

## BIBLE EXTENSION COURSE PROGRAM

### Personal Favoritism

Lesson No.4

Required Reading  
James 2:1-26

Epistle of James – **EJ Series**  
by Clifton H Carpenter

- **Courtesy to All**
- **Compassion for All**
- **Consistency in All**

**Key Verse:** James 2:8 If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well.

**I**NTRODUCTION James has made it clear that true religion finds an outlet in service which demands that a believer learn “to accept others without prejudice” and “to assist others without presumption.”

#### Problems From Inside The Fellowship

**Service and Compassion.** The Sermon on the Mount is a commentary that is rich in applications for daily life. It expresses the “*faith of Christ*” and describes his glorious approach to dealing with people – Lit. “*not with respect of person.*” Jesus never showed favoritism. James 2:1

**Difference between Preference and Partiality.** The problem of “*religious hypocrisy*” existed in the early church and it is still with us today.

It is “*inconsistent love*” for other people that manifest itself in how we treat them.

**My Brethren.** The message of “*personal favoritism*” is to encourage the believers to practice brotherly kindness.

**The Creation Story.** The beauty of diversity is seen in the natural world. The sky, moon, stars, land and sea are objects of God’s creative ability, and God said “*it is good.*”

**The Creation of Man and Woman.** Made in the likeness of God possesses intellect, emotions and will, and God said “*it is very good.*” Genesis 1:25, 31

**The Value of Human Life.** Therefore, because man is made in the image or likeness of God, the value of Human Life exceeds that of other objects created by God.

**Personal Preferences.** The right to choose is a God-given right of every individual. Of course, with the freedom of choice comes responsibility and accountability.

People prefer “*likes or dislikes*” different things. Everyone does not like or dislike the same things. i.e. automobiles, clothing, literature, music, etc. The beauty of diversity.

**Legitimate Preferences.** We enjoy the company of people who share things in common. It too is our God-given right.

**The Preference of God.** The sovereign right of God to choose one nation over the other. Deuteronomy 7:6-11

**The Assembly.** Lit “*synagogue*” was where early Jewish believers met until their unbelieving Jewish brethren forced them out.

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**The Assembly of Believers.** The early days of the church were predominantly “*poor and humble people.*” If a rich person was converted and did come to the Christian fellowship, there must have been a very “*real temptation*” to make a fuss of him, and to treat that person as “*a special trophy for Christ.*” **You have respect of him.** James 2:3

**Personal Favoritism.** Lit – Partiality, it implies an inclination to favor a person or thing because of strong fondness or attachment.

**Partiality** – Lit. Greek “*prosopolepsia*” It is the fault of one when called to give judgment has respect to the “*outward circumstances of men*” and not to their intrinsic merits, and so prefers, as more worthy, one who is rich, high-born, or powerful, to another who is destitute of such gifts.

Therefore, to be partial toward others is an act contrary to the nature of God. Genuine Christian Faith is to be “*impartial and unbiased*” in our dealings with others.

**Prejudice.** Implies a preconceived and unreasonable judgment or opinion usually an “*unfavorable one*” marked by fear, intolerance, or hatred.

**Bias.** Implies a mental leaning in favor of or against someone or something without passing judgment on the correctness or incorrectness of the preference.

**The Clear Command.** “*don’t show favoritism*”

**Courtesy to All.** The temptation to be Partial toward others can be overcome by the Proper Attitude and Proper Actions.

**What If.** Suppose a “*gold-fingered*” and “*brilliantly clothed man*” comes into the meeting place. A poor man in “*vile raiment*” Lit. “*dirty clothes*” also enters. James 2:2

To the rich man you give “*preferential seating*” and to the poor man standing room only or “*an inferior seat on the floor*” Lit. “*under my footstool.*” James 2:3

**Errors of the Usher.** Have you not discriminated? James 2:4

**First,** he showed “*favoritism*” because of what the rich man might do for him, if he received preferential treatment. The usher reflects a “*double-minded*” attitude.

