

# The Book of James, Session 3

## James 2:1-13

### Favoritism Forbidden

“Believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism.” (2:1)

God does not practice favoritism; Romans 2:11, Colossians 3:25, Ephesians 6:9

Jesus showed no favoritism; Luke 20:21, Mark 12:14, Matthew 22:16

Galatians 3:28 “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” When it comes to God’s love, the availability of God’s forgiveness and gift of eternal life, God shows no favoritism and gives freely to those who are willing to receive.

And yet we often show favoritism. And it is not a new problem. Genesis 37-50 tells the story of Jacob and his many sons. He clearly favored Joseph over the others and it created amazing turmoil in that family!

Have you ever been the favored one? Have you ever struggled with others being favored?

In 2:2-7 James addresses the issue of favoritism regarding the rich and poor.

Illustration is of how people show favoritism to the rich over the poor in their place of worship.

What is so destructive about favoritism?

- Favoritism forgets the truth that God has created every human, has endowed them with intrinsic value that can never be taken away, and loves each human.
- Favoritism introduces the lie that some people are more worthy than others. This leads to discrimination, reducing individuals or groups to a lesser status, as judged by others who consider themselves more worthy.
- When we practice favoritism we assume the role of judge. That is not our job!!
- Clarification: While it is sinful to show favoritism and to discriminate, it IS necessary that we practice discernment. Wisdom is often based upon wise

discernment, but discerning never enters the realm of deeming someone to be unworthy or of a fundamentally lesser status.

Why do we practice favoritism?

- A fundamental reason why we practice favoritism is because we have an “upside down” view of reality. The “world” has a list of priorities and values that are simply non-biblical and yet we often are influenced by those values and then mistreat people.
- Please be aware of a subtle form of favoritism it is very easy for us to practice; we can easily include Christians but exclude those who are not yet Christians.

The better, God-honoring way; 2:8 “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

“Neighbor” is defined by Jesus as those who are not like us.

One facet of neighbor love is “Hospitality” = “kindness to strangers.”

The sobering consequences of practicing favoritism (2:8-11). Just one stumble leads to judgment.

2:12-13; The need for mercy.

The way in which we treat and judge others will determine the way in which we will be treated and judged.

“Mercy triumphs over judgment”....When mercy is present there is no judgment. It’s like how light casts out the darkness.

## Discussion Questions

1. When you hear the word “favoritism” what is your first response? Why?
2. Where are some examples of favoritism that you are aware of? What were the results of favoritism being shown?
3. How do you show favoritism through your actions? Your thoughts?
4. Three reasons are given for why favoritism is destructive. What is your response to these reasons? Can you think of other reasons why favoritism is sinful?
5. How do you make the distinction between judging and discerning? Is it difficult for you to practice discernment? If so, why? What helps?
6. Why do you practice favoritism?
7. How do you love your neighbor as yourself? What is a new way you can do so?
8. How have you been shown mercy? What was its impact? How have you shown others mercy? What impact has that had upon you?