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Are You a Prejudiced Christian?

Proverbs 24:23: (NASB) *These also are sayings of the wise. To show partiality in judgment is not good.*

Special Guest: Len Griehs

In one way or another, prejudice has dominated human culture for thousands of years. Because prejudice is an internal characteristic, it is often hard to detect it until it has had time to develop and finally show itself in our words or actions. As Christians, can we be shielded from prejudice? Do the scriptures teach us how to avoid it or how to remedy its effects? Is prejudice ever a good thing? Stay with us this morning as we plunge into this wildly difficult topic and try to get a grip on a true Christian perspective.

First, our theme text: Proverbs 24:23

John 7:24: The meaning of prejudice is to pre-judge. Prejudice is an attitude taken towards an individual without adequate factual basis or understanding. Because some people have prejudiced attitudes that are negative towards certain individuals or groups, they sometimes do things that are detrimental to them for no valid reason. Most often, prejudiced attitudes are based on opinions generated by environmental influences in lieu of facts. Prejudice is characterized by a feeling of superiority.



1925 Klan March, *The Shadow of Hate*, Charles Guggenheim

- *On a summer day in 1925, 40,000 American Klansmen marched down Pennsylvania Avenue to proclaim their dislike for Catholics, Negroes, and Jews. Though the size of the gathering was unprecedented, the marchers that day were not the first or the last in our nation's history to cast the long shadow of hate.*

An example of the anger of prejudice: There was a young Englishman in Nazi Germany just when the Nazis started degrading Jews in the streets. He went back and forth to work every day and the first time he saw this degrading, he was sick at the sight and rushed down a side street. He wanted no part of it.

The next time he stopped. He felt he could look to see what was going on, so he stopped for a full minute. The third time, he stopped and he watched. The fourth time, not only did he watch, but he stood with the crowd and it seemed less revolting. That's the peril in this prejudiced world. We see that every day. We see the killings and executions going on around the world and we de-humanize the people that are there. We need to not become molded by seductive powers.

As we would expect, there is very specific scriptural guidance on this issue: Psalms 1:1:

Notice the progression shown in the warning: First WALKING with the wicket; then STANDING with the sinners, finally SITTING with the scoffers! We need to stand apart when we know something is wrong. Eventually we can become comfortable with what is wrong and evil.

Psalms 1:2



Defining prejudice, Price Cobbs, *ThinkingAllowed.com*

- *...Part of understanding stereotypes, understanding one's prejudices, is to really to get in touch with whom we are most comfortable. Most of us are intellectually and emotionally comfortable with people who are most like ourselves.*
- *Once we get in touch with that, then how do I broaden that? How do I broaden it so I can get more of an appreciation for differences? How can I begin to value differences?*

People of like thinking tend to gather together because they agree with each other.

What should we do to derail a prejudiced attitude from taking hold in our hearts?

1. Gather truth in any matters involving others before forming an opinion. *We live in a day when we are blasted by "facts" which are often just accumulations of the prejudices of others. Don't believe something just because someone says it is true. John 8:32*



2. Correct mistakes in judgment promptly and voluntarily.
3. Base decisions on your own sense of right and wrong. *For the Christian, it ought to be based on biblical principles and not on how we feel.* James 5:12
4. Have a sense of personal morality and commitment. *Jesus stood above the crowd even though he associated with others.*
5. Are you ready to take a position that is unpopular? *Would you be willing to break the law if it would violate your conscience?*



Observations - six things we can use to fight prejudice:

1. Personal integrity;
2. Alertness to the problems and dignity of individuals;
3. Objectivity;
4. Independence;
5. Development of others; and
6. Interest in the major problems of our day.

We should get to know as much as we can about the people, places or things we are prejudiced against. We have to spend time with a person in order to better understand them.

Matthew 7:1-3: Examine yourself to determine if you have prejudicial feelings towards certain individuals or groups. Is there an OBJECTIVE reason why you feel this way?

If not, beware. Every person deserves a fair chance. We want to view people as individuals and not groups.

So, if you have a prejudiced attitude, how do you truly conquer it?

ACCEPTANCE: Don't fashion a spiritual and moral straightjacket and expect others to wear it. Accept them for what they are and who they are. Not: "If you are this way, you can be a part of my group." 2 Corinthians 3:17: There is room for differences. Christ accepted us and our potential. The more you can accept people as they are, the more chance you have to reshape your behavior or their behavior. Matthew 11:28-30: Jesus encouraged principle and spiritual-based behavior of individuals with whom he came in contact. If you can gain the confidence of someone because you are reaching out to them, there is a greater ability to offer advice. Acceptance doesn't mean agreement, but it helps us to dialogue.

