

Before the Lesson

Read the Scriptures and overview below before your LIFE Group meets.

Scripture passages: James 2:1-13 and familiarize yourself with the story of Jacob and Esau by skimming Genesis 25:19-33:20

It's easy to play favorites. We see someone of noble stature or riches, and our innate worldly view begins to take notice. This type of elitism is dangerous and promotes prejudice. Race is a common area of prejudice that has caused great pain over many generations. We show preference over appearance, thinking that what is on the outside of a person is of greater value than what is on the inside. We often look to those who are influential and think their opinions and ideas are better than the average person. We look at intelligence level and make quick assessments that are not accurate. And we are sometimes guilty of looking at those who are more affluent, thinking that somehow money adds to their importance. These attitudes are sinful and can cause much division, hurt, and anger among individuals and within the church. Prejudice complicates things, and as James observed this type of behavior, he gave a stern warning against it. He reminded the church that separating people out in this way showed a lack of mercy, heartfelt love, and respect for all people. This type of behavior did not reflect the crown jewels of the royal law of Christ but rather complicated the lives of believers and caused great division, disunity, and disharmony.

Focus question: How have you seen prejudice cause division, disunity, and disharmony?

Group Discussion

- Read James 2:1-13. What do you learn about man from this passage? What do you learn about God?
- What does the Bible say about partiality and favoritism? (Exodus 23:3, Leviticus 19:15, Deuteronomy 16:19, 1 Samuel 16:7, Job 34:10, Psalm 82, Proverbs 24:23, 1 Timothy 5:21)
- What does the Bible say about the attribute of partiality with reference to God? (Deuteronomy 10:17, Acts 10:34-35, Acts 15:7-9, Romans 2:11, Romans 10:12-13, Ephesians 6:8-9)
- Since one of God's attributes is "impartiality," discuss how the principle of impartiality correlates with Christ's "Royal Law of Love" as taught in Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:30-31, Luke 10:27, and Deuteronomy 6:5?
- The word "judge" means to separate. Since God is impartial, He cannot judge or separate on the basis of race, appearance, socio-economic level, or preference like we do. The only way God separates people is with regard to a heart condition. What is it? (See Matthew 25:31-46.)

- Based on your discussion and study of the lesson thus far, name the areas of prejudice God has identified in your heart. What will you do to stop the sinful tendency of your heart in order to change the attitudes and actions of partiality with which you struggle?
- Discuss the story of Esau and Jacob from Genesis 25:19-33:20. How did favoritism defile and destroy the relationships within this family? What did God do to reconcile these two brothers?
- Are there people with whom God is calling you to reconcile because of the sin of prejudice in your life? What will you do?
- How have you seen judgment and prejudice destroy or defile relationships, reputations, careers, and character? (e.g., judgment of someone who is divorced, single, with children or without, job status, diet choice, public school, private school, or home-school preference, etc.)
- Read 1 Peter 2:4-8. This passage is a metaphor describing the body of Christ as being built up as a “spiritual house.” It describes Jesus as the “chief living stone” and “cornerstone,” and believers as “living stones” in His Kingdom. Each of us is important and each can make an impact no matter our race, status, or intellectual ability. Compare this Scripture passage with the others listed here and discuss the significance and purpose of all God’s people within the Kingdom. Also discuss why we should not envy, boast, or become hypocritical when it comes to our purpose in the Kingdom. (1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 2:10)
- What does 1 Peter 2:9-10 say about our inheritance as believers? How does this “level the field” with regard to status and significance, not because of who we are but because of the supremacy of Christ and His redemptive work in our lives?
- According to 1 Peter 2:11-12, how should we handle the misjudgment of others? Who should we seek to glorify with our lives?
- Pastor defined *community* as “a place where people belong and become what God calls them to be.” How do pride, prejudice, and preference stifle community?
- Are you guilty of residing in the confines of a clique among those you are comfortable with? Do you seek out only those you know when you walk into a room full of people, or do you try to find the “least of these?” Are you “doing life” with an exclusive group of people, refusing to invite others in? Are you loving those in need and showing mercy to all or only those in your circle? Are you excusing partiality for preference?

Further Study (to be used in your personal Quiet Time)

Take time to study these parables this week, and prayerfully consider the impact of partiality on your life and those around you.

- Luke 16:19-31
- Luke 10:25-37

Who is God calling you to befriend that you would normally overlook?

For additional resources, visit warrenlifenotes.com.