

## **James: Putting Our Faith Into Action**

### **Lesson 3 - Playing Favorites**

#### **Warm up –**

1. In the book *Anne of Green Gables*, Anne asks Matthew Cuthbert, "Which would you rather be, divinely beautiful, dazzlingly clever, or angelically good?" Which would you rather be?

2. Think of a time when you were intentionally (or unintentionally) left out of something. When that happened, what went through your mind?

3. Here is a list of the occupations of some of the people Jesus hung out with. Attach the moniker upper class (UC), middle class (MC), or lower class (LC) to each of them.

- religious person
- tax collector
- leper
- prostitute
- bleeding woman
- dead person

#### **Lesson –**

Maybe you've heard of a little book called *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten* by Robert Fulghum. It talks about things like sharing everything and not hitting people and playing fair. Most people who read the book probably say to themselves, "Isn't that nice! That's the way the world is supposed to be." But if you really think about it, you'll have to conclude that for many of us, reality isn't nearly that nice.

The truth is, we aren't always treated very well ourselves. And too often we are at fault. We judge people by what we can gain by knowing them. We cruise by the solitary loser in the cafeteria in order to squeeze another chair around a table already crowded with the wildly popular. We fail to stand up for the kid who's the butt of mean jokes for fear of what others will think.

Our choice of the folks we associate with is important socially, the world tells us. And sometimes we end up treating people in the

light of what they can do for us. Not right, says Jesus. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." He could have added, "regardless of what you get out of the deal." In this lesson James zeroes in on how we should treat one another.

### **Read James 2: 1 - 9**

1. As you read this, notice who seem to be the bad people and who seem to be the good people.
2. What prompts us to show favoritism to some people over against others?
3. What has God chosen to give those who are down-and-out -- the poor -- since he doesn't give them money?
4. Maybe we don't make street people sit in the back row at church. But we're not off the hook. Discuss how you and others in your group show discrimination.
5. Think about this statement: Showing favoritism is primarily selfish; it is motivated by what we can get out of the relationship. Do you agree or disagree? Why?
6. How will you make a conscious effort to be less judgmental in the week ahead -- at home, at school, in this group?
7. If you treat some people better than others, you are treating some people worse than others. How does this hurt your Christian witness? How can you take pains to avoid showing favoritism?
8. What assumptions do you make when you come across people who are obviously not a part of your usual scene - either very poor or very rich or completely indifferent to fashion or whatever? Does their appearance make a difference in what you think of them?