

# Breaking the Grip of Prejudice

## Lesson 1: “The Truth About Prejudice”

### Sharpening Your Ax “Purpose-Driven Teaching”

My objective is to transform lives, not merely to teach material. Sure, I want my students to know what the Bible says about racism. But my ultimate objective is that they will walk away saying, *“I hate prejudice. And with God’s help, I’m going to rid my life of every form of it.”* Relying on God’s power, I intend to cure racists of their racism, and to guard the rest from becoming racists. Focusing on that objective can transform “just another lesson” into a defining moment in a student’s life. During this series, I challenge you to ask yourself with each point, each illustration, each activity, *“What am I trying to accomplish here? Is this the best way to that end?”* Hints:

#### 1. Know your students and their needs.

Teachers who focus solely on the lesson - organizing it well, making the presentation flawless, etc. – can totally miss their students. They answer questions their students aren’t even asking. They speak either above their heads or below them, but never quite hit the target. How do you hit that target? **First, the better you know your students, the better you can teach them.** Spend time with them. Find out what they love and hate, who they hang around, what type family they come from. To hit your students, you’ve got to first know them.

**Second, discover what students in general and your students in particular believe about the topic you are teaching.** Talk to some individually or as a group to find the types of prejudices they face in their world. I suggest conducting an anonymous survey the week prior to this message so that you can focus your message on the points your students most need. If you have, for example, a skinhead in your group, get to know him and find out how he thinks and feels. He may shave his head merely because his older brother does. He may not exhibit racist tendencies at all. Have lunch with him. Tell him, “I care about you and want to understand your world. I don’t think most people understand skinheads. I want to see the world through your eyes. I want to understand.” Discover the reasoning and experiences that led him to where he is. Get into his world. See life through his eyes. Take an interest in his world, and he may take an interest in yours. Getting into your student’s lives moves you beyond teaching lessons to teaching students.

#### 2. Rework your purpose statement to meet your students needs.

One group consists of primarily jocks who despise wimps, another of intellectuals who despise jocks, another includes some borderline skinheads, still another some poor who despise the wealthy and finally those with an even mix of several subcultures. **Each youth group requires a tailor made approach.**

#### 3. Make sure each point, comment, illustration and activity fulfills your purpose in the lives of your students.

Have no mercy on an illustration that stirs your emotions but does nothing for your students. Kill it. During this lesson, I will remind you over and over to ask yourself, **“Is this point the best way to move us toward our purpose?”**

#### **4. Pray, Pray, Pray!**

*“Master Teacher, guide me and empower me as I teach. Open my students’ hearts as only You can do. Without You, I can do nothing.”*

**PURPOSE: BY THE END OF THIS SESSION, I WANT MY STUDENTS TO KNOW THAT PREJUDICE IS WRONG, AND TO DESIRE TO RID THEMSELVES OF ALL PREJUDICE.**

**PREPARATION: 1) A week prior, ask students to think about prejudice during the week and to bring stories of their encounters with prejudice.**

**2) Bring magazines that have lots of pictures of different kinds of people. If you want to create a collage, bring scissors, glue, and poster board. If not, bring note cards to mark their picture pages.**

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### **Introduction: The Destructive Power of Prejudice**

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Hate for races or certain groups of people is one of the most destructive forces known to man.

**DISCUSSION:** What incidents of prejudice have you heard of lately? (Let them share.)

**Here are a few I’ve heard of:**

- *Students won’t allow a fellow student to sit at their lunch table. Why? He is fat and doesn’t wear the right clothes.*
- *In Australia, some students divide their school bus into a White section and Aboriginal section.*
- *Three Texans with links to white supremacist groups drag a black man behind their pickup truck until he dies.*
- *In Moscow, four skinheads badly beat a black American marine at an outdoor market.*
- *In South Africa, a white American student is killed by strangers, simply because she is white.*

**The Power of Passion** – If you want to move students beyond *knowing* (“Racism is wrong.”) into *feeling* (“I despise racism.”), start by checking your own passion for the issue.

If you see racism as “just another issue,” your students will receive the lesson with the same attitude. A lukewarm heart can’t ignite a fire in the hearts of students. It may be enough for you to reflect on the prejudices that have been directed against you. To prepare my heart for this series, I watched “**Schindler’s List**” and tried to imagine life as a Jew under Hitler. I read scores of articles on racist killings until the atrocity of this sin overwhelmed my soul. Kindle a fire in your own heart and watch the fire spread to your students.

- *At Columbine High School in Colorado, two youths, fed up with being called names and put down by other groups, show their own prejudice by killing 12 of their fellow students and a teacher, not just those who put them down, but any who they found in their path.*

It seems like prejudice is everywhere. What does God think about? What can we do about it? In the next three weeks we will look to God for some answers.

