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WEEK 3

5 - 9 July 2021

WEEK 3 – FAVOURITISM FORBIDDEN

MONDAY – Favouritism – It’s Everywhere



James 2: 1-4 (NIV): *¹My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favouritism. ²Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. ³If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, “Here’s a good seat for you,” but say to the poor man, “You stand there” or “Sit on the floor by my feet,” ⁴have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?*

Favouritism goes on every day. It exists to varying degrees in almost every place. It exists in workplaces where promotion is not just a matter of being competent and productive, but of getting into the good books of certain people. Favouritism is found in board meetings where decisions are not directed entirely by the will of the majority, but by the whims and fancies of a very influential minority.

Favouritism is commonly found in classrooms: A student endears himself to a teacher so well that he gains an unfair advantage even though he performs no better than the rest.

Favouritism is also found in families: Children receive biased treatment based on certain qualities they have no ability to change. And as we see from today’s reading, favouritism is sadly also found among Christians.

In fact it has been a pernicious problem in churches right from the time of the early church when James wrote this epistle, and it continues to be a problem in churches today.

What makes favouritism such a serious matter is that it brings suffering and unfair treatment to many. People are neglected, marginalized, despised or rejected because of it. Perhaps their social status is not as high as that of others, or perhaps they are not as well-off as others. Or perhaps they happen to be of a gender, nationality, race or language that is not preferred, and they are unfairly disadvantaged because of it.

Favouritism also creates a lot of distrust, jealousy and intense resentment. Ask any number of employees who work in places where favouritism is rife, and they will tell you how stifling the environment is, and how unpleasant working relationships can become.

And so, if we are practising favouritism we need to stop it. If we are receiving undue favour in a manner that is unfair to others we also need to put a stop to it. And if we are suffering the adverse effects of favouritism, we need to learn how to respond to it in a biblical manner.

Reflection: Where am I guilty of showing favouritism to someone at the expense of others?



Prayer: Lord forgive us when our **favouritism** ignores Your grace, Your standards and Your guidance. Help us to do what we do to glorify You, and to remember You as our creator and as our judge. May our expectations rest with You and may we remember Your expectations of us. AMEN

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QGITzH9xkXQ> (You're so Beautiful - Phil Wickham)

TUESDAY – Do we treat all people equally?



James 2: 5-7 (NIV): ⁵ Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom He promised those who love him?⁶ But you have dishonoured the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court?⁷ Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of Him to whom you belong?

I wish I could tell you that we live in world where there is no discrimination, but we don't. I wish I could tell you that no one would judge you because of your sexual orientation and/or skin colour, but too often they do. I wish I could tell you that Christians would treat everyone with equal value as a person, but I cannot.

We live in a world where favouritism and discrimination in all their various forms are real and present. At some level, we all have been discriminated against, whether because of how we have looked, how we have sounded when we talked, whether we were too skinny or too fat, whether we were athletic or not athletic and smart or not too smart. How you react when you are being discriminated against says a lot about you. **But** in James 2, God is not concerned so much about how you react when being discriminated against, as He is in whether or not

you are treating everyone as equally valuable.

Do you love people equally? Do you care for people equally? Do you value the poor man as much as you do the rich man? Do you accept the pretty person as much as you do the plain person? In reality, in your world you are going to be faced with rich and poor, cleaver and not so cleaver, godly and ungodly, good looking and plain, skinny and fat, and even possibly good and bad smelling people. Because, if we reflect on God's word, then we must come to the conclusion that genuine faith in Jesus Christ should cause you to love everyone equally.

Reflection: So then my question for you today is, does your faith in Jesus cause you to love, care, and treat everyone equally?



Prayer: Dear Lord and Heavenly Father, You called us to be in a relationship with one another and promised to be there whenever two or three are gathered in Your name. In our community we, Your children, come from different places, backgrounds and many different cultures. Open our hearts that we may be bold in finding the riches of inclusion and the treasures of diversity among us. AMEN

WEDNESDAY – Favouritism is an indication of spiritual immaturity



James 2: 8-9 (NIV): *⁸ If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbour as yourself” you are doing right. ⁹ But if you show favouritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.*

As followers of Jesus, how we treat people that are different from ourselves, look different to us, hold different opinions to us, and live in a different manner, should tell us a lot about where we are and how we are doing spiritually. Genuine faith, as it grows, helps us to begin to want to treat everyone equally. Genuine faith causes you to see value in everyone. But if you are segregating people and placing value on people based on how they look, what they sound like, and how much they have, then you may not be as spiritually mature as you think you are.

