



+ **YOU**

Fall 2024

Navigating Family Conflict

Sermon Title Possibilities: No Favorites at Church

To be used with Session 3: Isaac and Rebekah: Family Favorites

Scripture: James 2:1-10

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the Bible study “Isaac and Rebekah: Family Favorites,” this sermon builds upon today’s Bible study by expounding upon the command given to the church not to show favoritism towards others while highlighting the actions of God towards favoritism as well as how a church should behave.

Introduction: Let’s be honest, we all have our favorite sports team, which means we also have our least favorite sports team. For those in the congregation today that do not follow sports, then you have your favorite ice cream flavor. Simply thinking about that particular flavor makes you wonder how long this sermon last. While it is OK to cheer for a specific team or buy a certain flavor of ice cream, we are not to show favorites within the church family. Today’s message will clearly articulate a command to not show favoritism towards anyone as well as a biblical response to this important topic.

1. Our actions towards favoritism

- a. **We are commanded not to show favoritism (Jas. 2:1).** As a church family and as individual followers of Jesus, we should strive to be faithful to the commands in Scripture. We strive towards this because we know that God is good, and His commands are there to protect us. Verse one could not be any clearer in that it is a command given in the present tense. This means that we need not delay in faithfully living out this command. If we study the original language of this text, we would learn that favoritism was taking place. Therefore, the command was to stop doing something that was actively taking place.

As we continue in this verse, we learn that God not only calls us to set aside favoritism, but He also wants us to hold on to our faith in Christ. Favoritism can cause divisions. We learned this in our group study this morning in Isaac and Rebekah. We probably know examples of where favoritism has caused divisions within church families too. If, however, we set aside favoritism while holding onto our faith, Jesus becomes the focus and not us. This should be our goal.

- b. **We can easily make distinctions (Jas. 2:2-4).** It is important to understand that the book of James was written to believers (1:2). We are called not to show favoritism and we see

Lifeway

that this can occur based on external matters. If we are being honest, we can assume that someone has wealth based on what they are wearing. The truth is, we do not know where they purchased the clothes or if they are still paying for the clothes. It is also easy for us to show favoritism based on popularity. If someone famous within the community comes to church, we can be apt to show them special attention. Instead of looking at external matters, what can it look like for us to focus on the heart and see people in the same way that God sees people?

2. God's actions towards favoritism

- a. He chose the poor (Jas. 2:5).** If we discover someone poor in possessions, but rich in faith, we will discover someone of great wealth. Jim Elliot, a missionary who was killed for his faith in 1956 said, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." Elliot was not a man of great means, but he was a man of great faith. While statements like this may not make sense to those of this world, they make sense to those who are striving after great faith. It is OK to be poor in the things of this world if we strive for great faith.
- b. He makes us heirs (Jas. 2:5).** In order for someone to be an heir, someone else has to die and leave their wealth to another. Today's culture tells us to get as much as we can in the moment. When we have everything, then we will be happy. The Father, however, offers us to be heirs of His kingdom. Jesus has already died for the sins of the world, but we have not inherited His kingdom yet. Therefore, the question becomes will we walk in the ways of the world or trust in the goodness of God and the promise of His kingdom?

3. Our calling as a church family

- a. We are to fulfill the royal law (Jas. 2:8).** If we are not to show favoritism, the question can become then what are we to do? The passage answers this in the simplest of forms; we are to love our neighbors as ourselves. How would we want someone to treat us if we did not dress appropriately or know what to do during a church service? We would want them to love us and be patient as we learn what is right and wrong.
- b. We are to repent of known sin (Jas. 2:9-10).** If I know that I am doing something wrong and that it is hurting me and others, then wisdom would say that I need to stop that action. If we know that we are operating with favoritism in mind or heart, as a church or as individuals, then we need to repent and stop showing favoritism. The word repent means to turn around or go a different direction. Once again, it is not complicated. It does call for obedience.

Conclusion: A simple way to define wisdom is to say that it is applied knowledge. If someone takes knowledge and applies it to his or her life, then that person can be considered wise. We have learned from Scripture that favoritism is bad. We have also learned that fulfilling the royal law of loving one's neighbor as we love ourselves is good. If we want to be wise, then we will take the truth we have learned today and apply it to our lives while trusting God for the result.

Lifeway

Tod Tanner has pastored churches in Texas and Tennessee. He and his family reside in Wartrace, Tennessee, and he serves as the Executive Vice President of the Tennessee Baptist Foundation.