**Pray:** “*God, as we seek your wisdom about this important issue, it’s so easy to point our finger at others’ prejudices, but not face up to our own.*”  
Could each of you pray silently that God will give you the willingness to allow Him to shine His light into your heart and reveal to you the areas where you are failing? (Give time for a brief silent prayer.)

## I. Am I Prejudiced?

### A. What is Prejudice?

**Discussion:** We can’t deal with prejudice without first agreeing on what it is. Who wants to take a stab at defining racism? What about prejudice?

For this series, let’s go with these definitions:

***PREJUDICE is a negative opinion of a group or race that is not based on reason.***  
***RACISM is the belief that some races are superior to others.***

In the light of these definitions, which of the following statements are racist or prejudiced? (Either put these on an overhead or use the student handout. They could discuss these in small groups. Revise these to fit the prejudices common in your culture.)

- 1) “*Every black person I know has a bad temper. All black people have bad tempers.*” (**Racist** because assumes all black people have the characteristics of the ones that he knows.)
- 2) “*All Goths hate preppies.*” (**Prejudiced** because you don’t know how all Goths feel.)
- 3) “*Many Kenyans seem to have a physical build that makes them better runners.*” (**Not prejudiced** because doesn’t lump all Kenyans together.)

4) “*White people think they are better than other races.*” (**Prejudiced.** You don’t know how all white people feel.)

5) “*Pygmies tend to be shorter than people of other races.*” (**Not prejudiced.** A statement that can be rationally verified.)

6) “*All blondes are dumb.*” [True. This has been scientifically verified in study after study. Just kidding! Obviously a statement of **prejudice.**]

(Tomas: You might change some of the above to “All Germans think they are better than other races.” “All Gypsies are thieves.” And if blonde jokes are not understood in Slovakia, substitute a common joked about characteristic that no one really takes seriously.)

## B. What Kinds of Prejudice Do We See?

**Purpose of “B”:** to help my students see prejudice in its many forms, and thereby to help them see areas where they are guilty of prejudice. Do you think this point will work as it is laid out?

When most people think of prejudice, they think only of *racial* prejudice. But prejudice can be against any group.

**MAGAZINE SEARCH:** (Hand out magazines to either individuals or small groups.) Take a magazine and look for pictures of people who represent races or social groups that some people are prejudiced against.

As you find one, raise your hand and explain to the group what race or group the picture represents, and why some people are prejudiced against them. (If you have plenty of time, or have a group that needs activity, you could have them create a collage by cutting out the pictures and pasting them on a poster board.)

**DISCUSSION:** Now tell me about other groups that people put down, perhaps not represented by any of these pictures. As others share, make a mental note of the groups that, if you were entirely honest, you’d have to admit that you are prejudiced against. (Make they include all kinds of groups, not just based on skin color. Some people are prejudiced people who are male or female, work for certain vocations, who speak a different language, hang around a certain group, are fat or skinny, jocks or preppies, or nerds or dumb, from certain area of country, poorly dressed, ugly or beautiful, uncoordinated or athletic.)

The more you think about it, you realize that all of us are the subject of someone’s prejudice, because each of us belongs to a certain race that others look down on, a certain gender that others look down on, etc. We can’t escape prejudice.

**DISCUSSION:** Have you experienced prejudice against you in any way? Would you be willing to tell us about it? What did it feel like?

It's easy to notice when someone looks down on us. But it's usually difficult to see the prejudice in our own lives. But when we see all the ways people can be prejudiced, we begin to see our own prejudices. I want everyone to think of one or more groups of people that you look down on. Is God beginning to shine His light on some of your own prejudices?

Let's see what God thinks of those people we are tempted to be prejudiced against.

## II. What Does God Think About It?

**My purpose** in this point is to persuade students that God is against prejudice and racism. Do we succeed? What could make this more powerful? Ask yourself, "what will make my students come out of the other side of this point and say, "I'm blowing it. I'm wrong. I stand guilty before the almighty God for my behavior." My strategy is to start with more cerebral, logical points and end with the points that tug at their emotions as well.

**DISCUSSION:** Let's try to get inside the head of an extremely prejudiced person. How could he justify his prejudice?

Now, let's compare that thinking to what God thinks about prejudice/racism. I should preface this by saying that if you don't believe in God and the Bible, this point won't make much difference to you. But we do have strong reasons for what we believe. If that's an issue to you, grab me after the study and let's get some time to talk about it. (Note our series titled *Christianity on Trial*.)

**IDEA:** Divide into small groups, make sure each person has the handout, and give each group some Scriptures to look up and discuss what they say about prejudice. (Have last column blank.)

