It’s rooted in the idea of “to shade,” as in a shadow of something else. Many kings had images created to be a distinct resemblance to their appearance.³

God uses *tselem* when He speaks of creating humanity as living, breathing bearers of His image. Unlike the lifeless statues of Egyptian gods,⁴ which were merely carved representations, God created us to truly reflect His nature. We are meant to mirror His love, justice, mercy, and presence in the world.

When Moses and the Israelites heard the word *tselem* in the context of God’s creation of man, they likely couldn’t help but think of the idols and false gods of Egypt, those empty statues that filled the temples and lined the streets.

According to Genesis, what does God’s image represent to humanity? Circle the best answer.

- a) An empty and powerless symbol
- b) A living reflection of His character that we are called to emulate
- c) A God who is nothing like us and whose character attributes we cannot emulate

Imagine being an Israelite, hearing that you were created to be a “carved-out” reflection of God’s very image, a shadow of His love, patience, kindness, and justice. So much so that when others look at you, they will see not just a human being but a reflection of God’s character.

How might that truth change the way you see yourself, your purpose, and your identity? How would it transform the way you interact with others, knowing that every action, every word, could be a testimony to the God whose image you bear?

RESPOND:

Romans 1:25 says, “They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.”

This verse warns against people worshiping created things rather than the Creator. When we look at our culture today, we can see the same kind of thing happening.

Where do you see the truth about God’s character and nature being exchanged for a lie? What influences in your daily life (media, relationships, or cultural norms) tempt you to diminish reflecting God’s image?

As we end our day reflecting on being made in God’s image, how can you resist these pressures and encourage others to do the same?

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