LOOK BEYOND THE BARRIERS!

Several decades ago, in response to the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., an American teacher developed a simple classroom exercise to illustrate the power of prejudice to her students. She told the children that having blue eyes meant they were more intelligent, and gave greater privileges to the blue-eyed children. Very quickly she observed that the blue-eyed children were bullying and oppressing the brown-eyed children, while those with brown eyes demonstrated fear and low self-esteem—even though she conducted the exercise for only one day! The next day, Ms. Elliot returned to her class and told the children that what she’d told them the previous day was untrue—it was actually brown-eyed children who were more intelligent and would have more privileges. The same experience happened in reverse—now the brown-eyed children began to oppress the others.

The experience opened students’ eyes—both blue and brown!—to the power of prejudice and the divisions we create between people. It is very wrong to divide people up on the basis of race, language, culture, religion, and many other categories. We should never make distinctions between people based on our differences, nor try to determine who’s “in” and who’s “out,” who’s cool and who’s not. Jesus saw past all those barriers. He chooses His followers from every race, culture, and background, and He asks us to look past those barriers too. A major part of being like Jesus is to accept others because Jesus loves each of us and wants to welcome everyone into His family.

Sunday
RESPONDING

» Read Proverbs 28:21, GNT.

» Is your school like Chapin High School was at the beginning of the school year? Do groups of people sit together and exclude others from joining them? List the various groups in your school and what binds each group together. Do you belong to a group? Why or why not? What are the advantages and disadvantages of belonging to a group?

Monday
BIBLE ANSWERS ON UNITY IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

» Read Romans 12:4, 5; Galatians 3:27-29; Acts 17:26, 27.

» Even though God has created us unique and individual from others, we are still one in Christ. All of us are united in Christ as brothers and sisters. Just as we care for and love our families, we should care for and love our world family. When we see someone different than ourselves, we should realize they are a child of God and that He loves them. Our hearts should be touched, and we should treat them as we would Christ Himself.

» How do I see and treat others that are different from me?

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

» How can I show and share my love for God with others?

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

» Fill in the missing words.

"Go therefore and make ______ of all the nations, ______ them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ______ them to observe all things that I have ______ you; and lo, I am with you ______, even to the end of the_____.’ Amen" (Matthew 28:19, 20, NKJV).

Sabbath
FOR STUDY

» Memory Text: “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Psalm 133:1, NKJV).

» Our Beliefs, no. 14, Unity in the Body of Christ: “The church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. In Christ we are a new creation, distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation.”

» Ellen G. White, Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, pp. 35-38
Tuesday  REFLECTING

- Read Acts 10:34, 35.

- Although words such as racism and sexism (and in most translations even the word prejudice) aren't in the Bible, it's clear that God wants everyone to be treated equally. God gives us example after example of how to treat those members of society whom other members of society reject. This is so important to Him that it's even part of the law given to Moses.

- Speaking of Moses, we see one clear example of prejudice in Moses’ own family, when his brother and sister, Aaron and Miriam, spoke against Moses’ foreign wife. Miriam paid for her unkindness with seven days of shame living outside the camp with leprosy.

- Jesus confronted every -ism there was in the three years of His public ministry. Anyone was welcome to follow Him: women, children, tax collectors, old people, foreigners, those sick with contagious diseases, those who were crippled, and even traitors. He gathered around Him everyone that society said to avoid or ignore. Not only that, He told His disciples that it would be better for them to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around their neck than to hurt someone He called "the least of these."

- Prejudice is part of human nature, sometimes learned from our families, and absorbed from the society in which we live. But by God's power and grace we can become defenders, protectors, and friends to anyone.

Wednesday  BIBLE INSIGHTS

- Fill in the blanks after looking up the texts (if you don’t have a particular version of the Bible, you can go to Biblegateway.com).

1. "But the wisdom from above is first __________, then __________, __________, __________, full of __________ and good __________, un-wavering, without __________." (James 3:17, NASB).

2. "I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you _________ these things, prejudice, doing nothing with _________." (1 Timothy 5:21, NIV).

3. "There is neither _______ nor _______; there is neither _______ nor _______; for you are all one in _______." (Galatians 3:28, NASB).

4. "Then Peter replied, 'I _________ very clearly that God shows no _______ in every _______; he accepts those who _______ him and _______ what is _______;' " (Acts 10:34, 35, NLT).

5. "Jesus said to his disciples: 'Things that cause _______ to _______ are bound to come, but woe to anyone through whom they come. It would be better for them to be thrown into the sea with a _______ tied around their neck than to cause one of these _______ to stumble' " (Luke 17:1, 2, NIV).

6. "To show _______ is not _______" (Proverbs 28:21, NIV).

- Review the memory text.

- Now is the time in your life that friends are becoming the most important people (MIP) in your life. Soon they may even edge out your family for that position. This is also the time you are finding out who you are. That’s difficult, because you are changing rapidly every day (maybe even every hour!). Since you are so focused on this task, it may be harder than ever to be around people who are really different. But you must, because that’s the way life is.

- Dealing with people from various backgrounds is necessary in a global society and a global church. Even though it’s difficult, now is the time to look at what you’ve been taught about others and challenge those things you have found not to be true. Ask God to show you where you might have prejudices against someone or a group of people. Ask Him for the power to at least once a week seek out someone who is totally unlike you to interact with. Then stand back and watch Him work.

Thursday  CONNECTING

- Read 1 Timothy 5:21.

- Review the memory text.

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- Now go back through and think carefully about your responses. Using a different-colored pen or pencil, change your responses to fit how an agent of the kingdom of God should respond. Realize that we often react to people and situations according to the way we have watched others react or the way we have been told to. That’s not always the best way because in God’s kingdom a different kind of thinking is needed. Ask God to live in you so that you can treat others as He does—without prejudice or favoritism.

Friday  APPLYING

- Read 1 Samuel 16:7.

- Grab a pencil and finish the following sentences quickly, without stopping long to think about your answer. Put the first thing that comes to your mind.

Elderly people are _____________________________
Immigrants always ____________________________
Girls can’t ________________________

When boys __________________ they _____________________________
My country is ________________________________
Other countries are ____________________________

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