<u>The Prejudiced View</u>	<u>The Word</u>	<u>God's View</u>
<i>Some people are worthless. Others are superior.</i>	<i>"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."(Genesis 1:27; cr. 1:26, 5:3, 9:6)</i>	<i>I created all people in My image. (Including those you regard as unattractive, nerds, or obnoxious.)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Newcomers don't deserve what we have.</i></li> <li><i>Love only those who are in our group.</i></li> </ul>	<i>"When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the LORD your God." (Leviticus 19:33,34; cr. Ex. 23:9; Heb. 13:2)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Give newcomers equal treatment.</i></li> <li><i>Love those who are outside your group as much as you love yourself.</i></li> </ul>

<p><i>It's okay to hate those who hate me, and get even with those who treat me wrong.</i></p>	<p><i>"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,...."(Matthew 5:44, cr. 45-47; Rom. 5:6-10)</i></p>	<p><i>Love those who hate you, just like I loved you when you hated Me.</i></p>
<p><i>People need to be put in their place. So it's fine to call people demeaning names.</i></p>	<p><i>"Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell."(Matthew 5:22)</i></p>	<p><i>No name-calling. I'm serious.</i></p>
<p><i>In order to get ahead, I need to treat the cool, the wealthy, and the powerful better than others.</i></p>	<p><i>"...don't show favoritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, 'Here's a good seat for you,' but say to the poor man, 'You stand there' or 'Sit on the floor by my feet,' have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?" (James 2:1-4 cr. Pr. 28:21; 24:23,24; Deut. 10:17-19; Lev. 24:22; Ex. 12:49; Acts 10:34,35; Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:23-25)</i></p>	<p><i>Don't insult the poor by giving special attention to the wealthy. That includes snuggling up to the "cool" crowd and ignoring the "uncool" at school.</i></p>
<p><i>God blessed us to show we're better than others.</i></p>	<p><i>"(God) comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God." (II Cor. 1:4; cr. Ps. 67:1-7)</i></p>	<p><i>I blessed you so that you could be a blessing to others.</i></p>
<p><i>I can get away with putting down the lowly.</i></p>	<p><i>"...judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!" (Jms. 2:13; cr. Mt. 25:31-46; Jer. 7:3-7; 22:1-5; Zech. 7:8-14; cr. Ez. 22:7-15; Mal. 3:1-5; Ex. 22:21-24)</i></p>	<p><i>Oppressors can run. But they can't hide.</i></p>

## Conclusion

Why does God hate prejudice and racism so much? I suppose it's because God loves people, and prejudice hurts the people he loves.

Where can prejudice lead? One man's prejudice started when he read some literature which put down the Jews. As his hate grew, he could have said, "I'm heading down a dangerous path. This is wrong. God forgive me and help me to love these people." Instead, he allowed his hatred to grow. His name was Adolph Hitler. Eventually he would kill 6 million Jews.

**Option:** Show a clip from either this scene or another in the movie.

**ILLUSTRATION:** *How many of you have seen "Schindler's List?" This award-winning movie gripped people's hearts, probably as no other before or since, about the atrocities of Hitler's Third Reich. Of all the heart-wrenching scenes from the movie, the one that haunts me the most is where the Nazi's decided to rid themselves of the burden of the Jewish children at the labor camp. They lured the children onto trucks with candy and perhaps promises of a special outing. As the trucks began to leave, some parents discovered the plot and screamed helplessly as they watched their children disappear from their lives*

Revisionist historians have to ignore tons of eyewitness testimony to deny this kind of stuff happened. The Third Reich kept meticulous records, and even filmed much of the torture and killing.

Feel with me just a moment. The children and parents you saw were actors. But they represent millions who died in the death camps. You can't really despise prejudice till you realize that those children had real parents and grandparents who cried in joy at their births. Parents who rocked them to sleep at night and held them close when they were frightened. Moms who excitedly recorded on calendars their child's first step and first word. Dad's who taught their sons to ride bikes and took them fishing on holidays. All heartlessly murdered because of people who never dealt with their prejudiced hearts.

As for Hitler, the torture and destruction of Jews was not just a terrible necessity to develop a better society. His mind became so twisted that he enjoyed the suffering. He ordered his men to film the killings so that he could view them personally. He probably watched with popcorn and coke.

As a young student, Hitler was probably a lot like you. He ran in the fields with his friends, played games, and even at one time dreamed of becoming a priest. If anyone had suggested to him that he would one day murder millions of people, he probably would have laughed out loud at the joke. But he never came before God to ask Him to forgive and heal his prejudices. Instead, he nurtured them until the rage burned within. And if we don't deal with the prejudices in our own hearts, we have no idea how twisted our minds can become.

