



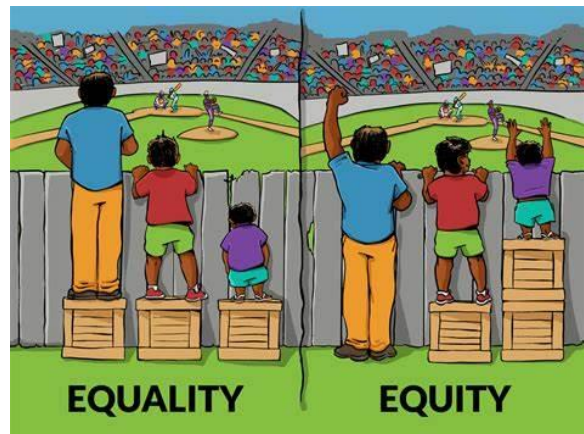
Reconciling in Christ - Team Update



Equity and Equality

When my children were little and we had something to share between them, for example the last piece of cake, one would be given the knife to cut it but the others would be able to choose their slice first. Because if you've spent any time with children being "fair" is a hard concept to teach and they are very aware of being treated "fairly". That idea of 'fairness' is often associated with the concept of equality (i.e., everyone is equal under the law, or everyone gets the same size slice of cake). The problem with such concepts is that they lack empathy or sensitivity to context or need. This is why everyone who is found guilty of the same offence may not receive the same consequences under our judicial system. That idea often makes people angry because many of us have been brought up to think of the 'fairness' of being treated equally. The problem with equality is that it often is applied without regard for context, empathy or needs.

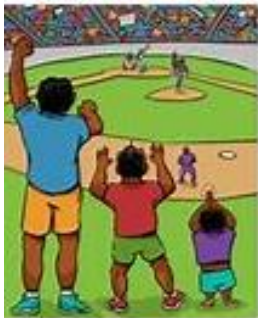
Take a look at the ballpark image. In the Equality side of the drawing, everyone is being treated the same. It is 'fair' that everyone gets access to the same resource, so everyone gets an identical box to stand on. But does this practice of equality help everyone see the ballgame? Giving everyone equal access to resources does not necessarily help everyone reach the same goal when there is no consideration for context or identification of individual needs or abilities. Not everyone needs a box to see the game, but all are given one.



As a teacher, everyone in my class was there for the same lesson, so should have had access to, and achieve, the same resources and learning. But I once had one student who was visually impaired. While he was in my class, I prepared all his handouts, tests, etc. in a size 24 font. He also sat in the front row where it was easier for me to watch out for a signal that he might not be able to see what I had put on the front board etc. In an equal world, I should not have had to make those accommodations – the other students in the room were not being treated the same as this student. And yet, if you heard of this student in my class being treated the same as everyone else and not being given individualized help to meet his needs and assist his learning, you would have (justifiably) wanted me to lose my job!

This happens in our society when we confuse equity with equality. When the needs of an individual are ignored then there will not be any equity in the solution to a problem. When children complain their older siblings get a later bedtime, 'it's not fair' will ring out loudly. It may not be 'fair' but that's life – right? Helping children understand that equality is not the same as equity can be a challenge. When I was a Run and Read coach, these two terms were part of our "Word of the Day" program. We had two sisters in the Club who were about 4 years apart in

age. The older one was quite a runner! The younger tried hard but could never run as fast as her sister. I asked our participants to sit on one side of the gym and the sisters lined up at the other. I announced that my goal was to find out who was the fastest runner and asked for suggestions. We brainstormed and very quickly it was decided to have a start signal and a finish line and whoever crossed first was fastest. After that race ended as expected, with the older sister being faster, I asked a different question. I now wanted to know how to set up the 'race' so that both runners would finish at the same time. There was a lot of brainstorming and in the end, they decided that the youngest sister would have a starting line about 2/3 of the distance from the wall while the older sister started at the wall. Both sisters were able to reach the new goal – they crossed the finish line together. The children understood that if you want both people (with different skill levels, or needs) to achieve the same goal then they need different conditions, or access to different resources, or different accommodations. That way, everyone can 'win'.



Look back at the ballpark Equity drawing. The overall resources available were divided, not equally, but equitably, based on each person's needs. This resulted in everyone being able to reach the same goal – everyone was able to watch the game. Of course, another option that would reduce the number or volume of resources needed to watch the game would be to remove the barriers to accessibility completely and let everyone watch the game without a fence. (okay – if safety is involved then at least make it a chain link fence!)

So, what does this mean for us at All Saints? How good are we at treating people equitably? How can we identify needs that are not being met? How comfortable are we at asking people to change what we do, or how we do something, to accommodate others' needs?

Over the next year different members of the RIC team will be discussing different words and phrases as we explore some of the vocabulary that was used in the JEDI training workshop last November. Please feel free to access these resources on the church website under JEDI Training (workshop video and resource package).

Respectfully submitted
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