As **James 2: 1 (NLT)** puts it, *“My dear brothers and sisters, how can you claim to have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ if you favour some people over others?”* When you placed your faith in Christ, He forgave you. He treated you just like He does everyone who places their faith in Him. Your wealth didn't matter, your skin colour didn't matter, your

education didn't matter, your appearance didn't matter, your gender didn't matter, your history didn't matter and it didn't matter if you were religious or not. You were treated equally. You were forgiven equally. You were adopted equally. You were saved equally. **Romans 2:11** says, *“God does not show favouritism”*. And just to reinforce this truth **Ephesians 6:9** says God *“has no favourites”*.

When you don't treat people equally, then you are perhaps demonstrating that you don't fully understand the sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross for you. Taking this into consideration, in your attitude towards favouritism you have an indication of where you are spiritually.

Reflection: If we believe that God does not show favouritism and has no favourites, then how am I doing in trying to follow His example?



Prayer: Dear Lord and Heavenly Father, You have called us to grow in grace, to increase our understanding of Jesus and to develop a close and intimate relationship with You. Lord, this is what I desire to do, and I pray I may come to know You more and more each day. AMEN

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=58pBvQa0XSM> (Phil Wickham - It's Always Been You)

THURSDAY – The causes of favouritism



James 2: 10-11 (NIV): ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. ¹¹ For He who said, “You shall not commit adultery,” also said, “You shall not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.

Let us consider the causes of favouritism. What could they be? Possibly, there are several root causes – the first being **Pride**. Sometimes our pride about our own education or background or knowledge level or maturity causes us to look down on others who haven't achieved the same level we think we have.

Secondly **external focus**. Often we show favouritism because we are focused on man instead of God. We don't want others to look at us and say, “Oh look who he is hanging out with.” We are worried that our spending time with a certain group or person will draw the negative attention from others.

And thirdly, **perhaps our good deeds are not really good**. We do something kind for some people because we want them to notice and return the favour. If a person is rich or has a high position, they can do a lot for us whereas if they are poor they can't. If they are a pastor or esteemed member of the church they will recognize our service and think highly of us, but if they are just

a normal person or a newcomer we don't care to please them. Really in this instance, the root cause is some form of selfishness. We are not exercising love as Jesus did.

The problem for us is really when favouritism starts to creep into our own lives and attitudes. Let's think about what ways favouritism may start to creep into our lives. For doctors one obvious temptation might be to spend more time and energy on taking care of the rich or important officials. For teachers, it might be paying special attention to certain students whose parents are more influential/important, or who we like better etc. As believers, we are not called make a judgement as to who is more important than whom. Our responsibility is to love everyone and show them mercy as God did to us.

Reflection: Where in my life, and in my interactions with others, am I showing favouritism?



Prayer: Dear Lord and Heavenly Father help me to expand my horizons, drop my carefully constructed walls of security, and help me get to know *all* of God's children. This week put someone in my path that I would normally not talk to so that I will experience how denying favouritism will bring me ever closer to You. AMEN

FRIDAY – Favouritism is overcome with mercy



James 2: 12-13 (NIV): ¹² *Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom,* ¹³ *because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.*

It is a fact that all through your life you are going to judge people whether you want to or not. You can either judge them by their appearances, their age, their affluence, their achievements, academics, or their athleticism (favouritism) or you can judge everyone based on mercy.

You show favouritism when you demonstrate that you have picked up an attitude toward people who look a certain way, sound a certain way, or act in a certain way, causing you to ignore them, look down on them, and maybe even ridicule them. God says don't do this. Instead, show **mercy**.

Mercy is compassion. Mercy reaches out to help those who have a need. Mercy is what causes you to love your enemy. Mercy is what motivates you to help a stranger. Mercy is being kind when others are unkind. Mercy is loving

when others are unloving. Mercy treats everyone equally when you are not treated equally. Any selfish person can show favouritism, but it takes a transformed heart to demonstrate real mercy. Mercy is your weapon against favouritism. Wisdom is demonstrated by God's people when they are full of mercy and show no favouritism. Mercy says, "Even though they are different from me I am going to love them anyway. They may not be what I want them to be, but I'm going to honour them and show them respect." Mercy says, "I'm going to treat everyone equally."

Reflection: One definition of mercy is a "love that responds to human need in an unexpected or unmerited way." Is there a human need that you feel you should be responding to in this way?



Prayer: Dear Lord and Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your love towards us. We thank You that in the midst of life's challenges and difficulties we have a loving Father that demonstrates total humility by asking, "what do you want me to do for you?" Lord, you show great mercy to me, help me to show the same mercy to others. AMEN

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XFRjr_x-yxU (Phil Wickham – This is Amazing Grace)