Are you willing today to come before God and allow Him to begin to deal with the prejudices in your own heart

**Prayer**



# Breaking the Grip of Prejudice

## Lesson 2: Prescription for a Prejudiced Heart

**PURPOSE: BY THE END OF THIS LESSON, I WANT MY STUDENTS TO REPENT OF THEIR PREJUDICES AND TAKE PRACTICAL STEPS TO RID THEIR HEARTS OF PREJUDICE.**

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### INTRODUCTION

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***ILLUSTRATION:** In South Africa, four black students attended a radical political rally that condemned all white people as their enemies. After all, whites had taken their land, oppressed them and taken away their rights for years. The rally referred to all whites as “settlers” and cried, “One settler, one bullet.” That evening the four students spotted a young white girl named Amy Biehl who was driving some black students home in their township. Someone threw a brick through her windshield. She tried to run, but the students caught her, beat her with stones, and stabbed her until she died.*

*The irony of this hate crime was that if they had only known her, they would have loved her. Little did they know that Amy’s life was dedicated to fighting for **their** cause. You see, Amy Biehl was an American exchange student who was inspired as a high school student by the imprisoned black South African leader Nelson Mandela. She never lost the vision of helping South African blacks. At the bottom of her letters she would write, “FREE MANDELA!” She wrote “FREE MANDALA!” on her graduation cap for all attending Stanford University’s graduation to see. A Fulbright scholarship allowed her to study in South Africa, befriend blacks, and organize voter education in black communities to ready them for the upcoming free elections.*

*Those who knew her loved her. She was funny, outgoing, and friendly. She had about completed her work and was ready to leave the country in two days. But her dreams were cut short by four of the very people she had dedicated her life to help. They killed one of the best friends they could have ever had. She came to fight racism, but died for the color of her skin. Her attackers never took the time to find out who lived inside of that white skin. And beyond killing her, they also killed something inside those who loved her: her many black and white friends, her mom, dad, brother, sister, and a boyfriend who was ready to propose to her when she returned home. (Sources: Dave Dorr; Of The Post-Dispatch Staff, *IN THE STEPS OF A SLAIN SCHOLAR*. , St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 09-09-1997, pp 03D; DON KLADSTRUP, DIANE SAWYER, *INSIDE THE STRUGGLE*. , ABC Turning Point, 08-07-1997.)*

Can you see the horrid chain of prejudice? White racists oppress blacks. Black racists lash back by attacking whites. Is there any way to break the chain? Let’s pray for God’s wisdom.

### PRAYER

**REVIEW:** Last week we discovered God's view of prejudice. Who remembers some of the teachings of God's Word concerning prejudice? (**Teacher:** they don't have to quote exact Scriptures here. Prod a little by reminding them of some of the beliefs of prejudiced people from the chart and seeing if they can remember God's view. You might even put the chart back up on an overhead.)

Last week we discovered the truth about prejudice. It's wrong and God's against it. But it's not enough for us to know it's wrong. This week we go beyond head knowledge to ask, "*How can we rid our hearts of prejudice?*"

**DISCUSSION:** What are some of your ideas? How do you think we can cure the prejudices in our hearts?

## **I. Face the Facts: Am I Prejudiced?**

One of the first steps an alcoholic must take is to admit he is an alcoholic. Those who live in denial can't be helped. The Bible puts it this way,

*"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." (I John 1:8) "We all stumble in many ways."(James 3:2a)*

It's the same with prejudice. Some people can't be helped because they refuse to believe they have a problem. So before we go any further, let's face our own prejudices. Do you despise jocks? Look down on freaks? Think blacks are not smart? See all Germans as snooty? See the rich as all bad? Think of the poor as losers? View men as tyrants? Women as objects? Then face it: you are prejudiced! Let's deal with them.

I'll give you a few moments of silence to make a mental list of your prejudices. As we continue, apply each point to your specific prejudices.

## **II. Believe the Truth**

Here's how God's Word describes those people we put down:

*"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."(Genesis 1:27; cr. 1:26, 5:3, 9:6)*

In some sense, God made those people like Himself. How dare we cut them down! But it's one thing to see this in the Bible. It's quite another to *believe it* in your heart when your friends, family, and emotions scream to you that certain people are worthless.

**Genesis 1:27:** Commentators speculate as to specifically what characteristic(s) distinguish man as being in God's image. They posit variously self consciousness, the capacity to choose right or wrong, superior intellect, holiness, the capacity to fellowship with God, dominion over nature, immortality, wisdom, love, justice. I'm not sure of the specifics. But for our purposes, it suffices to know that we are not just another species of animal. God created mankind, in some sense, like Himself. And even after the Fall, this fact should motivate us to treat all men with dignity (note Gen. 9:6 and Jms. 3:9; cr. Ps. 8:3-8). We dare not put down or subjugate even the lowliest person. For he was the apex of God's creation, created in the likeness of his creator.

Some neo-Nazi literature is well-written and very persuasive. If you reject God's Word and begin to read that literature, you can easily find yourself justifying all kinds of atrocities. You see, if you take God out of the picture, then humans aren't special. We are just talking animals that blind, natural processes produced over millions of years. And when animals over populate an area, we declare an open hunting season. So what keeps me from deciding that smart, short people with big ears are the pinnacle of the evolutionary process? And what's wrong with getting rid of all those tall, dumb, small-eared people who are holding society back? They are just animals. Who's to say that Hitler was wrong to kill minorities? Who's to say Amy's murderers were wrong to kill whites?

