

Mark & Friends

Love Without Favoritism: Seeing People Through God's Eyes
Pastor Mark Johnson with Mark Burns and a Room of Friends • Friday, July 10, 2026

Love Without Favoritism: Seeing People Through God's Eyes

A study of James 2:1-9 with Pastor Mark Johnson, Mark Burns, and a room of friends

Program Summary

In this edition of Mark & Friends, Pastor Mark Johnson leads a room of friends into James 2:1-9, where believers are commanded not to show favoritism. The conversation contrasts the culture of the world - which often evaluates people by status, wealth, appearance, or usefulness - with the culture Christ intends for His Church.

The group discusses church belonging, receiving correction with humility, treating every person with dignity, and finding our identity in Christ rather than in praise or criticism. The central challenge is simple but demanding: because every person bears God's image, the Church must consistently love people without partiality.

Key Takeaways

- Favoritism is incompatible with faith in Jesus Christ.
- The culture of the Church should be different from the culture of the world.
- Every person has dignity and value because every person bears the image of God.
- Christian maturity receives correction thoughtfully without allowing either praise or criticism to define personal identity.
- The biblical standard is not to lower the honored person, but to raise the way everyone is treated.
- Healthy believers should not remain the 'walking wounded'; through Christ, they can become the 'walking healed.'
- Consistency in love and respect builds trust in families, churches, and leadership.

Scripture References

- **James 2:1-4** - Believers in the glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism.
- **James 2:5-9** - The royal law is to love your neighbor as yourself; favoritism is sin.
- **Genesis 1:27** - Every person is created in the image of God.
- **Psalms 34:3** - Magnify the Lord together and exalt His name.
- **John 6:67-68** - Jesus asked the Twelve whether they would leave; Peter answered that Christ has the words of eternal life.
- **Revelation 2-3** - Christ addresses local churches concerning their strengths, weaknesses, and need for change.
- **Job 42:7** - God corrected Job's friends for speaking wrongly about Him and Job's suffering.

Quote of the Day

"He's not lowering how we treat people. He's raising how we treat everybody."

Broadcast Notes

- Tad Jagitsch reads James 2:1-4, followed by Hub Burnett reading James 2:5-9 from the NIV.
- Pastor Mark Johnson explains the distinction between the universal Church and the local church, emphasizing the New Testament assumption of belonging and participation.
- The discussion explores favoritism, church culture, correction, identity in Christ, hurt, patience, and consistent Christian leadership.
- The program closes by previewing next week's continuation on how believers and churches can develop a consistent culture of love.

Practical Applications

- Notice whether you instinctively give more attention to people who appear influential, successful, familiar, or useful.
- Welcome a person at church without first deciding what that person can contribute to you or the congregation.
- When criticism comes, prayerfully separate the truth of the message from an imperfect delivery.
- Treat family members and those closest to you with the same dignity and patience you show publicly.
- Before reacting to someone's harshness, consider whether pain or pressure may be influencing that person's behavior.

Today's Challenge

For the next seven days, intentionally treat each person you encounter as someone carrying the image of God. Give particular attention to anyone who is easily overlooked, and ask the Lord to expose any hidden favoritism in your heart.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, forgive us for the times we have judged people by appearance, status, wealth, usefulness, or familiarity. Teach us to see every person through Your eyes and to honor the image of God in them. Root our identity so deeply in You that praise does not inflate us and criticism does not defeat us. Make our churches places of consistent love, truth, healing, dignity, and welcome. In Jesus' name, amen.

Program Resource Library

- **James 2:1-9** - Read the passage slowly and note every contrast between worldly status and kingdom values.
- **The Book of James** - Continue studying James as a practical guide to mature, active, and consistent Christian faith.
- **Local Church Membership** - Consider how belonging, accountability, service, and fellowship help believers grow together.
- **The Image of God** - Study Genesis 1:26-27 and reflect on how this doctrine should shape the way Christians treat every person.

Complete Transcript

**We're glad you're here, we're glad you're here,
Fellowship is sweeter, knowing you're near.
It's so good to see you, we hope that it's clear,
Everyone loves you, we're glad you're here.**

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? That's James chapter 2, verses 1 through 4. Reading from James chapter 2, verses 5 through 9 in NIV. 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? But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong? If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, love your neighbor as yourself.

You are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. James chapter 2, 5 through 9 in NIV.

And that was the voice of Hub Burnett driving in from Rantoul and before him, Tad Jagitsch driving in from Champaign. Appreciate them showing up to our WLUJ studios here in Springfield. Oh, magnify the Lord with me.

