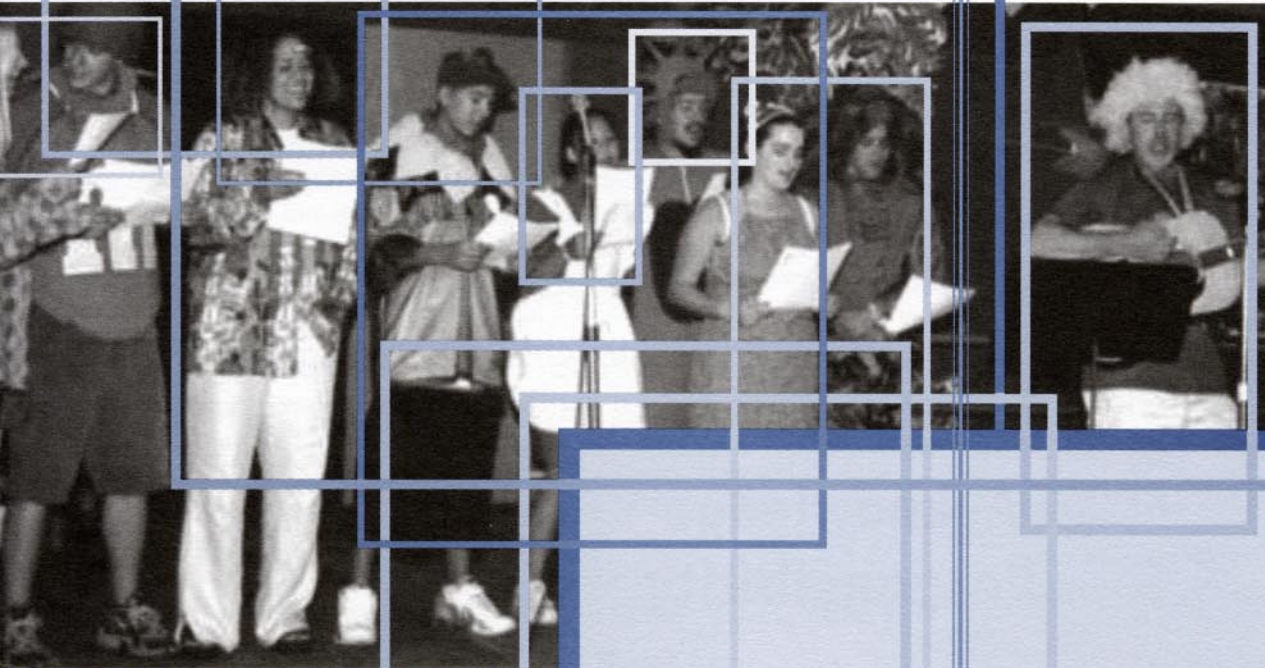


PEACE

24/7

Empowering Youth to Be Ministers of Peace and Justice



**Know Not?
Judge Not!**



We live in a world where people are always in a hurry. This is especially true when it comes to the hu-

man ability to judge and stereotype other human beings based on prejudices, fears, misinformation, and/or previous unrelated experiences.

Teen Drivers Targeted By Police

Airport Security Search Arab-looking Passengers

Airplane Grounded in South Africa—Nigerian Passengers Not Allowed to Leave Airport

Parents Forbid Dating between African American Girl and Caucasian Boy

Perfectly Healthy Gay Man Refused Insurance—Reason Given: AIDS

Man Stops to Help, Shot By Driver

When inaccurate and/or unproven criteria is the basis for actions and decisions, the results are seldom what we really want them to be. Think about the potential results.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Acknowledge Responsibility

- What are the risks when someone uses stereotyping or prejudice as a basis for dealing with others?
- If choices are made based on assumptions before true knowledge is a part of the equation, can peace or justice ever be the end result? Why or why not?
- Jesus was known for his refusal to pay attention to stereotypes. He saw people for the potential God had placed within them, not for the labels society had placed upon them. Search Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John for examples of how Jesus sought to bring an understanding of peace into the world, one person at a time. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

the Beatitudes
good Samaritan parable
tax collector friends
his disciples' backgrounds
Jesus blesses children
sinful woman forgiven
healing of leprosy

Do you punish all teens just because some are irresponsible?

Do you assume every older adult is mean just because the one next door isn't nice to you?

Do you hate all tall people because a tall person once called you short?

Do you fear all Arab-looking individuals because a few are terrorists?

Do you shun the new girl because rumor has it her church is a cult?

Parents and teachers tell you to be kind. Religion tells you to love everyone. In theory you are taught to see each person as an individual with their own gifts and history. However, those actions are not always the real-life examples witnessed. Humans continue to make judgments, and to act on those judgments, long before they ever really know each other. The result is often a hurt and pain that goes deep into the soul of individuals and communities. To be a world of peace, we must first learn how to build trust and peace one relationship at a time.

Luke 6:37–38 NRSV

“Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you.”

