



Transformed Through Mercy

[James 2:1-13](#)

Third in a 14-part series titled: *Wholly Transformed*

Pastor Matt Friend – January 20 & 23, 2022

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– OUTLINE –

Big Idea:

There's no room for favoritism in God's family.

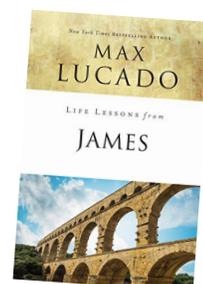
So, how can we fight favoritism in our hearts?

- #1 – Remember the splendor and authority of King Jesus. ([vv. 1, 7-8](#))
- #2 – Remember the value of every human being, regardless of their wealth, status, family, appearance, or ethnicity. ([vv. 2-4](#))
- #3 – Remember the various kinds of people God calls into His family. ([v. 5](#))
- #4 – Remember the unique temptations and brokenness of every person. ([v. 6](#))
- #5 – Actively love your neighbor as you actively love yourself. ([v. 8](#))
- #6 – Ask God to show you any areas where you might be practicing favoritism without realizing it... and repent. ([vv. 9-11](#))
- #7 – Always keep your own Judgment Day in the back of your mind. ([v. 12](#))
- #8 – Love people more than you love being right. ([v. 13](#))

Recommended Book

[Life Lessons from James: Practical Wisdom](#)

By Max Lucado





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– NOTES –

Introduction:

Today we continue our 14-week “Wholly Transformed” series, walking verse by verse through the New Testament book of James.

Two weeks ago, I began with an introductory message titled, “Transformed Through Suffering” from [James 1:1-18](#). Pastor Mike preached another introductory message last weekend titled, “Transformed by God’s Word” from 1:19-27. You can download both messages on our [app](#), on our sermon [podcast](#), or on the series page [here](#).

Starting today, the next 12 messages address 12 different ways Jesus wants to transform us. The first area can be found in James 2:1-13 from which I’ll bring today’s message titled, “Transformed Through Mercy.”

James begins chapter 2 with, “My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism” ([v. 1](#)). His words sound a lot like Jesus’ words, “If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?” ([Matthew 5:46-47](#)).

Are you ever tempted to show favoritism toward a certain group of people at work, at church, or in our neighborhoods... while consciously (or subconsciously) ignoring another group of people? If you’ve been in the church for a long time, are you ever tempted to use a Bible verse (out of context) to justify your lack of hospitality, grace, forgiveness, or love for a specific person?



In today's message, James will not only identify the problem of favoritism; he'll also give us 8 keys to fighting favoritism in our hearts.

Big Idea:

There's no room for favoritism in God's family.

Big Idea Expanded:

James 2:1 reads, "My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism."

Back in chapter 1 ([verse 27](#)), James told us that he was going to warn us about *worldliness*. According to the New Testament, worldliness has little to do with the brand of our blue jeans, the style of our hair, the make and model of our car, or the movie we went to the theater to watch last weekend.

James describes worldliness as the spirit of favoritism, discrimination, prejudice, and injustice. For James, the opposite of worldliness is exercising impartiality, not showing favoritism, and not being a respecter of persons. The command in verse 1 to "not show favoritism" is the main emphasis of this entire section.

The Greek word for favoritism here means, "receiving according to the face." It refers to making judgments about people based on external appearance. This could apply to judging people for their dress, general physical appearance, color of skin, ethnicity, weight, attractiveness, or a host of other characteristics. As the people of God, we must be on guard against this sin because it's often subtle and unnoticed.

We are not to make decisions about people based on any external factor. The Old Testament repeatedly stresses that God Himself is impartial, looking at the heart rather than at the outside of a person, and God's people are to imitate Him in this respect.



Evidently, this type of worldliness was creeping in the church. They were playing favorites just like the world does. In verses 2-4 James will give a specific example of their discrimination. Ours could be expressed in the same way or in a variety of different ways.

There's no room for favoritism in God's family.

So, how can we fight favoritism in our hearts?

