

rooster crow, “the Lord turned and looked straight at Peter” (Luke 22:61a). Peter realized that the Lord had seen what he had done. In describing the events surrounding the resurrection, Mark 16:7 includes the statement, “But go, tell His disciples AND PETER” (emphasis mine). The other three Gospel writers did not single out Peter. Only Mark’s Gospel specifically mentions that Peter should be notified about Jesus’ resurrection, likely because Mark’s Gospel represents the recollections and impressions of Peter himself.

A message of grace is unforgettable to the one who receives it. If Christ was willing to go to the cross for you, why would He stop loving you no matter what you have done? Like Peter, we can also receive that grace, no matter what we have done. God does not put us on a shelf next to Wheezy, nor will He ever turn His back on us. He calls us by name, as He did for Peter. When you read the words “and Peter” in Mark 16:7, insert your name instead. Just as the Lord did not desert Peter, He will not leave you. As it tells us in Hebrews 4:16 (NIV): “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our special time of need.” And when we read Luke 22:61a, let’s try not to think (as Peter likely did) that Jesus was looking at him in disappointment. Instead, we should see Jesus embracing Peter with a heart of grace and unconditional love. After all, Jesus wasn’t surprised at Peter’s denial – He expected it to happen, so He wouldn’t have been disappointed by Peter’s failure. When we need strength, conviction, and forgiveness, we can use Peter’s example of seeking the face of Jesus.

I acted like a pagan when I was in pharmacy school. I was the person God was referring to when He stated “you of little faith.” My heart breaks for the lost time I could have spent sitting at the feet of Jesus (Luke 10:38-42). I recall getting choked up when I admitted my shame to the students in the audience. I also told the students that they could learn from my and Peter’s examples, and hopefully not make the same mistakes.

When there are areas in life that are scarred by sin, shame, silent battles or sorrow, we don’t have to ignore them by treating them like Wheezy. We might be broken, but we don’t have to shove them aside or place them high on a shelf out of sight. God is always right there with us, His grace is amazing and sufficient, and He is willing to carry the burdens that we would rather keep hidden.

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging: A Biblical Perspective Compared with Secular Definitions

By Brittany Vickery

First and foremost, let me make a personal disclosure: I identify as a Christ follower with a Biblical worldview, which means that I view life and every situation through the lens of scripture. Scripture is fully accurate and reliable; it is the inspired (or “breathed-out”) word of God (2 Timothy 3:16). This is referred to as verbal plenary inspiration, meaning that God supernaturally guided the authors of the Bible to write exactly what He wanted to communicate. In this article I will compare and contrast the Biblical and secular definitions of 4 specific words that we hear so often in today’s culture: **equity**, **diversity**, **inclusion**, and **belonging**. I imagine over time we will see more of these buzz words added to the vocabulary of our culture. I also encourage anyone reading this article not to take my words as truth, but to spend the time researching this for yourself – both the Biblical and secular perspectives. I assure you it is worth your time

and it is paramount to how you will live out your calling as a Christian pharmacist.

In scripture, **equity** is related to fairness and justice, while **diversity** refers to variety. The Bible teaches us that God is sovereign (Acts 4:24-25) and that He creates diversity among all His created beings, including humans (Acts 17:26). “For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Colossians 1:16-17, NIV). This means that God creates some of us to be talented in certain areas while others are talented in different areas; some are created for leadership and some for service; some are created to live with prosperity and others more modestly. Proverbs 22:2 NIV tells us, “Rich

and poor have this in common: *The LORD is the Maker of them all*". Being created differently than others is not a matter of injustice. God is always just – in fact, He is incapable of being unjust – because of His righteousness (Deuteronomy 32:4). How we are each individually created relates to God's sovereign will, which speaks to both equity and diversity as defined by God. God has justly and wisely created each individual person to be exactly what He designed him or her to be, and we are assured that His creation and His plans are good (Genesis 1:31, Genesis 50:20, Jeremiah 29:11). Both believers and nonbelievers (whether they know it or not) have been given an important and unique calling for God's providence and glory. Despite our diversity, we are all equal in God's eyes and He shows no partiality (Romans 2:11).

