

Introduction:

1. Our worship leader says "Turn around and say hello to someone". You turn around and see Matt Damon and an ordinary looking stranger. Who would you greet the most enthusiastically? Why?
2. Do you agree or disagree with the following: "If you are rich God is pleased with you and is blessing you".

Understanding:

3. Read 1 Sam 16:1-13 (especially v.7) about the search for a replacement king for Saul. How does this theme compare to today's passage?
4. James is not the only place where Scripture talks about God's heart for the poor. Read Matthew 5:3-5. Is this the same idea as today's passage?
5. A certain church (not Jacksonville Chapel) had an unwritten rule that the more you gave to the church the more say you had in how the church was run. Based on today's passage, is that biblical? Why or why not?
6. There is survey evidence that says that the more attractive an individual, the greater the likelihood that that person will be hired for a job. This is known as the "what is beautiful is good" stereotype. Evaluate "what is beautiful is good" in the light of today's passage.
7. Favoritism misrepresents God's character. See 1 Cor 1:26-31. What does this say about smart powerful people? What is the important warning found here for us to follow?
8. According to v 10-11, what does a person have to do to be considered a lawbreaker? This actually means that we are guilty before God's court! Why would God condemn us as lawbreakers if our sins are only "minor" ones, such as favoritism? What is our rescue?
9. We need to find completeness in Christ. Read Titus 3:4-6. What part did our deeds have to do with finding Christ? What happened inside of us? What quality of God caused all of this? What does today's passage say about us showing that quality of God?
10. Read what Peter said in Acts 10:34-35 about how God looks at things. How is this similar to what we had in today's passage?
11. Read about when Moses charged the judges in Israel in Deuteronomy 1:16-17. What does this say about not being partial? And about how we view powerful people?

Application:

Just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.
Because of our connection with the risen Christ, we can develop a very different way of treating people. With that in mind consider these 3 application questions:

12. In Isaiah 42:8 it says
"I am the Lord; that is my name!
I will not yield my glory to another
or my praise to idols."

In which area of your life are you most at risk of doing this? This week ask God to begin to change it.

13. Consider Isaiah 66:2:

"Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?" declares the LORD.

"These are the ones I look on with favor: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word."

In which area are you MOST likely to have a contrite spirit? Give thanks for that. And in which area the LEAST likely? Ask God to begin to change that.

14. Mrs. Jones' daughter blew off some people and then said "All I did was ignore them. What's the big deal?" How would you address this attitude without scolding and lecturing her?