Let us exalt his name together. It's Friday, finally Friday, July 10th, 2026. And welcome to another edition of Mark & Friends.

It's great to have Pastor Mark Johnson back with us in a room of friends. I think we've filled up the room really well here as we begin our study of James chapter 2. Now, James challenges us with very practical questions. Do we see people the way God sees people? Or do we open up God's Word together and explore what it means to love without favoritism and to treat every person with dignity and value that comes from being created in the image of God? In fact, we earlier prayed about that we'll all see people, not the lenses of how we're taught in society, but through God's lenses.

And so today, joining in on this conversation, facilitating our discussion is Pastor Mark Johnson. And I appreciate his commitment to being with us. And certainly the last few weeks when we had Pastor Rick Mulkins and the First Lady joining us.

So we appreciate their commitment to dividing God's Word, along with Pastor Mark Johnson of Calvary Church here in Springfield. Thank you, Mark. It's really great to be back.

And I want to thank everybody for your prayers. We were gone some of that time just on a vacation. Sometimes it was some issues that we were dealing with.

And so it's good to be back today. Today, I want to look at this passage. Let's remind ourselves of where we're at.

James is writing to the church. It's dispersed now across that part of the world. But if you go into any of those communities, I mean, think about Springfield, Illinois today where we're sitting at.

You could drive from here from almost any direction and run into churches. You'll see church buildings, church fellowships. They're every place, hundreds and hundreds of churches in Springfield.

That wasn't the case back in that day. It would have been one church just forming, just getting started. And they're laying the culture of the church out.

The culture of the church is supposed to be different from the culture of the world. And the culture of the church is supposed to bring light to who God is and how God relates to us. It's supposed to show his pathway of blessing.

It's supposed to show his pathway of wisdom. It's supposed to show his values, his purpose for us. That is the call of the church.

And the church is supposed to make the world a better place. So we are these little enclaves of people gathered together as Christ followers trying to live like Christ would have us to live. So that the world will see the light of the gospel.

So just in this room alone, somebody just speak up. Where do you belong as a member of a church? What church do you belong to? Who's going to start for us today? Are you wanting a label that's on the outside of the building? Yeah, what are you a member of? What do you belong to? I belong to Christ. I attend in my church family.

My community is Southside Christian Church in Springfield. So you think about it this way. The Bible talks about the church.

There's two terms it uses for the church. One is the universal church. It transcends time.

I'm a part of the same church Paul was a part of. It transcends space. I'm a part of the same church that Christian believers in Africa or China are a part of.

But most of the time the Bible is talking about the local church. The individual groups of people gathered together in Christ's name who are now trying to become Christians like Christ, followers of Christ. And so we should all belong.

So you say you belong to Southside Christian Church here in Springfield. Good. Anybody else? Where do you belong? Where's your membership at? I belong to Hope Evangelical Free Church on the west side of town.

All right. Anybody else? Champaign First Seventh-day Adventist. I'm always hyping them up when I'm teaching there about this is such a friendly place and the diversity is incredible.

There are people from every continent in there and every language. Hey, Hub, you're a pastor. You want to do a little shout-out for your church and congregation? I belong to New Free Will Baptist Church in Champaign, Illinois, and I've been pastoring there for three and a half years.

And previous to that, my dad was pastoring for 34 years, and he built the church with his bare hands. So we walked in the church, zero ballots. In more than one way.

Amen. If you study the New Testament carefully, you discover that there is an assumption of membership. There's an assumption of belonging.

We're not supposed to be independent, flowing around. When our heart has been transformed, we are going to want to be connected. So you read through Acts, you read through the New Testament.

It's speaking directly to churches. Revelation starts with speaking directly to seven churches. It's speaking to the churches about their strengths, their weaknesses, what they need to do, what they need to change.

And what God is doing is He's trying to form a body of believers that will show the glory of Christ's nature in the way that they live. So here we have James talking. And James is saying, hey, here's the nature of the church.

What's the nature of the world? The nature of the world is we treat people differently by their status. The nature of the church is we treat people because they are valuable creations of God. And the world may see that.

The world may not see that. They may show that. They may not have learned to show that yet.

But the mature believer is seeing the value of every other believer. Have you ever been in a place where you were treated disrespectfully? Anybody in here? Yeah. I've been before.

I wanted to say that I like what Herb brought up, especially when he was reading some of that about places in the Holy Bible like that. Yes, I was at times. And then I saw other people that were being disrespected instead of me.

So I've seen all of that in the churches. But I like what I already heard with what you folks were saying in here about the respect of people, our world, our society versus a church. A lot of the churches I've seen are going along with the world.

