

WORSHIP

Suggested worship songs: One God, Your Love Awakens Me, The Wonderful Cross, Jesus, Son of God, Worthy of It All

WELCOME

Who are your favorite people in the world? Who are your least favorite?

WORD

JAMES 2:1-13

My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. 2 For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, 3 and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good place," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool," 4 have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? 5 Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor 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 man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? 7 Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called? 8 If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. 9 But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. 10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. 11 For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not commit murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. 12 So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. 13 For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

Real faith resists the value system of the world. This applies to how we treat other people from all walks of life. Probably all of us would say that we are not racist, and most of us will claim that we don't do favoritism. But what do our instinctive reactions when relating to others, reveal about how we assign value to different kinds of people? Through Scripture, we'll see the reality of what we struggle with, how God sees people, and how we can have victory in this area.

Stop Showing Favoritism (v. 1-4)

James was speaking to believers who already had faith in Jesus Christ. Although they were already Christians, they had an attitude of personal favoritism (*Gk: prosopolempsia* = "to receive the face" – to judge or value someone based on outward appearance). James was saying to stop showing favoritism, and he gives a specific example of what he was talking about (**v. 1-3**). It's not just the obvious discrimination (i.e., treating a poor man differently than you would a rich person who come in for worship services) that we need to watch out for in our church today, but how we view people in our minds.

After describing what was going on in the church in his time that showed obvious discrimination favoring the rich over the poor, James moves on to the heart. When you show favoritism, you are revealing something about your heart (**v.4**). When we make distinctions between the value of one person over another, we are acting according to the world system. Jesus values all people the same way because we are all one in Christ (**Galatians 3:28**). God did not make the distinctions; people did. When we practice favoritism, we make ourselves "judges" based on our perceptions, yet only God can be the Judge, only He really knows people. Our favoritism shows that we have corrupt reasoning, shaped by the values of this world (e.g., "It's not what you know, it's who you know"), and so we give special attention to affluent people, those who can "make things happen". We are selfishly motivated and that's how the world operates. Stop showing favoritism! *Favoritism is unjustified partiality treating some people better than others based on appearance, status, wealth, influence, education, gender, religion, ethnicity, or position, often for personal gain at the expense of others.* Are we motivated by the desire to be associated with power or the embarrassment to be associated with someone who the world thinks is not powerful or popular? Real faith loves without favoritism --- stop showing favoritism!

See People God's Way (v. 5-11)

James shifts his tone in this section ("my beloved brethren") and he gives a very important truth. He gives the contrast: the poor of this world have been chosen by God to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom. But James is not saying that poverty earns salvation, nor is he saying that wealth disqualifies you for the kingdom. He's pointing out a pattern: when you're poor in this world, lacking resources, there is a natural reliance on,

and more tenderness towards God. Many times, when you have all that you need, you don't think about God (**Mark 10:24-25**)! God doesn't love poor people more, or the rich more and He does not have favorites because He loves us all. But the reality is, when you don't have enough in this world, it's easier to set your minds on things above. But when you have a lot in this life, we often forget the greatest blessing --- an intimate relationship with Christ. God has given us blessings to enjoy, but don't put your hope in those blessings but on God (**1 Timothy 6:17-19**). If you have extra, be rich in good works and be generous and ready to share. Your heart follows where you put your treasure in. If God has blessed you, be rich in heaven by using wealth to bless others.

It's good to honor people, including the rich, but if you dishonor the poor man who is made in the image of God, you're not seeing them the way God sees them. Ironically, it was often the rich at that time who oppressed the believers and who blasphemed God (**v.6-7**). When you look closely at some of the celebrities we look up to, they blaspheme Jesus --- so why do we show favoritism towards them? We should fulfill the "royal law", from Jesus, the King --- to love our neighbors as ourselves (**v.8**). In the story of the Good Samaritan that Jesus taught (Luke's gospel), we find the contrast between showing favoritism and what the Good Samaritan did to his "neighbor" in need:

FAVORITISM			GOOD SAMARITAN
RANKS PEOPLE			CROSSES BOUNDARIES
PROTECTS COMFORT			ACCEPTS COST
PREFERS STATUS			RESPONDS TO NEED
WITHOLDS MERCY			GIVES MERCY FREELY
WHO	DESERVES	MY	WHO NEEDS MY LOVE?
LOVE?			

Jesus is the Good Samaritan to all of us! Any person who is in need --- the poor, the rich, the awkward, the socially invisible our neighbor. God wants us to see people the way He sees them. Showing partiality is a sin (**v.9**). When we sin by our favoritism, we've sinned in a way that James lumps together with "murder" and "adultery" and we're still sinners who need a Savior.

Show Christlike Mercy (v. 12-13)

We are to speak and act according to the law of liberty (God's Word). God's Law shows us the path to true freedom; because we are children of God, we want to live out what God wants us to do. We are to speak (how we talk to and how we talk about people) and act (relate, do, engage) towards others according to God's law of liberty. Let's be like Jesus, show Christlike mercy, to step out of our comfort zone to be His hands and feet in this broken world. You have received mercy if you have a relationship with Jesus, so you ought to be merciful like our Savior (**2 Corinthians 8:9**).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)

1. What does 'Favoritism' look like in your life even in the most subtle way?
2. Why is favoritism so contrary to being a follower of Jesus?
3. What will you do - or stop doing – to love without favoritism?

WORKS

PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

Pray for those who experience discrimination because of favoritism from family, co-workers or society. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading, seek out those who are marginalized and share God's love to them in tangible ways. Share the gospel of Jesus and live out Christlikeness as you relate to them.

WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives.

II. Country and the World

- Upright and moral governance of public servants; repentance and salvation for government leaders and citizens for a Christ-centered Philippines.
- For legislators to promote and support bills and laws aligned with God's Word.
- PRAY for the protection, safety and release of kidnapped American Christian missionary, Kevin, serving in Niger (West Africa). For God to turn the hearts of the kidnappers to repentance and salvation. Peace and comfort for Kevin's family.
- Pray for persecuted Christians in Sudan and Nigeria) --- many have been beheaded and murdered; earnestly seek God's intervention to stop the bloodshed. Pray for freedom from oppression, that God's word and His people bring them comfort and hope.
- PRAISE God that the rest of the living Israeli hostages have been restored to their families safely! Continue to pray that the last remaining dead hostage will be returned to his family for burial.
- For Israel's war with terrorists to end

according to God's purpose and for His glory. For Jewish people worldwide who are experiencing a surge of antisemitism. May this lead them to the Messiah, Jesus as they turn to God for help and comfort.

- For nations in turmoil (e.g., Ukraine, Iran, Syria, etc.) to experience true freedom in Christ and become centers for massive spiritual revivals in their regions. Killings of thousands of civilians by Islamist regime forces in Iran and Syria to be put to an end by God's mighty hand.

III. Church

- That CCF Members would honor and love God, and make disciples
- For elders, pastors, deacons, and families to become holy, humble, harmonious, happy, and heart-working)
- For ministries and church expansions worldwide.

IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center
- Prayer Mountain (MMRC)

V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper and intimate relationship with God
- Righteous living.
- Salvation of family and friends

MEMORY VERSE

James 2:1

My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism.