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Faith on Display in Your Relationships

The POINT >

Don't play favorites.

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WHEN HAVE YOU SEEN SOMEONE BEING TREATED UNFAIRLY?

> JAMES 2:1-13

¹My brothers and sisters, do not show favoritism as you hold on to the faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ.

²For if someone comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and a poor person dressed in filthy clothes also comes in, ³if you look with favor on the one wearing the fine clothes and say, "Sit here in a good place," and yet you say to the poor person, "Stand over there," or "Sit here on the floor by my footstool," ⁴haven't you made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

⁵Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Didn't God choose the poor in this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? ⁶Yet you have dishonored the poor. Don't the rich oppress you and drag you into court? ⁷Don't they

blaspheme the good name that was invoked over you?

⁸Indeed, if you fulfill the royal law prescribed in the Scripture, Love your neighbor as yourself, you are doing well. ⁹If, however, you show favoritism, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰For whoever keeps the entire law, and yet stumbles at one point, is guilty of breaking it all. ¹¹For he who said, Do not commit adultery, also said, Do not murder. So if you do not commit adultery, but you murder, you are a lawbreaker. ¹²Speak and act as those who are to be judged by the law of freedom. ¹³For judgment is without mercy to the one who has not shown mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

FACT:

In the US, we still live in a society that is highly segregated. Thirteen percent of white students attend schools where the majority are students of color, but almost seventy percent of black students attend schools where the majority of students are white.²



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // COMMUNITY & WORLD

God values all people—born and unborn, young and old, male and female, all ethnicities, those of opposing faiths—and calls Christians to live on mission for the sake of reaching the lost across the street and around the world through prayer, giving resources, loving actions, and sharing the gospel.

Stephen A. Smith, a sports commentator, recently came under fire for his insensitive remarks about Shohei Ohtani, a designated hitter and pitcher with the Los Angeles Angels. People were outraged because Smith's comments had nothing to do with baseball, but with Ohtani's being Japanese. In response to the outcry, Stephen did not make excuses. Instead, he said, "I was wrong, period."

As a Black man, Smith has been on the other side of racism, and he's an outspoken critic of racist thought and behavior. However, this time, he was the offending party. Smith said that his words were inexcusable, and acknowledged that he "contributed to the ongoing hate against the Asian and Asian American community."¹

Here's the thing: We live in a culture that has taken great strides in regard to issues of racism and equality. However, Smith is not alone, and racism and prejudice are far more common than they should be among those who agree that all people are created equal. Whether the distinctions we make are racial, socio-economic, religious, or political, we often treat people differently because they are different from us. James pointed to a better way. He taught that we should treat everyone equally.

JAMES 2:1-4

1 Where do you see favoritism or discrimination today?

2 What are some consequences of showing favoritism in the church?

When we show favoritism, prejudice, or discrimination, we offend God's standards in the worst ways. #BSFLFaithLivedOut

JAMES 2:5-7

3 Why is the heart of God so close to the poor and the excluded?

4 List some ways we overlook the poor in the church today.

5 What are some examples of showing honor versus playing favorites?

JAMES 2:8-13

6 How does harmful judging impact others? In contrast, how does showing love and mercy impact others?

7 Why is God opposed to favoritism? How does favoritism keep us from loving others like God wants us to?

8 How can we go beyond passively avoiding favoritism to actively demonstrating God's love?





LIVE IT OUT



GOD

JESUS

HOLY SPIRIT

BIBLE

SALVATION

CREATION

CHURCH

PEOPLE

FAMILY

**COMMUNITY
& WORLD**

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // COMMUNITY & WORLD

God values all people—born and unborn, young and old, male and female, all ethnicities, those of opposing faiths—and calls Christians to live on mission for the sake of reaching the lost across the street and around the world through prayer, giving resources, loving actions, and sharing the gospel.

All people are created in God's image and have immeasurable value. Further, God sent Jesus to pay the price for our sins because of His love for all people. We must never discriminate, and further, must work diligently to show the love of Christ and share the gospel with all people so that they would know God's blessings.

➤ CHRIST

Jesus lived out the Great Commandment—love God and love others—perfectly. This included His seeing all people as having equal value, and He never showed discrimination—against the poor or sick, against women, against those despised by society. He never discriminated against anyone.

9 Every day this week, pray that God would help you to be more like Jesus, particularly in the area of treating, in real ways, all people as having equal value.

10 Briefly journal the things you learn and the commitments you might make.



> COMMUNITY

Visiting a church can be a bit of an awkward experience. Visitors might not know many people (or anyone at all), they might not understand what's expected of them, and they aren't familiar with your church's traditions and practices.

11 The next time someone new visits, go above and beyond to make sure they feel welcome. Introduce yourself and others and invite them to sit with you. Practice the five-minute rule—five minutes before and after a church gathering, seek out people you do not know very well and spend a few minutes chatting with them.

