

Louder Than Words #4
Ending Favoritism

Word

Scripture Reference

James 2:1-13

Discussion Questions

1. What reasons could there be for one to believe some people are more important than others?
2. Favoritism is the practice of favoring someone over another, resulting in unfair treatment on the basis of prejudice because of looks or economic status. Favoritism should have no place in Christian life because it is inconsistent with the message of the gospel. No one likes to be treated unfairly, and as a follower of Jesus Christ, you should especially not show preferential treatment to others. Read James 2:1-13. James said that favoritism is a reflection of evil thoughts (v. 1-4) and should not be practiced in the church. What true-to-life example did James use to point out how favoritism was demonstrated in the church? Why do a lot of people regard rich people as more significant than poor people?
3. James gives us three reasons why favoritism has no place in the church. First is because favoritism does not see as God sees (v. 5-7). Verse 5 states, *“God has chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which He promised to those who love Him.”* Does it mean that it is wrong to be rich, or that one cannot be rich both materially and spiritually? How did rich people at that time treat people in the church (v. 6-7)? Discuss how even some Christians use physical appearance, job or economic status, power, and popularity to show favoritism in relation to people? God, on the other hand, looks at those less privileged differently. Why does God have a distinctive concern for the impoverished?
4. Secondly, favoritism is a sin (v. 8-11). Leviticus 19:15 says, *“You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor.”* Examine your heart. Do you expect to be treated with

favoritism/partiality? The Bible tells us that it is a sin. According to verses 10-11, what does a person need to do to be considered a lawbreaker? Discuss why we do not usually regard favoritism or prejudice as a sin?

5. Thirdly, favoritism is the very opposite of grace (v. 12-13). Verse 13 states, *“For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.”* Grace is the granting of favor to the one who is truly undeserving. Favoritism is when you grant undeserved favors to those you think deserve it. Your responsibility as a believer is to show the grace of Christ through your equal treatment of others. You cannot justify the giving of favors as being “gracious.” What warning was rendered to those who judge with no mercy (v. 13)? Share how you have shown mercy to someone who had done something wrong to you instead of judging that person. On the other hand, how did God show His mercy to you in spite of your shortcomings?

Walk

God showed His love and impartiality when He sent His Son Jesus Christ to die for EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US. In response, you, being a Christian, and the church, being the body of Christ, should end favoritism because it is inconsistent with the Gospel Message. Showing favoritism is a sin, and it is the very opposite of grace. Why do you think God would judge you as an offender of the law if your sin was only as “insignificant” as prejudice? Is there someone from whom you need to ask forgiveness for showing partiality? In what way should you change the way you consider wealth or status so that you regard it as God does?

Worship & Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for the reminder that as a follower of Christ, I am held to a higher standard. Forgive me for my disregard of showing favoritism as sin, for thinking it’s “not as bad” as the other sins. I confess that I’m guilty of judging others based on status, culture, family background, etc., and that my behavior towards people tend to be based on my assumptions about them. Help me see people as You do, Father, that they are worth accepting because like me, they are undeserving sinners for whom Jesus Christ died. Help me show grace instead of partiality, so that when someone comes through the church doors, when I meet someone at the office/school/etc., they will see and wonder where such grace comes from. Grant me the opportunity, then, to tell them about the God who gave His life so that they may live. I pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.