

Faith & Culture



Anti-Racism:
Prejudice and
Stereotypes



Anti-Racism: Prejudice and Stereotypes

Main Idea

Understanding the truth beyond stereotypes can help us combat our own prejudice and bias, and work against racism.

BIBLE CONNECTIONS

Matthew 7:1-4

Don't judge, so that you won't be judged. You'll receive the same judgment you give. Whatever you deal out will be dealt out to you. Why do you see the splinter that's in your brother's or sister's eye, but don't notice the log in your own eye? How can you say to your brother or sister, "Let me take the splinter out of your eye," when there's a log in your eye?

BACKGROUND FOR LEADERS

Many people think that discussing bias, prejudice, and stereotypes is impolite or can make the problem worse. In fact, studies have shown that having conversations about these issues, even when we don't get things exactly right, goes a long way to help us overcome such attitudes in ourselves. This is especially important for children, who quickly notice differences among people.

GATHERING ACTIVITY

What Are Stereotypes? What Is Prejudice?

Say: Today we're talking about prejudice and stereotypes.

Ask: Does anyone know what those words mean?

Say: *Prejudice* means "pre-judgment." A prejudice is a judgment someone makes about another person just based on their appearance or a surface interaction.

Supplies:

- Posterboard or butcher paper
- Marker
- Paper plates
- Crayons

Say: Oftentimes, those judgments are negative, hurtful, and untrue. The opposite of prejudice is *open-mindedness*.

Pass out paper plates and crayons.

Encourage the learners to draw their face on the outside (bottom) of the paper plate. Along the rim, they may write words describing assumptions others may make about them simply based on their appearance. On the inside (top) of the plate, encourage students to draw a heart and write words that describe their personality or who they feel they are inside.

Invite the learners to share their plate portraits, if they are comfortable.

Say: Sometimes people have a prejudice about a whole group of people. These prejudices are called *stereotypes*. There can be stereotypes about any group of people. Let's think of some examples to help us understand.

Ask: Do you know of any stereotypes about how boys and girls act or feel?

Write down the learners' suggestions on a second poster or large piece of paper. Choose a stereotype from the list to explore further, such as "Boys don't cry," or "Girls love pink."

Ask: Are there some boys or girls who fit into this stereotype? How do you think someone who doesn't fit into one of these stereotypes might feel? How can we say this in a way that doesn't hurt anybody?

Help the students alter the statement so that it no longer represents a stereotype. Most stereotypes can be altered by using the word *some* in front of them. For example, "Some girls love pink."

TIP: Learners often name prejudices that are based on skin color, gender, age, ability, or other immutable parts of their identity. (For example, "They think because I'm a girl, I like to play with dolls," or "People think I can't speak English because I'm Hispanic.") When prejudices are based on qualities shared by groups of people, they are stereotypes. Use this activity to transition into discussing stereotypes.

STORY CONNECTION

Say: All people struggle with bias and prejudice. We get a bad first impression or are taught a stereotype about a group of people, and it influences the way we treat them. Even Jesus had prejudices. Can you believe it? Jesus shows us how to overcome our own prejudices by listening to others and allowing them to teach us. Let's look at a story about a time when Jesus had the wrong idea about a group of people, but was able to learn and grow in love for them.

Say: Jesus went around his country teaching and healing people. One day as he and his friends went along, a woman came up and was calling to Jesus to help her daughter, who was very sick. But this woman was Canaanite, a different ethnicity than Jesus and his friends.

Ask: Does anyone know what *ethnicity* is?

TIP: Telling the story in a calm, smooth voice will draw the children into the story.

Say: Your ethnicity is your cultural background, like what language your family and ancestors spoke. It can sometimes mean what part of the world you are from.

Say: Jesus sees the woman, a Canaanite, who is different. Many of the Jews thought that the Canaanites and other non-Jewish people were bad news. At first, Jesus tries ignoring her. But she kept asking. Finally, Jesus tells the woman no. “I’ve only been sent to the people of Israel,” he said. “It’s not good to take food from children and give it to dogs.”

Say: Whoa, Jesus! That’s not very nice!

Say: The woman said back to him, “But even the dogs get to eat the scraps of food that fall off the table.” She was reminding Jesus that she was still a person in need.

