

# Love Doesn't Play Favorites

James 2:1-9

## I. Partiality Uses Others To Further Our Status (1-3)

### A. Partiality Darkens God's Glory (1; cf. Gal 3:28; Col 3:11; 1 Sam 16:7)

<sup>1</sup> My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.

### B. Partiality Enhances Self Glory (2-3; cf. 1:27)

<sup>2</sup> For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, <sup>3</sup> and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet,"

## II. Partiality Applies Unbiblical Distinctions To Divide The Church (4-7)

### A. Distinctions Are Based On Peer Standards Over God's Standards (4a; cf. Acts 17:26; Rev 5:9)

<sup>4a</sup> have you not then made distinctions among yourselves

### B. Distinctions Are Based On Sinful Motives Over Righteous Intent (4b)

<sup>4b</sup> and become judges with evil thoughts?

### C. Distinctions Are Based On Bad Theology That Doesn't See Others As God Does (5-7; cf. Lk 6:20; Lk 4:18; Mt 19:21-22; 2 Cor 8:9)

<sup>5</sup> Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? <sup>6</sup> But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? <sup>7</sup> Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?

## III. Partiality Violates God's Law Of Love (8-9, cf. Lk 6:31-34)

<sup>8</sup> If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. <sup>9</sup> But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

### Discussion:

1. What blatant or subtle ways is favoritism displayed in churches? How do I show it?
2. What are the common motivations for favoritism that most people struggle with? How about me?
3. What type of folks might feel awkward at FBC? Would a poor person feel comfortable at FBC? Or a rich person? Or of a different culture or age? What can we do to help them feel welcome?
4. How can we minister to new people and strangers and still maintain quality time with our church friends? (True friends would want you to thrive in serving others besides them). How could we partner with our friends to reach out to new and different people?
5. How can we strategically broaden our outreach beyond our culture, class and comfort-zone as a fellowship or church?

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## Introduction:

- For those watching on the internet, I heard that the internet is now where the traffic jams are.
- When we had all 4 of us do 4 separate video conferences on Friday night, we had a lot of freezing
- The traffic from Highway 92 and 101 went to the internet
  
- Answer with those you're watching this service with ...

## 1. What Is Your Favorite ... ?

- Ice Cream
- Vacation Spot
- Bible Verse
- Book (besides the Bible)

- **Warning: DON'T Answer this next set of questions**

## 2. Who/What Is Your Favorite ... ?

- Child?
- Parent?
- Race?
- Kind of Person You'd Want At Church?
  
- Aren't you glad I told you not to answer?
- There are some things it's nice to have favorites in
- **Until people are at risk for being hurt**
- There are other areas where our favorites portray a dark side of our human heart:  
**elitism, prejudice and judgmentalism**

## Scripture Reading:

<sup>1</sup> My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. <sup>2</sup>For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, <sup>3</sup>and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet," <sup>4</sup>have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? <sup>5</sup>Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? <sup>6</sup>But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? <sup>7</sup>Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?

<sup>8</sup>If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. <sup>9</sup>But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

**Proposition: James Identifies 3 Dangers Of Favoritism/Partiality In The Church**

## I. Partiality Uses Others To Further Our Status (1-3)

### A. Partiality Darkens God's Glory (1)

<sup>1</sup> *My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.*

- **"My brothers"** – that's our baseline
- We're equal in Christ

**Galatians 3:28** There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

**Colossians 3:11** Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

- Masters & slaves were one in Christ
- Jews and Gentiles are one in Christ
- Male and female are one in Christ
- Barbarian and Scythian are one in Christ – their church would be very interesting
  - According to Edwin Yamauchi: This general view of the Scythians is based on a wealth of classical references,<sup>10</sup> and is generally reflected in all the commentaries, e.g., "The Scythians are cited as an especially strange kind of barbarian";<sup>11</sup> "The 'Scythian' represents the lowest kind of barbarian who was probably also a slave; the term was applied to tribes around the Black Sea. . . ." <sup>12</sup>
    - <https://www.cbeinternational.org/resources/article/priscilla-papers/scythians—who-were-they-and-why-did-paul-include-them-colossians>
- That's our baseline – the Body of Christ, the family of God, being brothers and sisters
- **"show no partiality"**
  - "partiality" or "favoritism" = Gr. *Prosopolempsia* – literally means "to accept a face" (Kent, p. 75)
  - So we accept on the basis of appearance
  - We reject on basis of external appearance
  - **But God doesn't look at the outward appearance, but the heart**

**1 Samuel 16:7** <sup>7</sup>But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."
- **"Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory"**
  - The focus is on the glory of Christ, not the glory of Steve
  - Church is not about the glory of Republicans or Democrats, but about the glory of Christ
  - Church is not about how well we cater to Gen Z, Millennials or Baby Boomers, but how we glorify Christ
  - Church is not to accentuate an American culture, an Asian culture or European culture, but the glory of Christ

