

The Value of Being Christian & Inclusive

Building Bridges





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Introductions

Session Goal

Explore how we can be **authentically Christian** as an organization in a pluralistic society, while creating an **inclusive environment** that reflects Jesus' teachings of love, compassion, and acceptance.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the session, participants will:

- **Explore what it means to be Christian and inclusive**
- **Identify key barriers to inclusion**
- **Examine practical steps for inclusive bridge-building**



Defining What It Means To Be Christian & Inclusive

Pair & Share: Definitions

Provide your personal definitions for the following:

- Inclusion
- Christianity



Inclusion

- A culture of belonging that depends upon *active*, *intentional*, and *ongoing engagement* with diversity in ways that increase authentic representation, empowered participation, true belonging, and power-sharing. Inclusion pulls in diverse voices to influence and contribute to decisions and outcomes.

Source: George Washington University & Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design

Christianity

- Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines Christianity as "the religion derived from Jesus Christ, based on the Bible as Sacred Scripture, and professed by Eastern, Roman Catholic, and Protestant bodies."
- A faith system derived from the teachings of Jesus, which is based on the Bible and professed by many different denominations of believers.

Source: [Christianity.com](https://www.christianity.com)

Christian AND Inclusive

The Bible teaches that God loves all people and offers salvation through Jesus Christ, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, social status, or any other characteristic.



Biblical Texts on Inclusion

- **Galatians 3:28:** "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."
- **1 Timothy 2:3-6:** "For God desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time."
- **Matthew 22:37-40:** "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."



“The only clear line I draw these days is this: when my religion tries to come between me and my neighbor, I will choose my neighbor... Jesus never commanded me to love my religion.”

— Barbara Brown Taylor, “Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others”

Key Characteristics



A Place of Belonging



Diversity as a Gift



Challenges to Inclusivity



Focus on Unity



Inclusivity vs. Exclusivity

DON'T PUT PEOPLE IN BOXES



Video Reflection

- What thoughts come to mind in response to this video?
- What boxes have you tried to put people in?



“If you are going to be an authentic disciple of Jesus, you have to take Jesus seriously and try to understand what his message was really about and **incorporate it in our daily lives.”**

– Millard Fuller



Luke 19:6-10

When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.” But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.” Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, **because this man, too, is a son of Abraham.** For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”



Understanding The Barriers To Inclusion

Small Group Brainstorm: Barriers

In your community, what are some of the biases, beliefs, practices, and challenges that are barriers to inclusivity?

Some Common Barriers to Inclusion



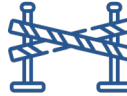
Attitudinal Barriers:

- Negative Attitudes
- Social Stigmas



Communication Barriers:

- Lack of Accessible Communication
- Unclear Language



Programmatic Barriers:

- Lack of Inclusive Programs
- Rigid Structures



Liturgical Barriers:

- Unwelcoming Rituals
- Lack of Sensitivity



Other Barriers:

- Cultural Barriers
- Doctrinal Disagreements
- Lack of Role Models
- Hidden Disabilities
- Fear and Conditioning



Practical Steps For Inclusive Bridge-Building

Dr. King's Beloved Community

“But the end is reconciliation; the end is redemption; the end is the creation of the beloved community. It is this type of spirit and this type of love that can transform opposers into friends. It is this type of understanding goodwill that will transform the deep gloom of the old age into the exuberant gladness of the new age. It is this love which will bring about miracles in the hearts of men.”



(Facing the Challenge of a New Age, 1956)



Habitat's Faith Foundation

Mission: Seeking to put God's love into action...

Question: What does it mean to be a Christian organization?
What does it mean to put God's love into action?

Love all our
neighbors



Do
justice



Walk humbly
with God



Love all our neighbors

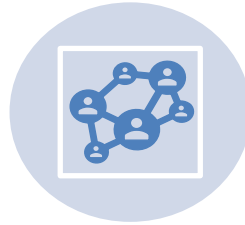


Our *faith* compels us to cross boundaries, identities, and different walks of life, bringing people together and seeing the inherent worth of everyone.

What Is Bridge Building?



