

MESSAGE SUMMARY

James reminds us that real faith doesn't play favorites. To show favoritism is not just unkind; it is sin, because it denies the gospel that declares all people made in God's image and are equally in need of grace. Jesus Himself welcomed the poor, the outsider, and the sinner, while also engaging the rich, the religious, and the powerful. His church is called to reflect His character by extending love, dignity, and mercy to all.

Big Idea: A vision of Jesus before you will help you value the people around you.

MAIN POINTS

1. **The Command – Don't Show Partiality (James 2:1)**
 - Partiality elevates some and diminishes others.
 - All people are created in God's image (Gen. 1:27).
2. **The Example – Favoritism in the Assembly (James 2:2–3)**
 - Treating the rich with honor and the poor with dishonor distorts the gospel.
 - Jesus welcomed both rich and poor, religious and outcast (Luke 19:1–10; John 4:1–26).
3. **The Reasoning – Why Favoritism Is Sinful (James 2:4–13)**
 - It makes us judges with evil thoughts (v.4).
 - God chose the poor to be rich in faith (v.5).
 - Love of neighbor fulfills God's law (vv.8–11; cf. Matt. 22:37–39).
 - Mercy triumphs over judgment (v.13; cf. Micah 6:8).

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. **Why is favoritism such a serious sin in God's eyes?** Possible Answer: Because it denies God's image in others (Gen. 1:27) and violates the royal law to love our neighbor (James 2:8). Favoritism is essentially judging with evil thoughts instead of seeing people as God does. Give a specific example in your own life. (James 2:1, 8; Gen. 1:27).
2. **James says mercy triumphs over judgment (v.13). What does it look like to extend mercy instead of judgment in everyday relationships?** Possible Answer: Choosing compassion over criticism, forgiveness over grudges, and generosity over withholding love. Give a specific example in your own life. (Matthew 5:7 – "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.")
3. **How have you personally experienced favoritism, either receiving it or being overlooked, and how did it affect you?** Possible Answer: Being overlooked made me feel unseen and undervalued. It reminded me how important it is that the church reflects God's heart where all belong. Give a specific example in your own life. (Romans 2:11 – "God shows no partiality.")
4. **What step of obedience can you take this week to "see, pray, and do" when it comes to valuing others as Jesus does?** Possible Answer: Identify one strained relationship, pray for God's wisdom, and take a step such as initiating a conversation, offering encouragement, or serving in humility. Who is your person(s)? (James 1:22 – "Be doers of the word, not hearers only.").
5. **What are some subtle ways favoritism can show up in the church today?** Possible Answer: Favoring people based on wealth, influence, appearance, race, political views, or social status (Colossians 3:11 – In Christ, all divisions fall away.).

GOSPEL CONNECTION

James confronts favoritism as sin because it opposes the gospel itself. The good news is that God did not play favorites with us while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8). On the cross, Jesus bore the judgment we deserve so that we could receive mercy. Repent from the ways you've shown favoritism and return to the gospel. Remember that mercy received must become mercy extended. Walk in step with Jesus by honoring all people and loving your neighbor as yourself (James 2:8, 13). Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the Lord of glory (James 2:1). As His mercy reshapes us, may our faith be seen in how we value, love, and serve every person God places in our path.

DAILY DEVOTIONS

Monday – The Lord of Glory Before Us

Key Verse: “My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.” (James 2:1)

Reflection: James begins by reminding us who we worship, the Lord of glory. When we fix our eyes on Jesus, we see His Majesty and His mercy. In His presence, there is no room for favoritism, because He welcomed everyone, rich and poor, Jew and Gentile, sinner and saint. True faith sees people through the lens of Jesus’ glory, not through worldly categories.

Application Question: Whose opinion or approval do you value most, Jesus’ or people’s? *Possible Answer:* Too often I care more about the approval of others. But I want to grow in valuing Jesus’ glory above all, so that His vision shapes how I see others.