Amy's murderers defiantly stated at their trial that they were justified in killing her, since it was the only way to rid themselves of the whites who had suppressed them for so many years. They believed a lie, took God out of the picture and justified murder.

Hitler read lots of racist literature and chose to believe the lie rather than the Bible. Don't walk the well-traveled road of Hitler and Amy's murderers. There

are lots of lies you can swallow to justify your prejudices. The cure to prejudice begins with staying in the grip of God's truth, even when your emotions urge you to squirm out of it.

### III. Get a New Heart

***ILLUSTRATION:** Have you heard of John Newton? He's a great example of a person who believed a lie and got really messed up. He grew up in 18<sup>th</sup> century England and went to sea with his father after his 11<sup>th</sup> birthday. Although his mom had taught him to believe the Bible, at age 16 he read a book that convinced him he should follow his own heart and mind instead. He decided that God didn't exist, truth was only opinion, and that morally he could do what he wanted to. As a result, he became an obnoxious person who respected no one and took every opportunity to try to turn people from God. He even enjoyed inventing new ways to blaspheme God.*

*This despicable fellow made his living in the slave trade, purchasing slaves in Africa and selling them for a profit. They would chain the slaves below and many would die on the voyage. Women slaves were raped. If they tried to escape, they were punished with painful thumb screws. But one day at sea his ship got caught in a major storm and began to fall apart. When it looked like all hope was gone, he realized in horror that he really wasn't sure that God didn't exist and didn't know for sure that the Bible wasn't true. And he*

*knew that if he were to die and stand before the God he had been ridiculing, he was in major trouble. So, he called out to God, survived the storm, and began to seriously seek God. Soon Newton trusted Jesus with his salvation and eventually became a preacher. He wrote a song that is one of the most popular hymns ever written: “Amazing Grace.” (Remember the words? “Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now I’m found, was blind but now I see.”)*

Our hearts, like Newtons, are diseased beyond a cure. Some of you have had prejudice drummed into you by parents or relatives all your life. Some have been so abused by certain groups that your insides boil every time you see a member of that group. You don’t need a heart *repair*. You need a heart *transplant*. And that’s what God offers us through Jesus Christ. No matter how badly you’ve hurt other people, God wants to forgive you and give you a new life just like He gave John Newton.

This is how the apostle Paul put it:

***“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (II Corinthians 5:17)***

**(Leader: If God so leads, you could give an invitation to accept Christ right here.)**

But it’s not enough just to get a new heart. You must...

#### **IV. Nurture Your New Heart**

*Some of you may have heard John Newton’s story before. But what you probably never heard was that, amazingly, for six years as a born again believer, he continued working as a slave trader! It never occurred to him that anything was wrong with it!*

**DISCUSSION:** How was this possible? (No people he knew in England thought it was wrong. None aboard his ship thought it was wrong. He was around the wrong people and wasn’t in a strong church.)

My point? It’s not enough to be born again into the family of God. Just as you began your physical life as a baby, so you began your spiritual life as a baby. And without proper nourishment, you can be a spiritual baby for years. The first century Corinthians had this problem. Paul wrote to them and said,

***Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly – mere infants in Christ. I gave you mild, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it.” (I Corinthians 3:1,2)***

Newton’s problem was that the sailors he hung around weren’t known for their preaching and Bible memorization skills. Until He got hooked up with some strong teaching and some vibrant Christians, his growth was stunted.

As Newton finally got under the teaching of some strong men of God, he began to see slavery through God's eyes and became one of the key people to stop the British slave trade. [Source on Newton: *Amazing Grace, The Dramatic Life Story of John Newton*, by John Pollock (Harper and Row, 1981) A truly riveting biography!]

**DISCUSSION:** A brand new Christian comes up to you and says she wants to grow in her walk with God. What advice would you give her? (Make sure they don't leave out personal bible reading, prayer, friendship with strong Christians, involvement in a vibrant church, and using your gifts to serve others.)

Does it not bother you at all to put down groups of people? If you're a Christian, perhaps the problem is the people you're hanging around and your lack of growth. The closer you get to Jesus, the worse prejudice looks.