#1 – Remember the splendor and authority of King Jesus. (vv. 1, 7-8)

The phrase “glorious Lord” in verses 1 harkens back to the Old Testament which often referred to God the Father as “The Lord of glory.” It signifies the presence of God himself ([1 Samuel 4:22](#)). God's glory is often associated with the bright light surrounding His throne ([Exodus 40:34](#); [1 Kings 8:11](#); [Ezekiel 1:28](#)). In the Old Testament, the word glory also referred to the weightiness or authority of an individual. This title was transferred to Jesus in the New Testament ([Romans 9:4](#); [1 Corinthians 2:8](#); [Hebrews 1:3](#); [2 Peter 1:17](#); [1 John 1:14](#)).

James is attributing to the Lord Jesus the splendor that is peculiar to God himself. This reminder is particularly appropriate in a situation where Christians are giving too much “glory” to human beings.

The rich and powerful in James' community were likely asking, “Don't they know who's in charge around here?” James answers, “Yes, it's King Jesus. It's His noble name (v. 7). It's his royal law (v. 8). He is Lord (v. 1).”

The first key to fighting your favoritism is remembering the splendor and authority of King Jesus.

#2 – Remember the value of every human being, regardless of their wealth, status, family, appearance, or ethnicity. (vv. 2-4)

James is giving a hypothetical illustration of favoritism and discrimination here, though based in reality. When these first-century Christians gathered in the synagogues (long before large church



buildings were constructed), Christians were tempted to give the best seats to the rich and famous, while ignoring or marginalizing those who were poor and forgettable. Their actions revealed how fractured (and in need of transformation) their hearts really were.

Another key to fighting your favoritism is remembering the value of every human being, regardless of their wealth, status, family, appearance, or ethnicity.

#3 – Remember the various kinds of people God calls into His family. (v. 5)

We can expect prejudice and favoritism in just about every community environment, right? However, James reminds us that there's one place it should never be seen—in Jesus' Church.

God delights to shower his grace on those whom the world had discarded and on those who are most keenly aware of their own inadequacy. James calls on the church to embody a similar ethic of special concern for the poor and the helpless.

Another key to fighting your favoritism is remembering the various kinds of people God calls into His family.

#4 – Remember the unique temptations and brokenness of every person. (v. 6)

James' logic becomes evidently pragmatic in verse 6. He wants us to remember that every person we are tempted to excessively honor has their own flaws.

Another key to fighting your favoritism is remembering the unique temptations and brokenness of every person.

#5 – Actively love your neighbor as you actively love yourself. (v. 8)

Partiality is sinful because it violates the greatest commandments. This royal, regal, and kingly law was given by Moses in [Leviticus](#)



[19:18](#) and affirmed by Christ in [Matthew 22:37-40](#) and [Mark 12:28-31](#). Jesus expanded the idea of neighbor to include people who have nothing in common with us ([Luke 10:25-37](#)), including our enemies ([Matthew 5:44](#)).

Another key to fighting your favoritism is actively loving your neighbor as you actively love yourself.

#6 – Ask God to show you any areas where you might be practicing favoritism without realizing it... and repent. ([vv. 9-11](#))

This passage allows no wiggle room for ambiguity—favoritism is sin. It's based on prejudice, judging others by false standards. Prejudice and favoritism flourish when we stop looking at people the way God looks at them.

James is blunt: You are breaking the law of God somewhere. In context, he's even warning us that we most likely play favorites somewhere. This isn't a racial text (nor do I believe it's wise or helpful to insinuate that "everyone is racist" as some are claiming today). However, James does call us to search our hearts to see if there are some kinds of people that we naturally avoid and some kind of people we naturally enjoy.

Another key to fighting your favoritism is asking God to show you any areas where you might be practicing favoritism without realizing it... and repenting.

#7 – Always keep your own Judgment Day in the back of your mind. ([v. 12](#))

God shows no favoritism ([Romans 2:11](#); [Ephesians 6:9](#); [Colossians 3:25](#)). Our words will be judged ([Matthew 12:36-37](#)) as well as our actions ([Romans 2:6-11](#); [2 Corinthians 5:10](#)).

Another key to fighting your favoritism is always keeping your own Judgment Day in the back of your mind.



#8 – Love people more than you love being right. ([v. 13](#))

“Mercy triumphs over judgment.” James doesn’t call us to toss discernment out the window. However, in our discernment, he commands us to exercise love and mercy—not harsh judgment.

God is a God of grace and truth; however, according to James, if you’re faced with a choice to choose judgment or mercy... choose mercy.

A final key to fighting your favoritism is loving people more than you love being right.

Why do these 8 things? Because...

There’s no room for favoritism in God’s family.