

# Week 2 - The Clock

Preacher: Menlo Church

Date: August 23, 2026

Primary Scripture: James 2:1–13

## Key Principle: Hurry is a verdict.

Welcome, Menlo Church. So glad you are with us today, especially if you are joining from one of our Bay Area campuses. Last weekend was Vision Weekend across all of Menlo, where we talked about reclaiming the way of Jesus this year—not just as an idea, but with specific practices. We are reclaiming it from priorities and pressures that took it from us, whether we noticed or not. Because you don't reclaim what you misplaced; you reclaim what was taken. And admittedly, it wasn't just a vision weekend; this is a vision series.

We are highlighting the four Kingdom Qualities—the shape of a disciple of Jesus here at Menlo—over these weeks together. We're doing that through the words of Jesus' baby brother, James, who did not initially know Jesus as his Lord. It took him decades to finally accept the true identity of his big brother, all the way until Jesus died and came back from the grave. Even where we don't cover a passage in this series, the whole letter is worth your time to read for yourself in your journal.

The journal has components for this series, sections for every series this year, and spiritual practices you can try. If you missed it, grab one today at your campus. Last week's step was showing up ready to participate as Undivided Followers—that God would get our whole lives, not just the parts that are convenient or seem to fit, but every part.

This week we get to our second Kingdom Quality: the Unhurried Friend. How can we be an unhurried friend in a world that feels this hurried? Before we start, would you pray with me?

[Prayer]

Every emergency room we walk into has a detailed set of protocols, policies, and procedures to equip the team for what they call triage, which just means to sort. In the hurry, they have to make quick decisions about who gets immediate care and who will wait, and they know the consequences of getting those decisions wrong. If you are the one who is required to wait, it can be really frustrating, especially if you don't encounter capable medical professionals who can keep you up to date and help you receive care as soon as possible.

While we might be frustrated with the need for triage in those spaces, we can sometimes forget the type of triage we deliver in our lives every day. In our hurry, we sort everyone around us—deciding whether they are worth our time or not—and we are doing it with unchecked training from our culture's curriculum.

My schedule and rhythms can reflect the idea that I believe I can be in a hurry without judging people unkindly. But what we're going to see in James 2, in our pursuit of becoming more unhurried friends, is that **hurry is a verdict**—all by itself, whether we like it or not.

Last week we spent time in James 1, where he introduced us to some important concepts about how we process trials and how we pray wholeheartedly, believing God is generous with the wisdom we need to live our lives in the way of Jesus.

## AN UNHURRIED FRIEND DOES NOT SORT THE ROOM

### James 2:1–4

*My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet," have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?*

Just like last week, James gives us the profiles of two people—this time headed into the same gathering. The rich person gets VIP access. The poor person doesn't even get a stool; he sits on the ground. This time, James is highlighting the reader—us—as making these decisions.

This room and these decisions are part of how James shows what an unhurried friend does. In these first few verses, we see that an unhurried friend does not sort the room. James refuses to call this just a seating assignment. He calls it judging with evil thoughts. He names it as bias and prejudice in the middle of something as ordinary as finding everybody a place to sit.

Here in Silicon Valley, it looks a little different from what it did for them. Honestly, one of the things I like about the Bay Area is that people don't usually flaunt their wealth. There are people who are part of Menlo whose wealth and influence you would never guess. But there are still tells. There is the car—we are low-key about it, but we're driving cars that cost as much as a house in other parts of the country like it's nothing. We don't flex the same way here, but we still sort. And our currency is time.

You already know who gets your full attention and who gets the three-minute version—who gets the quick set of pleasantries while you scan the room for the person you have something to gain from. So why do I do this when I don't think of myself as that kind of person? And if you're not a person of faith—I'm so glad you're here—it's likely you have this in you too.

It isn't really about cruelty. It's about capacity. Hurry feels important in our culture, but it's actually the opposite. Hurry is the least intentional version of you making the fastest possible decision about someone else, and I say that as an offender. The fastest decision about a human being is always a category: They're one of us, or they're not. Ours or theirs. Worth it or not.

Once the call is made, we get to keep our schedule. Here's what's underneath this: partiality is what you get instead of discernment when you are out of room—out of room in your brain or just out of room in your day. But if you slow down, the second and third layers of a person show up—not just who they are, but how they are. Speed will only ever hand you the first layer, and the first layer is where all of our prejudice lives.

