“How To Treat People Right”, Developing a Faith That Works, Part 6 of 15 – February 10, 2013, SBC

 James 2:1-13

Today, we want 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. (*"To dwell above, with those you love, . . . that, will be a glory. But, to dwell below, with those we know, . . . that's, another story.")*

James talks about, "How do you get along, with people?” He gives us, the principle, . . . the problem, . . . and, the application, in this passage, of scripture, . . . from, the most practical book, in the New Testament.

James 2:1 – *"My brothers, as believers, in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism."* Whenever, James starts a sentence, "my brothers", . . . he's getting ready, . . . to nail you. Count on it! He's talking about, prejudice, partiality, favoritism. The New English Bible, calls it "snobbery". Don't be, . . a snob. A snob, is somebody, whose nose turns up, . . . when their eyes look down, . . . somebody, who always thinks, they're better, . . . than, everybody else. (**I. The Principle: Don’t show favoritism**)

The Greek word, is a compound word, that means "to receive", and "to face". It literally means, "to receive, . . . somebody's face" -- to receive somebody, at face value, . . . on the basis, of how they look, . . superficial judgment. James says, “Don't, do that. Don't accept people, just, on superficial judgments.” The Good News Bible says, *"Never treat anybody, in a different way, . . . according, to their outward appearance."* It's a common, . . . social disease.

\*\*\* This morning, in order to deal with it, we need to look at, . . . some **common areas, . . . of discrimination:**

**Appearance:** We discriminate, often, . . . because, of appearance. Beauty is everything, in our world. If you're a cute kid, . . . you've got it made. If you're plain, . . . tough luck! We judge people, on their appearance -- how they look, . . . how they dress.

I heard about, an experiment, . . with some hitch-hikers. They dressed them up, in different ways. The dressier, the hitchhiker was, . . . the more likely, he was, . . . to be picked up. How you're dressed, . . . definitely, influences, . . . how you relate, to people.

\* How do you, judge people? Do you judge them, immediately, . . . by how, they look? If somebody, has long hair, and a beard, do you walk up to them, and say, "Jesus saves, **and shaves**." Do you judge them, . . . immediately?

Even Christians, get caught up, in this, dress for power, dress for success, dress to be cool. We're so concerned, with what's in, and what's out, . . . what's hot, and what's not. Some of us, . . . have the Gilda Radner philosophy of dress: "I make my fashion choices, based on what, doesn't itch." That's why, a lot of us, don’t wear a coat and tie, unless, we just have to -- it's just, more comfortable, not to. We dress, . . to be comfortable.

**Ancestry** -- We judge people, according to, . . . their race, their nationality, their ethnic, background.

There’s a story, . . . about a black man, who went to a church, 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, a week 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, for 20 years, and I still, can't get in.'"

**Age** -- You're too young, . . . or, too old. (Now, I know, . . . we don’t have this problem, . . . here.)

**Achievement** -- Our society, gushes over winners, . . . and, forgets, the losers. One minute, you're a hero, and the next minute, . . . you're a zero. (Hero, or a goat!) Success, and status, are keywords. I'm bothered, by the increasing, celebrity consciousness, . . . even in Christianity. We have, our own superstars -- mostly on TV. James says, “Don't, do that. 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? What attitude, do you have toward people, . . . who make less money, than you do?

This is the area, that James picks, . . . out of all the areas, we can discriminate in. He talks about, . . . economic distinction. James 2:2 – “*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?” (One g*uy, calls this, the “case of the, . . . nearsighted usher.”)

**Two guys, are strangers**. They arrive, at the church, at the same time. We know they are strangers, because, they didn't know, where to sit. The first guy walks in, . . . and, he is dripping with wealth. Everybody knows, he doesn’t fit, because in the New Testament times, all of the Christians, were poor. Most of them, were slaves. It says, he has gold rings -- literally, in the Greek, . . . "he is gold fingered".

In New Testament times, you could rent rings, . . . to prove, how wealthy, you were. They would cut jewels, and, sew them, onto their clothes. Real, gaudy. James doesn't criticize the guy, . . . for being wealthy;

 he criticizes, the members, . . . for being partial, to him. He doesn't say, there's anything wrong, with having the wealth. It says, he has "fine clothes". In the Greek, it literally meant, the Roman toga, . . . the politicians would wear, when they were running, for reelection. This is, . . . Rich Goldfinger.

