

Is the Act of Playing Favorites in the Church a Sin?

Have you ever known a parent who played favorites with their children? Have you ever felt like someone was favored over you?

Maybe you've felt the pain of not being the favorite. Playing favorites is not something new. In fact, the first family of faith has a legacy of playing favorites that caused all kinds of conflict and problems.

In this article, we're going to look into the dangers of playing favorites and see how it can cause conflicts in our churches, in our families, in our businesses and on our jobs. Playing favorites in the body of Christ causes a lot of people a lot of unnecessary pain and heartache.

I believe playing favorites will unfortunately cause Christians to backslide or to become disillusioned in their faith. Playing favorites will cause those in the Christian ranks to strive against each other in order to be accepted into the favored group. Playing favorites will cause the *favored* ones to shun and humiliate those who are not recognized as the ministry *favorites*. Playing favorites is clearly not God's best and I pray that conviction will touch the reader and changes will be made in the body of Christ.

In the book of James, chapter 2:1-10, God deals with the subject of *playing favorites* in the church. In James 2:1 (MEV) God says, "*My brothers, have faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, without partiality ...* " In James 2:9, God says, "*If we show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as sinners.*"

Playing favorites in the body of Christ is causing division, strife, offenses and many to become disillusioned and walk away from the church. When we preach, *God is no respecter of persons* and then treat church attendees like lower class citizens, we are sending a mixed message and causing spiritual confusion. When we train our ushers to cater to the rich, successful and influential and neglect the ministering to the saints, we are actually hurting our own ministries.

In James, chapter two, God gives us a command to treat all of His children with the same respect and to honor them all in the same way. But because some have become so desperate for jet fuel and an insatiable desire to have the biggest ministry, this command is often overlooked.

I was in attendance at a charismatic camp meeting in the southern part of the United States when I actually overheard a young minister ask another minister, "How much will it take for me to get a front row seat?" The older minister's response was, "You don't want to know!" I guess that meant it was going to cost him several thousand dollars and a lifetime subscription to the *big givers club* in order to have special seating.

The young minister who asked that question came from a small, but wealthy Texas church and he was willing to use the offerings of his local church in order to have preferential treatment at a special meeting. What he was really asking is how do I become one of the ministry's favorites? How can I get an invitation to green room? How can I get a seat at the minister's table? How can I get on the influential list of approved guest speakers?

That minister was willing to misappropriate his church's funds in order to pay for special recognition. I witnessed that young minister beginning to give his way into a position of prominence in that particular camp. What a horrible lesson to teach a young minister, that you can use money to promote

yourself; when God is the One Who promotes the faithful (Matthew 25:21–30).

In the book of Acts, Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, so he offered money to purchase the anointing and Peter's response was, "*Your money perish with you*" (Acts 8:19–21). Peter went on to say that Simon's heart was not right in this manner. Leaders, our hearts are not right in this manner.

Unfortunately today, we have ministries selling favor, selling seats, selling favoritism, gathering groups of deceived givers, fleecing them, and calling it a *sons and daughters meeting*. Of course, we know the Bible teaches us the love of money is the root of all evil and it's the lust for bigger and bigger offerings that is causing us to create this system of favoritism. Those who haven't broken the alabaster box and poured their life savings on the feet of the anointed are shunned and become disillusioned in their faith. Leaders, don't take God's holy offerings and turn it into a charismatic pyramid scheme.

Remember, Sarah coerced Abraham to prefer Isaac over Ishmael—we still see that seed of bitterness in the terrorists who attack us today. Isaac continued this pattern as he favored Esau and Rebecca favored Jacob, which led to hatred, betrayal and division in the family. Jacob continues the family trait of favoritism as he chose Joseph to be his favorite. This caused Joseph to be hated and despised by his own family and they faked his death and sold him into slavery. Joseph probably thought being the favorite was great, until he hit the bottom of the pit.

I watched a pastor lose his entire church after he made one man his favorite spiritual son, only to have that son betray him and destroy his work. Church, wake up, playing favorites is not the love of God in action; it's the demonstration of corruption in the heart of a man. Whatever you receive from

playing favorites, is not worth it! God commands us in James, Chapter 2—don't play favorites!

Be encouraged if you've been on the bad side of one of these situations, that God looks at the heart of man and God promotes faithfulness (1 Samuel 16:7). Keep your heart right before the Lord—give as unto the Lord—serve as unto the Lord and the Lord who sees in secret will reward you for your efforts.

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