Watch what James does in verse 4. The word behind "made distinctions" is the same word he used a chapter earlier for the person who doubts—asking God but relying on yourself. Last week, that was the double-minded man. This week, it is the same fracture pointed outward. First, he was divided on the inside. Now, he's dividing the room. It's the same person saying, "God, I know You get to be the judge, but let me take a stab at it for a minute."

We see this in the life of Jesus many times. In one particular moment, Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, approaches Jesus because his daughter is on her deathbed with hours left to live. Jesus agrees to go help, but on the way, a woman who

has had a blood disorder for more than a decade stops Him. Really, she just touches His robe, but He stops; He lets her interrupt His progress. During the delay, Jairus learns that his daughter has died.

Why didn't Jesus go faster? The beautiful part is that going slow still made room for Him to show up well in both places. Jesus brings the little girl back from the dead. Even though your stakes might not feel that high, hurry is how we avoid the cost of actually seeing other people and their needs. Our lives feel maxed out, and we miss the moments and people God puts in front of us.

I think there are some ways to slow down to see what's happening underneath some of this. I want to give you three practices this week—not to fix you, but to find your places of hurry. Some of this comes from resources you can find at [menlo.church/connect](http://menlo.church/connect):

- **Choose the long line:** Sometime this week, choose the long line at the store and just wait in it. Don't scroll. Just stand there and be pleasant.
- **Drive the speed limit:** Drive the speed limit (or maybe start with five over).
- **Cage your phone:** Put it away at dinner. Try not making it the last thing you look at at night or the first thing you look at in the morning.

It's hard for all of us, including me, but it can make a big difference. You slow down in the small places so that when a person is in front of you, you know what unhurried feels like.

## AN UNHURRIED FRIEND DOES NOT WORK THE ROOM

### James 2:5–7

*Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?*

If the first movement was *what* we do, then this is *why* our tendency to judge, divide, and categorize can be so damaging. God is the one who chose the people with no influence in our world to be rich in faith and heirs of God's kingdom. Yet we keep courting the ones with influence, who are often the very same people most likely to dismiss us, accuse us, or be dismissive of the name of Jesus. This isn't true about every successful, wealthy person; he's highlighting a principle about us.

God is not asking us to mirror His judgment about who is chosen. He isn't saying, "Now go judge every wealthy person harshly and prefer every under-resourced person as a matter of policy." He's asking us to love our neighbor regardless of what we might get in return. Because for James, faith in his brother Jesus and love of neighbor are inseparable. You don't get one without the other.

One of the places this gets easy for us—especially in a moment when faith is having a vibe shift in Silicon Valley—is that we sand off the edges of what it means to follow Jesus. We narrow what Scripture says in the places that feel culturally inconvenient so the "interested but not yet committed" will stay at the table. We tell ourselves a more sanitized Jesus is a more compelling Jesus. But Jesus is not an app for the operating system you were already running.

He is not a performative upgrade you open when it's convenient. James is saying the way of Jesus *is* the operating system. It shapes the truest thing about you: your actual identity.

We don't only do this individually or as a church. Over the last several decades, politics has become the new religion in our culture. One of the ways partiality shows up now is by using politics to hide it—we hide our personal prejudices behind a political platform.

If you lean right, it can be easy to assume the poor are in their circumstances because they deserved it. That was a theological stereotype in the first century too: that their situation was earned, and you shouldn't intervene so they could feel the consequences of their choices. Or maybe it's simpler than that—they should have worked harder, or pulled themselves up. That is exactly what James names in verse 4: we're sorting them so we can feel better about ourselves.

If you lean left, it can be easy to assume the rich are uniquely and universally evil—that whatever they have was undeserved, and taking it is justified. In that story, the poor can get used as a prop to be rescued by a party, which carries its own kind of dehumanization.

We do this individually. We do this regionally: north and south, city and rural. All of it is sitting in our rooms at every campus today. Reasonable people can disagree on all of this, but we have to get to the second and third layers of these conversations, rather than using easily dismissible positions as placeholders for our judgment of people made in the image of God.