An approach to building meaningful connections among people across demographic divides



Centers relationship and trust building and emphasizes listening and finding common ground as a first step to working together

The Goals of Bridge Building



GOAL 1

Bring together people from varied backgrounds



GOAL 2

Engage with and value people from vastly different lived experiences



GOAL 3

Dispel the “us” vs. “them” mentality



GOAL 4

Acknowledge and address systemic barriers



GOAL 5

Encourage the voice of the marginalized and urge advocacy for equity



GOAL 6

Form partnerships/ collaborations that foster equity and lead to community healing and collective empowerment

“Through co-creation, we build solutions from the ground up in accompaniment with the community. We intentionally ensure that community representation is not tokenism but a true inclusion with a long-term commitment”

-- Kelly Rubey, **“Inclusive Bridge Building: Community-Based Learning”**



John 4:27-30;40-41

Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, “What do you want?” or “Why are you talking with her?” Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?” They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, **and he stayed two days**. And because of his words many more became believers.

Small Group Case Study

- The **fictional Koinonia Habitat for Humanity** Affiliate, an affiliate in a rural southern service area has formed an ongoing relationship with a local coalition of churches who have traditionally supported the affiliate (e.g. volunteers, financial contributions, etc.). One member church of the coalition has recently decided to withdraw from the coalition and end its relationship with Habitat because another partner church has hired a female pastor. Because of the backlash over the new female pastor, the affiliate is concerned about losing the support of other churches in the coalition. What can the affiliate do to respond appropriately in this moment and to continue to build relationships and bridges in the community?



Reflection & Commitment

Individual Reflection

Identify two (2) things can you commit to do in the next 60-90 days to build bridges by becoming more inclusive at your affiliate?

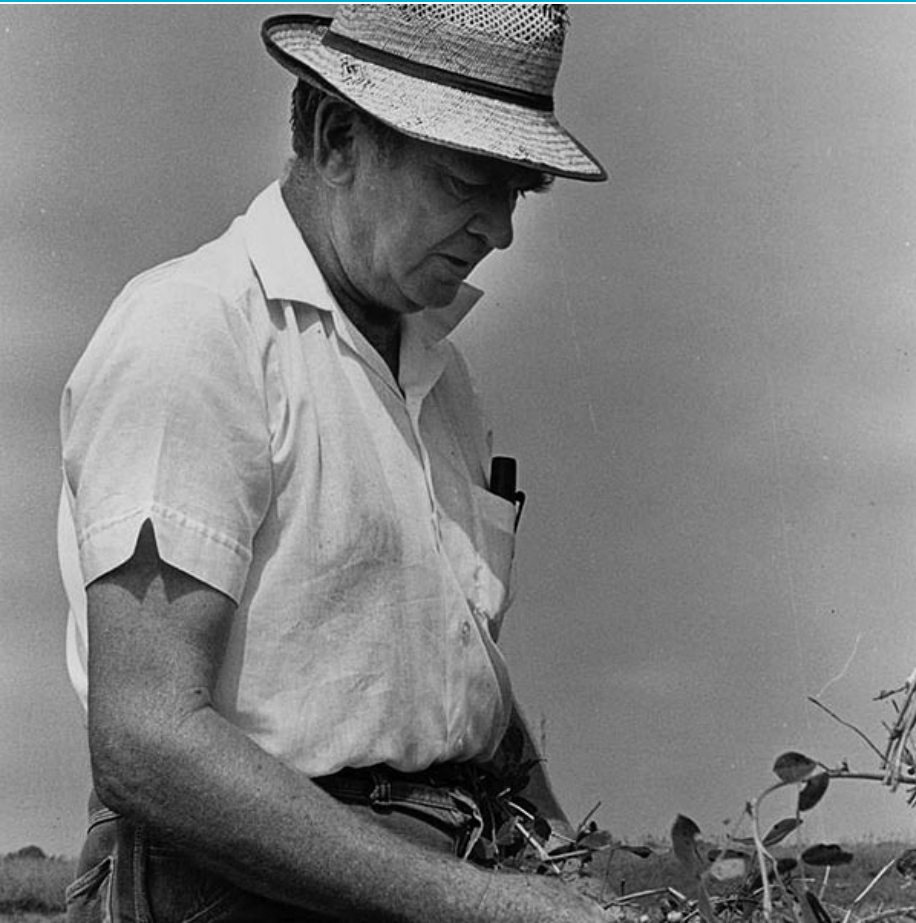
Resources

Faith Engagement Resources:

MyHabitat>U.S. Knowledge Center>Faith Engagement

Spiritual Resources:

MyHabitat>U.S. Knowledge Center>Spiritual Resources



**“It is not enough to limit
your love to your own
nation, to your own group.
You must respond with love
even to those outside of it. . .
This concept enables people
to live together not as
nations, but as the human
race.”**

Clarence Jordan



Thank You!
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*Share your
feedback!*