**Second,** he manifested evil motives in deciding where to seat the two visitors. He became a judge of men based upon “*outward circumstances*” and not on correct merits.

Prejudice is an evil that exhibits the character of the one who practices it.

**Christian Prejudice.** How we treat others tells people **MORE** about what we believe, and what following Jesus means to us than all tracts we pass out, or all the sermons we preach.

**Mahatma Gandhi** is one of the most respected leaders of modern history. A Hindu, Gandhi nevertheless admired Jesus and often quoted from the Sermon on the Mount.

Once when the missionary E. Stanley Jones met with Gandhi he asked him, “Mr. Gandhi, though you quote the words of Christ often, why is that you appear to so adamantly reject becoming his follower?”

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**Ghandi replied**, “Oh, I don’t reject your Christ. I love your Christ. It’s just that so many of you Christians are so unlike your Christ.”

Apparently Ghandi’s rejection of Christianity grew out of an incident that happened when he was a young man practicing law in South Africa.

He had become attracted to the Christian faith, had studied the Bible and the teachings of Jesus, and was seriously exploring becoming a Christian.

And so he decided to attend a church service. As he came up the steps of the large church where he intended to go, a white South African elder of the church barred his way at the door.

“Where do you think you’re going, kaffir?” the man asked Ghandi in a belligerent tone of voice. Ghandi replied, “I’d like to attend worship here.”

**The church elder snarled at him**, “There’s no room for Kaffirs in this church. Get out of here or I’ll have my assistants throw you down the steps.”

From that moment, Ghandi said, he decided to adopt what good he found in Christianity, but would never again consider becoming a Christian if it meant being a part of the church.

**Compassion for All.** Listen – Preferential judgment is wrong, and to favor the rich person more than the poor person is inappropriate.

The rich man rarely sees his need for Jesus.

**Three Questions.** Which anticipate a yes response.

- Has not God chosen those who appear poor materially, but are rich spiritually, to inherit His kingdom? Therefore, it is inconsistent for Christians to withhold blessings from them. James 2:5
- Are not the “*rich and powerful ones*” who drag you into courts? Physical and legal oppression of the Christian is in view. How inconsistent it is to despise one’s friends and honor one’s foes! James 2:6 and Acts 4:1-4
- Are they not the ones who slander the name of Jesus? Blaspheme – Lit. “*to mock deliberately*” or “*to speak contemptuously of God.*” James 2:7

**Jesus said**, “a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.”  
Matthew 5:3; 19:23-26

**Consistency in All.** Golden Rule – “*do unto others as you would have them do unto you.*” Matthew 7:12

**The Royal Law.** It governs all other laws dealing with human relationships. Partiality violates the **Royal Law** because it treats some as “*inferior*” and others as sources of “*special favor.*” It is not the way you expect to be treated! James 2:8 and Matthew 22:39

**The Sin of Partiality.** A transgression of the Law of God. To break one law is to be guilty of breaking the entire law. The chain is broken.

Therefore, a complete and consistent obedience is required if Spiritual Maturity is to be achieved.

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### **The Ten Commandments.** James 2:9-13

- Man's Relationship to God  
Commandments 1-4
- Man's Relationship to Man  
Commandments 5-10

### **Mark Twain. Christian Critic** – From Books and Biography

- If Christ were here there is one thing he would not be, a Christian.
- The Church is always trying to get other people to reform; it might not be bad idea to reform itself a little, by way of example.
- I have no race prejudices – all that I care to know is that a man is a human being, that is enough for me; he can't be any worse.
- It isn't the parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do understand.
- I found out that I was a Christian for revenue only and could not bear the thought of that, it was so ignoble.
- There has been only one Christian, they caught him and crucified him – early.

**Impartial Toward Others.** In modern life, partiality sometimes arises because of differences in economic levels, race, religious preferences, political views, personal opinions, educational backgrounds, to name a few causes.

