

Introduction: How do we experience social restoration?

Phase 1:

Social **DISTINCTION**

My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism.

James 2:1

Command:

Stop playing **FAVORITES**

The social distinction of a Christ-centered community is that there is **NO** social distinction.

Definition:

Favoritism – “To make unjust distinctions between people by treating one person better than another.”

What does favoritism / partiality look like?

- Treating certain people as more **VALUABLE** than other people.
- Looking down on those with whom you **DISAGREE**.
- Overlooking those who make you **UNCOMFORTABLE**.

Why is this such a big deal?

Reason #1:

It is an affront to the **HEART** of **GOD**.

James 2:5-7

Reason #2:

The law of **LOVE** demands **CONSISTENCY**.

James 2:8-11

Reason #3:

You are not the **JUDGE** and **JURY**, God is.

James 2:12-13

Social restoration begins when followers of Jesus embrace there are no social distinctions.

- Embrace and own that you play favorites.

- Before you speak or act, ask yourself, “What does love require of me?”

“God, help me to see others not as my enemies or as ungodly, but rather as thirsty people. And give me the courage and compassion to offer Your Living Water, which alone quenches deep thirst.”

Henri Nouwen

“Our confused society badly needs a community of contrast, a counterculture of ordinary pilgrims who insist on living a different way.”

Philip Yancey

Discussion Questions:

1. Describe a time when you demonstrated favoritism. What was the outcome?
2. Why is showing favoritism so important to recognize?
3. Are you currently demonstrating favoritism? What steps will you take to counteract this behavior?
4. What does love require of you today? How will you specifically demonstrate this love?

Introduction: How do we bring about social restoration?

Phase 1:

Social Distinction

Social restoration begins when followers of Jesus embrace there are no social distinctions.

Phase 2:

Social **ACTION**

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? ¹⁵ Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

James 2:14-17

The calling: A faith that **WORKS**

Definition:

Faith – "A strong confidence in, and reliance upon someone or something; to believe to the extent of complete trust and reliance." Check consistency from #1

What happened to salvation by faith alone?

⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Ephesians 2:8-10

You are not saved **BY** good works; you are saved **FOR** good works.

“Grace is not opposed to effort, it is opposed to earning. Earning is an attitude. Effort is an action.”

Dallas Willard

Why is a faith that works so important?

- Your **BEHAVIOR** reveals what you truly **BELIEVE**. James 1:18-19
- Action is the **COMPLETION** not the **COMPETITION** of faith. James 1:20-24
- Faith without **ACTION** is like a body without **BREATH**. James 1:25-26

Social restoration demands that followers of Jesus put their faith into social action.

In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:16

³⁴ “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.”

John 13:34-35

Discussion Questions:

1. Do your actions reflect the faith that you claim to have? Why or why not?
2. Describe the relationship between faith and good works. See Ephesians 2:8-10 and James 2:14-17.
3. Take a moment to reflect on how you spend your time, energy, and money. What does that reveal about your core convictions?
4. How has the Lord been prompting you to put your faith into action? What steps will you take to accomplish this calling?

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Phase 3:

Social **LANGUAGE**

¹ Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. ² We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.

James 3:1-2

Command: Watch your **WORDS**

Definition:

Words – “A communication where by the mind finds expression.”

How do you watch your words?

Before you speak, stop and think:

- Is it **TRUE**?
- Is it **HELPFUL**?
- Is it **KIND**?
- Have I truly **LISTENED**?

Why are you to be so careful with what you say?

- Your words have **DIRECTIONAL** force. James 3:3-4
- Your words have **DESTRUCTIVE** power. James 3:5-6
- Your words are very **DIFFICULT** to control. James 3:7-8

What do you do?

- Repent for the **INCONGRUITY** of your words. James 3:9-10
- Go to the **ROOT** to address the **FRUIT**. James 3:11-12

⁴³ For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. ⁴⁴ For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush. ⁴⁵ The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.

Luke 6:43-45

Social restoration requires followers of Jesus to do the heart work to bring about redemptive social language.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why are your words so important and what do your words reveal about who you really are?
2. Before you speak you should stop and think, “is it true?”, “is it helpful?”, “is it kind?”, and “have I truly listened?” Think of a time when you spoke before thinking. What was the outcome and how could it have been different had you stopped to ask these questions?
3. Do you need to repent for the incongruity of your words? Take a moment to ask the Lord for forgiveness and strength to control your words.
4. How will you specifically do the heart work to bring about redemptive social language?

Recap: How do we experience social restoration?

Phase 1: Social Distinction

Social restoration begins when followers of Jesus embrace there are no social distinctions.

Phase 2: Social Action

Social restoration demands that followers of Jesus put their faith into social action.

Phase 3: Social Language

Social restoration requires followers of Jesus to do the heart work to bring about redemptive social language.

How are we to navigate these culturally complex, emotionally charged, socially intense times to help bring about social restoration?

Phase 4: Social **WISDOM**

¹³ Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.

James 3:13

Command: Walk in **WISDOM**.

Definition: Wisdom – “The skill of living life well in God’s universe.”

What exactly does walking in wisdom look like?

Watch out for **COUNTERFEIT** wisdom.

¹⁴ But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. ¹⁵ Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶ For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

James 3:14-16

Counterfeit wisdom:

- Fueled by **NEGATIVE EMOTIONS**.
- Sounds **GOOD**, but its source is **BAD**.
- Produces **DIVISION**, **DISORDER**, and **DISCORD**.

True wisdom **ALWAYS** takes the **HIGH** road.

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

James 3:17

Pure: “Holy, without moral defect, originally – ‘what awakens awe.’”

Peace-loving: “Characterized by or prompting a state of wholeness or wellbeing; right relationships between individuals and between individuals and God.”

Considerate: “Not insisting on the right to enforce the strict letter of the law or custom; being merciful, lenient.”

Submissive: “Willing and open to adopting another position, belief or course of action with sufficient reason or evidence; open to reason, willing to listen, not stubborn.”

Full of mercy/good fruit: “Compassion moved to action, pity for the one who is suffering unjustly, and pity for the one who suffering was brought on by themselves.”

Impartial: “Not tending to cause factions or divisions within a group; not being judgmental or divisive, free from prejudice.”

Sincere: “Without hypocrisy or pretense; it never pretends to be what it is not and it never acts a part to gain its own ends.”

True wisdom sows seeds of RECONCILIATION.

Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

James 3:18

Social restoration is cultivated by followers of Jesus sowing peace as true social wisdom.

Discussion Questions:

1. How is the wisdom from God different from counterfeit wisdom? Explain.
2. What are some sources of counterfeit wisdom in your life? What steps will you take to take the “high road”?
3. How will you specifically cultivate peace in your life?
4. Take some time to re-read James 3:17. Prayerfully ask the Lord to fill you with His wisdom.