

## **BEST DRESSED**

Imagine for a moment that it is your senior year in high school. You walk into the commons area and realize that today is the day you will be voting on the “Who’s Who” for the yearbook. You begin to get nervous as you run the categories through your mind, wondering which one, if any, you will be nominated and chosen for - Mr. And Miss High School, Most Athletic, Most Studious, Most Likely to Succeed, Best Personality, Best Role Model, *Best Dressed?* You immediately throw that category out of the window if you have adorned yourself with baggy sweatpants and a T-shirt your entire high school career. Our clothes and style have become one of the most important things to us. Pressured by Hollywood and the latest trends, we are bombarded with name brand items and expensive tastes. For some people, what they wear is the identifying factor of who they are, while for others it’s simply something that they have to do. So really, what’s the big deal about fashion? Do we have to have the latest trends and name brands to be somebody? Do the clothes that we have on our backs really define the people that we are inside?

James knew that clothing and money would have a large impact on the way that people were treated in this world, even within the church doors. Despite our best intentions, many of us still show favoritism to visitors within our church walls based on their appearance alone. Many of us miss out on great friendships and opportunity because we judge before we know. We must make a conscious effort to stop the rule of favoritism in our lives before we keep people from the love of Christ through our judgmental glances.

## **THE FLAWS OF FAVORITISM**

### **DON’T JUDGE BY CLOTHES**

Even in the times when the New Testament was written, people judged others due to material goods. James writes that we should have faith in God without showing favoritism. Jesus Christ came for all people, for the whosoever, and thus we should love all people no matter their clothing. The churches during this time were just beginning to get on their feet and settle in. When individuals came into the church, the main point of interest was that they were potential church members and individuals who could tithe. When new people came into the church, members would judge them and cater to their needs according to their style and type of dress. James even talked about how people with nice clothes would be seated near the front or in special seating, while people with less expensive clothes would be placed on the floor or in the back of the congregation. How inconsiderate! The bad thing is that this is still very apparent in the churches across the nation. No, we don’t make the people with less expensive clothes sit on the floor, but unfortunately there is often a difference with the treatment they receive compared to a person with rich, trendy clothes. We must have the knowledge to realize where we falter in treating certain people differently simply because of their outward appearance.

### **DON'T JUDGE BY CASH**

After James hit on the issue of favoritism shown by clothing, he also touched on showing favoritism because of money. James reinforced the fact that God chose the poor of the world to be rich in faith. He talked how the rich were the ones who oppressed the church members themselves, yet they were still catering to the rich visitors' needs. Cash speaks many times louder than anything else. Today, in the world that we live in, the world measures importance by the amount of cash someone has in their bank account or the material possessions that they have bought with them. This type of attitude and judgement should not seep into the church, yet it has, and continues to do so. We should not be judging individuals that come into our church's doors by their income. Many times we miss out on making great friends and relationships because we "judge the book by its cover."

### **LIVE BY THE ROYAL LAW**

As James told us how we should not be living, he then turned his attention to how we should be living - through the royal law. We should be loving our neighbors as ourselves. That means that we should not be loving others based on the clothes they are wearing or the money they are carrying. We should not show favoritism because, if we do, James calls that a sin. He then goes on to show the seriousness of our sin because when we break one part of the law, we are guilty of breaking the entirety of the law. We must live in the law of freedom, where loving others should be our top priority. We must make a solid effort to realize when we begin to show favoritism and stop it before we allow it to grow further. We must love our neighbors as ourselves and thus fulfill the Royal Law.

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