

# THE BEREANS

ACTS 17:11

John 7:45-53

Lesson #28

Stereotyping

02/07/2016

## Stereotypes

Profiling and Discrimination

Are they always **offensive** and **inappropriate**?  
(or only when **irrational**?)



“Islamic  
extremists”

“Christian  
extremists”



1

**Just as**  
**All Christians ≠ KKK**  
**& Westboro Baptist**  
**Church**

**so it is also true that**  
**All Muslims ≠ ISIS**

2

**What are ways we can**  
**avoid irrational**  
**stereotyping**  
**of others**



**and being**  
**stereotyped by**  
**by others?**

3

John 7

“44 Some of them wanted to seize him, but no one laid hands on him. 45 The officers (sent by the Jewish leaders vs.32) therefore came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them, “Why did you not bring Him?” 46 The officers answered, “Never did a man speak the way this man speaks.” 47 The Pharisees therefore answered them, “You have not also been led astray, have you? 48 No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he? 49 But this multitude which does not know the Law is accursed.” 50 Nicodemus said to them (he who came to Him before, being one of them), 51 “Our Law does not judge a man, unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?” 52 They answered and said to him, “You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee.” 53 And everyone went to his home.”

4

**How did the Jewish leaders**  
**profile Jesus in this text?**

**They assumed:**

- his guilt and need for arrest.
- he was corrupting others.
- that no credible man believed him.
- that his followers were cursed.
- that all who disagreed were wrong.
- that geographic association was a Biblical proof of his invalidity.



5



**“People don’t reject Christ  
so much as a distorted  
characterization  
of him.”**



*Bill Bright*

6



***Jesus is commonly stereotyped as:***

- **A misunderstood Hebrew prophet and teacher.**
- **A mythical creation of the early church.**
- **A revolutionary social reformer.**
- **A loving, tolerant, Santa Clause.**
- **A chaplain of the American dream.**
- **A demanding moral spoil sport.**

8

***The Gospel will be offensive to many,  
but we must be sure that it is the  
Gospel that is the offense and not our  
distorted stereotypes.***

***We can learn from the way Paul talked  
about Jesus in the culture of his day.***  
*Acts 17:22-31*

***We can learn from the way conflicts  
within the early church were managed.***  
*Acts 6:1-6*

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***Acts 17***

“22 And Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. 23 For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.’ What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. 24 The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; 25 neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things; 26 and He made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation, 27 that they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; 28 for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His offspring.’ 29 Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. 30 Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, 31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead. .” 10

***Observations***

- 1. He is familiar with non Christian culture.**
- 2. He does not condemn but rather builds on that culture.**
- 3. He affirms common grounds of authority.**
- 4. He appeals to universal needs.**
- 5. He relates the Gospel to life’s longings.**

11



### Acts 6

“<sup>1</sup> Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, **a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews**, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. <sup>2</sup> And the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. <sup>3</sup> But select from among you, brethren, seven **men of good reputation**, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. <sup>4</sup> But we will devote ourselves to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.” <sup>5</sup> And the statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose **Stephen**, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and **Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas**, a proselyte from Antioch. <sup>6</sup> And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them.”

12



Ben Witherington

In Acts 6 “The apostles hand the whole system over to the offended minority. This may thus be the first recorded instance of what we might today call “affirmative action.””

13

### 1 Corinthians 9

“<sup>19</sup> **For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more.** <sup>20</sup> And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law, though not being myself under the Law, that I might win those who are under the Law; <sup>21</sup> to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, that I might win those who are without law. <sup>22</sup> To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; **I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some.**”

14

### Observations

1. The Pharisees were doing all they could to separate from “worldly” culture. **Paul was bending over backwards to connect with the culture without capitulating to it.**
2. The Pharisees were identifying with a subculture they had created while demonizing all outside it. **Paul was willing to give up his freedom and “natural” identity to be seen as an image bearer of Christ to his culture.**

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### Five ways to curb stereotyping others.



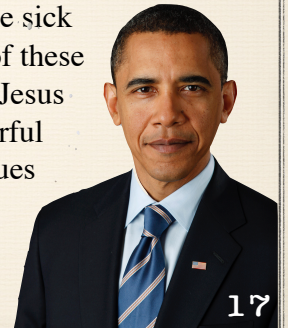
**It starts with our children - Social friendships with those who are different tend to erode fear and encourage empathy.**

1. Look for the **image of God** in all people.
2. Imagine the **love of God** for all people.
3. **Socialize, socialize, socialize.**
4. **Empathize, empathize, empathize.**
5. Commit yourself to **being the answer to someone else's prayer.**

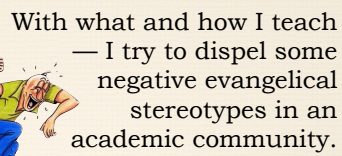
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“I am a Christian, and I am a devout Christian. I believe in the redemptive death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. I believe that that faith gives me a path to be cleansed of sin and have eternal life. But most importantly, I believe in the example that Jesus set by feeding the hungry and healing the sick and always prioritizing the least of these over the powerful. . . . Accepting Jesus Christ in my life has been a powerful guide for my conduct and my values and my ideals.”

(Barack Obama in Christianity Today (1/23/08))



17



1. Cultivate a healthy **self-critical** sensitivity.
2. Be sure your **distinctives** are godly.
3. Work at **rehabilitating** the stereotypes.
4. Be careful to avoid **magnifying** a negative stereotype.

*Matthew 5:13-16*

***Like Jesus we are  
the salt of the earth  
and the light of the world  
but not if we become  
tasteless and hidden,  
or toxic distortions.***

## Galatians 1:6-10

19