**1. Motivate**

For what reasons might a person think he or she is more important than another person?

* nationality
* family background
* where you live

An introductory video is available. View it at <https://watch.liberty.edu/media/t/1_1o4zakug> If you have no wi-fi where you teach, best to download to your computer from <https://tinyurl.com/rp36cadb>

* how much money you have
* what you’ve accomplished
* level of education
* your job position
* your looks
* what position, what sport you play

**2. Transition**

The Point

* We sometimes treat people differently, based on their position
* Today James will tell us not to play favorites

**3. Bible Study**

3.1 Outward Appearances

Listen for criteria of favoritism.

James 2:1 – 4 (NIV) My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. 2 Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. 3 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 there” or “Sit on the floor by my feet,” 4 have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

What examples of prejudice and partiality does James describe?

* people with fancy jewelry
* people with fine clothes
* contrast with an impoverished person
* person with shabby clothes
* you can almost infer that they might be a bit stinky also

What rationale might an usher or deacon give for such treatment to someone today?

* fancy family might join the church … prestige involved,
* they are also potential generous givers
* the scruffy person is just looking for a handout, here today, gone tomorrow
* nice folks will be scared away if we have a bunch of smelly homeless people crowding in here

What other qualifications might cause special treatment (either positive or negative)?

* race or color of skin
* good looks (or ugly), very tall, very short (a dwarf or “little person”)
* denomination
* what part of town they come from
* are they famous in sports, music, business, etc.
* might the person be infamous – a politician we disagree with, a former convict, etc.

Why is faith in Christ and an attitude of favoritism toward others incompatible?

* Jesus loves people no matter who they are or what they are like
* Jesus died for each person – rich or poor, male or female, famous or infamous or “nobodies”
* we cannot pick and choose who we welcome into God’s family
* the only criteria for church membership should be their faith in Christ as Savior and Lord

What could be some consequences of showing favoritism in the church?

* end up with divisions, cliques, factions
* people are offended and don’t come back
* we fail to show the love of Christ to those not in our “favored group”
* we end up being no different than unbelievers in how we treat people

How does James characterize those who engage in these attitudes or actions?

* you are acting as judges
* you act with evil thoughts

How is showing favoritism or preference to one person or group an act of “prejudging?”

* we establish our opinion about them based on the group we put them in
* we make the assumption that all people in that group act in a certain way, this is a person of that group, they will be that way
* we stereotype

⇒ Surely you have known people of some “group” that did *not* have the characteristics you assume about that group – “He’s a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, but I can tell he really knows Jesus as Savior.”

⇒ You only discover that when you *get to know* the person … God wants you NOT to show favoritism, NOT to have an attitude of prejudice

3.2 Don’t Discount Those God Accepts

Listen for God’s perspective on the poor.

James 2:5 – 7 (NIV) Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? 6 But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? 7 Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong?

What does James say about what God has promised the poor of this world?

* He has chosen the poor of the world to be rich in faith
* they are heirs of the kingdom
* He has promised His kingdom to those who love Him

Why do you think God has a special concern for poor people?

* they will be more prone to trust God
* rich people trust in their own skills, their own influence
* poor people know that only God looks after them

At the same time what did rich people have a history of doing to people in the early church (who were not often well to do)?

* oppress believers
* bring civil and criminal actions against religious people
* they blaspheme the name of Jesus that we revere

Why does favoritism within a group (family, church, etc.) lead to disasters in relationships?

* the *slighted person* feels less worthy
* over time this becomes a deep-seated hurt, cause deep emotional scars
* turned off in their attitudes towards faith in Christ
* the *favored person* comes to believe that he/she can act as they please and get away with it
* they develop a warped sense of right and wrong

What life events *condition* you to show favoritism?

* how you see parents, peers act
* you learn to toady up to people who can do good things for you
* it is a form of behaviorism … you reward those who can (and do) treat you nice and ignore or punish those who refuse (or are unable) to do you good

What steps can we take to overcome favoritism?

* confess, repent
* pray and ask God to change your heart, your attitudes
* take steps to become involved in the lives of people that cannot reward you in turn for being nice to them
* pray for your enemies …

3.3

Listen for the “royal law”.

James 2:8 – 13 (NIV) If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right. 9 But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. 10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. 11 For he who said, “You shall not commit adultery,” also said, “You shall not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker. 12 Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, 13 because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

The “Royal Law” is to love your neighbor as yourself.

* Jesus refers to it as the “second greatest commandment”
* It is the primary starting point for all commandments regarding interpersonal relationships

In what practical ways can we show genuine love to people of different races, cultures, and economic standing?

* welcome them into your church, your Bible study group, your social gatherings/parties
* learn about their cultures, ask them to explain
* look for ways to minister to them
* ask them for their opinions
* if they don’t have a Bible, give them one
* if they are foreigners of another culture, include them in your cultural/religious celebrations
  + - Christmas or Easter musical presentations
    - church sports teams
    - pot-luck dinners

How does mercy triumph over judgment (or judgmentalism)?

* God has mercy on us
* we deserve judgment, death, eternal separation from God because of our sinfulness
* God withholds that judgment that we deserve

Mercy triumphs!

* we withhold a judgmental attitude about someone

Consider this “law that gives freedom” that James is talking about…

* It is not law that condemns
* It is God’s law of grace and mercy that he provides
* We are set free from a law that we cannot measure up to
* The law that gives freedom enables us to obey Jesus willingly
* We do the right thing … NOT because were punished if we don’t  
   RATHER because God places the desire in our heart

Use the last page as a handout so your learners can take home the application points of this week’s lesson.

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Make contact.

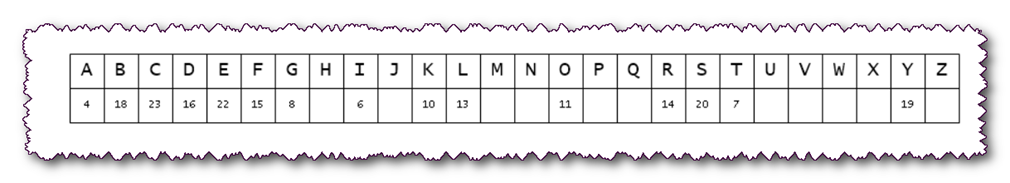
* In your group and congregational setting, greet those you don’t know.
* Smile. Make eye contact. Ask their names.
* Practice the five-minute rule. Five minutes before and after a church gathering, seek out people you do not know very well and spend a few minutes chatting with them.

Invite someone.

* You likely have friends and acquaintances who outwardly may not “fit in” with your group or church.
* Don’t assume they won’t fit in. Invite them to come with you.
* Show them the love of Christ.

Help end poverty for someone.

* Find a way to help someone in need.
* While you cannot end all poverty, you can help someone in need.

A sheet of music

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This is really big! Our operatives in Gerpriregynor came upon these two parts of a communication in a bottle on the sand. Use the numbers in the key above to place the proper letter in the main message. Our decoders are busy at jr. high football practice. Please help us out. Pass the completed message along to your class social committee. Get technical help at <https://tinyurl.com/rp36cadb> Other intriguing activities can also be found there.

Cryptogram Puzzle

A picture containing text

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