



Just Grow Up!

James - A Manual for Maturity

Defining True Equity

1. Read James 2:1-13. What is the difference between how our culture defines “equity” and the idea of equality? Does the Bible teach this idea of equity? Does the Bible teach the idea of equality? Can you give a verse that supports your position on either of these two ideas?
2. What is discrimination? When is discrimination wrong? When is it good? What is favoritism? Is favoritism ever a good thing?
3. Pastor Rick said that there are five ways that we either discriminate against people or show them favoritism that should never occur with Christians, what were they? Which one(s) have you personally experienced? Which one(s) do you find yourself doing sometimes?
4. In the James 2 passage, which one of the characteristics were the people showing favoritism toward? What argument does he use to show how stupid this was? Do you think, for the most part, that group of people still do the same things? Why do we think so highly of those people in our culture?
5. Pastor Rick brought out 3 ways that favoritism and prejudice are wrong, what were they? Can you think of any other ways in which they are wrong?
6. In the James 2 passage, it says if we break one of God’s laws, it is the same as if we broke all of God’s laws. What do you think this means? How is this different from how we typically think of sin as humans?

ANSWERS

1. The way that equity is defined in our culture today is that no matter what a person's circumstances or behavior or lifestyle, everyone should receive exactly the same thing, they should have equal outcomes in life. No matter where you started in life or what you have done, you should receive the same as everyone else. In the past this idea has been called socialism, that society has an obligation to equalize everyone's outcome so that some do not have more than others as far as resources are concerned. What it is defined as in the dictionary is the quality of being fair and impartial. This has always been the idea in the US justice system; everyone is treated the same no matter what their background. Equality deals with the idea of beginnings, everyone has an equal opportunity to be successful, everyone starts at the same place on a level playing field. But it relies on whether or not you work hard and take advantage of the opportunities you have. The idea of equity is connected to fairness: it is not fair that some have more than others. Equality is connected to the idea of justice, which is that everyone should receive what they deserve based on their efforts. God never guarantees that life will be fair, if he did he would have to create everyone with exactly the same skills and abilities. Some people going to heaven and some to hell is not fair, but it is just. 2 Thessalonians 3:10 tells us that if a person who can work is not willing to work, then they should not eat. Galatians 3:28 tells us that we are all equal in Christ.
2. To discriminate means to take note of the differences between two things, usually with the outcome of choosing the one that is perceived to be better than the other. For example, employers discriminate between two people when they prefer to hire one person over another. There is nothing wrong with this if the decision is based on past behavior, such as if a person works hard as opposed to a person who does not. It becomes wrong when the discrimination is based on something the person has no control over; such as their skin color. God says we should be discriminatory about the people that we spend time with: Don't hang out with people who want to do what is wrong, hang out with Christians who want to do what is right. So, if the discrimination is based on good and bad behavior, that is a good thing. If it is based on an unchangeable attribute that a person cannot control, that is a bad thing. Favoritism is preferring one person above another and granting them special privileges that they have not earned. There is nothing wrong with rewarding good behavior, God does this with us. As Christians, we are never to treat some better than others simply because we like them, we are to treat all people equally.
3. The five characteristics that we should not discriminate against people or show favoritism to them are: A. Appearance; B. Ancestry, C. Achievement, D. Affluence and E. Age.
4. In James 2 they were showing favoritism to wealthy people and discriminating against the poor people. The reason he says this is stupid is that it was the wealthy people who mis-treated them the most.
5. The three ways they are wrong are: A. They are unchristian, B. They are unreasonable, and C. They are unreasonable.
6. This is the idea that before God, if we break one of his laws (sin), we are just as guilty before God as the person who breaks a lot of God's laws. Whether you commit only one sin, or a lot of sins, the consequences are the same: Hell. God does not classify sin. To God telling a lie is equally as evil as murdering a person. As far as God is concerned, telling a little white lie would keep you out of heaven as much as killing a person or any other sin. As humans we classify sin, but we have to for the sake of our justice system. You don't put a person to death for a little white lie, but we do for murder.