

# Looking at Prejudice and Racial Justice

Leaders resource for Youth Groups

**Suggested time 1 ½ hours**

**Aims:**

- To look at issues of racism and prejudice, drawing from our experiences and the Bible
- To think of barriers in ourselves and explore strategies to overcome racial prejudice.

**Icebreaker:** *Getting the Short Straw*

by Anthony Reddie

*Cut a number of straws into varying lengths- some very short, some very long. Put the straws together so their lengths can't be seen. The leader hands them around.*

*Who has got a long straw? A short straw?*

*Discuss what we mean when we say, "Drawing the short straw".*

*In our society which groups experience discrimination, marginalisation?*

*What are some advantages of those who draw the long straw?*

*Who asked for the short straw? Who deserves the long straw?*

**No one asks or deserves to be treated as inferior to someone else.**

## **Step 1 What is Prejudice?**

- In small groups write your own definitions of prejudice?

*Compare with this working definition: Prejudice is prejudging- having negative attitudes towards particular groups based on false assumptions, misinformation and stereotyping. Prejudice is a way of thinking negatively about other groups.*

- Reflect on these questions:

How does prejudice develop? What are the consequences?

*Talk about the difference between personal prejudice (attitudes of individuals) and 'structural or institutional discrimination' (when discrimination is built into the way society operates).*

## Step 2 Breaking the Cycle of Prejudice: A Bible Study

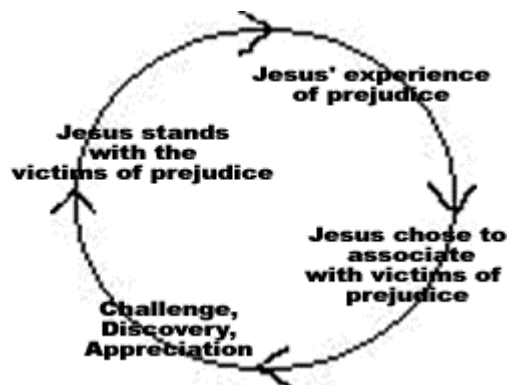
*Notes for this section provided by Rev. Duleep de Chikera, Peace worker, Sri Lanka*

Break into 4 groups: each group looks at one section

- (i) **Jesus, as a victim of prejudice:**  
Mark 6:1-4    John 7: 52
- (ii) **Jesus associated with groups that were ‘on the outer’:**  
Luke 15:1-12    John 4: 4-9, 27,40
- (iii) **Jesus’ finds his own understanding challenged by his association with the ‘outsiders’ - Discovery, Appreciation, Showing by example**  
Luke 7: 2-9    Luke 7:36-47    Luke 10: 33-37    Luke 17: 11-19
- (iv) **Jesus stands with those who are victims of prejudice:**  
See John 8: 3-11

*Report back from each small group*

*Leader explains the diagram - Breaking the Cycle of Prejudice, Trust Building*



### ➤ For group reflection:

*What do you learn about dealing with prejudice from this bible study?*

### **Step 3**      **Some more definitions....**

Racial discrimination was entrenched in Australian society under the White Australia Policy (1901- 1973)

**Assimilation:** *The view that the minority group should become absorbed into the dominant group. (Policy from 1788-1960s)*

**Ethnocentrism/ Racism:** *Belief that one's culture is superior to others. Racism may be personal, unconscious, unintentional as well as deliberate.*

**Multiculturalism:** *The right of all Australians, to express and share their cultural heritage; the right of all Australians to equality of treatment and opportunity. Cultural diversity and pluralism is seen as a resource, not as a threat.*

#### ➤ **For further discussion**

How is racial prejudice still engrained in our society?

Can you think of examples where the power and influence of one ethnic group is maintained at the expense of others?

### **Step 4**      **Sharing examples of prejudice**

In small groups talk about a prejudice you have had towards another person or group or a situation they have been in when racist attitudes or behaviour has been expressed. How did you respond?

Each group chooses one example to role play a situation of prejudice to the whole group.

After each role-play the large group asks the question:

- **What could be done to reduce/eliminate this prejudice?**
- **What are the effect of name-calling, bullying and labels.**

Note: *There may be members of the group who have personal experiences they want to share- depending on how 'safe' they feel in the group. If this happens remind people to respect the confidentiality of what has been shared.*

## **Step 5 Some Ideas for Action**

➤ *Time of individual reflection on the question:*

### **What ways can we work for racial justice?**

On cards ask each person to write down one thing they have learned from this session which they will take with them.

*People are invited to read what they have written during the closing prayers.*

Encourage the group to plan some strategies to do further work in this area. For example:

- I. Plan to meet with a group of people who may belong to a different cultural background or faith community to learn and share experiences.
- II. Over a period of time keep newspaper cuttings that reflect media bias in the way “ethnic” issues are dealt with.
- III. Put together a display dedicated to racial justice for your church.
- IV. In 3 months time revisit these issues and see how your own attitudes and actions have changed.

### **Closing Meditation**

*“Time now is a gift for you a gift of freedom to think and remember and understand the ever perplexing past and to recreate yourself in order to transform time.*

*Love demands the best in us, to always and in time overcome the worst and lowest in our souls. Love the world wisely. It is love alone that is the greatest weapon and the deepest and hardest secret”* Ben Okri

People read what they have written on their cards.

### **Prayer: (together)**

God, reconcile the differences that divide us from one another and bring us back into the unity of love.

Give us new eyes to see that our differences are part of your creation and what we have in common as human beings is stronger than what divides us.

Thank you that we are all equally loved by you.

Help us to follow the way of Jesus and work for racial justice.

Through the grace, mercy and tenderness of your Son, Jesus Christ.

Amen

**This material has been prepared by Assembly Multicultural Ministry of the Uniting Church as a resource in preparation for One Great Sunday of Sharing, 2001. Feel free to use and photocopy with acknowledgment.**