When I set out to research these words and topics so that I may better understand them, what I learned was very interesting. I discovered that the Oxford Languages Dictionary definition of "**equity**" is "*the quality of being fair and impartial*".¹ Other online definition searches related the word "equity" to finance. Years ago, finance-based equity would have been the primary definitions listed. We all want to be fair and impartial, which is in accordance with scripture; but we must understand what is meant by "fair and impartial" according to the secular definition of those words. When you dive even deeper into the meaning of the word "equity," you will find these illustrations: Three people, one of short height, one of medium height, and one of tall height, were each given the same size step stool to see over a fence – that scenario defines the word "**equality**." The tall person can see better, the medium person can see just over the fence, and the short person is still not able to see at all. Then, to define the word "**equity**" by illustration: the tall person receives no step, the medium person receives 1 step, and the short person receives 2 steps, making them all a similar height so that everyone can see over the fence. In this instance, what is meant by "equity" is that each person is given according to their needs or wants. However, the "wants" part of the definition is generally left out. Consider that watching a baseball game over a fence is a "want", not a "need", since needs are things that are required to sustain life. This definition of "equity" is neither fair nor impartial – and that would be more obvious if in the depiction the tallest individual (without a step) was barely unable to see over the fence. The illustration is skewed to illicit a positive response from the viewer: "Yes, that is equity because now everyone can see."

According to that definition, "equity" seems reasonable when it involves looking over a fence to watch a baseball game. But what if it involves something far more important? For example, a company that is hiring or

promoting a position in which Candidate A is highly qualified for the job based on school, training, and experience, but Candidate B is not qualified at all. Candidate B did not excel in school, did not receive training after school, and has little to no experience in that field. Both candidates are hired and paid the same wage. Is that fair and impartial? If that is how companies hire individuals, then what would be the purpose of getting education, training, and experience? It sets a dangerous precedent that people should be given things instead of earning them. This is just one of many examples that can be applied to our culture, and a quick read of recent news will clearly show this mindset in action. Another example is the achievement gap: in simple terms, it states that some ethnicities should be graded on a curve (achieve less to get the same grade) as those of other ethnic groups. It is the exact opposite of equity, justice, and fairness to assume that certain ethnicities are less capable than others simply based on their ethnicity. Instead of curving school grades, tutoring should be individualized for students who are not achieving the set standard or goals. Curving a grade does not make anyone smarter and will not help them in the long run, but tutoring or additional help might greatly improve the outcome of their education. Secularists use the illustration of a fence and baseball game because that isn't a significant, life changing scenario – to which I may ask, "Why didn't these individuals buy a ticket to the game so they can get a seat inside the fence?" It is an unrealistic scenario. If secularists used a more realistic scenario (such as job hiring or promotion), it would be very difficult to illicit agreement and support. As Christians, we are called to help those in need and should do so with joyful hearts. We must also understand that helping someone out of the goodness of our hearts (e.g., giving someone your stepstool at a baseball game) is much different than having it taken away from you because you were judged to be too tall to need or deserve it. I must ask here too, "Who gets to decide which people get a stool or don't get a stool? Who should we trust with that decision?" In pharmacy school admissions, there is a common scenario-based interview question: "You are volunteering at a local soup kitchen. You have 3 bowls of soup and 5 people who have waited in line for hours to get a bowl. How would you handle this problem?" There are 2 common responses. Interviewees either say they would put the 3 bowls back in a large pot and redistribute it to make 5 bowls; or they would give the 3 bowls to the first 3 people in line and take the last 2 people to a fast-food restaurant and buy them soup. Never once did a student state that they would judge the people in line by using age, weight, color, gender, stomach growling, sad facial expressions, or other visual markers, thereby giving the soup to the people they personally believed needed it most. I imagine that the admissions department would be concerned if a candidate had made such a statement.

The secular definition of **“diversity”** as taken from the Oxford Languages Dictionary is this: *“the practice or quality of including or involving people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds and of different genders, sexual orientations, etc.”* The meaning of “diversity” is so expansive, extending far beyond the secular definition. It also includes religion, values, character, debility, and so much more – a simple etcetera is not sufficient. For that reason, “diversity” is **best** defined as “variety.” The common definition is biased, and calls out specific labels that are hot topics in our culture today. The point here is that when we set out to make a situation or team diverse, we may limit the diversity by measuring known or disclosed things (e.g., gender or ethnicity) when there are many unseen and unknown things about a person (e.g., values, character, experience) that greatly influence diversity. Diversity of thought or mind cannot be seen. In Acts 17:26 NIV, we see that *“From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands.”* Revelation 7:9 NIV says: *“After 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.”* Biblically we see that “diversity” and “unity” go hand-in-hand. Therefore, creating markers for diversity unfortunately limits diversity.

Finally, we shall examine the words, **“inclusion”** and **“belonging.”** According to scripture, we are all valuable because we are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). This speaks to “inclusion” and “belonging” from a Biblical worldview. We are also instructed to love our neighbor as ourself (Mark 12:31); and in Philippians 2:3-4 NIV we are instructed to *“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.”* These passages in scripture clearly and concisely outline “inclusion” and “belonging” from a Biblical worldview. What better way to make someone feel included in (or belonging to) a family than sharing the good news of salvation through Jesus? When we put our trust in Jesus at our conversion, we become children of God as we’re adopted into His family (Romans 8:14-17, John 1:12, Galatians 3:26). Sadly, evangelism is being restricted or prohibited in many places.

