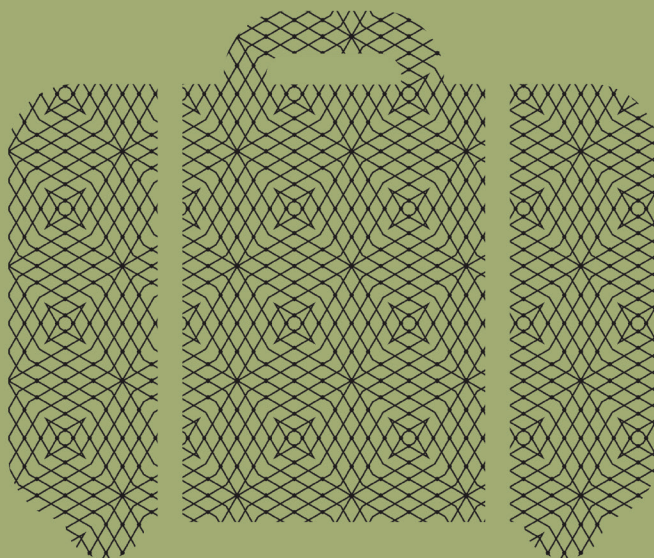


DIALOG

We Share the Name Refugee

A MILLION STEPS OF FAITH



Facilitator's Guide

We Share the Name Refugee

A MILLION STEPS OF FAITH

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SESSION

I

EDEN BEGINS (recognizing prejudice)

Focus Scriptures: Genesis 1:26-27; James 2:1-13

Session Goal: To help group members understand how our preconceived ideas about others affect the way we treat them.

OPENING OUR MINDS

Option 1

Obtain the following images before your session: a person with multiple piercings or tattoos, a person with long hair, a homeless person, a wealthy person, and a muscular individual.

Show each image separately and ask people to think about their perception of the image silently to themselves.

- **Where do we get our perception of others?**
- **How does our perception of others affect the way we treat them?**
- **Can our perceptions lead to prejudice thoughts and actions? If so, how?**
- **Why does something like prejudice exist?**

Option 2

According to the dictionary, “prejudice” is “*an opinion formed beforehand, usually an unfavorable one based on insufficient knowledge, irrational feelings or inaccurate stereotypes.*”¹

1. < http://encarta.msn.com/dictionary_1861737282/prejudice.html>. Accessed May 24, 2017.

- **With all the awareness regarding the issue of prejudice, why do you think it still exists in our world?**
- **In what ways can our preconceived ideas about others influence how we act and react toward them?**
- **Where does prejudice exist in our world? What are some of examples of prejudice you have seen?**

Option 3

Consider asking the group to share their thoughts and feelings regarding this week's chapter in *We Share the Name Refugee: A Million Steps of Faith*. Incorporate the "Reflect on this..." questions at the end of the chapter into your discussion.

Imaginative Option

Invite the group to give one example of prejudice in action with each of the following:

- **Physical appearance**
- **Religious beliefs and/or practices**
- **Financial status**
- **Age**
- **Nationality**
- **Skin color**

OPENING THE WORD

Understanding Genesis 1:26–27

God created humankind—male and female—in His image. God does not exist in physical form, so this “image” does not mean that we were created in the bodily likeness of God. Yet, “image” does denote being created to reflect the likeness of God. This image (*imago Dei* in Latin) gives us the ability to know and love God. People were created to “reflect the rational, spiritual, and moral attributes of God, though in a finite way.”²

Understanding James 2:1–13

God has no favorites, and neither should we as followers of Christ. James was warning early Christians not to show favor and give preferential treatment toward the wealthy because of their economic and social position in society. He used the example of a rich man (a ring and fine clothes signify a person of high social status) and a poor man (“shabby” clothing denotes dirty or filthy-type garments) visiting a synagogue. The rich man was given a seat while the poor man was given the floor. Special treatment was given to the rich person because of his social standing and wealth. James makes it clear that this kind of behavior is not in step with the life of Jesus—the One to whom they belonged. James warned early Christians not to judge people according to society’s standard, but to show mercy as God had shown mercy toward each of them.

2. Thornsens, Don. *An Exploration of Christian Theology*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 131.

Option 1

Read Genesis 1:26-27.

- **In what ways does understanding the truth that everyone is created in God's image influence the way we act and react toward others?**
- **How do these verses help us when we are tempted by prejudice thoughts and feelings?**
- **How does knowing that each person is God's creation help us understand the value of every human life in a deeper way?**

Read James 2:1-4.

- **Why do you think James used a rich person and a poor person for his example of favoritism?**
- **How do you think the people's act of favoritism caused them to "become judges with evil thoughts"?**
- **What are the dangers of favoring some people over others?**

Read verses 2:5-11.

- **In what ways does "loving our neighbor as ourselves" help us avoid prejudice thoughts and actions?**
- **How does being prejudice against others violate God's command to love one another?**

Read verses 2:12-13.

- **Why is mercy an important part of the Christian life?**
- **How does mercy triumph over judgment?**

Follow up by asking,

- **In what ways does this passage speak to the issue of prejudice attitudes and actions?**

Option 2

Read Genesis 1:26-27. Share with the group that God created humankind in His image. This means that people were created to reflect the attributes of God.

- **How does believing everyone is created in God's image influence the way we think about and treat others?**
- **Shouldn't the fact that we are all descendants of Adam and Eve connect us more to one another? If so, how?**
- **Do you think people are more or less connected than ever before? Why?**

Read James 2:1-13. Share with the group that in this passage a rich man is given special treatment because of his perceived high standing. The poor man was given the floor because of his perceived low standing.

- **What might be similar examples of this in our society?**
- **In what ways does a person's appearance, wealth, social standing, and so on influence the way we treat them—both positively and negatively?**
- **How does "loving our neighbor as ourselves" lead us toward treating everyone equally—a person created in the image of God?**
- **Why are love and mercy a big part of overcoming any prejudice thoughts and feelings we might have toward another?**

OPENING OUR HEARTS

Option 1

You may have some in your group who have not considered whether or not they have prejudice thoughts and feelings. Invite the group to consider the following silently:

- **Do I stereotype groups of people before I know or understand them?**
- **Do I say and do things that perpetuate prejudice?**
- **Do I judge people based on outward appearance and my preconceived ideas?**

- **Do I try to see and understand others as they really are and not as I perceive them to be?**
- **Am I receptive to allowing God to open my eyes to see people as He sees them?**

Option 2

Invite your group to respond to the following questions:

- **What are the ways we can identify prejudice in our church? Community? Personal lives?**
- **How should we respond to prejudice in our community? What about within our church? What about within our world?**

Close in prayer by asking the group to silently complete this sentence:

- *I would like God to help me with feelings of prejudice by...*

Imaginative Option

Invite a person who has been the victim of prejudice to come and speak to your group.

Connect

WEEK 1

Eden Begins (recognizing prejudice)

THIS WEEK: We will examine what it means to be prejudice against a person or people group.

THINK ABOUT THIS: Am I currently experiencing thoughts and feelings that might be considered prejudice?

PRAYER CONCERNS: