

Prejudice and Tolerance—September 2014

UUFVB Covenant Groups

Chalice Lighting

May we know once again that we are not isolated beings,
but connected, in mystery and miracle,
to the universe, to this community and to each other.

Check-in: How is your spirit right now?

Opening Reading: “He flattered himself on being a man without any prejudices; and this pretention itself was a very great prejudice.” (Antole France, *The Crime of Sylvestre Bonnard*)

Topic Exploration

The word **prejudice** refers to prejudgment: i.e., making a decision before becoming aware of the relevant facts of a case. In recent times, the word has come to be most often used to refer to preconceived, usually unfavorable, judgments toward people or a person because of gender, social class, age, disability, religion, sexuality, race/ethnicity, language, nationality or other personal characteristics. In this case it refers to a positive or negative evaluation of another person based on their group membership. Prejudice can also refer to unfounded beliefs and may include unreasonable attitudes that defy rational thought.

Discrimination often occurs when individuals perceive an “outgroup” to be threatening in some way. Threats can be realistic, symbolic, or related to intergroup anxiety or negative stereotypes. *Realistic threats* are tangible, such as competition for a natural resource or a threat to income. *Symbolic threats* arise from a perceived difference in cultural values between groups or a perceived imbalance of power—for example, an ingroup perceiving an outgroup’s religion as incompatible with theirs. (*Wikipedia*)

Questions / Sharing

1. What prejudices do you realize that you may have acquired from your family or environmental background?
2. What aspects or behaviors of people or groups of people currently test your ability to accept them?
3. How do the media affect our prejudices?

Tolerance is the practice of deliberately allowing or permitting a thing of which one disapproves. Tolerance is an attitude of mind that implies non-judgmental acceptance of different lifestyles or beliefs, whereas toleration implies putting up with something of which one disapproves. (*Wikipedia*)

4. What could you do to understand how individuals or groups developed the traits that caused prejudice toward them? Would such understanding help develop tolerance toward them?

5. How does our misunderstanding of other cultures lead to prejudice? Mark Twain said, "Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry and narrow mindedness." Discuss.
6. Describe an experience you have had that changed prejudice to tolerance or even acceptance toward an individual or group.
7. How best can we, as individuals and as UUs, work actively towards increasing tolerance of "outgroups" and decreasing prejudice within the greater community?

Check-out and reflection on today's session

Closing Reading

We are each burdened with prejudice; against the poor or the rich, the smart or the slow, the gaunt or the obese. It is natural to develop prejudices. It is noble to rise above them. (Author Unknown)

Extinguish the Chalice

We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth,
the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment.
These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.

Housekeeping