

### Covenant Life

- Our next in-person Community Gathering will be a week from today on Sunday September 12<sup>th</sup> at 4pm in the MSMCS gym.
- If you were unable to attend our last Gathering, you can listen to the audio [here](#), review the Word Gift summary [here](#), and read the transcript [here](#).
- Your ongoing financial support is sincerely appreciated. Please donate online [here](#) or mail your donations to P.O. Box 225008 Dallas, Tx 75222.

**Reflection** - With this pandemic keeping us apart I attempt to use these letters to help us stay a bit more connected. Each week I ask the Holy Spirit to provide some nugget that we can, as a people, reflect on together and try to incorporate into our response to His call.

Today I was struck by the second reading from James ([Jas 2:1-5](#)) where he makes the clear statement "*show no partiality as you adhere to the faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ.*" This is strong and clear exhortation especially considering the many biases that we read about throughout the old and new testaments and witness ourselves today. James follows this exhortation with the example of bias based on wealth. It is certainly a common bias and one that prompts reflection.

The book of James is a wisdom book and offers many exhortations. James writes these words in the context of encouraging us to love our neighbor as ourselves. Given that Jesus elevated these words as the second of the greatest commandments, it seems wise to spend quality time pondering the degree to which we are living it.

Over the centuries since James wrote these words, we have become aware of other unconscious biases. We all have them. There is a natural tendency to surround ourselves with those that look like us, believe as we do, etc... Corporate America has worked to eliminate bias in hiring and has proven that diverse teams have more potential and are more capable. We benefit when we hear ideas and perspectives that are different from our own. We open ourselves up to new possibilities when we are open to different perspectives.

Having been blessed with the privilege of attending coordinators meetings in Bobbie's living room for a decade I witnessed this in action. At work I saw the natural tendency of leaders to surround themselves with those that agreed with them. In Bobbie's living room I saw a diverse leadership team that came from many diverse backgrounds. The Community leaders that participated were not all successful business leaders but those who said Yes to a call and were willing to serve. They came from many social economic backgrounds. I would not say that it was as diverse it could have been, but it was a step toward diversity. The mutual respect and brotherly love I witnessed was a testament that James was right to exhort those of his day to be mindful of bias.

So how can we each take this in and respond in our day? The first step is to admit that we have unconscious bias. It is real. It is normal to want to surround ourselves with like-minded men, women, couples that encourage and support our desire to give our lives to God and live as a covenant people, but we have to be careful in our daily interactions that we are really loving those we live with and those we come into contact with as God asks. James is asking us to love our neighbor as our selves. Jesus did as well. How do we respond? What about those who are richer or poorer than we are? What about those of a different race, political party, gender, sexual orientation? Jesus' example was clear. He loved unconditionally. What can we do today to take a step toward this unconditional love of neighbor?

*Let us pray "Jesus, I resolve to respond to Your words to love my neighbor as myself. Help me to be more aware of my unconscious biases and see others as You see them. Help me to love them as You love them. Give me Your Spirit and the gifts of Your Spirit to offer words of love, hope, encouragement. I love You and want to give my life fully to You, to live for You and to love every person that You bring into my life! Amen."*

God bless,  
David