

Playing Favorites
2-15-26 / Mark McCartin
James 2:1-13

James 2:1 *My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism.*

I. What Favoritism Isn't:

1. You should never single out anyone for special recognition or honor.
2. Having "church friends" I'm especially close with.

II. What Favoritism is:

1. Sin (1-4)

- a. vs 4 "made distinctions among yourselves"
- b. vs 4 become judges
- c. vs 4 "with evil thoughts"

2. Diagnosis (vs 8-11 Loveless Lawbreaking)

3. Gospel Remedy (vs 12-13 Mercy through Christ)

4. Result (vs 13b Mercy in Mercy out)

Discuss

- Have you ever felt overlooked or judged based on appearance, age, status, or background?
- Where do you see favoritism most in our culture?
- What from the message stood out to you most?

Scripture condemns favoritism (James 2), yet the Bible also shows close friendships (David & Jonathan, Jesus' inner three, Paul & Timothy). The goal is not equal intimacy with everyone.

The goal is equal dignity and impartial love.

How can we have a "click" and yet not be "clicky"?

- What "external markers" tend to influence how you see people?
- Who do I instinctively gravitate toward?
- Who do I tend avoid?
- What assumptions do I make within five seconds of meeting someone?

Read James 2:1-4

- What specific behaviors does James condemn?
- What makes the behavior sinful?
- Why is favoritism such a big deal?

At the root of partiality is Internal Reasoning [Jas 2:4 have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts]

- What invisible scoring system do I carry?

Complete the sentence honestly:

- "People like that usually..."
- "People who look like that probably..."

- “Successful people are more...”
- “Struggling people are usually...”
- What do these assumptions reveal about my heart?

What motivates favoritism in your heart — insecurity, ambition, comfort...?

What does “mercy triumphs over judgment” (13) mean in context?

Gospel-Centered Questions

- How does Jesus model non-partial love?
- How does remembering the cross reshape how we see others? (Tit 3:4-5; Luke 7:47)
- Why must mercy received become mercy given?

Read Romans 12:10

- What does “outdo one another in showing honor” look like practically?

What would it look like for our church to be radically impartial?

Where might our church unintentionally show favoritism?

Who is someone in your life you tend to overlook?

What is one practical act of mercy you can show this week?

How can we better reflect the kingdom’s upside-down values (as the 5th Gospel)?