Prayer Response: Lord Jesus, You are the Lord of glory. Help me to see people the way You do, without partiality or prejudice. Free me from caring more about appearances and status than about Your truth and love. Make me more like Jesus. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

(Sources: James 2:1; John 4:1–26; Romans 2:11)

Tuesday – The Sin of Favoritism

Key Verse: “If you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.” (James 2:9)

Reflection: Favoritism may seem small to us, but James calls it what it is, sin. Whether it’s showing kindness to the wealthy while ignoring the poor, or valuing those who agree with us while dismissing others, favoritism distorts the gospel. The same God who said “do not murder” said “do not show partiality.” One sin is enough to break God’s law and reveal our need for mercy.

Application Question: What is one way favoritism might show up in your life today? *Possible Answer:* I may be tempted to favor people who are easy to be around while neglecting those who are difficult or different.

Prayer Response: Father, forgive me for the ways I have shown favoritism. Reveal where I have sinned against others by elevating some and diminishing others. Teach me to walk in Your love and obey Your royal law. Make me more like Jesus. Change me from the inside out to be like Jesus. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

(Sources: James 2:8–9; Leviticus 19:15; Romans 3:23)

Wednesday – God’s Heart for the Poor

Key Verse: “Has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom...?” (James 2:5)

Reflection: God often works through those who the world overlooks. From Mary and Joseph to the shepherds at Jesus’ birth, from fishermen disciples to the poor in Jerusalem, God delights in using the humble and marginalized to display His kingdom. The poor may lack material wealth, but they can be rich in faith because they depend on God more deeply. This reminds us that God’s values often invert our own.

Application Question: How can you honor someone who may be overlooked or undervalued this week? *Possible Answer:* I can intentionally reach out to someone who feels left out, whether at church, work, or in my neighborhood with encouragement or an invitation to connect.

Prayer Response: Lord, thank You that Your kingdom does not depend on wealth, status, or human power. Teach me to honor those the world ignores and to value people as You do. Make me more like Jesus. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

(Sources: James 2:5; Luke 1:46–55; 1 Corinthians 1:26–29)

Thursday – Mercy Triumphs Over Judgment

Key Verse: “For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.” (James 2:13)

Reflection: God’s mercy toward us in Christ is greater than the judgment we deserve. When we truly grasp the mercy we’ve received, it transforms how we treat others. Instead of judging by appearances or condemning others for their faults, we can extend the same mercy that triumphed over our sin at the cross. Mercy doesn’t excuse sin, but it points people to the Savior who forgives it and who wants to change you from the inside out. Will you keep going to Him until He does?

Application Question: Where do you need to extend mercy instead of judgment? *Possible Answer:* I need to show mercy to a family member I’ve been critical of, remembering how much mercy God has shown me.

Prayer Response: Merciful Father, thank You that in Christ, mercy triumphed over the judgment I deserved. Fill me with Your Spirit so that I can extend mercy instead of judgment to others. Make me more like Jesus. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

(Sources: James 2:13; Matthew 5:7; Titus 3:4–5)

Friday – Living Out the Royal Law

Key Verse: “If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you are doing well.” (James 2:8)

Reflection: Love is the mark of true faith. When we love our neighbors as ourselves, we reflect the heart of Jesus, who laid down His life for us. In a divided world, the church is called to embody a better way, the way of Christlike love that transcends favoritism, prejudice, and division. Real faith is active, not passive. It loves, serves, and values every person as an image-bearer of God.

Application Question: What practical step can you take this week to love your neighbor as yourself? *Possible Answer:* I can serve someone in need by providing a meal, offering help, or simply showing kindness because loving my neighbor reflects Christ’s love for me. God wants to change your heart to reflect His. Will you go to Him and keep going until he does?

Prayer Response: Lord, thank You for Your great love for me. Empower me by Your Spirit to love others as myself, not in words only but in actions that reflect Your mercy and truth. Make me more like Jesus. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

(Sources: James 2:8; Matthew 22:37–39; John 13:34–35)