

The Problem with Playing Favorites*James 2:1-13*

We all have our favorites, right? Our favorite food or restaurant. Our favorite place to go on vacation. Our favorite time of the day or season of the year. Our favorite sport or team (Go Chiefs!). All of this is simply part of how we experience the world around us. When it comes to the issue of favoritism, however, (i.e. judging other people based on external appearance or circumstances) this is something that is incompatible with who God is and the gospel of grace. It is something that we simply must not tolerate. As we consider this passage, may we be open to letting God address any subtle or overt ways that favoritism has crept into our lives personally or our church corporately.

Opening Question: Have you ever been a victim of favoritism or prejudice? Explain.

Read James 2:1-13

1. How would you put James 2:1 in your own words?
2. Is the issue of favoritism that James is confronting in these verses something that is mostly from the distant past or is it something that is part of our experience today? Explain.
3. What are James' arguments against showing favoritism?
4. How does the Great Commandment (v. 8) address the issue of favoritism?
5. How is the sin of favoritism contrary to the character of God?

6. How is favoritism contrary to the gospel we are called to proclaim?

7. Do you think we see favoritism with the same seriousness that James does? Why or why not?

Sam said:

A potentially eye-opening and humbling exercise would be to ask yourself these questions throughout the coming week:

Who do I **physically show partiality** to?

- In a crowd, am I more comfortable being close to certain types of people than others?
- Do I intentionally avoid some people based solely on their appearance?
- Do all my friends look and sound and act very similar to me?
- Does the way I interact with the people around me look like the way Jesus did? Why or why not?

Who do I **emotionally show partiality** to?

- Are there certain types of needs that I have less sympathy for?
- Am I quick to be cold to those whose circumstances are very unlike my own?
- Why? What is Jesus' example?

Who do I **spiritually show partiality** to?

- Do I assume who wants to be included or who should be included in spiritual communities based on external circumstances?
- Do I know and love any non-believers? Do I love them enough to desire a friendship with them, even if they are uninterested in learning more about Jesus? Why? What is Jesus' example?

8. Do any of these questions surface areas of potential partiality in your life that you need to address? Explain.

9. If you were gut-level honest, what areas of your life do you need to repent of for the sin of favoritism?



Daily Devotion: Spend time this coming week reading and reflecting on James 2:14-26.



Serve the Community: If you have done Rooted you know that this is one of the rhythms that we want to practice individually and as a church. How might continuing in this rhythm help you address issues of favoritism in your own heart?