

What Is Prejudice?

- **Prejudice** is a preconceived opinion, usually unfavorable, formed without sufficient knowledge or just grounds. It is an irrational attitude based on an overgeneralized belief and is directed toward an individual, group or race.
- **Prejudice** is the illegitimate offspring of ignorance and/or arrogance.
- **Prejudice** is a mental slant that comes from your culture and makes up your mind before you think.
- **Prejudice** is a mental blind spot that shuts you off from viewing the facts in a given situation.
- **Prejudice** is a psychological fence that keeps you from healthy friendships and confines you to your own “backyard.”

*“Fools find no pleasure in understanding
but delight in airing their own opinions.”*
(Proverbs 18:2)

Characteristics of Prejudice

- Extremely rigid
- Highly structured
- Fearful of change
- Authoritative
- Self-righteous
- Controlling
- Mistrustful
- Cynical
- Closed-minded
- Legalistic

*“At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived
and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures.
We lived in malice and envy,
being hated and hating one another.”*
(Titus 3:3)

Causes of Prejudice

- **Philosophy**
 - Believing that cultural customs and traditions are sacred rather than flawed by human weaknesses
 - Believing that one person must make all the adjustments in racial relations rather than that both be involved
 - Believing that only certain groups of people have prejudices rather than that everyone everywhere is vulnerable to prejudice
 - Believing that God’s world of people is only a larger version of your “own backyard” rather than its being inclusive of people from every race, color, language, and nation
 - Believing that you can change your attitudes in your own strength rather than relying on God to work in you to empower you to develop a Christlike attitude toward others
- **Projection**
 - You may, without realizing it, attribute your own ideas, feelings, or characteristics to other people.
 - You may condemn others because of regarding them as having feelings or characteristics you yourself have neither acknowledged nor resolved.
- **Perception**
 - A bad experience with one person may lead you to become prejudiced against an entire group of people.
 - Stereotypes of a certain group can lead to prejudice against that entire group.
 - Media reports that show a consistently negative image of a particular group may influence your opinion of that group.
 - Peer pressure may persuade you to adopt a prejudice toward select individuals or groups.
 - Misunderstanding the cultural values of a particular group can lead to prejudice toward that group.
 - Believing that humanity evolved may lead you to believe that one race is superior to another.

The Compassion Jesus Practiced with Victims of Prejudice

- The leper of Matthew 8:1–3
- The centurion foreigner of Luke 7:1–10
- The tax collector of Matthew 9:9–13 and Luke 19:1–10
- The demon-possessed man of Mark 5:1–20
- The Greek woman of Mark 7:24–30
- The children of Matthew 19:13–14 and of John 4:46–53
- The Samaritan adulteress of John 4:1–42
- The paralyzed, the blind, and the dumb of Matthew 9:1–2, 27–30, 32–33

Key Verse to Memorize

*“He himself is our peace,
who has made the two groups one
and has destroyed the barrier,
the dividing wall of hostility.”*
(Ephesians 2:14)

Key Passage to Read

(2 Corinthians 5:16–19)

Ministry of Acceptance

- You no longer view others on the basis of your own understanding.
- You are a new person in Christ.
- You are completely accepted by God through Christ.
- You are given the ministry of extending acceptance to others.

*“All of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic,
love one another, be compassionate and humble.”*
(1 Peter 3:8)

Dos and Don'ts of Acceptance

- **Don't** judge the heart of another. (Matthew 7:1)
Do ... Ask God to search your own heart. (Psalm 139:23–24)
- **Don't** judge by outward appearances. (1 Samuel 16:7)
Do ... See and seek to meet the needs of others. (Philippians 2:4)
- **Don't** assume you can't change your attitudes. (2 Corinthians 5:17)
Do ... Assume the responsibility to change your thinking. (Romans 12:2)

- **Don't** use derogatory names or terms. (Titus 3:1–2)
Do ... Ask God to season your speech with His love. (Ephesians 4:29)
- **Don't** discriminate just because “everybody does it.” (Proverbs 14:12)
Do ... Treat others as you want others to treat you. (Matthew 7:12)
- **Don't** laugh at the differences in others. (Proverbs 11:12)
Do ... Value the differences that create the rich tapestry of God's creation. (Malachi 2:10)
- **Don't** react when others are prejudiced against you. (1 Peter 3:8–9)
Do ... Be prepared to suffer the painful effects of prejudice for the cause of Christ. (Matthew 5:11–12)

Biblical Theology to Prevent Prejudice

- To believe I'm finite ... just like everyone else—takes away any pretense of infallibility.
- To believe I'm fallen ... just like everyone else—allows you to make allowances for the failures of others.
- To believe I'm of value ... just like everyone else—takes away a deflated or inflated view of yourself and of others.

Have a Heart of Equality

Express God's perspective on the equality of all people. (Galatians 3:28)

Quit the tendency to stereotype any persons different from yourself. (James 2:1)

Understand the God-given worth of all human beings. (Genesis 1:27)

Acept your personal God-given worth based on your position in Christ. (Ephesians 1:7–8)

Learn that prejudice is a product of irrational stereotypes and emotionalism, not a result of rational reasoning. (1 John 2:9)

Invest in others by having a servant's heart toward everyone. (Mark 10:45)

Turn from judging others to self-examination. (Matthew 7:4)

Yield in obedience to the nature of Christ living within you. (2 Peter 1:3–4)

*“There is neither Jew nor Gentile,
neither slave nor free,
nor is there male and female,
for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”*
(Galatians 3:28)

The Propositions of Paul's Pronouncement

- In Christ is the principle of equality—everyone deserves fair treatment.
- In Christ is the principle of significance—no group is inferior or superior to another.
- In Christ is the principle of respect—differences are acceptable to the extent that they do not violate the principles of the Word of God.

Help Others Move toward Healing

- **Help** others to pattern their emotional responses in accordance with God's character.
- **Help** others to examine themselves.
- **Help** others to build self-esteem.
- **Help** others to forgive.
- **Help** others to repent.

*"The entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command:
'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"*
(Galatians 5:14)

Pulling Up the Roots of Prejudice

- **Pray** for the Holy Spirit to convict the heart of your prejudiced friend or loved one.
- **Prepare** to challenge prejudice when it occurs.
- **Persist** in correcting false generalities made about others.
- **Purpose** to keep the conversation based on facts rather than on emotions.
- **Point** out only factual information.
- **Profess** the fact that you are not knowledgeable in certain areas and be willing to be vulnerable.
- **Present** God's perspective on the intrinsic value of all people.
- **Promote** fellowship with others who are not prejudiced.
- **Perceive** the unmet needs that prejudicial attitudes are feeding.
- **Plant** the seeds of Christ's love and His ability to meet all our needs.

*"Make every effort to live in peace with everyone
and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.
See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God
and that no bitter root grows up
to cause trouble and defile many."*
(Hebrews 12:14–15)

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