

Everybody Belongs!

“The CODE” Series – Part 05

A 15 Minute Study Guide- Read James 2:1-13

1. Why is showing favoritism toward some people a detriment to our Christian faith?
2. What are some ways we discriminate against others in our society today?
3. When is the last time you extended mercy and grace toward someone?

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A Fuller Study Guide-

Connect question: Do you tend to avoid conflict or face it head on? Why?

Introduction:

Mahatma Gandhi, once said that during his student days, he considered becoming a Christian. Deeply touched by the reading of the Gospels, he seriously considered becoming a convert. It seemed to him that Christianity offered a solution to the caste system that plagued the people of India. (Please note: the Caste systems are social divisions based on wealth & status... it treats the poor horribly).

One Sunday, Gandhi went to a local church. He had decided to see the pastor and ask for instruction on the way of salvation and other Christian doctrines. But when he entered the sanctuary, the ushers refused to give him a seat. They told him, *"Go and worship among your own people!"* He left and never went back. Gandhi would state later, *"If Christians have caste system also...I might as well remain a Hindu"*. –*"The Daily Bread"*, Feb. 1979

In our culture today, how might the church demonstrate a “caste system” within its fellowship?

Can you describe a situation where you made a stand against perceived bias or injustices?

To favor some people and to disregard others based on outward factors is a terrible sin that plagued the early church in James’ day. It has plagued the church in every generation, because it stems from pride and our broken condition.

James 2:1-13

Jas 2:1 My dear brothers and sisters, how can you claim to have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ if you favor some people over others?

Jas 2:2 For example, suppose someone comes into your meeting dressed in fancy clothes and expensive jewelry, and another comes in who is poor and dressed in dirty clothes.

Jas 2:3 If you give special attention and a good seat to the rich person, but you say to the poor one, "You can stand over there, or else sit on the floor"—well,

Jas 2:4 doesn't this discrimination show that your judgments are guided by evil motives?

Jas 2:5 Listen to me, dear brothers and sisters. Hasn't God chosen the poor in this world to be rich in faith? Aren't they the ones who will inherit the Kingdom He promised to those who love Him?

Jas 2:6 But you dishonor the poor! Isn't it the rich who oppress you and drag you into court?

Jas 2:7 Aren't they the ones who slander Jesus Christ, whose noble name you bear?

Jas 2:8 Yes indeed, it is good when you obey the royal law as found in the Scriptures: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Jas 2:9 But if you favor some people over others, you are committing a sin. You are guilty of breaking the law.

Jas 2:10 For the person who keeps all of the laws except one is as guilty as a person who has broken all of God's laws.

Jas 2:11 For the same God who said, "You must not commit adultery," also said, "You must not murder." So if you murder someone but do not commit adultery, you have still broken the law.

Jas 2:12 So whatever you say or whatever you do, remember that you will be judged by the law that sets you free.

Jas 2:13 There will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others. But if you have been merciful, God will be merciful when He judges you..

Please describe a time when you felt unfairly discriminated against because of your social standing, color of skin, or other factors beyond your control. In what ways could the offender have taken Christ-like actions toward you?

Make a list of how showing favoritism and demonstrating inequality is destructive to the Great Commandment (love others as yourself):

Where is the boundary between godly discernment (which we all need) and ungodly judgment (which is sin)?

In what ways can the church lead out in promoting equality and justice for all?

Homework:

In what way can you help your church to eliminate bias and prejudices within its body?

How can you rid yourself of feelings of favoritism or discriminatory thoughts and love others as Jesus did?