

Overcoming Prejudice

In overcoming prejudice, we will explore how to overcome the wounds stemming from prejudice and how to stop discriminating. There is a mindset that we need in order to live in a society that is free from prejudice. Often, we are both victims and perpetrators therefore I will deal with them together. This is the mindset we all need for freedom. We need to be free and not pass on our prejudice to the next generation. We are responsible for what we pass on based on what we teach them, consciously or unconsciously.

1. Get your identity from God alone

Genesis 11:1-9

Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. 2 As people moved eastward,^[a] they found a plain in Shinar^[b] and settled there. 3 They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. 4 Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth." 5 But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. 6 The Lord said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. 7 Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other." 8 So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. 9 That is why it was called Babel^[c] — because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

This 'self-naming project' is linked to both their unification project and their building project – "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth"

It's important to remember that we all have one blood.

This mindset is similar to the Nazis and others. Lebensraum = 1. additional territory considered by a nation, especially Nazi Germany, to be necessary for national survival or for the expansion of trade. 2. any additional space needed in order to act, function, etc. . Lebensraum is the land or territory that a country's leaders believe it requires in order to grow and flourish. ... The Nazis used the idea of Lebensraum, literally "living space" in German, as the basis of their policy for the Germany's expansion.

Our identity should be from God and we were all created equal in His image.

[Video: White supremacist who didn't know he was part black](#)

Interact at an equal level of power. This is key to dealing with prejudice. The solution to pride is sometimes interacting with someone from that group at the same level of power. The key thing is to know that we are all equal under God. Your money and status does not make you superior.

Ephesians 6:9

And masters, do the same for your slaves. Give up your use of threats, because you know that He who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favouritism with Him.

If you have had the wrong mindset, repent of this and apologize.

If you have been a victim do let anyone take away your dignity based on gender, social class etc.

Be delivered from the biological myth of "race".

2. Seek understanding.

Be curious. Ask questions. Learn about other groups and why they do what they do. This is empathy.

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. 20 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. 21 To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. 23 I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

3. Love your "enemies"

Jesus commands us to love our enemies, not merely tolerate them. Love does not mean I agree with you, but it does mean I care. What does love look like? What did Jesus teach?

Mt 5:43-45

You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' 44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous....

1 Sam 24:16-17

16 When David had finished speaking these words to Saul, Saul said, "Is this your voice, my son David?" Then Saul lifted up his voice and wept. 17 He said to David, "You are more righteous than I; for you have dealt well with me, while I have dealt wickedly with you....

Romans 12:19-21

Do not avenge yourselves, beloved, but leave room for God's wrath. For it is written: "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord." 20 On the contrary, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink. For in so doing, you will heap burning coals on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good....

Our Christianity will be seen largely by how we relate to those that have wronged us.

4. See the opportunities within the calamity

It's important to view your pain from God's perspective.

Genesis 50:15-21

When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?" 16 So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died: 17 'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." When their message came to him, Joseph wept. 18 His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said. 19 But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? 20 You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. 21 So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

5. Look for common ground.

This is the start of building rapport. Don't define and categorise based on the devil's categories. What are the areas of common interest that you have suppressed?

Remember that prejudice often exaggerates differences and downplays similarities eg lady who said “So I am by myself as they are all white, older, Afrikaans males.” But wasn’t their profession the same?

Paul mastered the art of establishing common ground. Here are two examples.

The first is around citizenship:

Acts 22:25-27

As they stretched him out to flog him, Paul said to the centurion standing there, “Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn’t even been found guilty?” 26 When the centurion heard this, he went to the commander and reported it. “What are you going to do?” he asked. “This man is a Roman citizen.” 27 The commander went to Paul and asked, “Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?” “Yes, I am,” he answered.

The second is around religious background:

Acts 23:6-8

Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, called out in the Sanhedrin, “My brothers, I am a Pharisee, descended from Pharisees. I stand on trial because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead.” 7 When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. 8 (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees believe all these things.)

Be careful of looking at colour as your only source of common ground. You can have family members with so much in common yet looking so different. There are even twins like this.

[Video: Twins, one black and one white](#)

6. Deal with perceptual distortions

E.g. people are either all bad or all good; halo effect. So renounce all the lies you have believed about yourself, your group and others.

Watch out for value equivalents to superiority. Is it money? Skin colour etc.

E.g. accent, manners (the guy who doesn’t know how to eat with a knife and fork might be more loyal and faithful as a husband). Eg lesson learnt by FNB sales lady.

Romans 12:2 ESV

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Philippians 4:8 ESV

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

John 8:32

And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

Embrace the truth and stop abusing stereotypes. Ask yourself, when I am stereotyped positively do I abuse it? E.g. only guy in the room and you are asked a political question. Do you answer it and act like you know the answer (embracing the stereotype) or do reject it by suggesting that one of the girls might know as you have not been following the politics. We have daily opportunities to question and challenge stereotypes. When people assume I am better than my wife at certain things do I embrace that or challenge it?

7. Create new mental images of people behaving differently.

Do you have a vision for cultural diversity or do you see a world where everyone is like you? Look for these “outliers” to disprove your theory. Ask, What else could be true? This helps you to suspend judgment. **Be careful of forming set mental patterns.**

Remember that people can change. People grow. We are not fixed but have a capacity for change. We can learn. There is also a lot of variety within a group. One example from a group does not define the group. One experience like that does not mean they will always be like that. Think of how you have changed. Be careful of forming set mental patterns prematurely.

Jesus saw the positive in Nathaniel instead of resisting him because of his prejudice.

John 1: 46-48

Can anything good come from Nazareth?” Nathanael asked. “Come and see,” said Philip. 47 When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, He said of him, “Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is no deceit.” 48 “How do You know me?” Nathanael asked. Jesus replied, “Before Philip called you, I saw you under the fig tree.”...

- Celebrate those who break stereotypes eg the Venda guy skiing.
- Remember that you get what you are looking for. If you believe that Xhosa women are forward you will be conscious of the forward ones and not notice the many that are not.

8. Learn to manage your own rage or reaction to discrimination

- See it as a teaching opportunity
- Remind yourself about the persons limited exposure
- Ask yourself, “what else could be true?” “Of what are they afraid?” This is not an excuse for their behaviour but understanding it will help you deal with it.
- Have some kind of constructive response (assertiveness vs passivity vs aggression). Script how you will respond eg “That’s an interesting statement, why would you say that?”
- Explore your own emotional triggers. Why is it affecting you so much? Do you feel belittled, helpless, bullied? Why are you letting their weakness control your emotional state. Often we are triggered because we need validation from those that harm us.

John 5:41-44

“I do not receive honour from men. 42 But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you. 43 I have come in My Father’s name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive. 44 How can you believe, who receive honour from one another, and do not seek the honour that comes from the only God?

The key is to be straightened toward God and not bent toward man.

Let’s Pray for South Africa