

Week 4 - James 2:1 - 13

DAILY DOSE OF JAMES



Monday July 5

How do we show favoritism today? (2:1-3)

The first-century church was developing a counter-culture that was rejecting the class divisions of its day. In the church a “rich man” and a “poor man” or slave could (should) associate as equals, and a slave could even serve in a leadership position over a rich man. This type of interpersonal equality in a culture of upper-class dominance was a challenging adjustment. Apparently many in James’ audience were still struggling with the sin of favoritism, or said negatively, discrimination.

Take a moment to consider favoritism or discrimination that you have personally received. Then take another moment to consider favoritism or discrimination that you have personally given someone else.

- Having trouble? – what about skin color, blue collar vs. white collar work, house size, car, clothes, school, employer, athletic prowess etc.?
- What was your impression of the person’s character who showed you favoritism or discrimination?
- Were you even aware of your own inclination toward favoritism or discrimination?
- In order to apply James 2:1-13 in your daily life where do you need to change your behavior, and who might need to hear an apology from you?

Tuesday July 6

What happens when favoritism becomes judgment? (2:4)

It’s interesting to note that James condemns this type of judgment as being motivated by evil thoughts. How often do we assume our judgments of others are “objective” or “biblical” rather than motivated by evil thoughts? Read Matthew 7:1-5. Jesus condemns the act of judgment in the Sermon on the Mount in the same way that James does here. Jesus instructs us to take the plank out of our own eye before we remove the speck from our brother’s eye. The application here is that we should never appoint ourselves the position of judge since we will never be able to completely remove the plank from our own eye.

Take a moment to think about how the world around us is consumed by judgment and motivated by evil thoughts or animosity against those being judged.

- The old saying is “never judge a book by its cover.” Who was the last person you judged solely by external appearance and without any knowledge of their actual person?
- Can you think of a time you have judged someone and then found out later that your initial judgments were unfounded?
- Can you think of a time when you were unfairly judged? What are the chances that the person was accurate or fair in their judgment of you?
- In order to apply James 2:4 in your daily life whom or what do you need to stop judging?

Wednesday July 7

Who are the poor? (2:5-7)

On the surface this is an easy question – “the poor” are measured by a financial barometer, which of course is true. However, the poor are not limited by a socio-economic status. The poor can also refer to those whose values are despised by the affluent of society: serving rather than managing, human relationships instead of a financial bottom line, peace instead of power. Being poor in either of these meanings certainly does not mean automatic admission into heaven, however the poor in this regard are often more aware of their powerlessness and it may be easier to acknowledge their need for salvation. Go back and read Matthew 5:1-12. The Beatitudes are Jesus’ admonishment to us to take on the characteristics of the “poor in spirit.”

Take a minute to think about just how uncommon it is to find someone who embodies this value of poor in spirit.

- Does anyone in your own life come to mind as embodying “poor in spirit?” What are the chances that you come to someone else’s mind when they ponder this question?
- If you don’t know anyone personally, think of historical figures who embody this value: Mother Theresa, Abraham Lincoln, Forrest Gump.
- When was the last time you made a conscious decision to live out these values when it would have been easier to “fight for your rights?”
- There will come a moment today when you will have the opportunity to be poor in spirit. Will you be ready to act accordingly?

Thursday July 8

How does one sin makes me guilty of all? (2:8-11)

In AWANA the children learn James 2:10 - “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.” It’s a nice concise verse and somewhat easy to memorize which results in a tangible reward for the AWANA clubber. But in the context of this passage, especially the examples that follow, James is not about to let anyone off the hook. Just when you are tempted to gloss over this week because favoritism/ discrimination/ judgment are not your vices, here comes James to tell us that favoritism is bad, but it is no different than murder or adultery because sin is sin, period. Before the readers and us have the opportunity to pass judgment on those who judge (a little literary irony here), we are quickly called to account for our own sins.

So maybe the past couple of days the application has been easy for you. You may be blessed with the disposition to be poor in spirit or the Holy Spirit may have done a tremendous work in your heart to help you overcome that sin, but don’t rest on that accomplishment for the remainder of the law exists to convict of our sins beyond favoritism/discrimination/ judgment.

- So if favoritism or judgments aren’t your sins of struggle – what are?
- James 2:10 reminds us that just one sin is sufficient to convict us as a sinner. Do you ever feel discouraged by the repetitive sin in your life? If so, rest assured that the law was given to show us that no matter how good we think we are, we will always fall short of God’s standard and that is why the grace that brings salvation is so amazing.
- Conversely, do you ever think that since you continuously struggle in an area that it’s not even worth it to mature past your struggles since Christ is willing to forgive you anyway? Continuing in sin ought never be the mindset of the believer – take a look at Paul’s response to this type of thinking in Romans 6:1-7.

Friday July 9

Do you want to be judged by the same standard that you use to judge others? (2:12-13)

As Christians we are saved by God's free gift of grace through faith, not by keeping the law. But as Christians, we are also required to obey Christ. The Apostle Paul taught in 2 Corinthians 5:10 that "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" to be judged for our conduct. God's grace does not cancel our duty to obey him; it gives our obedience a new basis. The law is no longer an external set of rules, but it is a "law that gives freedom," one we joyfully and willingly carry out, because we love God and because we have the power of his Holy Spirit to carry it out.

Only God in his mercy can forgive sins. We can't earn forgiveness by forgiving others. But when we withhold forgiveness from others after having received it ourselves, we show that we don't understand or appreciate God's mercy toward us.

Take a minute or two to ponder again the incredible forgiveness that you have been given through Christ!

- When considering this forgiveness, are you compelled to keep on sinning or to turn from daily sins because of the forgiveness that is available through Christ?
- Now consider your first response to those who have wronged you – perhaps a family member, co-worker, classmate, or friend. Are you willing to forgive those who seek your forgiveness or do you withhold forgiveness and give judgment instead?
- Is there someone in your life who has only received judgment from you? Perhaps they even have a pattern of bad or immoral choices. In light of James 2:13 would you be willing to give them mercy because God has already given mercy to you?