

Diversity in The Church

RELATE

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Diversity

Diversity is about understanding, accepting, and valuing differences between people.

- Genders
- Body Types
- Religious Affiliations
- Ages
- Physical Abilities
- Socioeconomic Statuses

Diversity In Scripture

“After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes and held palm branches in their hands.”

- Revelation 7:9 NLT

Inclusion

Inclusion is the pointed action of including or being included in a group, organization, or structure. Inclusion is more than diversity or a numerical representation.

Inclusion...

- Involves Participation

- Encourages Empowerment
- Provides The Assurance That All Voices Are Heard And Represented
- Cultivates A Sense Of Belonging

Inclusion In Scripture

“For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”

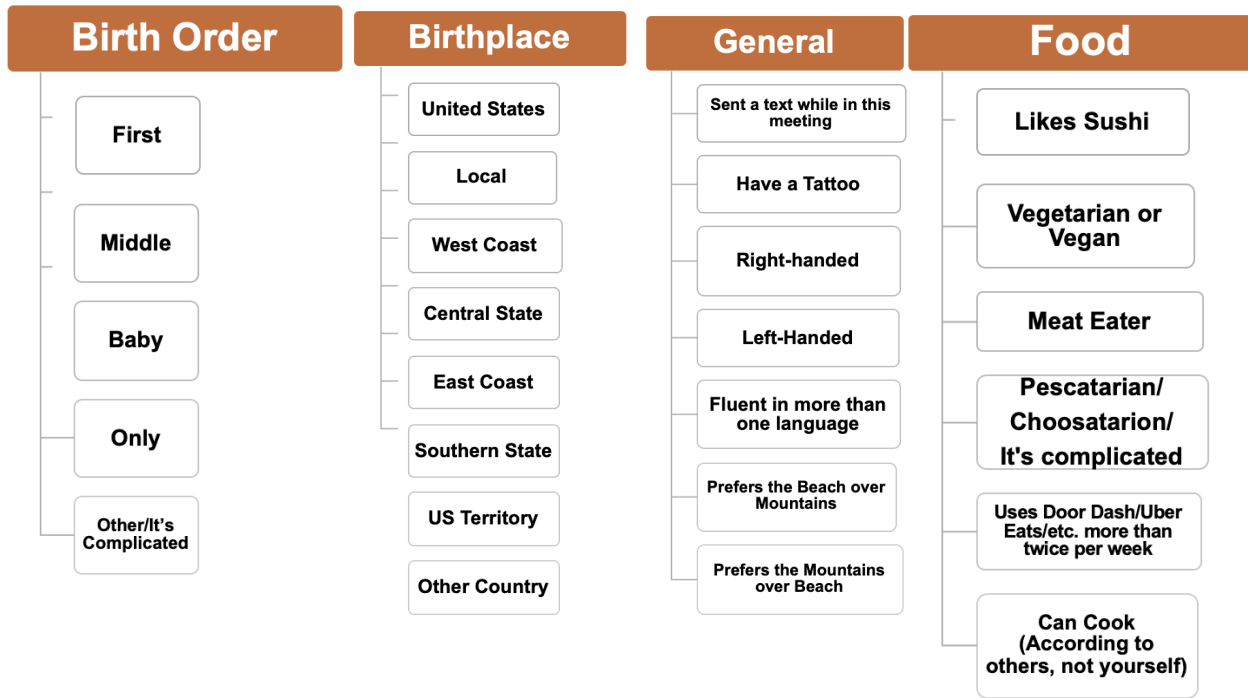
- John 3:16 NLT

“Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect.

They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

- Romans 10:12-13 NLT

Who's in the Room



❖ What surprised you the most?

❖ What Did We Just **Accomplish?**

- -Created a Safe and Brave Space
- -Courageous Conversations

Scenario #1



Ashley's Story

Part of my family has a Jamaican heritage and my hair naturally grows into “dreadlocks.” I enjoy wearing my hair the way it grows naturally.

I didn't realize that wearing my natural hair was keeping me from performing certain roles in the church until someone from our Leadership Team informed me that I would need to “change my natural hairstyle” before I could minister from our main platform. I was faced with either cutting my freeform locks or altering my look to make them appear “*more professional.*”

As a result of this advice, I decided to cut my hair. One week after cutting off my locks, I was invited to speak on the main platform for the first time.

- What/how is Ashley feeling?
- Does this incident impact Ashley's perspective of your church or her team members? If so, how?
- As a leader, if Ashley is a member of your group or department, how would you address this?

Scenario #2



James' Story

After learning about the story of Ahmad Arbury, I shared my feelings with the team I serve with at my church.

I spent approximately fifteen minutes sharing my heart with those I serve alongside with. I've had a relationship with most of the team members for 9 years.

The moment I finished my last word, the group got completely silent and then immediately changed the subject to "what is everyone watching on Netflix these days?"

- What/how is James feeling?
- Does this incident impact James' perspective of your church or his team members? If so, how?
- As a leader, if James is a member of your department, how would you

address this?

Scenario #4



Miriam's Story

I'm new to the area, and I wanted to visit a few churches in my new community. After hearing so many great things about a church in my neighborhood, I decided to visit.

I dressed in my cultural garments as I do every single day. While some people seemed very friendly, many others didn't seem very open about my visit.

- What/how is Miriam feeling?
- Does this incident impact Miriam's perspective of your church? If so, how?
- As a leader, how do you prepare your staff and volunteers for welcoming

people of different faiths or cultures an invitation into your community?