## V. When You Blow It, Confess It and Pray for Love.

**ILLUSTRATION:** *Steve was a Christian, but he hated a bully in his class who humiliated him by picked on him.*

**Discussion:** How would you advise Steve to overcome his hate?

*Perhaps his strategy for overcoming hate can help us overcome prejudice. Realizing that his hate was sin, Steve confessed his sin to God and asked God to forgive him and to give him to power to love the bully. The next time his blood began to boil and he dreamed of strangling the bully, he immediately confessed his hate to God, and asked for the power to love. He repeated this process every time hatred crept into his mind, until he eventually felt sorry for the bully and the hate disappeared.*

This is a verse that helped him:

***“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9, cr. Prov. 28:13)***

Remember, returning love for hate isn't natural. It's a God thing, a supernatural thing that God enables us to do through His power. You can't do it on your own. Pray for His power.

**PRAYER:** With your heads bowed and eyes closed, ask God to forgive you for the specific prejudices you have. Now ask Him for the power to love the unlovely. Now look up. If you meant it, you're forgiven. And if you continue to pray for His power, you can overcome your prejudices. But there's another step.

## VI. Forgive Everyone.

Doesn't it feel great to be forgiven? Isn't it wonderful to serve a forgiving God? Well, when God forgives us for sin that was so bad that we deserved hell, he expects something of us – to forgive others like He forgave us. The Bible says it this way,

***“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” (Ephesians 4:31,32; cr. Mt. 6:14,15; Mt. 18:21-35; Lev. 19:17,18)***

To break the chain of hatred that extends from generation to generation, someone must say to himself, *“The hatred stops here with me. I’m breaking the chain.”* So the choice is up to you. Whether your problem is with jocks, men, blacks, whites, Gypsies, or whoever, you’ve got to decide if you’re willing to break the chain. If you decide to cling to your hatred, the chain will destroy yourself as well as others.

**ILLUSTRATION:** *One white man experienced abuse by blacks while he was in prison. He could have forgiven the men and gone on to live a normal life. But he allowed the hate to grow, joined a white supremacy organization, and now faces execution for dragging a black man to his death. His lack of forgiveness destroyed him.*

**ILLUSTRATION:** *Harris and Klebold could have forgiven the jocks who intimidated them at Columbine High School. Instead, they let their hatred grow, planning for over a year the massacre that killed 12 students and a teacher. And in the end, they destroyed themselves as well.*

That’s where hatred ends. It destroys the haters. But I want to end this lesson on a positive note with two examples of people who decided to break the chain.

**ILLUSTRATION:** *“Shawn” is an 18-year-old who attends a prestigious art school. But he could have suffered the fate of Harris and Klebold. Like the killers, his high school years were consumed with hatred for the popular crowd that put him down. Like the killers, he planned to seek revenge by hurting or killing the students who caused his pain. But unlike Harris and Klebold, he finally realized that his obsession with revenge was tearing him apart. In “Shawn’s” own words, **“In the long run, I wasted four years hating people.”** Shawn was wise enough to see what was happening, and stopped the chain of hate. (Facts from Kevin Flynn; News Staff Writer, *COLUMBINE KILLERS STRIKE CHORD ON NET VISITORS TO WEB SITE FOR DYLAN AND KLEBOLD WRITE OF RAGE, VIOLENT THOUGHTS OVER BEING RIDICULED IN SCHOOL.*, Denver Rocky Mountain News, 07-12-1999, pp 5A.)*

**ILLUSTRATION:** *We introduced this lesson with the story of Amy Biehl, the student who died at the hands of the South Africans she had dedicated her life to help. But the story doesn’t end at her death. Her parents, Peter and Linda, could have carried on the chain of racism by seething with hatred for the blacks who killed their daughter. Instead, they did the unthinkable. They forgave the killers. They visited the killers’ parents, identified with their pain, and hugged them. And they refused to get bitter when the*

*killers were released after only four years. Rather, they went beyond forgiveness to set up a foundation in South Africa that continues their daughter's work in the very area where she was murdered. They spend more time there than in America these days. They train students to bake bread and help them set up their own businesses. They provide art, music and welding classes as well as tutorials for students wanting to get into college. Thousands of lives are being touched. Why? Because Peter and Linda Biehl stopped the chain. They were willing to forgive. According to Peter, **"It's liberating to forgive. We can sleep at night and we can feel totally at ease. You can't do that if you're harboring hate or anger...."** Of their work in South Africa he says, **"It just absolutely sets me free."** (Sources: 1. Andrew M. Greeley, *Commentary // Parents of Amy Biehl find 'it's liberating to forgive'*, Minneapolis Star Tribune, 08-16-1997, pp 07B. 2. Amy's Story, CBS ( 60 Minutes (CBS)) Lesley Stahl; 01-18-1999)*

Do you need to be set free? The choice is in your hands. Do you want to live in bondage to your anger and prejudices? Or, do you want to be set free? Jesus set the pace by forgiving those who tortured Him to death on the cross. Will you follow His example? Come on. Break the chain.

(Give time for reflection and prayer.)

# Breaking the Grip of Prejudice

## Lesson 3: “Living an Unprejudiced Life”

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### *Introduction*

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Prejudice comes so naturally to the human heart. Squish it in one form and it comes out in another.