And, then comes, the guy, . . . who is poverty stricken. This is, Bum Poorboy. He is destitute, and shabby. He has holes, in his Levis, and doesn't have his shoes on. He doesn't have, any deodorant, so he has B.O., and, his hair is unkempt. He looks bad. The usher, has to make, a decision. Where, will he, seat him?

The usher, takes the rich guy, to the front row, . . . and, seats him. *"Take this, nice place. We want everybody, to know, you're here. We want to take care, of every one, of your needs."* Then he says, to the bum, . . . *"You can stand over there, in a corner, or you can sit, on the floor."* Literally, in the Greek, it's "under, my footstool." It's the ultimate, . . . putdown. He treats him, . . . carelessly.

**II. The Problem**

**\*\*\* James says, there are three problems, with favoritism:**

**1. Favoritism is unchristian**. If you want to be like Jesus, . . . you can't, play favorites. V. 1 – *"My brothers, as believers, in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism."* Faith, and favoritism, . . . are incompatible -- we're a family. This word "favoritism", is used only four times, in the Bible. Every other time, . . . it's referring to God, . . . and, it says, “God does not, play favorites.”

Romans 2:11 – *"God does not, show favoritism"* Jesus treated everybody, . . . with dignity. Peter, had to learn this lesson, . . . before, he went to Cornelius. God loves, everybody. If there is one place, in the world, where there shouldn't be, . . . any kind of discrimination, . . . it ought to be, . . . the church. There is discrimination, everywhere else, in the world. But, there ought to be one place, . . . no matter, who you are, . . . or, what your background is, . . . that, you're welcome.

**2. Favoritism is unreasonable**. In James 2:5-7, he says it's illogical, . . . it doesn't, make sense. “In the first place,” he says, . . . “God has chosen, the poor.” *"Has not God, chosen the poor, to be rich, in faith, and inherit, the kingdom?"* He's 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.

Everybody in this room, is rich, . . . compared to, the majority, of the world. It doesn't make, any difference, to God. Aren't you glad, God doesn't check your wallet, . . . before, He saves you? Aren't you glad, your salvation, isn't based on, your savings account? Wealth in itself, does not deserve, any special treatment. Maybe the person, . . . got it, dishonestly. Your value, is not based on, . . your valuables. Don't confuse, your net worth, . . . with your self-worth. Big difference.

A 1974 Buick, with a rusty hood, will get you there and back, just like a new SUV. You drive cars, . . . for transportation, not for status. A $4 watch, tells the same time, as does, a Rolex. We don't wear a watch, to impress people, . . . we wear a watch, that tells time. We could afford, a lot of neat things, but, that's not, our priority. My net worth, and my self-worth, have nothing, to do with each other. We don't get our strokes, by impressing others, . . by wearing certain kinds of clothes, or driving a certain kind of car. It doesn't matter, where you buy your clothes, or what you drive, . . . you're welcome here, at our church.

“It's illogical,” . . . James says. Don't confuse, where you get, . . your self-worth, from. God chooses, the poor. He doesn't expect them, . . . to be wealthy, . . . in order, to be saved. “On top of this,” he says, “the rich, could care less, about you”. Why worry about, catering to them. *"Is it not the rich, exploiting you."*

In New Testament times, it was the Roman nobility, . . who were feeding the Christians, to the lions. It was the upper crust, (a bunch of crumbs, . . . held together, by their own dough), . . that were persecuting, the Christians, judging the Christians, insulting the Christians, throwing the Christians to the lions. James says, "Why are you worried, . . . about, impressing them. They're certainly, not worried about, . . . impressing you. They're doing, . . . the opposite."

Do you know why, . . . we like to kiss up to people, who are affluent? Why we like to cater to, and get close to people, who are celebrities? Because, we hope, they'll do something, . . for us. You don't have to know, the key men, . . . if you know the Man, who holds the keys. He has a way, of opening and closing doors, regardless of your network, or your contacts. James says, “Don't show, favoritism. It's unchristian, . . . and, unreasonable. It's illogical, . . . it doesn't, make sense.”

Then, he gives his primary reason, . . . in v. 8.

**3. Favoritism, . . . is unloving**. That's why, you shouldn't, do it. *"If you really, keep the royal law, found in Scripture, `Love your neighbor, as yourself', you're doing right."* Why is it called, . . . the royal law? Because, if we obeyed, . . . just, that one, . . . we wouldn't need, all of the rest.