Scenario #3



Isaac's Story

I visited a church service with my wife and her parents. My in-laws introduced us to a few members of the church.

One couple we were introduced to greet us, and then the husband proceeded to make an "unsavory" joke saying, "I think I've seen you before. Yeah, on the FBI watchlist!"

It made me very uncomfortable, but I didn't speak up about it because my wife and her parents were there.

- What/how is Isaac feeling?
- Does this incident impact Isaac's perspective of your church or his team members? If so, how?
- As a leader, if Isaac is a member of your group or department, how would

you address this?

TALKING POINTS

1. Why It's Important

- **Open with reading John 17 and pointing out every time Jesus mentioned oneness.**

John 17:20-25 NLT - ²⁰ "I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. ²¹ I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.

²² "I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. ²³ I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me. ²⁴ Father, I want these whom you have given me to be with me where I am. Then they can see all the glory you gave me because you loved me even before the world began!

²⁵ "O righteous Father, the world doesn't know you, but I do; and these disciples know you sent me. ²⁶ I have revealed you to them, and I will continue to do so. Then your love for me will be in them, and I will be in them."

- What does this look like in the Church??
- **Read Revelations 7:9-10.**

Rev. 7:9-10 NIV - ⁹After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

- Discuss our part in shaping the Church to become the Bride Jesus is coming for.
- Our part as ministers of reconciliation to bring others to the fullness of the Bride of Christ
- **Adopting a culture of oneness and belonging as part of our great commission.**

2. Who It Applies To

How to have diversity in their church?

- Embracing the importance of oneness (John 17)
- Developing and cultivating an intentional culture of oneness and belonging
- Becoming committed to cultivation the picture of the Bride of Christ depicted in Revelations 7 in our own churches.
- Authentic representation in leadership positions
- Acknowledging and embracing different cultures of worship
- Our responsibility to bear His image and likeness in the earth
- Make the culture of oneness and belonging in your church a priority, commitment and mantra

How does the Church handle racial tension in the world which affects our church members?

- People want to be seen, heard, respected, and acknowledged. Provide opportunities to minister to each cultural need from the place that Jesus did in his ministry. (Woman at the well, the poor, the sick, the hungry, the oppressed, the disenfranchised, etc.) He saw them. He acknowledged their current position and healed them and offered freedom and empowered them.
- Create safe and brave spaces where listening sessions can occur.
- The Church should be the voice that represents Jesus' perspective on what's happening in the world. When the Church is silent, it appears as though Jesus is silent or your specific church doesn't care.
- Be willing to be criticized for the message. Jesus was an advocate and an activist for others. He was criticized for his message and method. We must be willing to share the

message of the love of God, along with methods that upset the world, or those who are comfortable with the standards the world has set.

3. How To Cultivate It

What strategies does Bayside use?

- Intensive training and small groups
- Redesigning a mission statement that prioritizes a culture shift embracing oneness and belonging.
- Hiring diverse staff in executive leadership positions.
- Being intentional about incorporating diverse expressions of worship in all campuses.

What to do and what not to do:

- **Don't ignore issues that affect POC within the congregation.**
- **Do invite uncomfortable conversations.** Jesus did so with the intent to bring healing, freedom, and restoration.
- **Do not make things political.** Politics are from a system outside of the Body of Christ. The Body must influence world governments through representing Christ culture and understanding that politics is a divisive tool that can adversely affect the Body of Christ's mission for oneness. We are in the world but not of it.
- **Do explicitly express your church's culture for oneness and belonging.**
- **Do not wait for a crisis to occur to speak or preach messages on injustice.**

Final Thoughts/Prayer (inspired by Faith Tabernacle):

It is time we become aware of our subconscious biases and judgments. Pay attention to thoughts that just pop up that categorize people and assign a value either above or below where you think you are. God's love is the same for all people regardless of race, gender or stature. God does not look at outward appearance or worldly achievements. He only sees the spirit and heart of every person He made.

John 15:12 *"This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."*

What we see or know about other people may be dim or relatively non-existent, but that might be the best way to keep us from judging them. The scriptures warn us about making judgments, which is a function of sowing and reaping.

Luke 6:37 *"Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven."*

We will be judged by how we treat others.

We live in a world of division and contention because people judge one another by their own standards. Prejudice prevails because we tend to believe that where we are and what we have spiritually, physically, mentally, emotionally, religiously, politically, or ideologically is superior. But I say to all of us that when we stand in the presence of God, none of that will matter.

We can love because God loves us.

John 3:16 *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."*

1 John 4:7 *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.*

1 John 4:11 *Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*

"Love is the most important spiritual standard of every generation. When we know God and have His Spirit, we will produce the evidence in our lives manifesting as the fruit of the Spirit."

Galatians 5:22-23a *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.*

Let's grow some fruit!

Isa. 1:17 NIV - *Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.*

"We live in a world in which we need to share responsibility. It's easy to say, 'It's not my child, not my community, not my world, not my problem.' Then there are those that see the need and respond. I consider those people my heroes." – Fred Rogers

"Let my heart be broken by the things that break God's heart," – Bob Pierce

Prayer: Make us one by your Spirit. Help us to know when our hearts are being lovingly convicted and corrected into holiness. Grant us opportunities to become your image-bearers, and ministers of reconciliation in the world you assigned us to. Give us Your perspective on issues in this world and within Your Kingdom. Forgive us for not recognizing places in our hearts that don't represent Your heart. We welcome your correction. Renew our minds. Heal our perspectives. Empower us to be advocates of Your Word and activists of Your love.