Say: Jesus said, “You’re right, and you have great faith.” And the woman’s sick daughter was made well.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Ask: Why do you think Jesus said no? How do you think it felt to be that woman who so badly needed help, being told no because of her ethnicity? Have you ever been told no or not been able to do something because of your ethnicity, gender, race, or ability? What do you think made Jesus change his mind?

PRACTICE AND REFLECTION

Seeing Things Clearly

Say: One of the reasons we have prejudice is because it’s not always easy to see things clearly or see them the way someone else does.

Ask: Have you ever had an argument with a sibling or friend and had to share your side of the story? Was your version different than the other person’s version of what happened?

Say: There is always more than one way of seeing things! Jesus taught his disciples and teaches us that we shouldn’t judge or stereotype others because it’s like trying to get a speck out of someone else’s eye when we have a log in our own. A log! We couldn’t possibly see clearly with a log in our eye! When we judge or stereotype others, we can’t see them clearly. We can’t learn who they really are because we have already decided what they are like based on stereotypes.

Say: Today we’re going to make clear and foggy telescopes as a reminder to try and get rid of stereotypes and prejudices so we can see others more clearly.

Supplies:

- Construction paper
- Tape
- Rubber bands
- Wax paper
- Clear plastic wrap or cellophane

- Help the learners make a long tube by rolling a sheet of construction paper lengthwise, then taping it into place.
- Cut small squares of plastic wrap and wax paper, and give every learner one of each.
- Using the rubber bands, fix the wax paper square over one end of the tube to be the “lens.”
- Invite the learners to look around the room or at one another and describe what they can see through the wax paper. Probably not much—perhaps light or general shapes.
- Swap out the wax paper square with the clear plastic square and repeat.

Send home the “Practice and Reflection at Home” sheet on page 5 with each child. This will help engage the whole family in this spiritual practice together.

PRACTICE AND REFLECTION AT HOME

Today your child learned about prejudices and stereotypes, including why we have them, how they hurt, and how we can work against them. It can be difficult to have conversations about this with our children. But studies show that before the age of ten, children are actively picking up on prejudices and stereotypes in our culture—OR learning to develop more inclusive, open, and justice-oriented mindsets.

Chances are your child is noticing differences among the people around him or her. If your child asks a question that you aren't prepared to answer, that's okay! Tell them that you aren't sure and need to think about it, or use a computer at home or at the library to seek information together about language, skin color, ethnicity, immigration, or other concerns. Questions about others' differences are a great opportunity to explore difference without placing a value judgment. Notice diversity with your child, and wonder together how others see and experience the world.

FURTHER READING

As you continue to think about combatting assumptions and negative attitudes toward others, check out the Sailboat note, "God Rewards Kindness and Respect," at 1 Samuel 26:20 in the *CEB Deep Blue Kids Bible* to learn about David, who listened empathetically even at great risk to himself.

Faith & Culture



Anti-Racism:
Curiosity
and Empathy



Anti-Racism: Curiosity and Empathy

Main Idea

Asking questions and learning about one another can grow compassion and connection, the foundation of combatting racism.

BIBLE CONNECTIONS

Psalm 139:1-3

LORD, you have examined me. You know me. You know when I sit down and when I stand up. Even from far away, you comprehend my plans. You study my traveling and resting. You are thoroughly familiar with all my ways.

BACKGROUND FOR LEADERS

Empathy is the ability to understand how and why others feel the way that they do, and we develop our empathy for others through genuine curiosity, patience, kindness, and good listening. Honing our curiosity and empathy is a tremendously important foundational practice for the work of anti-racism. This lesson will focus on those fundamental attitudes.

GATHERING ACTIVITY

Practicing the Golden Rule

Ask: Does anyone know what the Golden Rule is?

Say: The Golden Rule is “you should treat people in the same way that you want people to treat you” (Matthew 7:12).

Ask: What do you think that means? Why do you think this is called *golden*?

Say: The most important rule or idea is that we should treat one another the way we want to be treated. When we do this, our relationships and communities are as precious as gold.

Ask: How do you practice the Golden Rule?

Say: Some of the most important ways to live by this rule are to be curious about other people's lives and imagine how you would feel in their situation.

STORY CONNECTION

Say: The Bible tells us a story about how the Holy Spirit leads us to practice the Golden Rule. The Book of Acts tells about how Jesus' followers formed churches after his resurrection.

Say: Peter and the other disciples were the first leaders of the church, but they were mostly working, living, and worshipping with people who were like them, Jewish people. But God wanted all kinds of people to be a part of the church, including Gentiles or non-Jewish people.

