

LESSON 5

PLAYING FAVORITES

JAMES 2:1–13



1 Describe a situation in which a teacher showed favoritism in class. How did the class know about it? How did you feel about it?

2 In what ways do adults continue to play favorites at home, at work, or in government?



Read James 2:1–13 and the following notes:

☐ 2:1ff ☐ 2:1–7 ☐ 2:2–4 ☐ 2:5 ☐ 2:8, 9 ☐ 2:12 ☐ 2:13

3 Why is favoritism to the rich inconsistent with believing in Christ (2:1–4)?

4 What is God's attitude toward the poor (2:5)?

5 How does loving your neighbor as yourself relate to showing favoritism at church (2:8, 9)?

6 Why are the rich usually treated with special favor in the world?



James is echoing the consistent teaching of the Old and New Testaments in this passage—that God has a heart of compassion for the poor and destitute. He is a God rich in mercy who delights in caring for those who don't count for much in the world's eyes. All Christians have received undeserved mercy from God and are called by God to express mercy to those in need. That's why favoritism to the rich is so unacceptable: It values that which God says is unimportant. Be very careful in your personal life and in your church to treat people according to God's values rather than by the values of the world.

7 Today, most churches would not usher people to good and bad seats. But what other ways might people favor the rich at church?

8 For what reasons do people show favoritism to the poor?



9 In what ways does God show favoritism to the poor?

10 How does God's view of wealth compare with your view? In what specific areas do you need to align your thinking about wealth and poverty with God's?

11 Would a poor person feel accepted in your church? Why?

12 In what ways do you favor some people over others at church?

13 Whom have you snubbed or favored, perhaps without being aware of it at the time? Why did you do it?

14 In what other ways can you apply this principle of not showing favoritism on the basis of what the world considers important?

15 Think of someone whom God has brought into your life who is unattractive or seems to have little to offer you. Perhaps you have been guilty of ignoring this person in the past. Ask God to help you see this person more clearly from his or her perspective. List at least three specific actions you can take to reach out to this person with Christ's love.



A Are riches ever a sign of God's favor? How much of your prayer life is given to pursuing material requests?

B Why do you think God gives such a priority to the poor? Why doesn't God simply bless them with more material things? Why doesn't God always answer your prayers for material blessings?

C Why does James call the command to "love your neighbor as yourself" the "royal command" (2:8)? In what ways does it summarize all the laws governing human relationships? What changes would this make in how you interact with your spouse, children, or a close friend?

D Who will receive mercy from God (2:2, 3)? How does this relate to salvation by faith alone? In what areas of your life has your faith led you to be more merciful?

E Why is a person who breaks just one of God's laws guilty of breaking all of them (2:10, 11)?

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