

“How to Treat People Right”

Text: James 2:1-13

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Hollywood Pres & The Lord’s Lighthouse illustration

I want us to look at what James has to say about “How to Treat People Right”. Your biggest problems and mine are people problems – getting along with other people. James talks about “How do you get along with people?” He gives us the principle, the problem, and the application in this passage.

Read James 2:1-13 & Pray!

I. THE PRINCIPLE: DON’T SHOW FAVORITISM! (vs. 1)

A. James starts this off with vs. 1, *“My brothers and sisters, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don’t show favoritism.”* James is talking about prejudice, partiality, favoritism in this passage.

1. The Greek word for favoritism means to receive somebody at face value, on the basis of how they look, superficial judgment.
2. James says, “Don’t do that. Don’t accept people just on outward appearance.”
3. It’s a common social disease.

Let’s look at some common areas of discrimination.

- Appearance – We discriminate because of appearance. Beauty is everything in this world. If you’re a cute kid, you’ve got it made. If you’re plain, tough luck! We judge people on their appearance. Hitchhiker example. How you’re dressed definitely influences how you relate to people.
- Ancestry – We judge people according to their race, their nationality, their ethnic background. I heard of a black man who went to a church in the south and was trying to get in. It was full of bigots and they wouldn’t let him in. He went to the pastor and told him. The pastor said, “You just need to pray about it.” About three weeks later the pastor saw him and asked, “Did you talk to the Lord about it?” The man said, “Yes, and God said, ‘Don’t worry, I’ve been trying to get in that church 20 years and I still can’t get in.’”
- Age – You’re too young or too old.
- Achievement – Our society gushes over winner and forgets the losers. One minute you’re a hero and the next you’re a zero. Success and status are key words. James says, “Don’t ask for special treatment.”

- Affluence – The most common distinction. We judge people by their wealth – whether they’re rich or poor – their economic status. What attitude do you have toward people who make more money than you do or less money than you do?

Affluence is the one area James picks out of all the areas we can discriminate in. He talks about economic distinction.

- Vs. 2, *“Suppose a man comes to your meeting wearing gold rings and fine clothes and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say ‘Here’s a good seat for you’ but say to the poor man ‘You stand over there’ or ‘Sit on the floor at my feet’, have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?”*
- James doesn’t criticize the person for being wealthy; he criticizes the members for being partial to him. The poor man is treated carelessly and the church is criticized for that.

II. THREE PROBLEMS WITH FAVORITISM

1. FAVORITISM IS UNCHRISTIAN

A. Vs. 1, *“My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don’t show favoritism.”*

1. If you want to be like Jesus you can’t play favorites. Faith and favoritism are incompatible – we’re family. Jesus treated everyone with dignity. The Bible says God loves everybody.
2. Romans 2:11, *“For God does not show favoritism.”*
3. If there is one place in the world where there shouldn’t be any kind of discrimination, where everyone is welcome, it ought to be the church.

2. FAVORITISM IS UNREASONABLE.

A. In vs. 5-7, he says it’s **illogical**, favoritism doesn’t make sense. In the first place, *“Has not God chosen the poor to be rich in faith and inherit the kingdom?”*

1. James is not saying that it’s good to be poor and bad to be rich. He’s not saying that only the poor will be saved. What James is saying is that God doesn’t expect people to be wealthy in order to be saved. Wealth or poor doesn’t make any difference to God. Our salvation is not based upon our savings account.

B. Vs. 6, *“Is it not the rich exploiting you?”* James is saying that the rich could care less about you. Why worry about catering to them. They certainly are not worried about impressing you.

1. Do you know why we like to kiss up to people who are affluent or celebrities? Because we hope they’ll do something for us. You don’t have to know the key people

if you know God who holds the keys. God has a way of opening and closing doors regardless of your network or your contacts.

- Entertainment industry

3. FAVORITISM IS UNLOVING.

A. Vs. 8, *“If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ You’re doing right.”*

1. Favoritism is unloving. That’s why you shouldn’t do it. *“Love your neighbor as yourself.”* Why is it called the royal law? Because if we obeyed that one we wouldn’t need all of the rest.
2. The Bible says that how we relate to other people shows how much we really love God. 1 John 4:20, *“If a man says he loves God and hates his brother he’s lying. How can you love God whom you haven’t seen if don’t love your brother whom you have seen?”* How I relate to you proves how much I love God. Favoritism is unloving. God calls us to love unconditionally.

B. How serious is favoritism?

1. vs. 9, *“If you show favoritism you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. For whoever keeps the whole law yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.”*
 - How many laws do you have to break to be a lawbreaker? One. How many crimes do you have to commit to become a criminal? One.
 - James is saying that people think favoritism is such a small sin. But, he says, if you break God’s rule, you break God’s rule. Be careful it’s serious business.

That’s the problem. It’s unchristian, it’s unreasonable, it’s unloving to show favoritism – to be a snob. How do you treat people?

III. THE PRESCRIPTION: HOW TO TREAT PEOPLE RIGHT

- A. How do you have a loving church? There was an article in the paper that said, “More people are drawn to loving, caring facilities.” It’s talking about how the churches that love grow.
- B. “In a survey of 8,600 people from congregations in 39 different denominations they measured their ‘love quotient’. The institute reports growing churches are more loving to each other and to visitors than declining churches. Loving churches attract more people regardless of their theology, denomination or location.”

“There is increasing evidence that nothing influences a church’s growth or decline as significantly as how much love and acceptance people experience when they attend.”

C. It’s love that reaches people. You don’t argue people into the kingdom of heaven. You love them into the kingdom of heaven. How do you do that? Three steps:

1. Accept everybody.

- Romans 15:7, *“Accept one another just as Christ accepted you.”*
- Do you know why people have a hard time accepting others? They confuse acceptance with approval. You can accept somebody without approving of their lifestyle. They may be doing something totally contrary to the word of God, but you can accept them as a person without approving of the sin they are involved in.
- PBPC – church of the middle way.

2. Appreciate everybody.

- Philippians 2:3-4, *“Do nothing from selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourself. Each of you should look not only to your own interest but also the interest of others.”*
- Appreciate everybody. Find something you can like, not just accept. Tell them so. We are a diverse church family and each of us is unique. Appreciate it.
- China

3. Affirm everybody.

- 1 Thessalonians 5:11, *“Encourage one another and build each other up.”*
- Give everybody a lift whenever you can. When somebody stumbles, don’t criticize, sympathize. Be an encourager, not a complainer, not a condemner, not a critical person, not a judger. You can encourage people just by smiling at them.
- Ministry of Greeters at Plant conference.

What is God saying in James?

- The church that accepts, appreciates and affirms people is the church that God blesses. Absolutely nothing can stop the church that’s filled with love. Nothing. It doesn’t happen accidentally. It requires an all out effort by each of us. Everybody needs to contribute to the positive atmosphere of the church.
- A question to ask each of us: Would people come back to this church just because of you? Are you a greeter, a smiler?
- It was said of the New Testament church, *“See how they love one another.” “By this shall all people will know that you are my disciples if you love each other.”*
- Nothing can stop a loving church.

Pray!

Lord, thank You for Your word. Thank You that it pierces our heart. I pray that each of us would commit ourselves to accepting people, appreciating them, and affirming them because you have accepted us. Help us to be loving. More than anything else help us to have a reputation that we love You and that we love other people.