

Equality

Readings Genesis 1.26-31, Galatians 3.26-29

Gal 3.26-29

*You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

**Equality** is a really important issue in the Bible and in our lives because it affects how God will treat us, how he treats people who are different to us and also how we treat each other.

In our world we find that divisions and unfairness can come about if one group are given favour over another, or if a group is seen as less than another, this can be on the grounds of:

Race

Riches

Status

Religion

Gender / orientation

Age

Disability

Blank

The first point to tackle is God – does he have favourites?

The answer found in the Bible is a categorical ‘no’.

**Rom 2.11** God shows no partiality, (GNB God judges everyone by the same standard), God is no respecter of persons – lit ‘no acceptance of faces’ or NKJV For there is no respect of faces with God = no partiality (Thayer partiality = the fault of one who when called on to give judgment has **respect of the outward circumstances of man** and not to their **intrinsic merits**, and so prefers, as the more worthy, one who is rich, high born, or powerful, to another who does not have these qualities)

**NIV ‘For God does not show favouritism’**

That’s reassuring, but are all people equal?

The Bible has a lot to say about it, so let’s dive straight in. in the past I have shown you a simple way of looking at what the Bible teaches by using a simple approach called

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### “Creation – Fall – Redemption”

This is where we see what Gods original plan was, how it became distorted through sinfulness and how in Christ it is transformed for those who believe in him.

**Creation:** Equal in value, dignity & purpose **All are made in Gods image**

Genesis 1:

**Human dignity** is seen 3 unique relationships

**Relationship with God** (worship)

**Relationship with one another** (fellowship)

**Relationship with the earth** (stewardship)

Over the next few months we will be looking at each of these, so I will just name them for the time being.

**Fall:** Equal in need **All have sinned** and fallen short of the glory of God, and the wages of sin is death – there is no room for us to look down our noses at anyone else, we have all been in the same boat

**Redemption:** Equal in love of God **God wants All to be saved**  
**1 Tim 2.4**

Come to me **all** you who are weary

Go and make disciples of **all** nations

Rom 16.26 so that **all** nations might believe and obey him

1 Tim 2.6 he gave himself as a ransom for **all**

2 Pet 3.9 not wanting anyone to perish, but **everyone** to come to repentance

So you can see that our equal value comes from being made in the image of God and with the purpose of knowing him, we also all stand on level ground because we have all sinned, and that God wants to bring us all into his family because he loves us all – all those differences we mentioned earlier of race, age, status, gender are all irrelevant because all have sinned, and all must repent and believe in Jesus – **that** is his loving invitation to us all.

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So now, there is this last phrase; 'You are all one in Christ Jesus' – why is this important? Because in the OT the Jews were the people of God – they were the **insiders**, they were the chosen people and if you were born in the wrong family you were an **outsider** – God still loved you but there were things that you were excluded from in worship

Pauls writes about this in Ephesians 2.11-18

*Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men) - remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.*

In Ephesians Paul talks about the dividing wall of Jew and Gentile being torn down so that one new man could live before God without hostility – here in Galatians he tells us that the dividing walls of race, religion, class and gender are broken down also, so that there are **no outsiders** –

- **Gods grace is for**
  - all who will accept it,
  - all are equal,
  - and all are welcome here.
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This is why it is important that God not only treats us equally but also makes us one, so that we can value and respect everyone else equally and thus demonstrate his saving love for us all.

## **An Inclusive Community**

Since Jesus exemplified the Kingdom values expressed by the Old Testament prophets, and specifically identified caring for the needy as service to him, we should reflect his unfailing love for the fallen, the excluded, the poor and hungry, the oppressed, voiceless and powerless. Our life together will transcend barriers of gender, language, race, class, age and culture creating communities which welcome and accept those on the margins of life and learn from them. As Baptists, we need to recover the Reformation emphasis on the priesthood of all believers. This will lay upon us such obligations as the following:

### **In the local church:**

- To listen to, value and address the particular needs of people who are often under-represented or absent from leadership and decision-making, and to develop effective strategies to ensure full participation.
- To welcome and affirm those who do not fit commonly accepted norms of speech, dress and appearance.
- To be open to those who are theologically different from us.
- To ensure that the full range of women's gifts are affirmed and used in all areas of church life.
- To audit church life and practice to ensure that people do not feel excluded.
- To create a community where those often excluded can feel they really belong.

### **In the denomination:**

- To reflect Christ's bias to the poor.
- To explore, affirm and celebrate the importance of the many small, pastor-less churches in both urban and rural situations, and of congregations drawn from ethnic minorities, and learn from the gospel insights that they offer, to devise mission strategies which ensure that such churches have good access to denominational resources and equal opportunity to help set the denominational agenda.

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- To address the continued under-valuing of the ministry of women in Baptist life.
- To challenge continually all racist, ageist and sexist attitudes and structures,
- To ensure that all policies and structures respect sincere differences of conviction, encourage open debate and accept diversity in unity.

### **In society and world:**

- To promote positive attitudes to the two-thirds world and active support for mission and development agencies.
- To work with and act as advocates for marginalised groups.
- To challenge parochial attitudes and protectionist policies which bolster the well-off and condemn others to poverty and disadvantage, particularly in domestic and European legislation.
- To encourage promotion of better education and training for those most in need.
- To learn from, affirm and promote inclusiveness in industry and government, and challenge any discriminatory practice throughout society.

*“It is not enough for us to say, ‘I love God’, but I also have to love my neighbour. How can you love God whom you do not see, if you do not love your neighbour whom you see, whom you touch, with whom you live”.*  
*Mother Theresa 1910-1997*