

# The Book Of James: Keeping It Real

## James 2:1-4

\*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: Have you played favourites lately? Have you tried to justify such actions? It is true—we are closer to some people than others. But our hearts and motives are being weighed by the One *Who so loved the world*—the world that sinned and came short of His glory (John 3:16; Romans 3:23). Let's begin by asking God to investigate our hearts and shine His holy searchlight on any partiality or favouritism lurking in the shadows and keeping us from being effective messengers of His Good News.

### **James 2:1**

**(KJV)** *My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.*

**(NIV)** *My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism.*

As new believers, my wife Sheri and I never really fit in with the church crowd—not because we were not saved, but because we *were* saved. Let me explain: in the Body of Christ—which is wondrously diverse demographically and culturally, God has grafted into His household many new believers who do not look, sound, or act like those raised in the church and who are well-versed in Christian vocabulary and etiquette. And guess what? *God is okay with that!* Since I didn't grow up in the church and my tent-making work has always involved being alongside mostly non-believers, I have learned to temper my Christian *talk* in favour of my Christian *walk*—how I behave behind and in front of the world's camera. Real people, with all their self, sin, and sorrow, do not need to see religion in me. Rather, it is the compassion, humility, and love of Jesus that is most attractive to those in my sphere of influence—those presently seeking God.

Now I must qualify what I've said here and make it clear that being real as a believer requires that I allow the light of Jesus to shine through me (Matthew 5:14-16; Galatians 2:20). In other words, the fruit I bear before the world must be good fruit (John 15:8)—there will never be a reason for any to doubt that I am a follower of Christ. No reason whatsoever. And not because I am perfect, but because it is obvious that I have spent countless hours with my Saviour Who is perfect.

### **Acts 4:13**

*Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.*

Most of us are aware that Jesus perfectly modelled this familiar phrase: *Hate the sin. Love the sinner.* This statement intimates that there is a spiritual discerning of Scripture that must be rightly-divided and acted upon with love and care. In fact, the whole

counsel of God is founded in Jesus, who paid for our right to become God's own children. Our Lord saved us out of the world, and out of Satan's bony fingers. We are now His! But listen beloved—so is *anyone* who calls on His name (Romans 10:13).

So, what is this *separation* all about?

### **2Corinthians 6:14-18**

*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*

As is the pattern tragically played out in human history—*separation* often becomes *slavery*. Slavery to cultism, slavery to religion tradition, slavery to hatred, slavery to the charisma and deceitfulness of man—ultimate slavery to self, and to Satan. The reality is that none of us is that far from a fall (1 Corinthians 10:12), from a separating unto faith or folly. But when God separates a man, a woman, or child apart as His son or daughter, the separation is unto glory. This person has become a member of God's own household (Ephesians 2:19). So, while their physical body is still functioning here on earth, the Holy Spirit Who has come to reside in them is in continuous fellowship with God in heaven. Their soul is saved through Jesus. Heaven is their new home! Separation? Absolutely!

\*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: What is your Biblical view on spiritual separation—can you define it with Scripture? How does this truth play out in your daily life?

\*STUDY POINT: Find three passages in the New Testament that give us insight of how to live in our flesh on this earth while living and walking in the Spirit?

A Scripture that so beautifully and clearly describes our new mind and heart focus:

### **Colossians 3:1-4**

*If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.*

*Separation* is defined in the Greek as “aphorizo” meaning “set off by boundary” or “severed” and some believers have taken this to mean their glorious separation unto God the Father justifies a *them* and *us* mindset towards unbelievers. This attitude in turn perpetuates itself as condescension and condemnation—both of which Jesus forbids. Our Saviour, in fact, models a different kind of heart towards the poor in state and spirit:

**Matthew 9:36**

*But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.*

Just as we were once sheep without a shepherd, so are those God brings to our churches the wayward who may not fit in. Our job? To meet their immediate practical needs in love and introduce them to the Good Shepherd (John 10:11). My wife and I are delighted to be part of a church family that embraces *everyone* in Christ's love—and accepts one another, no matter what condition or circumstance we find ourselves in. This is the merciful heart of God for His near and distant children alike.

**1Peter 5:6-7**

*Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.*

James continues:

**James 2:2**

**(KJV)** *For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;*

**(NIV)** *Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in.*

**James 2:3**

**(KJV)** *And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:*

**(NIV)** *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,"*

It happened then, and it most certainly happens today. The carnal religious man separates himself hypocritically from those who do not look, talk, or smell like him:

**Luke 18:9-14**

*And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*

In doing so, he dishonours the name of Christ, who is the Head of the Body, the Church:

**Colossians 1:18**

*And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.*

Folks, if the agape love of Christ in your church is not overflowing into the lives of the least righteous and 'right-looking' and into the life of your community, it is time for examination, prayer, and repentance—in order that real revival can happen.

**James 2:4**

*(KJV) Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?*

*(NIV) have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?*

*Oh, God, examine Your church. Are we playing favourites? Forgive us if we are. Change our hearts. Increase our faith. Increase our love. Glorify Your holy name. Amen.*

~ Reverend Darren McClelland