

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Message Series: Life Hacks for Tough Times & Rough Relationships
Message Title: Favoritism
Speaker: Kevin Queen
Date: October 25-26, 2014

Icebreaker:

Do you have any subconscious habits? (sleep walking/talking, biting nails, twirling hair, etc.)

Message Overview:

Today's message is the third in the series LIFE HACKS. Life hacks are free or inexpensive tips and tricks to make your life simpler and easier (see series promo: <http://vimeo.com/108359527>). The Bible is full of practical ways that we can improve our lives. This week, Pastor Kevin Queen shared how the lessons from the Book of James can help us to fight favoritism and grow in character.

The life principle shared by KQ was:

You fight favoritism (and grow in character) by giving VIP treatment to those more vulnerable than you.

1. Learn Names.
2. Listen to Stories.
3. Share Possessions.
4. Provide Opportunities.

KQ noted that God does not show favoritism (read Deut. 10:17, 2 Chron 19:7, and Romans 2:11). Jesus modeled this in his life and ministry. KQ used a visual example of a line to represent how Jesus was countercultural. In our world, we align people based on their power, or attractiveness, or financial success, etc. We see ourselves as somewhere along that line, and we are taught by our culture that the goal is to move to the front of the line. But Jesus stepped out of the line and moved to the end. When he called his disciples, he didn't take them to the front of the line, but to the back.

Discussion:

(Leaders: The questions that follow are designed to stir reflection and discussion on this week's primary message points. Please read through them prior to your meeting, so you can be prepared to prayerfully pace your group well. And remember, as leader, your goal is to promote increased *biblical* awareness, as well as individual *self* awareness – a combination that with the help of the Holy Spirit, results in revelation and...transformation!)

- In his message, KQ said that often we want to argue that Christianity shouldn't be a list of rules of things we should do. But James actually tells us that it is about being faithful and following commands in obedience to God. Out of 108 verses in James, 59 are commands. As PK had taught previously, we need to not just be hearers of the Word, but doers. There are things we need to do.

Are there things you need to do in your job, marriage, parenting, etc.? Things that if they do not get done, you are not going to succeed in that area of your life?

What if you stopped doing the things that you need to do at home and just said, "Well, they know how I really feel about them. It's okay if I don't feed them or clean or take the kids to school. They still know that I love them." Or if you stopped doing your work at your job and thought, "They still know that I want my job and enjoy their company and like getting a paycheck. I don't really have to do stuff." You are demonstrating how you feel about those relationships by your actions and how you treat the people you are in relationships with.

- Read James 1:27. Our obedience doesn't earn God's love. KQ said, "Your obedience is not what gets you God's love. It's the evidence that God's love has gotten you." And the way that we demonstrate that God's love has gotten us is in our relationships. When James said in 1:27 "keep yourself from being polluted by the world," he's talking about the system of the world that runs contrary to the heart of God. The system of this world that says that some people matter more than others. More valuable than others. When we give preference to people who are at the front of the line, we are ignoring the first part of the verse that says we are to seek out and visit people who are helpless. KQ witnessed this when his mother visited Ms. Miller each week. Have you witnessed this kind of countercultural influence in your life?
- Read James 2:1-13. James erases the lines that our culture draws by telling us that God does not view anyone as more or less worthy of his love. Unfortunately, we view people through a worldly lens, whether it is a conscious or unconscious bias. KQ said a conscious bias is when a person makes the choice to hate a person or group (like the New Orleans Saints). An unconscious bias is like twirling your hair or sleep talking – you may not even be aware that you are doing it. In order to fight favoritism, we need to become more aware. How can you make yourself aware of people who are vulnerable?
- KQ asked us to consider where there is bias in our hearts. He said we need to not just ponder this, but repent of it. Did you have time to consider this after this weekend's message? If you could not identify an area of bias, do you think you are unbiased, or do you think you just can't see it because it is unconscious bias?

One of the ways that we can overcome bias is by intentional kindness and attention to others. The life hacks KQ suggested included learning names, listening to stories, sharing possessions, and providing opportunities. Which one of these is the most challenging for you personally?

By going to the back of the line, we will understand how we might have been showing favoritism and been unaware of our biases. What can you do to go to the back of the line in your life?

Wrap-Up/Close:

God extended grace and mercy to us. As we have received God's mercy, we need to extend it to others. We need to learn people's names and faces, and listen to God about how we should serve them. We need to listen to their stories, not caring about what people think of us, but caring about people. Help us to point people to you.

We tend to move to the front of the line, toward people like us or who have more than us. Pray that God will make us aware of this, and draw us to the end of the line, where we will find the vulnerable, and we will find Jesus there, every time.

Throughout the Week: (Optional)

At the end of the service, we were asked two questions. If you have not yet given them consideration, spend time considering this week:

- Every person matters equally to God but does every person matter equally to you? Where is there conscious or unconscious bias in your heart? What do you need to confess to God
- (What would it look like for you to turn around and go to the back of the line, at work? At school? At church? In your community?)