

Home group questions on James 2:1-13

By Phil Bailey

Theme: Favouritism on the basis of wealth is perverse and contrary to God's purposes and law.

Aim: Stop showing favouritism; press into the mercy Christ has shown you by becoming poor, so that you grow in mercy and love neighbours as self, without distinction.

N.B. if you're pressed for time, questions 2, 4 and 5 are the most important.

1. If it's helpful, spend some time going back over the passage, recapping James's reasons why favouritism towards the rich is evil.
2. The sermon included several examples of ways we might show favouritism on the basis of wealth/social class (listed below). Which felt closest to home for you/us as a church?

Can you think of any other notable ways you/we show favouritism on the basis of wealth/social class?

3. To the extent that you struggle with this kind of favouritism, what attracts you towards the wealthier and repels you from the poor?
4. James sets favouritism in contrast to love for neighbour in vv.8-9 and mercy in v.13. But we can only truly begin to love our neighbours and show them mercy because Christ first loved us and showed us mercy. How does his love give us courage to lay aside our comfort and love the poor?

How does his mercy inspire mercy in us?

5. James calls God's moral law (as interpreted by Jesus) 'the law that gives freedom' in v.12. That law is summarised by the 'royal law' in v.8 – love your neighbour as yourself. If this law gives us freedom, can you try to imagine how we will find freedom and joy in loving our poor neighbours?

Ways we might see favouritism on the basis of wealth/social class in evangelical churches like ours:

- In who we prefer talking to after church and who we invite home for a meal.
- In who we choose to employ as a church (or which churches those of us in ministry apply for jobs at!).
- In the part of town where we choose to live and focus our personal witness.
- In where we choose to plant churches and who we think are the most important peoples to reach – do we automatically assume it's the clever, wealthy and powerful who are most the strategic?
- In church meetings if we take one person's opinion more seriously than another because of socio-economic background.
- Perhaps in a reluctance to sing worship songs that are simple and repetitive because we think they are shallow and lacking theological depth – even though they might be a blessing to believers who lack a good education.