*"Love your neighbor, as yourself."* Galatians 5:14 – *"All the law, is summed up, in one sentence, `Love your neighbor, as yourself'."* If I play favorites, . . . I'm being, unloving.

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 you don't love your brother, whom you have seen?"* How I relate to you, . . . proves how much, I love God. Favoritism, . . . is unloving.

Few of us, . . . know how, . . . to love unconditionally. Most of us, . . . are like, this poem: “Paul's girl is rich and haughty, My girl is poor as clay, Paul's girl is young and pretty, Mine looks like a bale of hay. Paul's girl is smart and clever, My girl is dumb but good, Would I trade my girl for Paul's? You bet your life, . . . I would!” We don't know how, . . . to love, . . . unconditionally. All we know, is how, . . . to show favoritism.

James 2:9 – *"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. How many links, do you have to break, to break a chain? One. Have you ever been, in a china shop, that has the sign, "You break it, . . . you've bought it." They don't care, . . . if it's broken, in one place, or into a thousand pieces, . . . if you broke it, you bought it.

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.

James 2:11 – *"For who said, `Do not commit adultery', also said `Do not murder'. If you don't commit adultery, but, you do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker."* What is, he saying? He's illustrating his point, . . . about, being unloving.

If someone comes to your house, . . . and, they say, "I really respect you, . . . a whole lot. The way, I'm going to prove, how much I love you is, I'm not going to commit adultery, with your wife. However, if you tick me off, I reserve the right, to murder you." Are you going to thank them, for that? Will you appreciate, their love? How absurd! It's ridiculous! "I don't drink, smoke, cuss, chew or run around with girls, that do. What does God care, if I'm partial, to certain, kinds of people?" God says, it's all, the same! It's all, important.

James 2:12 – *"Speak, and act, as those, who are going to be judged, by the law, that gives freedom, because, judgment without mercy, will not be shown to anyone, who has been merciful. Mercy triumphs, over judgment."* Love treats people, . . . with mercy. Love gives people, what they need, . . . not, what they deserve. James is probably thinking, about his half-brother Jesus, . . . who said, in the Sermon on the Mount, *"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."*

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**

How do you have, . . . a loving church? There was an article, in the paper, that said, "A loving connection, . . in church growth. More people, are drawn, to caring facilities, scholarly studies says." It's talking about, how the churches, . . . that love, . . . grow.

"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." They surveyed them, . . and, gave them a quotient, of 1 to 100. Of the 12 denominations, scoring below 65, all of them except 2, . . . were declining. Of the 13 denominations, scoring above 65, all of them, . . . were growing, in the past 10 years.

Most churches, that are growing today, have learned, . . . how to love. A church that loves people, is a church that grows. Typically, in analyzing reasons, for growth, in a church, the focus in the past, has been, on such factors, . . . as pastoral leadership, attractiveness of facilities, location, liberal or conservative theology, evangelical fervor. But, there is increasing evidence, that none of these, influences a church's growth, or decline, as significantly, as how much love, and acceptance, people experience, when they attend." The number one denomination -- the most loving denomination, . . . was the Southern Baptist Convention, "the largest Protestant denomination scoring 74, the highest love quotient, with a growth rate of 16% a year."

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.**

Have you ever, been in a church, of spiritual snobs? We got it, . . . and, you don't. Do you know, why people, have a hard time, accepting others? They confuse, . . . acceptance, . . . with approval. There's a big difference, between acceptance, . . . and, 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’re involved in.

Romans 15:7 – *"Accept one another, just as Christ, accepted you."* That's a start -- acceptance. At our church, and, at every church, we should try, . . . to cultivate, an attitude, of acceptance. The church, is a hospital, for sinners, . . . not a hotel, for saints, where they dress up, for dress parade. Some people, go to church, to close their eyes, others go, to eye their clothes. If you're perfect, . . . you don't belong here. This is a church, . . . where people are growing. This is a church, for people, . . . who don't, have it all together.

We have every kind of background, you can imagine, in this church. It doesn't matter, . . where you've been. It matters, where you are now, and if you know Jesus. If you want to grow up, more and more, like Him, every day, . . you're welcome here. In the essentials, we have unity. Jesus, is Lord. The Bible, is God's Word. In the non-essentials, we have liberty, and in all things, we have charity. Acceptance, is the key.

