



February 15, 2009

Appearances

By Teresa Hampton

We were visiting a small church on one of the islands. It was nearing time to begin the service so we took our seats close to the front. There was the normal “quiet down” phase, and then it happened. We could hear the rustle of whispers, which traveled like a wave from the back to the front until finally a woman sitting behind us tapped me on the shoulder and said, “Randy Travis just walked through the door!” His appearance caused quite a stir. As soon as the service was over people anxiously went to meet him. One or two even asked for an autograph. The place was abuzz. Actually, I felt sorry for Mr. Travis. Worship is *supposed* to be a time of devotion and praise, a time to soberly reflect on Jesus’ death, and a time to focus on God. He should have been given that consideration as well as any other.

It reminded me of what James said about showing partiality (James 2:1-13). He rebuked early Christians because they gave special attention to wealthy worshipers, only to put down the poor worshipers, relegating them to stand out of the way or sit at their feet. He said they became judges with evil thoughts. In other words, they sized people up by appearance, judging people the way the world judges. They valued wealth, notoriety, and the appearance of such things. Partiality does not always concern wealth. When we favor someone because they’re in the “in crowd,” and snub those who are not, it is wrong. James said favoritism is not in any way representative of love. On the contrary, it is sin, a transgression.

When a wealthy person, influential doctor, lawyer, judge, mayor, or even a famous singer is in our midst, let us maintain a neutral demeanor of interest and concern, *not* focusing on appearances. And when poor and lowly people come to us in the assembly or in our communities, let us approach them with love, mercy, and impartiality, realizing that God has chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith.

Today’s Verse: *Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment (Jn. 7:23).*

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