

JESUS' BROTHER, CHALLENGES OUR HEARTS

Talk 3 – Don't show favouritism – James 2:1-13

Small group questions

Leaders – if the questions make no sense or you don't know the answer – please contact bishop@bathurstanglican.org.au

1. What resonated with you from the message, or was there something you found challenging or unclear?
2. Do you reckon you treat people differently on the basis of how they look? Someone at school or club or in your street or at church seems so awkward, or perhaps scary; someone is obviously from a poor background OR on the other hand some else seems to come from quite a rich past and wears the latest fashions etc. Do you treat them differently? Can you work out why?
3. The example of favouritism James gives in the passage would seem pretty obvious wouldn't it? Do you think this could happen in our churches today? Are there perhaps more subtle ways it would happen?
4. Isn't it true in our society too, that the very ones people want sidle up to and treat with a great deal of fuss and attention are those who in end, are going to rip us off and treat us badly? (Read 2:5-7). Why do you think this is the way things are?
5. What does James mean in that section when he says '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 to those who love him'? (See also Luke 6:20). Is this kind of a reverse favouritism?
6. How is showing favouritism going against 'loving your neighbour as yourself'? How serious is it to do this?
7. How come breaking the law at one point is like breaking at some other point? Surely showing favouritism is not as serious as that guy in Norway killing heaps of kids last weekend?
8. How can the law give freedom? (You may have touched on this last week!)
9. "Mercy triumphs over judgement" - Mercy trumps (wins over – is better than) judgment every time. How can we change our behaviour and transform our heart so that our default reaction to any one we meet – no matter what they look like or how they come across – is mercy – that is – to be kind and generous. (Which is how God has been to us – especially as we understand the generous gift of His Son!).

Closing Prayer idea:

Gracious and merciful God, we come before You, confronted and challenged by Your Word. Open our eyes to see others as You see them, with love and grace, regardless of the world's standards. Forgive us for the times we have shown favouritism or allowed societal norms to dictate how we treat our neighbours.

Lord, help us embrace the heart of Your royal law: to love unconditionally and to show mercy generously. Guide our hearts to be genuine reflections of Your boundless love, where favouritism has no place and where mercy and grace overflow.

Please empower us to live out Your call, to be agents of love and understanding in a world that so often judges by appearances. Let our lives be a testament to Your unfailing love and grace.

In the glorious name of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and King, we pray. Amen.