**ILLUSTRATION:** *I heard of a bus driver who tried to solve the fighting between his white and aborigines students. One day, far out in the country, he stopped the bus and asked the white boys, “What color are you?” They answered, “White.” “No,” corrected the driver. “You are green. Anyone who rides this bus is green.” After all the white boys understood they were green, he went to the aborigines and asked what color they were. “Black,” they responded. “No, you are green,” he corrected. “Anyone who rides my bus is green.” So all the aborigines answered that they were green. All went well for several miles until he heard a voice from the back of the bus saying, “All right, light green on this side; dark green on that side.” (Found in 1001 Great Stories, by R. Kent Hughes, Tyndale House Publishers, 1998, p. 332)*

If prejudice were not so horrible, some of it would be laughable. Two weeks ago we discussed why prejudice is wrong. Last week we talked about how to rid our hearts of prejudice. Today we’re asking God to show us how to live a life free of prejudice. Let’s pray for God to teach us.

### **PRAYER**

**IDEA:** You could show the clips of the Jesus film that correspond to each of these events in His life. [The Jesus Film covers only the events that were included in the gospel of Luke. This excludes Scene I (Samaritan Woman),] (Tomas, you may want to put information here on how they can borrow or purchase a copy of the Jesus film in Slovakia.)

I love a coach who can not only *tell* me how to pass a ball or shoot a hoop, but can *show* me how to do it. That’s exactly what God did for us. He didn’t just *tell* us how to treat other people. He became a man so that He could hang out with us and *show* us how to treat people. So, the Christian’s great objective in life is to be like Jesus. (I Jn. 2:6, cr. 4:17, 3:2,3; Phil. 3:21; Heb. 12:2,3; I Cor. 11:1, Eph. 5:1,2 I Pet. 2:21) And one of the best ways to act like Jesus is to ask ourselves, in each situation we face, “*What Would Jesus Do?*”



To find out how Jesus handled prejudice, let's dig into the Bible to find out how He responded to those awkward people situations that we face in life. And rather than me teach you, I want *you* to see Jesus in action. Then you can answer three questions to move us from the Bible to your daily life. I'll ask: 1 - *What Did Jesus Do?* 2 - *What Did Jesus Teach?* 3 - *What would Jesus do in the similar situations you face today?* At the end of your student sheet I've left a place for action points. As God puts His finger on some of your actions that need to change, I challenge you to take it seriously and write it down.

## Scene I – “Jesus Meets a Person of a Despised Race”

### What Did Jesus Do?

Read **John 4:4-10, 27**. (Give a little background on prejudice against Samaritans and women.)

### What Did Jesus Teach?

Read **Matthew 28:19**. (We are to spread the gospel to all the world. Not just our own culture or race.)

### What Would Jesus Do Today?

(Let the students go with this. Only ask questions if you need to.) *What races of people do your fellow students regard as social outcasts? How do people treat them poorly? (Make fun of them. Avoid them. Try not to sit close to them.) How would Jesus treat them? Are there some individuals that you need to write down in your Action Points that you need to treat differently?*

## Scene II – “Jesus and Sinners”

- **What Did Jesus Do?**

**Matthew 9:10,11** (cr. Luke 15:1ff) (Defying the teaching of the Rabbis, he ate with people they considered human scum. But look how this encounter paid off. One of the tax gatherers was Matthew, who became a disciple and wrote the gospel of Matthew!)

- **What Did Jesus Teach?**

### Jesus Versus Prejudice

Jesus was a revolutionary regarding the racial and gender prejudices of His time. Strict Jews would take a longer route to avoid Samaria, so intense was their hatred of Samaritans. Jews once cut Jesus by suggesting he was a demon possessed Samaritan! (John 8:48).

Some rabbinical teachings during Jesus' time: *“a man should not salute a woman in a public place, not even his own wife.”* It is *“better that the words of the law should be burnt than delivered to women.”* (compare Aboth, i. 5 (Taylor); and Buxtorf, Lex. Rabb., p. 1146). *“One of the thanksgivings in the daily service of the Synagogue is: ‘Blessed art Thou O Lord, ... who hast not made me a woman.’”* (Source: Westcott) A Rabbi would rather go thirsty than speak to a woman in public. (BKC) *“He that eats the bread of the Samaritans is like to one that eats the flesh of swine”* (Shebi. 8:10, cited by Morris)

**Matthew 9:12-13** – [He spends time with sinners because He came to reach sinners. It’s the sick who need a doctor. **Clarification:** 1) Don’t take this to mean it’s okay to have your best friends as flagrant sinners (I Cor. 15:33, II Cor. 6:14,15). Jesus wasn’t looking for girlfriends or best friends among unrepentant sinners. His purpose in being with them was to call them to repentance (Lk. 5:31,32). 2) His association with known sinners didn’t imply acceptance of their lifestyle. He at times sharply rebuked unrepentant spiritual leaders and oppressors (e.g., Mt. 23:13ff).]