But I get the feeling that there are churches that are not too. And that's what I'm looking for. Well, unfortunately, in the world that we live in, because guess what? Human beings come into churches.

We spoil everything. My dad used to say to people, hey, if you're looking for the perfect church, we're not it. If you find it, don't go to it.

You'll ruin it the day you walk in the door. You know, the perfect church doesn't exist yet. We live on this earth, and we are not fully formed in Christ's image.

But we should be striving for that, working for it. And what James is talking to in this passage is, again, how do we treat people? How do we see people? And so I'm not surprised when somebody has not been treated respectfully in the church. We're trying to overcome that.

We're trying to learn from that. I'm not surprised when people say they've been treated disrespectfully, when really the only thing that's happened to them is they have been spoken to correctively and given a new direction in their own life, and they take that as being disrespectful. I've got to make sure I'm not carrying a chip on my shoulder that's easily knocked off.

The higher you go in leadership in the church, the more people should be able to say anything to you. And you take that and say, I will pray about that and seek God about it. At the end of the day, you may disagree.

You may disagree with their assumption, you may disagree with what they've said, but you can receive it. At the end of the day, they may be right. They may not have said it the right way.

They may have said it the wrong way, but they may be right. I've had people say the right things to me the wrong way. Now, am I going to throw the right thing out because of the wrong attitude or the wrong spirit? I'm foolish if I do that.

I grow, I learn from that. And then I try to be very careful in my own life that when I'm having to speak that way to someone, I'm speaking to them respectfully in a way. Any other comments? We've talked about our churches.

I feel like another thing maybe that he's correcting here is a coveting of that status. Yes, come and be associated with us. Look at how great the people that come to our church are.

And aren't we therefore also great because of that? And maybe, just maybe, you'll stop taking us to court if we're really nice to you. It reminds me of a time that I experienced early on. We were going to Florida and stopped in Atlanta, Georgia at Sears to pick up something.

We'd forgot something. We had little ones at the time and had forgotten something. And we walked in that store and for the first time in my life, the majority, huge majority, of people were darker skinned than we were.

My white husband and me and the baby. It was like an epiphany of God's diversity in people. And it was like, I bristled first.

And it's like, now I can understand maybe how other cultures feel. It was enlightening. I'll tell you, there was a time my wife and I were traveling.

And we were in a vacation community. And we'd gone to a local church in that community. And at a point in time, the pastor's up.

We'd sang and done some worship. The pastor gets up. And he says, hey, just look around, see if there's somebody you don't know, and meet them and welcome them at our fellowship.

And a couple of people walked over to us and said, how are you? Great to see you today. We're glad you're with us. Why are you here? And we said, well, we're on vacation and we just came to church today.

And it was like they looked at us and said, well, you're of no use to us. And they just turned and walked away. They didn't even say bye.

They just turned and walked away and left us standing there. And we're like, wow. And I guess they have so many visitors that come in for one sentence.

I've only been at that church one time. I'll probably never be at it again. They probably judged all that.

Especially after that. After they just said, there you go, you're done. Here's one of the things that we're seeing.

They had developed this theology that if you were healthy, if you were rich, you were right with God. If you were sick, if you were troubled or poor, it was some sort of judgment of God. It was almost like.

This sounds familiar. They had imposed karma on people. Sounds like Job's friends.

And exactly. Job goes through the very same thing. Sounds like the prosperity gospel.

When he's successful, he's really honored. When he isn't successful, then he's definitely done something wrong. And God wraps all of that up at the end of Job saying, none of that had anything to do with anything.

And so what's happening here is James is forbidding this kind of favoritism. Now, he's not looking and saying, hey, when the rich people come in, tell them they can have a seat on the floor by your feet. He's not lowering how we treat people.

He's raising how we treat everybody. He's saying treat everyone with the respect and with the honor. And that's that's really hard when you have someone who has so many personal troubles and issues in their life that it can become disruptive at times.

And so you've got to deal with the pastors have to deal with that disruption, have to deal with those issues. But do we deal with them respectfully? I have found at the end of the day when I feel like I have been dishonored or put down in fellowship, you know, it troubles us. And when I'm praying and evaluating the day before I go to sleep, it's like, why is this bothering me? Is it bothering me because I feel disrespected or should I be thinking about what caused that person to speak that way? We don't know what's happened in their life or what's going on or how they've been disrespected.

So we're called back to what would the Lord do? That's really good, because when the Holy Spirit dwells in us, you remember these. I think it was Ronald Reagan used to say he's like the Teflon guy that nothing sticks to him. He kind of keeps right on going.

That becomes us. We become these people that we know who we are before God. Absolutely.