Say: God came to a man named Cornelius, who was a Gentile. Cornelius received a holy visitor, who told him that God loved him and that he should go and visit Peter, the apostle. Peter also received a holy message, a vision from God, that told him to be more open-minded, curious, and kind to Gentiles.

Say: When Cornelius and Peter met, they were able to listen to one another. They could each see that God had been speaking to the other and recognized that while they did not have much in common, they could pray and worship together, and become friends who would love and serve God together.

TIP: Telling the story in a calm, smooth voice will draw the children into the story.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Ask: Have you ever become friends with someone who was very different from you? Was it hard or easy? How did you understand and listen to your friend?

PRACTICE AND REFLECTION

Matching Feelings and Colors

Say: Sometimes colors almost match our feelings.

Ask: Have you ever heard someone say that they're feeling blue? What does that mean?

Say: Use markers to color in a circle on one side of the paper plate.

Supplies:

- Markers
- Paper plates

Say: We're going to share some feelings and then match a color that goes with them.

The following questions describe different situations to prompt a feeling. Invite the learners to hold up their paper plate colors and name possible emotions to respond to the situation. There can be more than one emotion and color!

Ask: How would you feel if there was a scary tornado coming?

What emotions would you feel if your dog got out and ran away?

How would you feel when your dog came home again?

What might you feel if you got an "A" on a hard test at school?

How would you feel if your best friend had to move to a new city?

What emotions might you have if you found out you were getting a new brother or sister?

How would you feel if you accidentally stepped in a muddy puddle on your way to a friend's house?

For Older Students

Watch this brief biographical video about Jackie Robinson:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NZ1RfJLayMk> .

Ask: What do you think Jackie felt as he faced discrimination? as he was rejected and ignored by his teammates? as he was being forced to use other hotels from his teammates? as he faced threats by people because of the color of his skin? How do you think he kept his focus on baseball?

Ask: What should we do when we see people being mistreated or bullied?

Send home the "Practice and Reflection at Home" sheet on page 4 with each child. This will help engage the whole family in this spiritual practice together.

PRACTICE AND REFLECTION AT HOME

Today your child learned about empathy and curiosity as the foundation for interacting with people who are different, the first steps to countering systems of racism and oppression. It can be difficult to have conversations about this with our children, whether because as a racial minority it is a painful discussion or because from places of privilege, we are wary of getting things wrong.

Ask your child this week about differences between members of your family, to start. Wonder together how you can show empathy, or knowing how others think and feel in your own household. Sometimes those nearest us are both the safest and most difficult place to start in practicing curiosity and empathy.

FURTHER READING

To pray and grow in empathy, check out “Love Each Other!” at 1 John 4:7-8 in the *CEB Deep Blue Kids Bible*.

Faith & Culture



Anti-Racism:
Colors
and Cultures



Anti-Racism: Colors and Cultures

Main Idea

God made us to be diverse, from our skin color to the expressions of our cultures and families.

BIBLE CONNECTIONS

Revelation 7:9

After this I looked, and there was a great crowd that no one could number. They were from every nation, tribe, people, and language. They were standing before the throne and before the Lamb.

BACKGROUND FOR LEADERS

Kids as young as four and five begin to notice racial and cultural diversity. They see difference among people and seek to place those differences into cognitive categories. So the sooner we can note difference, celebrate it, and name God's goodness in our difference, the sooner children will start building their foundation of seeing all kinds of people in the image of God, the core of Christian anti-racist theological ethics. This lesson will offer insight into the beauty of cultural expressions and diversity, and help learners build gratitude and curiosity as they interact with people different than themselves.

GATHERING ACTIVITY

What Is Culture?

Ask: Does anyone know what the word *culture* means?

Say: A culture is the habits, beliefs, and traditions of a particular group of people. This might include the language they speak or the style of art they make.

Ask: Can you think of other characteristics a group of people might share?

Supplies:

- Paper
- Pencils
- Crayons or markers
- Posterboard or whiteboard

Say: Food, music, clothes, games, work and play, manners, and religious practices are all good examples. As your group names forms of cultural expression, write them on a posterboard or white board so that everyone can see.

Say: When we spend time with people who share our culture, we may think everyone speaks the way we do or eats the kind of food we eat or greets people the way we do. Sometimes it isn't until we meet someone from another culture that we notice our own! We're going to practice identifying our own culture using the categories we've just listed. Pick three of the categories, and draw pictures representing your food, clothes, games, music, and so forth.

