

Wisdom for a New Year
Pride & Prejudice ~ James 2:1 - 13
January 19 & 20, 2008

My dear brothers and sisters, how can you claim to have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ if you favor some people over others?

For example, suppose someone comes into your meeting dressed in fancy clothes and expensive jewelry, and another comes in who is poor and dressed in dirty clothes. If you give special attention and a good seat to the rich person, but you say to the poor one, “You can stand over there, or else sit on the floor”—well, doesn’t this discrimination show that your judgments are guided by evil motives?

But if you favor some people over others, you are committing a sin.

James chapter 2 verses 1-4 & 9 (930)

The human heart is the most deceitful (*a fraud!*) of all things and desperately wicked (*sick!*). Who really knows how bad it is? *Jeremiah chapter 17 verse 9 (587)*

- Don’t say “I don’t struggle with racism or prejudice!” Instead, agree with God that our hearts are “a fraud & sick,” thus capable of anything
- Have courage to pray & ask God to reveal your sin in how you treat, look at or think about those who are different than you. Confess this sin & ask God to help you grow in this area

For Christ Himself has brought peace (*rest*) to us.

He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in His own body on the cross, He broke down the wall of hostility that separated us. He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. **He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in Himself one new people from the two groups.**

Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of His death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death. Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us.

Ephesians chapter 2 verses 14-18 (896)

- All racial, economic, denominational & political differences are put to “rest” in Christ
- As a Christ-follower, in Christ my hostility towards other races, denominations, political views or economic standings have all been abolished
- Instead of being divided & separate, in Christ all people are made one because of what Jesus did on the cross

If someone says, “I love God,” but hates a Christian brother or sister, that person is a liar; for if we don’t love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see? And He has given us this command: **Those who love God must also love their Christian brothers and sisters. *1 John chapter 4 verses 20 & 21 (943)***

Jesus said, “I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in Me through their message. **I pray that they will all be one, just as You and I are one**—as You are in Me, Father, and I am in You. **And may they be in Us so the world will believe (come to faith!) You sent Me.** May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that You sent Me and that You love them as much as You love Me.”

John chapter 17 verses 20-23 (825)

- Here, Jesus is praying for us!
- His prayer? That we would be unified, one with all other Christ-followers, so that as a result, the world would know that Jesus really is the only way!
- **Question...knowing what Jesus prayed for here, why is it that church continues to be one of the most racially-separated areas in all of society?**

Action steps:

- Before you leave today, find 5 people who are different than you (race, nationality, gender, economic / social standing, etc) and welcome them to Bethel, thank them for coming today. Do this each time you're at Bethel
- Spend time this week reading, studying & praying through the verses on this notes-page. When you pray, ask God to show you where you need to grow & change so you can honor God in this area
- This week, at work, school, your neighborhood, church...be intentional about greeting, spending time with, eating with those who are different than you
- Share what God is doing in you in this area with someone of a different race
- In any social setting, be the first person to reach across the racial divide to greet & welcome another person
- Be intentional about building relationships across racial lines. Spend your time listening to and learning from, not arguing or convincing
- Refuse to look at people through “labels” or stereotypes. Instead, spend time with those who are different & learn what their hopes & dreams are

Resources for further study...

- **God's Politics:** *Why the Right Gets it Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It*, by Jim Wallis
- **Faith Works:** *How to Live Your Beliefs and Ignite Positive Social Change*, by Jim Wallis
- **The End of Poverty:** *Economic Possibilities for Our Time*, by Jeffrey Sachs
- **Divided by Faith:** *Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America*, by Michael Emerson & Christian Smith
- **United by Faith:** *The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of Race*, by DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey & Chai-Kim
- **Letters Across the Divide:** *Two Friends Explore Racism, Friendship, and Faith*, by David Anderson & Brent Zuercher

Next week: How to fight my temptations & win! (James 1:12-18)