

James: A Real Discussion about Christian Living

Favoritism (James 2:1-13; 5:1-6)

The **proper application of law and gospel** is required when talking about **financial matters** in the church. The **law** is needed to **expose sinful** motives, thoughts, words, and actions regarding this topic. The **gospel** is needed to **forgive sin** and **release** a heart from **guilt**. Like anything else the church does, sin will always be involved. List at least **two consequences of discussing financial matters** in the church **without the proper application** of law and gospel.

An example of financially motivated favoritism requiring God's law (Read James 2:1-4)

1. It's **not wrong** for Christians to **"judge"** when we're **determining a course of action** (whether it's **God-pleasing or not**). In fact, in Luke 12:57-59 Jesus encourages us to "judge." Also, in 1 Corinthians 6:1-8 Paul encourages believers to "judge" matters among themselves. The example provided in these four verses, however, provides an **example of sinful judgment**. **Describe** what it is and **determine** what makes it **"evil"** (v 4).
2. **Provide an example** of a congregation showing **the type of favoritism** these verses are referring to.
3. Discuss: is it **possible** for someone **in every income class** (e.g. upper, middle, lower) to be **guilty of what James is describing** here?

God's law applied to the sin of favoritism (Read James 2:5-11)

4. Verse 5 expounds on how **this type of financially based favoritism** in a church **fails to represent the ministry** God has entrusted us to proclaim. Explain.

5. Verse 6 reveals **an inconsistency that sin** makes a **person guilty of favoritism blind to**. Explain (also read James 5:1-6).

6. Explain how **verses 8 & 9** are **an answer to** the unspoken objection, **“Well. I’m being nice to the rich person** because I’m loving them as my neighbor, **as God commands.”**

7. Explain how **verses 10 & 11** are **an answer to** the unspoken objection, **“Favoritism isn’t all that big of a deal.”**

Mercy triumphs over judgment (Read James 2:12-13)

8. James **does not clearly proclaim** the **gospel. It’s merely implied**. For, instance, look at the end of verse 13 and **place yourself as the defendant in God’s courtroom** where you’re on trial for the sin of financially based favoritism. What does this **communicate to you, a person guilty** (on some level, if only just in your thoughts) **of favoritism?**

9. **Verse 12** is referring to **following God’s law** when our **heart has been released** from the burden of **guilt** and we are assured that our **sin** has been forgiven. In other words, it invites the listeners in a congregation **to consider how they are going to act** toward everyone without showing favoritism. Describe **what that looks like**.

Conclusion: Now’s time to practice a **“real discussion”** with the proper application of law and gospel. The **concern** has been expressed that **following a capital campaign process** in which the “top third” of givers receive a personal visit (advance gift gathering) in which they’re asked to consider a pledge, and the “bottom two-thirds” of givers is asked to consider a pledge without such a visit (community gifts) **makes our congregation guilty of favoritism.** (Also read 1 Timothy 6:17-19; Romans 12:3-8)