

“Playing favorites” has a negative connotation. Having a favorite child is something parents strive to avoid at all costs. But being God’s “favorite” and having His favor rest on you is a terrific thing. Belonging to Him and reaping the benefits of His love and presence, understanding that He is leaning towards you (or as the Bible says, He is making His face to shine on you) is of indescribable worth.

Jump Start

1. Has someone ever wanted to give you a gift which you thought was too extravagant? Looking back on it, what could you have done differently?
2. *God wants to give me His favor. Read Psalm 5:12, Proverbs 8:35 and Luke 4:18-19.* Discuss who the Lord blesses with His favor, according to these verses. How do you get into this category of favored?
3. *God gives more favor to those who follow Him closely. Read Psalm 84:11 and 2 Chronicles 16:9.* The Bible tells us in these two verses that God knows and rewards with favor, honor, and strong support those who are diligently following Him. What do you think it means to “walk uprightly” or to have a “blameless heart” towards God?
4. *God shows me His favor when He invites me to serve. Read John 12:26 and Matthew 25:23.* God has prepared tasks for us, just like He prepared a task for Mary. As children of God, serving Him and being obedient to His calling isn’t an obligation, it is a privilege. When we serve God, what is the result? How do we know that being asked to serve God is evidence of His favor on us?
5. *I have to believe in and seek God’s favor. Read Joshua 3:5 and Lamentations 3:25.* Consecration means “set apart.” How can we, as Christians, set ourselves apart, expect and seek God’s favor?
6. Final Thought: King David said, “I entreat your favor with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise” Psalm 119:58 (ESV). When the Israelites made a golden calf and sinned against God, Moses “sought the favor of the Lord,” Exodus 32:11 (NIV). He prayed God’s promises over His people. He begged God’s favor on behalf of the people and God was merciful. How can you, like King David and Moses, seek God’s favor more earnestly in your own life? How do these verses remind us that prayer activates God’s favor and promises to us?

Deeper

Isaiah 66:1-2 (NIV)

1 This is what the Lord says:

“Heaven is my throne,
and the earth is my footstool.
Where is the house you will build for me?
Where will my resting place be?”

2 Has not my hand made all these things,
and so they came into being?”
declares the Lord.

“These are the ones I look on with favor:
those who are humble and contrite in spirit,
and who tremble at my word.”

As we approach the Christmas season, it is important that we realize the majesty of God, Creator of the Universe. Equally important is the humble, poor, distressing circumstances of the birth of the Lord Jesus. When we think of Mary and her circumstances prior to the visit of Gabriel, we may not think of favor.

- What does it mean to be humble?
- What misconceptions have you had about what favor looks like?

Psalm 84:11 (ESV)

11 For the Lord God is a sun and shield;
the Lord bestows favor and honor.
No good thing does he withhold
from those who walk uprightly.

Numbers 6:24-26 (ESV)

24 The Lord bless you and keep you;
25 the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;
26 the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

How do “good things” differ in the eyes of God vs. in the eyes of man? While God will sometimes, according to His good pleasure, choose to bless us financially, how do we know that worldly wealth and power do not necessarily indicate the favor of God? What, according to Numbers 6, is the real blessing of walking in God’s favor?