## AN UNHURRIED FRIEND DOES NOT JUDGE THE ROOM

### James 2:8–13

*If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.*

James consistently references Leviticus, and here he points to the core pursuit of loving our neighbors. James grew up hearing "love your neighbor" recited, watched religious leaders fail to do it, and then watched his brother do it perfectly for decades in his own house. When Jesus was asked for the greatest commandment, He gave the core teaching of loving God, and then He added something. He said the second is like it—meaning of equal weight—because it is the expression of the first: *Love your neighbor as yourself*.

So James says that if you set out to keep that royal law and break even a single point of it, you are a lawbreaker—not partly, but entirely. He applies it to something they would have considered minor, something culturally acceptable, something everybody did: reading a room and deciding who gets a moment of your time or VIP access to your life. He puts it next to adultery and murder on purpose, because those are the offenses nobody argues about. James says partiality belongs in the same sentence.

Then watch the switch he makes: "royal law" in verse 8, "law of liberty" in verse 12. That is not an accident. The royal law tells you what love requires. The law of liberty tells you what you are standing on when you fail it. Same law, same

commands, different implications. The difference is whether you are under it or free in it—whether you are working *for* God's love and approval or *from* God's love and approval. Paul makes the same case in Galatians 3 and Romans 7. This is the most important thing for us to see about our faith in Jesus.

If we try to earn our standing and our forgiveness by works of the law, we will make painful decisions about ourselves and about everyone around us. Because the measure you used on the guy with the weak resume is coming back around—the person who tried to talk to you in public whom you decided had nothing worth saying, the unhoused person with whom you avoided eye contact, the server who wasn't very good but is probably having a harder day than you.

The Scriptures are clear that the way we judge people comes back to us. It's not about losing your salvation; it's a description of what actual followers of the Way look like. We lead with mercy. Not because we think everyone around us deserves it, but because we know we didn't, and we got it anyway.

We love because He first loved us, and most of us only know that because somebody showed it to us before we had any language for it. When my family moved back to Ohio, I got there before they did. I stayed with family friends so I could start school on time—new school, new state, no family in the state yet, and I was fifteen and pretending that was fine.

Ryan was one of the first friends I made, and his mom was Merrie Arth. Merrie was peak host mom. The door was open. The food kept coming. If you were in that house, you got fed and you got asked about your day, and she waited for the actual answer.

I was nobody to her. I was a name her son said at dinner one night. I had nothing she needed, no way to pay her back, and nothing to offer that family except more noise in the kitchen. She never once acted like she was doing me a favor. She just kept the door open—not for a season, but for years. Almost everything I know about having people in my home, I learned standing in that kitchen watching her do it. She was teaching me, and she wasn't trying to. She was an unhurried friend when there was nothing in it for her, and she had no idea how much I needed it.

That is a small picture of a much bigger one. God did not scan the room and decide we were worth the time. We were not the ones with the gold ring and the good clothes. We had nothing to offer. We still don't. He came anyway. He stayed anyway.

So here's the step: Find one unhurried hour this week with someone who can do nothing for you. Write it in your journal right now, or go put it on your calendar before you leave. Don't tell them that's why. Not the person holding the keys to your promotion, not the internship, not the relationship you're hoping for—somebody who cannot pay you back. If you're not a Christian yet, I hope you'll try this one too. I think the way of Jesus is simply a better way to live.

Judgment is fast. It's easy. It fits the Silicon Valley curriculum, and it fits your calendar. Mercy is slow. Somebody was slow with you once. You didn't earn it. You probably never told them. Some of us are going to realize this week that we have been the closed door in somebody's life, and that the sorting we do in a hurry has been running longer than we want to admit. So go back to James 2 and let God show you where it lives in you. Let's pray.

[Prayer]

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## LISTENER GUIDE & RESOURCES

**Scripture:** James 2:1–13 | **Date:** August 23, 2026

**Key Principle:** Hurry is a verdict.

**Kingdom Quality:** Unhurried Friend

**Core Summary:** An Unhurried Friend does not sort the room, does not work the room, and does not judge the room.

### Three Things Worth Knowing About the Text

- **James is describing an actual room.** In the first century, seating reflected status. The wealthy visitor would be given a seat, often with a footstool, while the poor man was told to stand at the back or sit on the floor. James does not treat this as an etiquette problem; he calls it becoming "judges with evil thoughts," which is formal courtroom language.
- **Courtroom language runs through the whole passage.** Terms like *judges with evil thoughts*, *dragged into court*, *convicted as transgressors*, *judged under the law of liberty*, and *judgment without mercy* demonstrate that James is arguing that what looks like seating is actually sentencing.
- **The royal law and the law of liberty are the same law, named twice on purpose.** The "royal law" is the King's law ("love your neighbor as yourself," quoted from Leviticus 19 and elevated by Jesus as the second great commandment). The "law of liberty" is the phrase James used in chapter 1. The passage asks us not which law is real, but which one we are standing under.

