

RAD

WEEK 2 (HYBRID)

BIG IDEA

James 2:1-17; Proverbs 22:1-2, 8-9, 22-23; Romans 2:11

Bible

James 2:1-17; Proverbs 22:1-2, 8-9, 22-23; Romans 2:11

WHAT?

POLL | Favorite 90s Fashion Trends

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Show a series of side-by-side images of 90s fashion trends. Then have students vote on their favorites by raising their hands, standing up, cheering, or running to a spot in the room that you designate. You might use examples like . . .*
 - [Neon](#)
 - [Animal print](#)
 - [Plaid](#)
 - [MC Hammer pants](#)
 - [Bucket hats](#)
 - [Denim everything](#)
 - [Tinted glasses](#)
 - [Jelly sandals](#)
 - [Windsuits](#)
 - [Fanny packs](#)
 - [Overalls](#)
 - [Snap bracelets](#)
 - [Bandanas](#)
 - [Visors](#)

IMAGES | Mary Kate & Ashley Olsen

- These days, we might find a lot of 90s fashion pretty cringeworthy, but at the time, these trends were sported by some real fashion icons — like the Olsen twins.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Show a few images of Mary Kate and Ashley Olsen from the 90s. [Here are some examples](#) to inspire you!*
- In the 90s, Mary Kate and Ashley were fashion favorites. Lots of girls looked to them to see what was cool. Why? *Full House*.

POLL | What About You?

- It feels good when you're the favorite, but pretty awful when someone else is being shown favoritism.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Have students reply to the following questions by either raising their hands or standing.*
- So what about you?
 - **Have you ever felt like "the favorite"?**
 - **Have you ever worried someone else (a sibling, classmate, or friend) was "the favorite"?**
 - **Have you ever seen someone receive special treatment because they were "the favorite"?**
 - **Do you think you've ever shown someone favoritism?**

QUESTION | What is favoritism?

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Ask the following questions and give a few students a chance to respond.*
- What do you think?
 - **Is it bad to have favorite people? Why or why not?**
 - **Is playing favorites the same as having favorite people?**
 - **If it's not bad to have favorite people, is it bad to play favorites?**
 - **What's the difference between having favorite people and playing favorites?**
- Of course, it's okay to have favorite people! That's healthy! We can't be best friends with everyone, and we all need a few close friendships. But favoritism . . .
 - Excludes people.
 - Is unfair.
 - Hurts.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
 - **What's your favorite thing?**
 - * **What kind of people are your favorite kind of people?**
 - **Do you think it's okay to have favorite people? Why or why not?**
 - **What's the difference between having favorite people and showing favoritism?**

SO WHAT?

STORY | Talk about a time you experienced, witnessed, or showed favoritism.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time when you saw the negative effects of favoritism. Since students will have already seen a lighthearted example of favoritism, give an example that shows how favoritism can hurt, exclude, or neglect someone in need.*

THAT'S RAD

- Today, we're going to talk about the difference between having favorites and playing favorites because, as we'll see, God has something to say about this — and it's pretty radical.
- Like we mentioned last week, there were a lot of people who thought Jesus was too "radical."
 - In the 90s, "rad" meant "cool." But its real meaning has to do with being different, revolutionary, and counter-cultural.
 - What Jesus said about loving God and others was radical, and what He teaches us about showing favoritism is pretty radical too.

SCRIPTURE | James 2:1-10

- In this series, we're looking to the Bible for practical advice on how to change the world with God's radical love, and that search has led us to the book of James.
 - This "book" is a letter written by a guy named James, Jesus' brother.
 - Can you imagine growing up with Jesus as a brother? I wonder if James ever felt like Jesus was his parents' favorite kid.
 - Because James knew Jesus so well, the letter he wrote is packed with summaries of Jesus' teachings, retold in James' own words.
- James is known for its straightforward instructions for how to follow Jesus. These teachings might seem simple, but they have the power to create radical change. Let's see what radical things James has to say about favoritism.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read James 2:1-10.*
- Is James saying we can't have best friends or a favorite group of people to hang out with? No! Remember, there's a difference between having favorites and playing favorites.
- In this passage, James has a lot to say about rich people and poor people. Maybe people's wealth is something you think about often, but maybe not. If you're struggling to relate to James' use of the words "rich" and "poor," try replacing them with words like . . .
 - "Popular" and "unpopular."
 - "Cool" and "not cool."
 - "People like me" and "people who are different."
 - "Christians" and "non-Christians."
 - "My friends" and "everyone else."
- James is not down with showing favoritism. In fact, he forbids it! According to James, God isn't happy when we . . .
 - Choose favorites based on what people have (like money, popularity, or power).
 - Ignore people without things like money, popularity, or power.
 - Mistreat, dishonor, shame, exclude, or fail to love some people because we see them

as less important than other people.