## B. Partiality Enhances Self Glory (2-3)

<sup>2</sup>For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, <sup>3</sup>and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet,"

- Gold rings were status symbols in the ancient days like it is today
- "assembly" = *sunagogen* = synagogue
- E.g. Imagine if Steph Curry and his family walked into our church service right after a disheveled man who hadn't showered in 3 days walks in. Then we usher the Currys to the front row and we send the disheveled man to watch live in the fellowship hall.
  - We hand the Currys a visitor's gift and hand the other man a Sani-Wipe.
- Why do we prefer the rich guy? Because he can enhance our status.
- That's why James challenges about what pure and undefiled religion is

**James 1:27a** Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction,

## II. Partiality Applies Unbiblical Distinctions To Divide The Church (4-7)

### A. Distinctions Are Based On Peer Standards Over God's Standards (4a)

<sup>4a</sup>have you not then made distinctions among yourselves

- Sam Allberry: "Favouritism ends up judging one person's soul as being of greater value than another's, and it does all this on the basis of superficial, worldly criteria." (*James For You*, The Good Book Co., 2018, p. 59)
- E.g. **Generations:** Boomers & Zoomers (Gen Z)
  - Do we prefer to be in a church that just caters to our age group?
  - Or are we ready to minister to multi-generations?
  - Do we find the elderly slowing us down? Making our music more too conservative?
  - Do we find the young people too progressive? Making our music too progressive?
  - Do we reach out to kids, teens, singles, couples, young families, empty nesters, seniors?
  - What can we do to help them be more accepted?
- E.g. **Class**
  - Some churches don't minister to their demographic in their community
  - Why or why not?
  - How would we minister to someone homeless?
  - We've tried to encourage them from the Word but also keep them from personally begging
- E.g. **Churches not like what we like**
  - not as conservative as us, not as liberal as us

- I know where I am theologically, but do I have to look down at churches that preach the Gospel that aren't exactly where I am
- We are to identify false teachers and heretics and separate from them
- Ie/ But I went to a **seminary** that favored their denomination more than the Bible church people
- Ie/ I wrote one **mission agency** of a missionary we supported because they wouldn't let us join that missionary on a short term trip. I questioned that they would take our support money but not let us go on a missions trip even though we hold to the same theological position. Only because we were a "Bible Church" and didn't have their denominational name we were rejected?
- Ie/ I used to struggle with judging churches on non-biblical preferences
- Ie/ Do we avoid the person with odd body piercings, facial tattoos, dresses differently?
- **E.G. Race & Culture**
  - Asian, African, South American
  - I feel more comfortable in South America than I do in the nation of my origin because there is such prejudice against those who don't speak the language – there is a hierarchy: Mandarin, Cantonese and the lowest is those who can't speak at all
  - With our audience mainly of Asian heritage, do others feel welcome here at FBC?
  - Ie/ Southern Baptists split from the Northern Baptists at the Augusta, Georgia Convention in 1845 over the issue of slavery
  - Southern Seminary published an apology and report on how their founders were slave holders: part of their justification was they believed they improved the situation of the African American taking them out of Africa (<http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/899>)
  - The History: <https://sbts-wordpress-uploads.s3.amazonaws.com/sbts/uploads/2018/12/Racism-and-the-Legacy-of-Slavery-Report-v4.pdf>
  - That is a horrible assumption rooted in white supremacy
  - Despite all men being created in the image of God, despite verses like Gal 3:28 and Col 3:11 declaring our equality
  - **Note:** I love the Southern Baptists – they have acknowledged a horrible history and repented of it. We all have a past – PTL for forgiveness in Christ.
- **Is the answer for Christians to be Colorblind?**
  - I don't believe this is the biblical answer.
  - Some wonder why there are ethnic churches and that all Christians should be assimilated
  - Not everyone is accepted in an assimilated church
  - You don't see missionaries going to Indonesia or the Middle East and trying to make them more American – the priority is change through the Gospel, not changing a culture
  - Colonial missions in the 1800's caused great damage to the Gospel of Christ
  - Ie/ One Korean American speaker from Together for the Gospel Conference I attended shared how a white American pastor asked when his people would start coming to their American church. The Korean pastor responded "I spent 6 years learning English so I can understand your church. When are

you going to learn Korean so you could understand our church?" Wow! **So you want us to be like you, but you're not willing to be like us!**

- **I believe the answer to racism is to be Ethnic-Embracing! Celebrating cultural diversity.**

**Acts 17:26** And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place,

- God made the nations. True, we all came from Adam. But God made every nation – He determined their shelf-life (there are no more Hittites or Mayans, though there is a history of them) and their geographical boundaries.