### Questions for Reflection or Conversation

1. Who in your life gets your full attention, and who gets the three-minute version? Be specific and name one person in each category.
2. Hurry feels like importance. What would it cost you, practically, to move at a pace where you could actually notice somebody?
3. Partiality is what you get instead of discernment when you are out of room. Where in your life are you out of room right now?
4. What are the "tells" you use to size somebody up? (Not the ones other people use, but yours.)
5. James says God chose the people with no influence to be rich in faith. Where has that been true in your own story through someone who taught you about God?
6. Where have you sanded off an edge of following Jesus to stay palatable to a room?
7. Politics can become a place to hide our partiality. Which political story about people lets you off the hook most easily?
8. Which law do you want to be judged by?

## This Week's Practice

**Three Diagnostics:** Choose the long line and wait in it without your phone. Drive the speed limit. Put the phone down at dinner, and try not letting it be the last thing at night or the first thing in the morning.

**The Action Step:** Schedule one unhurried hour this week with someone who can do nothing for you.

## Next Steps

- **If you are starting here:** Pick one of the three practices. Just one. Notice what your body does when you make it wait.
- **If you want to go further:** Read James 2 slowly, out loud, twice this week. Circle every word in it that belongs in a courtroom.
- **If you are in a group:** Bring an honest answer to the question about who gets the three-minute version—not the presentable answer.
- **If you are looking for community:** Group environments are launching at every campus this fall. Come find out what fits.

## Works Consulted & Further Reading

- *The Letter of James* by Scot McKnight (New International Commentary series)
- *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry* by John Mark Comer
- Practicingtheway.org for resources on silence, solitude, and slowing
- Bible Project's overview video on James
- On Jairus and the woman with the bleeding: Mark 5:21–43 and Luke 8:40–56

## Five-Day Devotional: Reclaiming the Way of Jesus (Week 2)

### Day One // The Room (James 2:1–4)

Two men walk into the same room. Somebody decides where each one sits. That is all that happens here. On the surface, it is a hospitality problem. James calls it becoming judges with evil thoughts. He accuses them of deciding about a person based on a glance to keep the morning moving. It feels like efficiency, but it is judgment.

**Reflect:** Who did you size up this week without meaning to? What did you use to do it?

**Pray:** *God, slow me down enough to actually see the person in front of me. Amen.*

### Day Two // Chosen (James 2:5–7)

James is not saying poverty is holy or that wealth is evil. He is saying our instinct about who matters runs backward from God's. He asks us to love our neighbor regardless, without using people as props or striving for influence.

**Reflect:** Who has taught you something real about God that you would never have expected to learn from them?

**Pray:** *God, my sense of who matters is off. Correct it. Amen.*

### **Day Three // One Point (James 2:8–11)**

James sets partiality alongside adultery and murder. If the plan is to earn your standing with God by keeping the law, one crack in the wall breaks the whole wall. James closes that exit to make room for grace.

**Reflect:** Where are you still trying to earn a standing with God that you have already been given?

**Pray:** *God, I keep trying to pay for something You gave me. Help me stop. Amen.*

### **Day Four // The Law of Liberty (James 2:12)**

Under the royal law, love of neighbor is the standard you are measured against and fail. Under the law of liberty, love of neighbor is what a rescued person does with their freedom. Your footing changes from working *for* approval to working *from* approval.

**Reflect:** Are you working for God's approval or from it? Answer honestly, not correctly.

**Pray:** *God, let me live like someone who has already been received. Amen.*

### **Day Five // Mercy Takes Time (James 2:13)**

People who have received mercy hand it out. Judgment is fast; mercy is slow. It requires you to stay long enough to learn something about a person that your first look did not reveal.

**Reflect:** Who are you withholding mercy from? What would it cost you in time to extend it?

**Pray:** *God, You were slow with me. Make me slow with them. Amen.*