

FAITH + WORKS

JAMES 2:1-13



OPENING

- Read the passage that we discussed on Sunday, James 2:1-13. Ask the group members to paraphrase it in their own words, and identify the main idea.

SERMON REVIEW

- The book of James can be a little overwhelming! It constantly calls us to change.
- But God is looking for progress, and understands when we fall short of perfection.
- We deceive ourselves into thinking that some sins are worse than others. But that isn't the case - whether murder or disrespecting authority, adultery or favoritism.
- In the first verse, James brings to our attention a seemingly "small" sin. And he says, "If you do this, how can you even *claim* to have faith in Jesus?"
- The sin is favoritism: treating a person or group better than another with equal claims.
- It goes way beyond rich and poor. We may favor the physically fit, the educated, the motivated, etc. And we absolutely cannot allow our preferences to become our prejudices.
- The Greek work implies that favoritism is "to judge others at face value," while the Hebrew idiom is "to lift up the face."
- Favoritism is playing God, determining who deserves to be acknowledged, and who does not.
- How can we overcome favoritism?
- *Look to Jesus as an example.* He lifted the face of the prostitute that was weeping over his feet. He lifted the face of the blind man at the gate. He lifted the faces of the children that came to him.
- *Recognize who we are.* Contrary to what we may believe, we're no better nor worse than any other person. We're equally made in the image of God. Equal in our depravity. Equally loved, saved, and forgiven.
- *Recognize who He is.* We need to realize that we aren't on the throne! Jesus Christ is. We were not made to sit on a throne, but to fall down before His.
- Don't even claim to have faith if you're choosing to sit on His throne.
- We must let mercy must triumph over judgment, just as it did in Christ.

DISCUSSION

- Why do you think James discussed favoritism directly after encouraging believers to live out the word?

- How does favoritism contradict Christ-likeness? Why does James present it as such a serious offense?
- Did the insight into the original languages (Greek/Hebrew) help you understand favoritism more fully? How does the image of “lifting another’s face” enrich the discussion?
- What does verse 5 tell us about the Kingdom of God? Does this mean that only the poor can enter the Kingdom? Do the rich stand a chance?
- Why does James call the commandment to love your neighbor the “royal law”?
- How does this passage call its readers to be doers, not just hearers, of the word?
- What are verses 12-13 really saying? What is your emotional response to that?
- In what ways does Jesus exemplify mercy and justice?
- Why is it important to recognize Jesus’ rightful position on the throne? How does it change us?

CHALLENGE

- Brandi challenged us to “make it right!” Have you thought about what that would look like in your own life? If not, consider how you can “make it right,” and do it!
- Identify the ways in which you show favoritism and partiality, then actively replace those prejudices with mercy, kindness, and love.
- Continue reading, writing, and memorizing the book of James.

PLAN AHEAD

- Look at James 2:14-26 to get ready for next week!