APPROVAL: Look for something to approve in others - find something you can identify that you value. Let that person know you approve and then the number of things you *can* approve will grow. 1 Corinthians 12:23-25: Sometimes when a person gets a taste of genuineness, it spills into other behavior. 1 Thessalonians 5:11

APPRECIATION: Appreciation simply means, "to raise in value." Consider how valuable other people are to you. Emphasize their value in your mind and figure out ways to let that person know that you think they are valuable. Acknowledge the good in them.

Are there any great and enduring historical prejudices that still persist today?



Religious hatred in the U.S., *The Shadow of Hate*, Charles Guggenheim

- *By 1656, Quakers were persecuted, whipped, imprisoned, banished and branded. Many were forced from the Massachusetts Bay Colony to survive in the wilderness. The Baptists of Virginia fared no better. Because of their beliefs, some were whipped at the stake, their ears cut off, and their tongues bored with hot irons.*

In addition, there is a long history of anti-Semitism. It is one of the great enduring prejudices of our day. Let's look into some of the history of its progression through early Christianity.





- Constantine became emperor in 306 AD. In 321, he declared Christianity the official religion of Rome. Non-Christian groups, such as the Jews, saw tremendous persecution.
- The Council in Elvira, Spain (305 AD) passed a law that Christians couldn't share meals with Jews. Christians couldn't marry Jews and Christians couldn't observe the Jewish Sabbath.

Romans 14:1-4 Romans 14:5-8



The Edict of Milan, 313 AD, outlawed all synagogues.

In Rome, 321 AD, all business ceased on Sunday, substituted Sunday for Saturday in Christian worship; four years later, Sunday became the official day of rest.

-  All privileges previously granted to Jews withdrawn.
-  Rabbinical jurisdiction abolished.
-  Proselytism prohibited, punishable by death.
-  Jews excluded from high office, military.
- Writings of church leaders changed to aggressive, anti-Jewish themes. (Eusebius, bishop of Vercelli, 370 AD)
- Promises of the Hebrew scriptures were transferred to Christians through "replacement theory." It was taught that the church was a continuation of the Old Testament, superseding Judaism and that the church was "true Israel" or "Israel according to the spirit." Rome taught that God cast away Jews and transferred His love to Christians. Genesis 17:7

Has the enduring prejudice of Anti-Semitism started to decrease in the context of this modern age?

John Chrysostom in 387 AD: "The synagogue is not only a brothel and a theater; it is also a den of robbers and a lodging for wild beasts. No Jew adores God... Jews are inveterate murderers, possessed by the devil, their debauchery and drunkenness gives them the manners of a pig...Jews are abandoned by God, and for the crime of deicide, there is no expiation possible."

Jews were forced to take jobs as slave librarians to maintain Hebrew writings. Then, since usury was considered to be endangering to Christian salvation and "Jewish souls were lost" anyway, they were forced into professions of usury or money lending. There was a growing economy developing in Rome. Later Jewish people were used by western countries as trade agents in commerce. Today's prevalence of Jewish people in banking and commerce today grew out of Christianity's own hatred for them!

Romans 11:17-20 Romans 11:23-24: Notice that Israel is re-grafted in and God has a purpose and plan for the Jewish people as well.

So now what? What can we do from a practical basis to avoid being prejudiced?

1 Peter 4:7-9: This is a strong admonition to make sure we are treating one another honestly, fairly and according to scriptural principles. Jesus taught love, not hate. If we are to be a true Christian, that has to be exemplified in our life every day in every way. Job 6:14: We don't have to act superior to others. Be willing to have acceptance and build upon that foundation. Brotherhood is the essence of the Gospel message. They were willing to sacrifice for each other. We need to try to understand each other. Showing kindness goes a long way. Treat others the way you want to be treated. The message taught by Jesus and expressed in the Lord's prayer was a world without prejudice: *Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven*. Bear one another's burdens. Galatians 6:1-2: Prejudice is dark and devious. We want to do the right thing. If you know how Jesus acted and we are trying to follow him, remember how would he treated people.

There will be a future time when the rule of righteousness and equity will exist. Right now we want to look in the mirror - am I living in a prejudiced way? I need to change that to be more Christ-like.

***So are you a prejudiced Christian?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions,
Think about it...!***