- Then James says something interesting. In verse 5, he says God chooses to bless the poor. Wait. Does that mean God plays favorites? Does God show favoritism, but in the opposite way you and I usually do?

SCRIPTURE | Proverbs 22:1-2, 8-9, 22-23

- To help us make sense of this, let's look at the Old Testament book of Proverbs. It's a collection of short sayings that share wisdom about how followers of God should live.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Proverbs 22:1-2, 8-9, 22-23.*
- If God is the Creator of everyone (rich and poor, popular and unpopular, powerful and not-so-powerful) it's safe to say God doesn't play favorites. As God's creation, we're all loved equally, no matter what.
 - But it's clear God notices when certain people are more in need than others. We might all be loved equally by God, but God knows we're not all given equal treatment by others or equal opportunities in the world.
 - God seems to understand our tendency is to show favoritism to people we already like or admire. We need to be reminded to care for people who aren't like us, or aren't as cool or popular or wealthy.
 - So does God play favorites? No! But you and I do. God is just trying to teach us how to be more just and fair, like God is.
- Can you see some similarities between this proverb and James' advice? James said playing favorites broke God's law, but this proverb helps us understand more about what that means.
 - This passage helps us see that showing favoritism is injustice — and injustice has dangerous consequences.
 - If we play favorites by excluding or harming others, God will stand against us and defend the people we've harmed. That's pretty scary.
- So what's the alternative? Instead of playing favorites, we can . . .
 - Treat everyone like they are made by God — because they are.
 - Be generous with everyone, but especially people who really need it.
- Can you imagine how your family, friends, school, or the world, could be different if everyone treated each other this way? If we could learn how to have favorites without playing favorites, the change would be radical.
- So do you want to see that radical change? Are you not sure what you think about Jesus yes, but you know you want to see more good and less hate in the world? Then James tells us how to love like Jesus: **radical people don't play favorites.**

NOW WHAT?

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
 - * **What are some reasons someone might show favoritism? Why are those reasons unhealthy?**
 - **Read Romans 2:11. Do you ever feel like God plays favorites? Tell us why.**

- **How does Jesus show us God doesn't play favorites?**

REFLECTION | How Not to Play Favorites

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your program, print and cut the handouts provided in your Week 2 folder. Place one under each seat, along with a pen, and encourage students to answer the following questions silently by writing down their thoughts.*
- But how do we do this? What does it mean to not play favorites in our friendships, at school, at church, or wherever we go? I think there's one thing we need to remember and a few questions we need to ask.
- **REMEMBER:** It's natural to want to show favoritism.
 - We like to be near people who think, act, and look like us. Think about your friend group. Do you look similarly? Dress alike? Live in the same part of town? Have similar kinds of families?
 - It's understandable that our favorite people are often people who are like us. And it's understandable that we would want to show favoritism to our favorite people. But when we play favorites with our favorite people, we end up excluding and hurting a lot of other people.
- **ASK:** So if we want to follow God's lead and choose not to play favorites, here are a few questions to ask.
 - **Have I shown favoritism?** Is it possible you've been playing favorites and aren't even aware of it? Are you willing to get curious about the ways you've done this?
 - **Who have I excluded?** Have you been spending so much time with certain people that you rarely think about the people who would love to be included by you? You don't need to ditch your favorite friends, but how might you be able to include someone who feels excluded?
 - **Who have I hurt?** Has anyone been harmed by your favoritism? Has playing favorites caused you to be hurtful, rude, or unfair to someone?
 - **What have I assumed?** We all have biases. We tend to make assumptions about people we don't even know based on very little information (like their clothes, accent, family, skin color, interests, or looks) and then ignore or exclude them. Who have you made assumptions about?
 - **Who can I include?** Remember, when God chooses to love and care for people who have been excluded, that's not favoritism — it's justice. So how can you make a wrong thing right by caring for someone who isn't usually one of your "favorites"?

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
 - * **Think about the kinds of people you spend the most time with. Who is not represented in that group?**
 - * **Have you excluded, hurt, or been prejudiced against anyone recently? What do you think you could be missing out on by excluding them?**
 - **This week, what's one thing you can do to include more people instead of playing favorites?**