

# Maple Springs Baptist Church

## Series: Life Hacks for Tough Times & Rough Relationships

### Week 3: Favoritism

... eventually you're going to come to a section of the Scripture that's uncomfortable, something that challenges you and makes you want to change.

Your obedience doesn't earn you any more of God's love. Our love for kids is not based on what they do but sometimes they just do things that we love.

God loves you and there's nothing you can do about it.

There's nothing you could do that would make God love you anymore and there's nothing you could do that would make God love you any less. Your obedience doesn't get God's love, it's evidence that God's love has gotten you. There are things though that you can do in your life that God loves, that just it thrills His heart to see you do.

James says our faith shows up in our obedience to God by the way that we treat other people ... the way we love our spouse, our children, the way we engage with our neighbor, with our coworkers. The way that we interact with strangers. How we treat people is the primary context that our faith shows up.

Visual metaphor: The Line. There's a line that's in your mind.

And everyone you know, every person you meet is somewhere in your line. There's someone who's in front of you and there's someone who's behind you.

Now, we've got all kind of measuring tools that we use to place people in our lives. And, this is general rule: people with more end up in front and people with less end up at the end.

People with more we put them in front. And very quickly we can measure where someone's at and place them in our life.

Our lines work best as you face the front. And the objective is you try to get ahead.

Now general, universal line etiquette is whatever you do, you don't turn around. If you do it makes for a very awkward moment, right?

The way lines work, because we want to get ahead, the tendency is to favor people in the front of the line. In the world the people at the front of the line get the VIP treatment and this means that people in the back of the line they usually end up feeling overlooked, vulnerable, undervalued and unappreciated and often live in obscurity.

Since kindergarten, many of us have been taught: you got to make it your objective to get to the front of the line because that's where success and significance is.

In Jesus day the religious system had a line like this. The most religious people were up in the front and the ones who felt the furthest from God were put in the back. But Jesus kept breaking out of line and spending time with the most vulnerable people, the marginalized and oppressed, even the people who had made a mess with their lives. When He called the disciples to follow Him, they thought, "Man, this is great. We're going to get a fast pass to go to the front of the line." But really all He did was take them quickly to the back of the line.

Jesus said in the Kingdom of God, the last in line are actually the first.

Sometimes in my life, I can feel far from God. Sometimes I can feel like I have drifted from Jesus. And usually, it's because I've become self-absorbed. Usually, it's because I've been facing the front, trying to get ahead. And what I found is, if I'd just turn around and look for the least, find the most vulnerable person in the room and befriend them and serve them and love them, I'd find Jesus. Because Jesus said that what you do to the least of these, you've done it to me. And when we're honest with ourselves and we're honest with God this line that's in our mind causes us this tendency to give VIP treatment to those in front of us and to overlook people who we may consider behind us. This is the pattern of the world.

**James 1:27.** The faith that God is looking for, the faith that God is searching for, the faith that pleases God, is when you care for those who are in need, when you give sacrificial care for those who are helpless.

**"to look after"**: to seek out, to go visit, to go out of your way to give help for those who are the most vulnerable. To go to the back of the line.

And then he ties this idea into favoritism. James 2:1. James is saying, remember Who you're following. Remember, you're following the One who emptied Himself. You're

following the one who sacrificed Himself. He's the One who served others. You're following the One who went to the back of the line.

God does not show favoritism. **Deuteronomy 10:17, 2 Chronicles 19:7, Romans 2:11**

Psychologists say that favoritism comes in two different forms: conscious bias and unconscious bias.

Conscious bias is defined as undisguised volitional discrimination against somebody or a group of people. It's obvious. It's willful. "I willfully, consciously hate you because of the color of someone's skin, because of political affiliation, because of socioeconomic status, because of a lifestyle."

Unconscious bias. This is more subtle. This is preferences that we're not even aware that we have.

James writes wanting us to see this bias that's present. **James 2:2-4.**

If you're not aware of your unconscious bias it can actually undermine your conscious beliefs. You can say I believe in God. You can say I believe in a God that every person matters to Him. You can say I believe in a God that every person is the same to Him. You can say every person matters to me. You can say every person matters the same to me. But if people don't know that they matter to you, they're not going to believe that they matter to God. We have to be intentional with our love to reveal to people that they matter to us, and to be aware of the unconscious bias that we might have.

Life-principle: **You fight favoritism (and you grow in character) by giving VIP treatment to those more vulnerable than you.** You fight favoritism in your heart and you grow in character by giving VIP treatment to those who are more vulnerable than you. We fight favoritism by going to the back of the line. This isn't optional for us. As a church, this is our obligation, and God doesn't have another set of hands and feet on the earth other than His church. We're called to this.

2 people drive up for church. One person nice car, other a beater. They both come into church and you've got one seat next to you. Who do you give it to?

James goes on **James 2:5-6a, 8-10, 12-13**

Mercy is love in action. Put your love in action. Mercy is giving VIP treatment. It's going to the back of the line. It's not just trying to get the VIP treatment but giving the VIP treatment. Not just trying to be served, but to actually serving other people. That's when we're most like Christ.

At some point you just have to make a decision how you're going to live your life. Are you going to live your life trying to impress other people? Or, are you going to live your life trying to make an impact?

### **LIFE HACKS:**

#### **1. Learn names.**

Names matter. When you read through the Bible you find that God, whenever He calls a person to do something, He calls them by name.

Dale Carnegie said there is no sweeter sound to a person's ear than the sound of his or her own name.

To learn other people's names, we have to be focused on other people. When you focus on learning someone's name it's a powerful thing.

When no one cares about your name in life, when you feel like that, it could be like prison for the soul. But when you learn someone's name or remember someone's name it liberates their soul. It's a gift that you give to help someone feel like a VIP.

#### **2. Listen to stories.**

A guy I heard about does this so well. When he meets somebody for the first time. He learns their name and then he says, "I collect stories. Tell me your story. Tell me your favorite life story." And then he just listens to their story. And people just tell him stories. He has a way of just locking in and giving his undivided attention to people. And what that says is you matter to me.

If you want to do the business of God, what Jesus teaches us is, you've got to go to people that other people overlook and you give me your attention. The people that are chronically ill, the poor, the marginalized and when you give them your attention you're giving oxygen for their souls. You are saying, "You matter to me." It's powerful.

#### **3. Share possessions.**

The story of man and caddy. Here's what I've learned from that story. Two things. First, there's a big difference between giving and sharing. Second, mercy is contagious.

When you get out of line and go to the back other people will follow too see. The real leader isn't the one that fights for the front of the line. The real leader is the one who gets out of line and goes to the back of the line and other people will follow. Mercy is contagious.

4. Provide opportunities.

This is where you use the influence and the resources that you have to take people places that they couldn't go on their own. That's what mercy is. That we would reveal to those around us that "the God of the universe loves you too."

Conclusion: 2 Questions: **In your own heart, has God revealed any favoritism?** And as God reveals that, don't just acknowledge it. Repent from it and turn toward loving those that you've been biased toward.

Secondly, **where would God call you to go to the back of the line?**