Give each learner three pieces of paper along with drawing materials. Offer support if they need help brainstorming. After they finish their drawings, invite them to share with the group or in partners.

Say: There are so many different cultural expressions just in this group! Your pictures show all the ways that God has made you and your family and people creative and beautiful. All these ways of expressing your culture give honor and glory to God.

STORY CONNECTION

Say: Did you know that the Bible tells us a story about how different languages and cultures came to be?

Say: After Noah and his family survived a great flood that swept over the earth, they had to start over. There weren't many people at first, but as Noah's family grew, people started to fill the earth again. Now they all spoke the same language and had all the same cultural expressions. They looked alike, talked alike, and, maybe they even thought alike.

Say: All the people came together and started to build a big city and a tall tower. They wanted to live all in the same place and make a name for themselves. When God saw this, God was troubled. "They're all one; they're all speaking the same language; they're all doing the same thing!" So God went and mixed up their language and sent them all over the good earth.

Say: After that, people began to develop their unique cultures and tend to the earth, making their homes in new places. They began to see the world differently, express themselves differently, and look different from one another. It was just as God had planned in the beginning.

TIP: Telling the story in a calm, smooth voice will draw the children into the story.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Ask: Why do you think the people wanted to be the same, speak the same way, and live in the same place? Do you ever feel more comfortable with people who are like you? Why do you think God mixed up the people’s languages? How do you think the people felt? How do you feel when you meet someone with a very different culture from your own?

PRACTICE AND REFLECTION

The Colors of Us

Read together the book, *The Colors of Us* by Karen Katz. If you don’t have access to this book, you can watch it here: <https://youtu.be/679Sw4IACAk>.

Say: We’re all beautiful colors! Let’s paint a portrait of ourselves and our friends.

Using paint, help the children mix together the different colors to make the skin tones of themselves and their friends.

Equality and Fairness Covenant

Before gathering with the learners, write “Fair and Equal Community” as the title for your posterboard.

Cut yarn into 12-inch pieces; sort into bunches of three with different colors; and making a small knot on one end, tape the end of the strands onto a desk or tabletop, one for each learner.

Say: The Bible story about languages shows us that it is God’s joy that we should be different-looking, -thinking, -speaking, and -expressing. It is a gift that we have different colors and cultures, and all should be celebrated equally. But unfortunately, we live in a society that doesn’t always treat people with different colors and cultures the same way.

Ask: Do you know of ways that people are treated unfairly because of their skin color, language, the way they worship God, or some other cultural expressions?

Ask: What do you think we can do about that in our community?

Write the learners’ ideas on the posterboard for everyone to see. You may need to help the brainstorming along. Help the learners focus on treatment, communication, curiosity, and a loving community.

Ask: How can we remember to act and think like this, to remember that we are all equal and our differences are a beautiful gift from God?

Supplies:

- *The Colors of Us* by Karen Katz
- Card stock
- Paint
- Paintbrushes
- Smocks

Supplies:

- Posterboard or butcher paper
- Markers
- Tape
- Colored embroidery thread or yarn (at least three colors)
- Scissors

Write down any suggestions for practice on the posterboard.

Say: One way we can remember is by making a symbol to take with us. Today we're going to use different colors of yarn (*or thread*) to make a bracelet. The different colors woven together will remind us of our differences, and that God gives us diversity in our colors and cultures, weaving together difference to make us beautiful and strong.

Help the learners braid or twist yarn together, then tie their bracelets on. Encourage older learners who may already know how to make a braid to help others when their project is finished.

Send home the "Practice and Reflection at Home" sheet on page 5 with each child. This will help engage the whole family in this spiritual practice together.

PRACTICE AND REFLECTION AT HOME

Today your child learned about how everyone has a color and culture. This week talk together about your family history and culture. Use a computer at home or at the library to look up the ethnic background of your family name. If this name doesn't accurately represent your family lineage, explore why that might be. Many indigenous people or people of African descent have anglicized names that were assigned to them, and that, too, is part of your racial and cultural story.

FURTHER READING

To read more about how God's people are of all different cultures, colors, places, and expressions, check out the story of Ruth (with notes in the *CEB Deep Blue Kids Bible*). Ruth was a Moabite, from a different people and culture than Israel, but she belonged to God and honored God with her life and love, just like people from Israel.

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