The secular definition of “inclusion” is related to access of opportunities and resources, as well as being respected; where “belonging” is defined as the emotional outcome associated with inclusion. These definitions generally relate to an environment that is created or experienced in a secular place such as work or school.

Again, on the surface these do not seem negative or unreasonable... until it reaches the point where Christians are encouraged or forced to conform to, agree with, or show support for things that are clearly prohibited in scripture. Isaiah 5:20 NIV reminds us: *“Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.”* Romans chapter 1 is also very clear on this subject; and I encourage diligent reading of that chapter, especially Romans 1:28-32 NIV which reads: *“Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.”* James 1:17 NIV states: *“If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.”* Therefore, as Christians we must call evil what it is (evil) and not encourage it or go along with it. It is important for us to read and study our Bibles, understanding the truth so that we can recognize when we are being asked to support that which is contrary to scripture. Romans 12:1-2 NIV instructs us: *“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

Be aware that these secular definitions often use the word they are defining in the actual definition, which means they are not well understood or well defined. (I never would’ve been allowed to do that as a middle-school student!) Additionally, the secular definitions are continually changing and evolving, whereas scripture and God Himself are final and unchanging (Isaiah 40:8, Malachi 3:6, Hebrews 13:8). What is found in an internet search today may be very different in a year, a month, or even tomorrow. Additionally, those who support secular views of these words (including some misguided Christians) will try to use scripture to argue their points. A common example of this is Matthew 20:1-16, which is the parable of the workers in the vineyard. In the story, day laborers are hired early in the morning to complete a day’s work and were promised a denarius. As the day went on, the landowner rounded up more and more day laborers to work for him at 9:00 am, 12:00 pm, 3:00 pm, and 5:00 pm. When evening came, it was time for the workers to be paid and each received a denarius. A denarius was considered a fair wage for a full day’s work

(6:00 am to 6:00 pm). Those who were hired first grumbled, expecting to receive more since the laborers hired last (and only worked a few hours) also received a denarius. The landowner reminded the grumblers that they were given exactly what they agreed to for their work, and that he has the right to be generous if he wishes and can do what he wants with his own money. This scripture is commonly used to argue for “equity” as secularly defined – each worker receives the same pay regardless of how long they labored. But in context, that is not at all the point Jesus was making; and in fact it can actually be used to argue against secular equity. The parable of the workers in the vineyard teaches that God pours out grace and mercy according to His will, not according to our works. The thief on the cross who repented and believed in Jesus only moments before his death will enjoy heaven as much as a lifelong believer who spent decades laboring for the gospel and serving God faithfully. Matthew 20:1-16 is a passage that teaches about salvation and God’s grace, not equity. So, if you find yourself in a conversation with someone who uses that passage to argue for equity, I encourage you to explain the true meaning of the parable, and also consider it an opportunity to share the gospel with that person and pray with them.

We should always use caution and critical thinking when examining the words and definitions that are typically viewed through a secular lens, and compare them to Biblical truth and thinking. Biblical definitions and admonitions should always take precedent over the secular. In Galatians 1:10 NIV, Paul rhetorically asks, “Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.” In Acts 5:29 NIV, we see a situation where the apostles were

instructed to never again teach in the name of Jesus, but Peter replied, “We must obey God rather than human beings!” Let us keep this truth on our hearts and minds, always remembering that we are here to serve and glorify God. It is certainly not popular in our culture today, and yet it is our highest calling.

This is what **equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging** should mean to us as Christ-followers with a Biblical worldview as defined by scripture. We must reject the inaccuracies of the secular definitions, and gently and lovingly point out the discrepancies and harm associated with them. Following the Biblical definitions of “equity”, “diversity”, “inclusion”, and “belonging” gives us reasonable goals for conducting ourselves in both our professional and personal lives. We must also realize that we’re still fallen human beings, and therefore we will sometimes fall short of those goals, even with the help of the Holy Spirit (Romans 7:15-25). With reflection and conviction, we can grow and mature in our faith which will help us to live in alignment with how God calls us to conduct ourselves. We also must strive to guard our hearts and minds against the secularism that dominates our culture. With that, I leave you with a passage of scripture to mediate on: Philippians 4:7 NIV, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Reference

Google’s English dictionary provided by Oxford English Dictionary Online. Oxford University Press, June 2022.



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