- **What Would Jesus Do Today?**

*What kinds of sinners and social outcasts do people look down on today? (Perhaps drug addicts, prostitutes, alcoholics.) How do people treat them poorly? How do you think Jesus would treat them? Are there any sinners that you need to treat differently? Write their names in your Action Points.*

### Scene III – “Jesus and People Who Hurt”

- **What Did Jesus Do?**

**Matthew 9:36**

(He looked on people with compassion.)

- **What Did Jesus Teach?**

**Matthew 5:7** (Blessed are the merciful.)

- **What Would Jesus Do Today?**

*Who are the hurting people today? (Sick, handicapped, mentally retarded, poor, oppressed, unpopular, etc.) How do people treat them poorly? How do you think Jesus would treat them? Are there any hurting people that you need to add to your Action Point list?*

**Matthew 9:10-13** – Jews bitterly hated tax gatherers because 1) they collected taxes for the evil, dominating Roman empire. To support the Romans in their cause made them traitors to their own people. 2) Since tax rates were vague and indefinite, collectors often filled their own pockets by collecting more than their due. 3) They were considered ceremonially unclean by Rabbis because of their contact with Gentiles. Thus, Rabbis forbid their students to eat with them.

**Mt. 9:36** - Jesus had deep sympathy for them, seeing them as “sheep bothered by wolves, lying down and unable to help themselves, and having no shepherd to guide and protect them, the people were maligned by the religious leaders, helpless before them, and wandering about with no spiritual guidance.” (NBC)

**Matthew 5:7** - “*Blessed*” could also be translated “*happy*,” or “*fortunate*.” Not dependent upon outward circumstances, it’s more than a fleeting good laugh. It is the general sense of welfare in the heart of the believer, the spiritual prosperity and satisfaction resulting from God’s favor and salvation. “*Mercy*” goes beyond feeling sorry for someone. It is pity in action, helping the hurting and relieving their suffering.

### Scene IV – “Jesus Reacts to Those Who Hate Him”

- **What Did Jesus Do?**

**Luke 23:33,34**

(Jesus forgave those who crucified him.)

- **What Did Jesus Teach?**

**Matthew 5:43,44**

(Love those who hate you. Pray for those who persecute you. **Clarification:** This doesn't mean that I should do nothing to fight evil. In order to protect the innocent, drug pushers must be turned in. Bullies sometimes must be reported to the principal.)

- **What Would Jesus Do Today?**

*Who are the people who hate and persecute others today? (Some of the social elite, skinheads, bullies, etc.) How do people treat them poorly? How would Jesus treat them? Are there people who hate you that you need to add to your Action Points as people you must forgive?*

## Scene V – “Jesus and The Lowly”

- **What Did Jesus Do?**

**Mark 10:13-16 (cr. Mt. 19:13-15; Lk. 18:15-17)**

(Jesus welcomes the children.)

- **What Did Jesus Teach?**

**Matthew 25:40** (cr. The entire context: vss. 31-46)

“When you help the least of these, you do it to Jesus.”

**Mt. 25:40** – The “King” is Jesus (v. 31). See vss. 35-39 to see the specifics of how to help “the least of these.”

- **What Would Jesus Do Today?**

*Who are the lowly people today? (Unpopular, uncoordinated, unattractive, too young, too little, too poor, sick, imprisoned, etc.) How do people put them down and treat them poorly? How would Jesus treat them? Are there lowly people you need to add to your Action Points in order to treat them as Jesus would?*

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## *Conclusion*

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**Idea:** You could end with a song such as “*For Annie*,” by Petra (Never Say Die cassette), which powerfully portrays a rejected girl who commits suicide. Students could fill in additional action points as the song plays.

I think we need to be honest with ourselves at this point. If we begin to live the kind of life that Jesus lived, some people won’t like you. Some religious people won’t like you. If you begin to ask yourself, before you sit down for lunch at school, “*Who would Jesus sit with?*” You may begin to be excluded from certain social groups.

A.W. Tozer put his ambition this way,

*“Our great honor lies in being just what Jesus was and is. To be accepted by those who accept Him, rejected by all who reject Him, loved by those who love Him and hated by everyone that hates Him. What greater glory could come to any man?” (A.W. Tozer)*

The bottom line is who are you gonna believe? The *world* tells you “*Blessed are those who live at the top of the social ladder. Jesus says “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”* The merciful are those who look out for other people’s welfare over their own. I know it’s radical. But a fork in the road is before us today. One has a signpost that says “*Mercy Way.*” It’s the sacrificial way. The other is “*Selfish Way.*” I’ll give you a moment of silence to do business with God and decide which road you will take.

## **Prayer**