> CULTURE

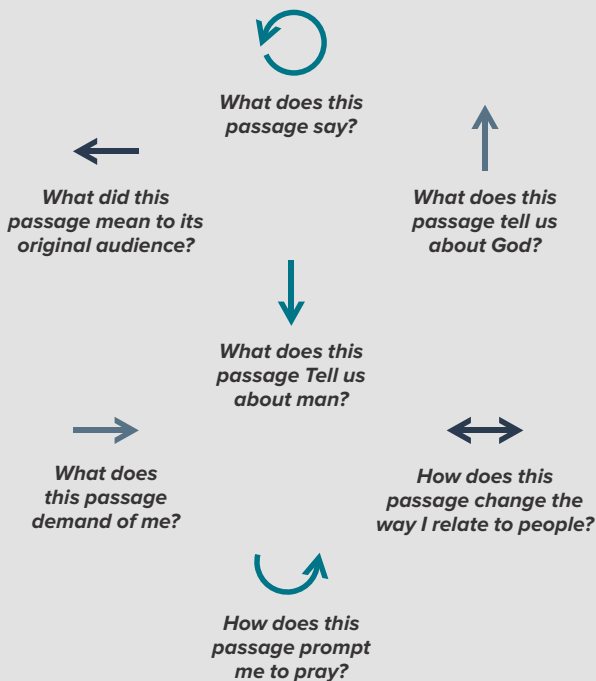
There are people all around us who don't feel like they fit in. Many people feel, for all kinds of reasons, rejected and isolated, and it's our responsibility to help them feel valued and loved.

12 This week, make it a point to show kindness to someone who might not be treated equally. Make sure it's not a one-time event, but choose to make it a lifestyle. Invite them to your church and make sure they feel welcome. Look for opportunities to share the reason—when we were left out, Jesus came to us in order to reconcile us to God.

DAILY DEVOTIONS



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Day One ROMANS 2:1

Judging is something of a sensitive issue today. You've probably heard something to the effect of, "Only God can judge me." This reality is not something to be taken lightly. The Bible actually has quite a lot to say about judging. Matthew 7:1 says not to judge so we won't be judged. Pretty simple, right? Don't judge others. However, Matthew continues by saying that we will be judged by the standard we use to judge others (v. 2). We aren't to judge others according to pride or worldly wisdom, because when we do, we're bringing judgment upon ourselves. We're never to condemn others. However, we are to recognize whether or not they're living for God. And when people are open to our patient and loving correction, we're to help. In Romans, Paul isn't referring to making loving judgments, but to prideful condemnation.

➤ How would you describe different types of judging?

➤ Why is condemning others so bad?

Day Two

ROMANS 2:2-5



God certainly loves all people. And even when we sin, He is gracious and patient, and He shows us this kindness to allow us the opportunity to turn from our sins and follow Jesus. However, alongside God's kindness, He is also just, which means He will judge sin and disobedience. When people continue to sin, even after God has been merciful, they hate the riches of His kindness, which is a terrible offense and comes from hearts that are hardened. One day we will all stand before God in judgment, and for those who are given chance after chance to turn from sin, but still continue to disobey, they store up for themselves great punishment for sin.

➤ **Why is God so patient and gracious with us?**

➤ **Why will God punish sin?**

Day Three

ROMANS 2:6-8

Romans 6:23 is a very familiar verse, and teaches that “the wages of sin is death.” A wage is something we earn according to our works, and the payment for sinful and selfish living is eternal death and suffering. Scripture is clear that God will pay us according to the ways we live on earth. For those who are selfish, living in ways they think will make them happy but which are opposed to God, they will receive as payment God's anger and wrath. However, for those who trust Jesus and follow Him, they will receive the gift of eternal life. Though our obedience is essentially important, we could never live up to God's standards. But Jesus did! And when we trust in Him, His works are credited to us, and because of our faith, Jesus's ways will be reflected in our lives.

➤ **What is a wage, specifically in an eternal sense?**

➤ **What is the payment for sinful versus righteous living?**

Day Four

ROMANS 2:9-10

The Israelites were called into a covenant relationship with God and were set apart as His own special people. However, they mistook exactly what this means. They thought they were favored and would receive God's blessings no matter what, and that non-Jewish people were separated and cut off from God's blessings. God wanted Israel to live in obedience and to bless them so other nations would see that honoring God is the right and best way to live. But when even Israel disobeyed, God was required, because He is just, to judge them according to the ways they lived. For all people, no matter if we go to church or believe in God, disobedience brings punishment from God. However, for anyone who trusts and follows Jesus, no matter their color, sex, age, or abilities, God will pour out His blessings on those who live by faith in Christ.

➤ **Why did God call Old Testament Israel to live set-apart lives?**

➤ **Why is it important to understand that God's blessings are available to all people?**

Day Five

ROMANS 2:11



The specific meaning of the word “favoritism” in this verse is “to receive a face.” Many times, people in our culture and in our schools value people because of their face, or their appearance. Pretty people receive special treatment because they are attractive. Some people, because of the color of their skin, are given preferential treatment and others are refused opportunities. Sometimes, appearance has to do with wealth, popularity, or personality, and these characteristics lead to all kinds of preferential treatment. However, God never shows partiality. In fact, God cannot show favoritism. And because we are called to reflect God in the ways we live, we should never discriminate. Favoritism is a terrible sin against others and against God.

➤ **Why are people tempted to discriminate based on appearance?**

➤ **Why is this such a terrible offense?**