

Sermon or Lesson: James 2:4 (NIV based)
[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: The Sins Of Favoritism-Discriminating-Judging

INTRO: Do believers in ministries and churches show favoritism, discriminate, and judge others? What do you think? And what exactly is at the heart of showing favoritism in ministries or churches?

In our passage, let's study two comprising elements of showing favoritism to discover what God says is occurring within favoritism: discriminating, and judging others.

READ: James 2:4, with vv.1-3 for context

[Lesson Question: What two problems with showing favoritism are cited in verse 4 for the example in verses 2-3, and what does each mean?]

As cited in verse 4 for the example in verses 2-3, there are two problems with showing favoritism: "discriminating among yourselves", and "become judges with evil thoughts".

SECTION POINT: "Discriminating among yourselves" involves exclusively separating into classes of distinction within the body of Christ.

"discriminate" = Strong's #1252 "discriminate; to separate thoroughly, i.e. (literally and reflexively) to withdraw from, or (by implication) oppose; figuratively, to discriminate (by implication, decide), or (reflexively) hesitate"

"discriminate" = (AHD) "to perceive, recognize, and make a clear distinction of; to distinguish by noting differences; "differentiate" (to separate and constitute the distinction between); to make decisions, judge; to make distinctions on the basis of class or category without regard to individual merit; to show preference or prejudice"

- - The forming of classes is occurring in the body of Christ amongst all who are suppose to be equal co-heirs. (cf. 1 Peter 3:7)
- - Some people are separated out of the normal group to be put into a superior class or an inferior class, based on the perceived essence of their being or personhood.
- - In a broad sense, the forming of classes in the body of Christ promotes selectiveness rather than inclusion into and within the body of Christ, which runs contrary to the global comprehensive of the Great Commission to "go and make disciples of all nations". (Matthew 28:19; cf. Romans 2:1-12)
- - The forming of classes within the body of Christ leads to the forming of divisions, which promotes disunity (Romans 15:5), disharmony (Romans 12:16), and disintegration (Matthew 12:25).
- - Both the thinking and the behavior of separating and dividing into classes of distinction within the body of Christ are condemned by God in this passage in James 2:1-9. (cf. Romans 12:3-5,16; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27)

SECTION POINT: “Becoming judges with evil thoughts” involves making judgments of other humans in order to satisfy selfish evil intentions.

- - Within the phenomenon of forming into classes within the body of Christ is the activity of playing the role of judging other humans.
- - Judging other humans is a role only God is qualified to do because He alone has sufficient power, knowledge, and ability to accurately see and know a person’s heart. (Acts 15:8)
- - And judging other humans is a role only God has a right and qualifications to do, because He is the only true God, and because He is the Creator of us non-deity finite humans. (cf. Psalm 9:7-8; Romans 2:16)

- - Within the activity of judging other humans is the evil intention of manipulating a situation with selfish goals in mind.
- - Types of evil intention goals can be to satisfy a self-desire or self-comfort, to fortify self-protection, or to acquire some personal favor, or benefit, or status, or connection, or financial gain by associating with or befriending the person who is in a position of being able to extend such a benefit.
- - This evil intention includes eliminating or pushing aside or shunning anyone who threatens to hinder or derail that acquisition of personal benefit or that accomplishing of self-promotion, such as a “poor man in shabby clothes”. (v.2)
- - Evil “reasoning” or “consideration” (Strong’s #1261 ‘thoughts’) and judging are utilized to formulate these evil intention schemes.
- - Determinations are made based on worldly standards, which of course are polluting to practicing religion that God accepts. (cf. John 8:15; v.1:27)

[Lesson Question: How does this issue of discriminating and judging among believers fit with accompanying verse 1:27, where we true believers are told to discriminate among people to show special treatment to “orphans and widows”?]

SECTION POINT: This issue fits with accompanying verse 1:27, where we true believers are told to discriminate among people to show special treatment to “orphans and widows” who are “in distress”.

- - The citation in verse 1:27 has a condition of “in their distress”, suggesting selecting disadvantaged persons to bring benefits to for improvement from their distress or affliction is pleasing to God, i.e. helping those who need help solely for their benefit rather than trying to manipulate to get some kind of benefit or favor for oneself.
- - Therefore, a main principle behind this God-instructed kind of discrimination is to hold the motive of giving without expecting or desiring to receive anything in return.
- - An additional implication is that the system used to select disadvantaged persons to bring benefits to for improvement from their distress must be “just, impartial, fair” (AHD - ‘equitable’), and proportionally equalized for all of those who are being selected.

- - And furthermore, we are not to lift up someone who is in comfort or advantage over those who are in distress or disadvantage.
 - - We need to show the same standards of rightness, equality, and justice in other situations as we do when we are “taking care of widows and orphans in their distress”. (v.1:27)
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BIG IDEA: We sin when we extend favoritism, discriminate, and judge others.

IMPLICATIONS:

- - People-pleasers are especially vulnerable to this kind of sin because by their personality nature, they crave popularity and admiration from others, particularly those who can fortify their popularity.
 - - Leaders in volunteer-based ministries and churches are especially vulnerable to this kind of sin because their job position is completely dependent on the popularity support of those who hold and wield power for their ministry.
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APPLICATIONS:

- - Is favoritism, discriminating, and judging of others a common and pervasive problem in your ministry and your church, or is it rare and isolated?
 - - When you look at the gathering of the group of people you are involved in ministering to, do you truly view, regard, and treat every single person in the group as being equal? Or have you become desensitized to your own ongoing extending of favoritism, discriminating, and judging of others?
 - - Do you hold in high priority the imperative of not showing favoritism, and of not inappropriately bending rules, and of not having different standards for different people?
 - - What do you think happens to your credibility among others when they see you showing favoritism? Isn't this result of actually losing credibility the exact opposite of what you are so desperately trying to acquire by engaging in favoritism - popularity?
 - - How do you think God regards your integrity when He sees every time you show favoritism, discriminate, and judge others? How do you think God will react to you when you do these things?
 - - When any of you ministry leaders scheme and connive and discriminate to successfully manipulate the security of your holding that ministry position, do you really think God will be active in blessing your ministry?
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