

January 27/28, 2024

"Faith & Favoritism"

Pastor Aaron Buer



**Beyond the
Weekend**

SPEND DAILY TIME WITH GOD AS YOU READ, THINK, PRAY + ACT.

2024 Challenge: Finding Jesus in the Old Testament

JANUARY: Read Luke to see how the author points back to the Old Testament

Day 1 James 2:1-13 | Faith & Favoritism

Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? James 2:2-4

To his scattered, persecuted congregation, James writes about how making faith real will shape what they say, do and care about. Playing favorites goes against the way of Jesus. James says giving special attention to those with money while marginalizing those who are poor is hugely inconsistent with real faith.

Playing favorites can be based on popularity, finances, career advancement or ability. We know we're playing favorites when we look at someone and think, "How can this person benefit me? How can they make me look good?" To stop playing favorites, we need to focus on Jesus and remember what he did for us. This includes "redemption and forgiveness" (Ephesians 1:7) when we deserved punishment for our sins (Ephesians 2:3). Offering no benefits for himself at all, Jesus made it possible for us to be welcomed into God's family. As we understand the good news of Jesus, we start to treat people differently.

TODAY: Pray a prayer of openness about your attitude towards those you are tempted to avoid or ignore. Wrestle with your broken humanity and how you can interact in a Christlike way with everyone you meet.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read Luke 20. Highlight anything that refers to the Old Testament and how Jesus fulfills it. Note the Old Testament passages Jesus quotes and refers to.

Day 2 James 2:1 | God's Glory

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

James anchors his instruction on favoritism on a specific word. It's a familiar word, but one we may not associate with showing favoritism. The word is "glory" and James uses it to describe Jesus. The most basic definition of glory is "heavy" or "weighty," meaning something or someone that is significant. In using it to describe Jesus, James means that Jesus is the most significant. Nothing can compare to his brilliance or majesty. James ties this to favoritism because when we show favoritism, we are focusing on our glory or significance instead of Jesus's.

When we show favoritism, we try to gain significance (status, importance, credibility) through someone we think is significant. In those moments, it becomes about us, not Jesus. But when we treat people well who are vulnerable or who are otherwise on the outside, we do it not for our glory, but for the glory of God. When we focus on the glory of Jesus, our desire to compare ourselves to others, and attach ourselves to someone with more glory than us, becomes insignificant and pointless. When we center our thoughts on his infinite worth and glory, all comparison and favoritism will fade away.

TODAY: Join Ada Bible Church's worship team as they sing "Been So Good." Meditating on these lyrics will help you focus on Jesus and remind you of his incomparable value and worth: "I call you Savior, for the blood that washed me clean, for the wrongs that you've redeemed. And I know you're able, and my eyes don't have to see, one more reason to believe."

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read Luke 21. Highlight anything that refers to the Old Testament and how Jesus fulfills it. Note how Jesus talks about the coming of the Son of Man and the Old Testament passages he is pointing to.

Day 3 James 2:1-5 | Humility

Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? James 2:5

In his instruction about not showing favoritism, James returns to a subject he's mentioned previously: the rich and the poor. He makes it clear that one isn't valued more than the other. In this, he refers back to his words in James 1:9-10 where he tells those who are poor to consider themselves rich because of the gospel and those who are rich to be humbled.

This means that those who are poor, or in a tough stretch financially, need to take pride in their high position as a child of the King. If we're poor, we need to be reminded that our value is immense because of the cross. It also means that those who are doing well financially need to respond with humility as they understand their need for God. If we're rich, we need the reminder that our value comes from the cross and not our wealth or investments. And when it comes to favoritism or discrimination, our challenge is to look at people the way God looks at them: at their hearts. God seeks humility and examines hearts. Whether rich or poor, God desires for everyone to be poor in spirit.

TODAY: Reflect on where you find your value or identity. Whether you consider yourself rich or poor, thank your Heavenly Father for the cross. Confess those times when you've placed your ultimate identity, or the identity of others, in something other than the cross. Listen to the Beyond the Weekend Podcast [HERE](#) to dig deeper into this passage with Senior Pastor Aaron Buer and other staff members.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read Luke 22. Highlight anything that refers to the Old Testament and how Jesus fulfills it. Note how Jesus institutes the Lord's supper on the Passover feast and how he fulfills this Old Testament feast.

Day 4 James 2:8-10 | Royal Law

If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. James 2:8

By basing his teaching on favoritism in the royal law, said by King Jesus multiple times (see Matthew 19:19; 22:39 and Luke 10:26-28), James teaches that favoritism is no petty sin. It violates both the law of love and the gospel. It is to be taken seriously. All sins are major because they all violate the law of the King, who gave every command. Even a small sin violates the King's law, for God is love (1 John 4:8). When we choose which laws we will obey, we become our own god. If we obey laws only when they seem right to us, if we pick and choose from among God's commands when they suit our ends, then we never really obey God at all.

James says we violate the King's law by showing favoritism. This means ignoring or rejecting someone by not wanting to be associated with them. We show favoritism when we scan the lunchroom or boardroom for a seat next to someone who will make us look good. We show favoritism when we avoid someone during a break because we don't want to hear their problems. We show favoritism when we speak to family members only when we want something.

TODAY: Who do you seek out for your own benefit and who do you avoid? Ask God to help you see them as God does. Then consider who you need to start caring about in a loving way. Share with a trusted friend and ask them to pray for you in this situation.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read Luke 23. Highlight anything that refers to the Old Testament and how Jesus fulfills it. Note Jesus's Old Testament quotations while hanging on the cross.

Day 5 James 2:12-13 | Changed By Mercy

Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment. James 2:12-13

James tells us that understanding and responding to the gospel should make us merciful. This means that the mercy we have received from God, because of the forgiveness we have received through Jesus's death on the cross, should flow into our actions toward others. Simply stated, it's "mercy in, mercy out." Our acts of mercy, such as how we care for the poor and hurting, are to reflect the mercy we have received from God.

This is what we mean when we talk about the gospel—the "good news"—of Jesus. The freedom he offers through his death and resurrection is freedom from judgment without mercy. Our experience of his mercy leads us to show mercy. The way out of favoritism, discrimination, prejudice and racism is all through the gospel. We can't act, think or feel differently until our hearts have been dramatically changed by God's mercy. Only when we believe and anchor ourselves to what we read in James can we live out what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

TODAY: Do you have a relationship with Jesus? Have you placed your faith and trust in him for forgiveness? If not, we encourage you to take this most important step today. We'd love to speak with you about doing this. Contact us at btw@adabible.org. If you have already done so, ask God to help you be a person of mercy and to live a life shaped by the gospel.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read Luke 24. Highlight anything that refers to the Old Testament and how Jesus fulfills it.