**Revelation 5:9** 9 And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,

- God has every tribe, language, people and nation worshipping God in heaven
- God didn't make everybody mono-racial – even in heaven
- God has every tribe, language, people and nation worshipping God in heaven
- God didn't make everybody mono-racial – even in heaven

**Acts 2:5-11** 5 Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from **every nation under heaven**

- E.g. Those who are Asians and coughing
- Ie/ Natalie Chou, a 6'1" basketball guard who plays for UCLA shared in ESPN how she feels those that look at her with
  - "UCLA's Natalie Chou won't stand for anti-Asian racism related to coronavirus" **Natalie Chou, as told to Charlotte Gibson**
  - She pointed the stares and glares on a flight from Dallas to L.A.
  - "I know how something as simple as changing the name of the virus can create real hurt. To call this pandemic anything other than the technical name it has been given is disrespectful and ultimately racist. Calling it the "[Chinese virus](#)," the "[Hong Kong virus](#)," the "kung-flu" or anything of that sort [is racist](#). There is absolutely no need to refer to the coronavirus in this way. It is not witty or funny. It is ignorant, insensitive and prejudiced.
  - "Asian Americans across the country have been verbally and physically attacked because of this rhetoric. It has now become dangerous for us to go grocery shopping, ride the bus or train -- or even go outside for that matter. There have been hundreds of documented cases of Asian Americans being harassed or assaulted since the term "Chinese virus" has become public."  
[https://www.espn.com/espnw/voices/story/\\_/id/28955666/ucla-natalie-chou-stand-anti-asian-racism-related-coronavirus?fbclid=IwAR2Pd--zbdx5le9l3uV1pHZKkVHUO06bizh2oL1GgfdbLs3adrtHsxIINKM](https://www.espn.com/espnw/voices/story/_/id/28955666/ucla-natalie-chou-stand-anti-asian-racism-related-coronavirus?fbclid=IwAR2Pd--zbdx5le9l3uV1pHZKkVHUO06bizh2oL1GgfdbLs3adrtHsxIINKM)

## B. Distinctions Are Based On Sinful Motives Over Righteous Intent (4b)

*4b and become judges with evil thoughts?*

- James says that favoritism is evil
- We judge sinfully for our personal gain
- Ie/ We hated the jocks who said you're not tough enough to hang with us
- Ie/ We disdained the Queen Bee who hand selected those who both were desperate to be with her and became addicted the drama that surrounded her
- But then we do this with a poorer person or an odder person than us
- What evil thoughts have crept in to our motivation?

## C. Distinctions Are Based On Bad Theology That Doesn't See Others As God Does (5-7)

*5 Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? 6 But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? 7 Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?*

- When we show favoritism, we receive the rich person who hates God instead of the poor person who loves God
- We must conform to **God's theology of the poor**
- God chose the poor in this world to be rich in Him
- Most of the world in the ancient days was poor
- Many who consider themselves in need of welfare are far more wealthy than the poor in the ancient days
- We make distinctions based on outer appearances rather than seeing that their heart is just as needy as a rich person

**Luke 6:20** "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God."

**Luke 4:18** "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed,"

- We must also change our **theology about the rich**
- God recognizes many rich people are in no need of God
- Yet based on outward appearances, we like the fancy clothes, cool cars and updated gadgets
- But we don't see their heart as lost
- Jesus tried to point to the Rich Man how his riches kept him from following Christ

**Matthew 19:21-22** <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." <sup>22</sup> When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

- V. 6 – yet we still choose to ignore the theology of sin in every person's heart and we choose to dishonor the poor person
- V. 6 – the rich oppress us – yet we still favor them over the poor

- “exploit” – take advantage of someone else for personal gain
- V. 6 – the rich sue us in court – yet the money they gain will not buy the peace of God
- V. 7 – the rich are blaspheming the Person of God who called us – yet we all tolerate this because we think we can profit from them by being “Linked In” with them, being in their peer group
- **The rich people attack Christians through exploitation (6), litigation (6) and identification (7) with the Lord who calls us**
- **Wealth needs to be identified spiritually, not materially.**

**2 Corinthians 8:9** <sup>a</sup>For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

- Christ loved us without

### **III. Partiality Violates God’s Law Of Love (8-9, cf. Lk 6:31-34)**

*<sup>a</sup>If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well. <sup>a</sup>But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.*

- God’s law is a **royal law** because He’s the King – the **King of Kings**
- V. 5 – we are **heirs of the kingdom**
- The supreme command is to love
- Showing partiality is a sin!

**Luke 6:31-34** 31 And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them. 32 “If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount.

### **Conclusion/Discussion:**

1. What blatant or subtle ways is favoritism displayed in churches? How do I show it?
  - Do I seek out the popular who will make me feel accepted?
  - Do I just want to be around the people I enjoy?
  - What’s my motive for coming to CTF? Quest? CFF?
2. What are the common motivations for favoritism that most people struggle with? How about me?
3. What type of folks might feel awkward at FBC? Would a poor person feel comfortable at FBC? Or a rich person? Or of a different culture or age? What can we do to help them feel welcome?
4. How can we minister to new people and strangers and still maintain quality time with our church friends? (True friends would want you to thrive in serving others besides them). How could we partner with our friends to reach out to new and different people?
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