For the Christian it is sometimes harder to be impartial toward sinners who flaunt their sin than it is those who acknowledge that they have sinned.

However, because Christ died for all we should reach out to all as He did rather than being unfriendly. This is true whether the sinners are homosexuals, AIDS patients, the murders of unborn children, liars, adulterers, thieves or gossips, for example. This reaching out will be an accurate indicator of the extent to which Christ's love controls us.

Therefore, we should understand that God will judge us for our conduct. We need to speak and act accordingly, without prejudice toward others. We are in no danger of losing our salvation; however, we will suffer "*a loss of reward*" if we sin by practicing unmerciful favoritism. Matthew 7:5; 1 Corinthians 2:12-15 and 2 Corinthians 5:10

**Aspects of Salvation.** Paul and James provide different aspects of salvation. They provide a full dimension of Faith and Works.

We are not *saved "by deeds"* but we are saved "*for deeds.*" These are the twin truths of the Christian faith.

- Paul's whole emphasis is on the first truth
- James' whole emphasis is on the second truth

Hearing God's Word and talking about God's Word can never substitute for "*doing God's Word.*" The immature Christian "*talk about their beliefs,*" but the mature Christian "*lives his beliefs.*"

**Workless Faith is Worthless Faith.**

### **The Faith of Abraham** "*Genuine Faith*"

- Expression of True Faith
- Evidence of True Faith
- Examples of True Faith

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**Expression of True Faith.** What good is it, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? – Lit. merely claiming to have faith is not enough. Genuine Faith is evidence by works. James 2:14-16

**Suppose.** A brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. You say; Go, I wish you well – Lit. “*go in peace*” What good is it? **Faith without action is dead.** James 2:17

**Evidence of True Faith.** Faith that does not lead to works is dead faith, it is not a living faith. James 2:20

**There is a Challenge.** Show me your faith without your works! This is impossible to do, because the work of salvation will manifest Christ-like deeds.

**The Elements of Faith.** Genuine faith includes Knowledge, Conviction and Trust in God. To boast that you believe in one God is no more than what the demons believe, and they “*shudder*” Matthew 8:29; Acts 16:17 and James 2:19

Therefore, belief in one God may be good so far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. True faith in God involves trusting God. Unless it is “*trust*” it is not true faith, and it will not be evidenced in good works.

James’ argument is not *pro-works/anti-faith* or *pro-faith/anti-works*. He states that genuine faith will always be accompanied “*by good works.*”

Spiritual works are the evidence and not the energizer of a sincere faith. Fruit is the “*outward*” evidence of inner life. Many Christians refuse to bear fruit. Luke 8:14 and John 15:2,6

**Examples of True Faith.** The joint role of Faith and Works as seen in the lives of two Old Testament figures.

**Faithful Abraham.** God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac on the altar! Abraham had faith in God, and therefore was not afraid to obey Him. James 2:21 and Hebrews 11:17-19

- His obedience to the Word of God was evidence of his “*trust*” in God. Genesis 15:6
- His faith was made perfect “*brought to maturity*” in act of obedience. James 2:22-23

**The Finality of his Faith.** James 2:24

**Faithful Rahab.** Likewise, she was a sinner, but a woman of faith. Joshua 6:17-27 and James 2:25

- She believed the God of Israel, and risked her own life to identify with Israel.
- She proved her faith by her reception and protection of the two spies. Hebrews 11:31

The works of Abraham a man, and Rahab a woman are examples of “*saving faith*” regardless of one’s background.

**Stop!** It’s time to challenge your thinking. Using the Ladder as a guide, think about how each principle on the rung of the ladder relate to the Topic given in this chapter.

- Answer the five questions on the chart honestly
- Re-adjust your “*principle of thoughts*” accordingly

**NOTE – Please visit the Text with PowerPoint Format for more details.**