



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

John 7:24: (NASB) *Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.*

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: (NASB) *How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of 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: (NASB) *But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night.*



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: (NASB) *and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.*

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: (NASB) *But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment.*

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?*



Attacking, How Muslims are treated, ABC Prime Time on Racism

(This was a hidden camera report using actors. Real patrons were then interviewed.)

- Reporter: ...I'm with ABC News. What did you think of what you heard here?
- Patron: I didn't hear anything racist.
- Reporter: He told her he wouldn't serve her.
- Patron: Well, he can say he won't serve you if you come in here barefoot or if you didn't have a shirt on.
- Reporter: But she wasn't barefoot or without a shirt on.
- Patron: Well, she wasn't dressed right.
- Reporter: What do you mean?
- Patron: If I had a place, I would do the same thing.
- Reporter: You wouldn't let Muslims shop at your store?
- Patron: I sure wouldn't.
- Reporter: We never expected customers to be so candid.



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: (NIV) *Do not judge, or you too will be judged...why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye but pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?*



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.

Defending, *How Muslims are treated, ABC Prime Time on Racism*

- *Reporter: Meanwhile back at the bakery, our actor is at it again.*
- *Shopowner (actor): How do I know you aren't a terrorist? Terrorists look like you.*
- *Reporter: But this time the customers are sympathizing with the Muslim woman.*
- *Shopowner: Yah, I know, but can you blame me? (A patron chastises him) You're not a good American, Sir.*
- *Patron: Yes, I am a good American. My son just came back from serving in the army for over a year in Iraq and this has nothing to do with her rights. I can't believe you can be so discriminatory.*

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

A **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: (NASB) *Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*

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: (NASB) ²⁸*Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.* ²⁹*Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.* ³⁰*For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

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: (NASB) ²³*and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable,* ²⁴*whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked,* ²⁵*so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.*

Sometimes when a person gets a taste of genuineness, it spills into other behavior.

1 Thessalonians 5:11: (NASB) *Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.*

Appreciation

A caller suggested
Psalms 51:10:
Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

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: (NASB) ¹Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. ²One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. ³The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him. ⁴Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

Romans 14:5-8: (NASB) ⁵One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. ⁷For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; ⁸for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

- 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: (NASB) *I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you.*

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: (NASB) ¹⁷*But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree,* ¹⁸*do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you.* ¹⁹*You will say then, Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.* ²⁰*Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear;*

Romans 11:23-24: (NASB) ²³*And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.* ²⁴*For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?*

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: (NASB) ⁷*The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.* ⁸*Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.* ⁹*Be hospitable to one another without complaint.*

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: (NASB) *For the despairing man there should be kindness from his friend; So that he does not forsake the fear of the Almighty. Being a friend helps endure rigors of the way.*

- 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: (NASB) ¹*Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. ²Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.*

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...!*



*And now even more to think about...
only in the **Full Edition** of CQ Rewind!*

Regarding the favor of God to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles - God's favoritism is not like *our* prejudice as it is for a pre-determined reason. The following illustrates how God's way is impartial:

The account of the conversion of Cornelius:

Acts 10:17-34: (NRSV) **(selected verses)** ¹⁷Now while Peter was greatly puzzled about what to make of the vision that he had seen, suddenly the men sent by Cornelius appeared. They were asking for Simon's house and were standing by the gate. ¹⁸They called out to ask whether Simon, who was called Peter, was staying there. ¹⁹While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, Look, three men are searching for you. ²⁰Now get up, go down, and go with them without hesitation; for I have sent them. ²¹So Peter went down to the men and said, I am the one you are looking for; what is the reason for your coming? ²²They answered, "Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say.

So Peter complies, takes some believers with him and goes...

²⁵On Peter's arrival Cornelius met him, and falling at his feet, worshiped him. ²⁶But Peter made him get up, saying, Stand up; I am only a mortal. ²⁷And as he talked with him, he went in and found that many had assembled; ²⁸and he said to them, You yourselves know that it is unlawful for a Jew to associate with or to visit a Gentile; but God has shown me that I should not call anyone profane or unclean.

Cornelius explains his part, his vision, etc.

³³Therefore I sent for you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. So now all of us are here in the presence of God to listen to all that the Lord has commanded you to say.

³⁴Then Peter began to speak to them: I truly understand that God shows no partiality...

The result is not only begetting of the spirit and baptism, it is the changing of the whole call of Christianity! This sets up lots and lots of conflict to come...



With God - it is about our eternal welfare and not about our current condition:

Ephesians 6:5-6: (NASB) ⁵Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; ⁶not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. ⁷With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, ⁸knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free. ⁹And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

1 Peter 1:17-18: (NASB) ¹⁷And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; ¹⁸knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers,