

LIVING ROOMS - WEEK THREE FAVORITISM FORBIDDEN (JAMES 2:1-13)

(please try and go through the questions and make a few notes prior to study)

MEMORY VERSE James 2:8. "This royal law is found in the Scriptures: "Love your neighbor as you love yourself." If you obey this law, you are doing right." (NCV)

BREAKING THE ICE: (15min)

Even God Cannot Get Into Some Churches

For more than a year a little old chairwoman who lived on the wrong side of the tracks had been trying to join a fashionable downtown church. The preacher was not eager to have a seedy looking person in faded, out-of-style clothes sitting in a pew next to his rich members. When she called on him for the fifth time to discuss membership, he put her off for the fifth time. "I tell you what," he said, rather curtly. "You just go home tonight and have a talk with God about this. Perhaps some other time you can tell me what His reply was".

The poor old woman went on her way. Weeks moved into months, and the preacher saw no more of her. In time, his conscience did start to hurt, just a little. Then one day he encountered her scrubbing floors in an office building, and felt impelled to inquire, "Did you ever have your little talk with God as I suggested, Mrs. Washington?" he asked.

"Oh, my, yes," she said, "I talked with God, as you said."

"Ah, and what answer did He give you?"

"Well, preacher," she said, pushing back a wisp of stringy hair with a sudsy hand, "God told me that he loved me very much and that I should not to get discouraged, but to keep trying. He said that He himself has been trying to get into your church for well over 20 years, and that He has had no more success than I have had...."

Have you ever had the sort of experience that this little old lady had? How do you feel "wrong side of the tracks people" people feel about churches and Christians these days? What can we do to change this?

OPEN PRAYER – SHORT SENTENCES.

LOOK TO THE BOOK: (average about 10 min per question – if more on one then less on another – but cover them all!)

1) James uses the analogy of the wealthy vs. the poor to teach us this truth. There are also a great number of other situations where we might be tempted to show favoritism or partiality. What are some of these?

2) Can you think of any particular situations where you are guilty of showing favoritism? Does our church treat rich people differently?

3) How does the world treat the wealthy as opposed to the poor? See if you can think of some examples where this is so. (Read Prov 14:20, Prov 19:4, Prov 19:7)

4) What does this sort of behavior say about the world's attitude? What could the motives be behind flattering or befriending the rich & influential while passing judgment on and treating the less fortunate with disregard (read Prov 22:16)?

5) The scriptures say 'to love your neighbor as yourself' and to "treat others as we would want to be treated". If we show favoritism to one group regardless of our motives, what are we in fact doing? Also, what about "people pleasing"? Being unreasonably concerned with being liked by the upper class yet showing little concern at all with how our actions or inaction has made the "little guy" feel? (Read Luke 6:31-35, James 2:4, Gal 1:10, Rom 15:1, 1 Thess 2:4)

6) When we look at this teaching on showing favoritism & kindness to people based on their station in life and we consider examples from scripture, what does 'loving your neighbor as yourself' really look like? (Read Luke 14:12-14, Matt 25:35-40, Heb 13:3&5)

7) In scripture we see some examples of people who God chose for exalted positions or held in high regard. People who, in the eyes of the world, had no inherent value whatsoever. There was John the Baptist, Matt 3:3. The "lowly" virgin girl, Mary, Luke 1:48. The young shepherd boy, David, 1 Sam 16:10-12. The poor widow who put in the collection plate all she had, Mark 12:41-44. If looking at outward appearances alone, what was there about these people that would cause the world to reject them or deem them unworthy of the sort of honor that God showed them?

8) Whose side is the Lord on?

9) When we show mercy, love and respect to the less fortunate, how does the Lord feel about this? (Read Prov 14:31, 14; 21, 19; 17)

In the coming week, let's each of us be conscious of what we have learned tonight. Look for situations to be kind to those who you may normally be curt with. Play no favorites! Open prayer - Pray and ask God to help you.