Some people, are not going to like Heaven, . . . because, it's not, exclusive enough. If we can't learn, . . . to get along together, here on the earth, what makes us think, we'll get along together, in heaven? Accept, everybody.

**2. Appreciate everybody.**

This goes, a little bit further, than acceptance. Philippians 2:35 – *"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.

With some people, this may require, . . . a little creativity. You may have to, . . . look a little while. Maybe, you just need, to value them, for their uniqueness. Like Baskin-Robbins -- 31 Flavors. What if we were all, vanilla? What a boring church, . . we would be! God has 31 flavors, of personality, and more than that.

**3. Affirm everybody.**

Give everybody a lift, whenever you can. I Thessalonians 5:11 – *"Encourage one another, and build each other up."* When people stumble, . . . don't criticize, . . . sympathize. Be an encourager, . . . not a complainer, not a condemner, a critical person, not a judger. You can encourage people, . . . just, by smiling at them.

The ministry of greeters, in a church, . . . is crucial, and vital. When new visitors, come to our church, we only have one chance, . . . to make a first impression. We need to show them, that we are a people, who love the Lord, . . . and, who show it, on our faces. Give a welcome handshake, . . . a smile.

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 atmosphere, of the church. Everybody here contributes, to the atmosphere of the church, . . . either, negatively, . . . or, positively.

Would people come back, to this church, . . . just, because of you? Are you a greeter, . . . a smiler? There's two kinds of pillars, in the church: one that holds the church up, . . . and, caterpillars, that walk in, and out.

Together, we need to make a commitment, that this church, will receive people, . . . unconditionally. We don't expect people, to act like believers, . . . until, they are believers. Love draws, outside people, in. God wants our church, . . . to have a reputation, . . . for love.

God is just waiting, for a church, . . . that will love people, unconditionally. He can use that kind of church, to spark a spiritual awakening, in this community, . . . that, all the forces of hell, . . . couldn't stop. It would change, the climate, . . . of this community, for Christ. Nothing, can stop, . . . a loving church.

A visitor, ought to be, as welcome, . . . as a charter member, of this church. It really doesn't matter, . . what you wear, or your economic status, or whether you've been once married, never married, or married 4 times. It doesn't matter. You are welcome, here. It doesn't matter, what color, or race, you are. Acceptance.

It was said, of the New Testament church, *"See, how they love, one another." "By this, shall all men know, that you are my disciples, that you love, each other."* You accept, affirm, appreciate. Jesus Christ, . . breaks down all barriers, and the ground is level, . . . at the foot of the cross. We are all equal, . . in God's eyes. God wants you, and me, and everyone one in the world, . . . to know Him.

Galatians 3:26-27 – *"For now, we are all children of God, through faith, in Jesus Christ. We are no longer, Jew or Greek, or slave or freemen, or even, men or women."* We're all, . . . the same. There is no distinction, . . . in the body of Christ. We are, Christians. We are One, . . . in Christ Jesus."

“How To Treat People Right”, Developing a Faith That Works - Part 6 of 15

James 2:1-13

*"If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, `Love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing right,"*(vs. 8)

I. THE PRINCIPLE: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 1)

*"My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism."* DEF: "Favoritism"

Areas of Discrimination

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Illustration (vs. 2-4)

II. THE PROBLEM

1. FAVORITISM IS \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 1)

Romans 2:11 – “*For God does not show favoritism.”*

 Acts 10:34, Eph. 6:9, Col. 3:25

1 Samuel 16:7 – “*Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”*

2. FAVORITISM IS \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 5-7)

*"... Has not God chosen those who are poor ... to be rich in faith ... and inherit the kingdom ...?"*

*"Is it not the rich who are exploiting you ...?"*

3. FAVORITISM IS \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 8-9)

1 John 4:20 – “*Anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.”*

The seriousness of it (vs. 10-13)

III. THE PRESCRIPTION: HOW TO TREAT PEOPLE RIGHT

 (And How To Have A Loving Church)

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Romans 15:7 – “*Accept one another just as Christ accepted you.”*

2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Philippians 2:3-5 – “*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also the interests of others.”*

3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1 Thessalonians 5:11 – “*Encourage one another and build each other up.”*