And what others say or how others treat us is not going to define how I feel about myself or how I act. Correct. I'm going to go on in Christ Jesus.

The flip of that is how do I treat people? What am I called to do to treat people? Regardless. Tad, go ahead. Well, I was just thinking that a lot of times the people we're most likely to mistreat are the ones that are closest to us.

Yes. And we're told that we're supposed to. You're starting to meddle now.

But the same thing can be true in a church. But if we're following the golden rule, it says you're supposed to treat everybody well. You're not supposed to treat the wealthy or the famous better.

You're not supposed to treat the poor people worse. You're supposed to treat them all as if they're carrying the image of God because they are. Amen.

And if we remembered that and we just were going, I need to live out the golden rule all the time in every situation, this wouldn't be a problem anymore. Pastor Mark, I wrote down two different things. How are we defining ourselves and where do we receive our identity? And so true followers of Jesus, ambassadors for God, our identity is in him.

But we should also recognize those around us also have God's stamp and identity. Yeah. If we have that same identity, we're like, I don't have anything to prove.

I don't gain anything by treating the rich people well. I don't lose anything by treating poor people well. I don't need to worry about it.

I just treat everybody well. The freedom of this, Mark, is when you come to this place where the words of men do not puff me up, nor do they deflate me. A pastor can stand in the entryway of the church and have five people say, that was the greatest message I ever heard in my life.

And you can have three people say to him, that really ticked me off today. Sounds like refereeing. And the truth of the matter is you've got to walk out the door saying, did I say what God told me to say? Amen.

And if the whole church is mad about it, did I say what God told me to say? Did I say it in the spirit that Christ would have me to say it in? If the whole world pumps me up and says, oh, Pastor, you're so great. Do I walk out feeling puffed up or do I walk out going, thank you, Lord, you gave me a word that blessed people today? Now, that doesn't just apply to pastors. That applies to all of us.

And so when we walk through our life, we can't be the walking wounded. We've got to be the walking healed. We've been healed by God.

And what you shoot at me is no longer available to pierce me. There came a point when Jesus is teaching where he said, you know, all these people have walked away. He looked at disciples, are you going to leave too? He wasn't saying, oh, did I say the wrong message? He wasn't asking that question.

Are you going to are you going to reject the message too? So in all of our lives, we have to carefully examine ourselves to make sure we are not causing wounds. We have to carefully examine ourselves that we are not allowing others to cause wounds in us. That we are, as Liz said, that we're patient.

We don't know what they're going through that week. We don't know what's happened in their life that week. We don't know what other pressures are going on in their life.

I could tell numerous stories of people that I knew who were acting out of acting towards me or others out of a sense of frustration and pain that was going on in their personal life that almost nobody knew about but a few others. And I've had to look at people and say, you don't know what's going on with them right now. Just be patient with them.

So the word that's screaming out to me, this whole process is consistency. And it reminded me of when I was a basketball coach. I got 15 players who all live in 15 different homes.

Some of them can stay up to 2 o'clock watching TV. Some of them got to go to bed at 8. And so I had to be consistent. I only had one standard.

I could not change my standard for each one of those households. And I think James is speaking consistency here, especially as leadership. You have to be consistent with the people.

If the people know that you're consistent, then they know who you are. But if you mark one day and Larry the next day, they don't know who to follow. So I think consistency is a major part of what James is trying to get across.

Next week on the show, we'll get into how this happens, how we get there. And we live that way individually. And hopefully we develop it in our churches that the standard is we love people.

Period. And something that I learned some time ago that pivots on something you said to hurt people, hurt people. And that really helped me understand those people are hurting people because they're hurting.

And that really has helped me to recognize that person is just hurt. And so we're to be that healing balm that Jesus use into people's lives. Well, thank you for joining us for today's edition of Mark & Friends.

If today's program encouraged you, we invite you to continue studying and learning by visiting Mark & Friends page at GreatNewsRadio.org and WLUJ.org. There you'll find today's broadcast, the transcript, printed PDF, program summary, key takeaways, scripture references, quote of the day, broadcast notes, practical applications, today's challenge, a closing prayer, and our growing program resource library. It's all been put together about a week or so ago. So lots of resources for you to revisit today's program.

And like I said, there's a transcript of it, all these wonderful remarks that have been shared, along with some of the key verses that have been shared. So I hope you'll take that opportunity to stop by GreatNewsRadio.org or WLUJ.org. Well, thanks for listening. Thanks for being a part of our radio listening family.

This is Mark Burns, Pastor Mark Johnson, and a room of friends with the ministry of Great News Media. God bless you, and have a great day, night, and weekend.