1 Samuel 16:7 NRSV

The Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature . . . for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.”

Psalms 69:4 NRSV

More in number than the hairs of my head are those who hate me without cause; many are those who would destroy me, my enemies who accuse me falsely. What I did not steal must I now restore?

James 2:1–4 NRSV

My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favoritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, “Have a seat here, please,” while to the one who is poor you say, “Stand there,” or, “Sit at my feet,” have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?

Presumed Innocent? Maybe Not

Make a list of stereotypes that you see exhibited on a daily basis, not only in the world news, but in your own community. Try to be very honest and specific about your community. How do these stereotypes and presumptions affect the daily life of your community's citizens? education? employment opportunities? businesses and housing? retail? law enforcement? freedoms?

Discuss how the major stereotypes in your community got started. Is there a specific history that can be traced? What causes them to continue? What can you do to help stop them?

“Profiling”

The practice of targeting individuals because they fit certain characteristics (*usually race or ethnic identity, but can reflect other sets of characteristics*) is called “profiling.”

Have you ever felt like you were a victim of profiling? If so, share your story. What happened, and how did it make you feel? How did you react?

Discuss the implications of “profiling.” Is it prejudice in action, stereotyping, or just a good method for protecting people? Is it ever okay to use “profiling”? Why or why not? Who has the right to decide?

Acquire More Understanding

Who Would You Rather Meet?

If possible, work in pairs or small groups for this activity. Read a question, then let each person respond by identifying their choice and explaining why they responded that way. If you are working alone, responses to these questions can be recorded in a journal.

Who would you rather meet on a dark street? three elderly ladies dressed for church or three dark-skinned teenage boys wearing leather jackets and silver chains?

Who would you rather date? a computer genius or an athletic superstar

Who would you be more likely to hire? a person dressed like you or someone with wildly different taste?

Who would you want as a friend? the homeless kid in study hall or the rich kid in algebra?

Who would you ask for help fixing a tire? a strong man or a woman dressed in high heels

Who would you ask for directions? a man or a woman?

After initial reactions have been shared, process the group's general reactions. What are some of the stereotypes or assumptions that were used to choose an answer? Are there other possibilities to each situation? What information would you need to make a wise decision in each situation? How might that information change your answers?

Walk in My Shoes

Find ways to put yourself into the shoes of someone who is often stereotyped and prejudged. **This will only work if you approach it as a serious experience, not a joke.**

- Arrange to spend the night in a homeless shelter.
- Follow your regular routine, but use a wheelchair everywhere you go.
- Dress in “not cool,” old fashioned, unmatched clothes and go shopping. Return to the same place dressed extremely nice and well groomed. Compare experiences.

If doing this as a group, assign different people to each challenge, then set a date to come back together to process the experiences.

Take Action

- Make a list of stereotypes you accept and use. Make a strong effort to let go of these stereotypes. Work to see each person as a child of God first, then seek to know them as the individual they are.

- Provide a setting for adults and teens to come together in a positive situation. Offer opportunity for small groups made up of adults and teens to talk about perceived generational stereotypes. Discuss and respond to two topics: (1)

What stereotypes do you think people our age have for people your age? (2) What stereotypes do I actually have about people your age? Remember this is an opportunity for better communication, not a chance to be hurtful or to take offense. Each side should have opportunity to explain why the described stereotypes do or do not fit them. Remember, a person can only speak for themselves, not a whole generation.

- Plan a block party for your neighborhood. Arrange for food, fun, games, and lots of visiting so people can get to know on another better and learn more about their neighbors. The best antidote for fear, prejudices, and misunderstanding is knowledge.

- Ask someone whom you have hurt, because you responded with action or words to information you now know was incorrect, to forgive you.

- Choose to forgive someone who hurt when they responded to incorrect assumptions and information about you.

- Sponsor a Forefront Seminar on Understanding Generations. For more information call 1-800-825-2806 and ask for Forefront Ministries.

Become an Advocate

- Speak up whenever you observe actions and/or decisions taking place that you know are based solely on stereotypes, misinformation, predetermined ideas, or prejudices.

- Ask to present a sermon and/or drama about this issue in your congregation. Start by acting out the story of the Good Samaritan. Speak to the challenge of overcoming stereotypes and the responsibility as disciples of Christ to make sure the cycle begins to stop with us.

- Ask someone who has been a victim of racial profiling to come speak to your group. Open the event to the community to help spread awareness.

- Write an article for the school or local newspaper that raises an awareness of this issue in the community.

- *Treat others the way you want them to treat you.* This saying is an adaption of Matthew 7:12 and is often called the "golden rule." There is a version of this golden rule in most religions and cultures. Do some research to find and better understand each one, then make a poster using as many versions as possible. Ask to hang the posters in store windows, churches, libraries, and other public places.

Lessons from the Movies

Freaky Friday

Prince and the Pauper

Tootsie

Mulan

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