



I AM BECAUSE YOU ARE

Resource Guide

I Am Because You Are is an introduction to the subject of equality and diversity. It is aimed at Baptist ministers, but leadership teams or small groups in churches across Baptists Together may also find it useful. The contributions are drawn exclusively from those who are part of our Baptist movement.

The purpose of *I Am Because You Are* is to enable a discussion about how discrimination and exclusion is experienced in Baptist circles and the ways in which this can be addressed.

There are six videos. Each one concludes with two or three questions for discussion. Some additionally invite you to pause to tackle a further question part way through. Ministers are asked to watch the videos and discuss the questions together. Details of what ministers have to do can be found at www.baptist.org.uk/e&d

In the following pages of this guide, you will find a summary of each video's content, some quotes from the narrators and interviewees, and each video's questions which you can use as a reference during your discussions. At the end, there is a biblical reflection on the term, 'equality and diversity' which you may find helpful.

1. Why explore equality & diversity?

As you begin to watch the videos, take a moment to note your own feelings about engaging with *I Am Because You Are*.

Are you hopeful of learning something new?

Are you anxious about what the material or discussion may stir up?

Are you weary of the topic even before you begin?

Wale Hudson-Roberts, Baptists Together Racial Justice Enabler:

'It's a conviction that is deep within my soul, a recognition that all people are created in the image of God. What drives me is that all people deserve a level playing field and deserve justice.'

'I, as a young child, inculcated some of [my parents'] negativity and so as a result one of the things that I've had to do some deep critical reflection on is, how do I treat women? Clearly, my perspective has had to radically change, and it has radically changed, but it has been a process. I've had to look into my own soul and ask some very, very serious and very deep questions of myself.'

'We are involved in a covenantal relationship. This is a collegial thing. We are participating as human beings in growth, in journeying together, in critiquing and challenging each other. And from that comes a certain formation, which moves us closer to Christ.'

'I am because you are' is a rough translation of the Zulu phrase 'ubuntu.' The late Desmond Tutu said,

'A person with ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good. [A person with ubuntu] has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished... or [when they are] treated as if they were less than who they are.'

This hints at the way we are interconnected, despite our remarkable diversity. God in his grace makes us equal in status and privilege in Christ, whatever our differences.

The murder of George Floyd opened the eyes of many of us to see what we had previously not seen, that is, racism embedded in our nation, our churches, our Baptist movement, and in ourselves. If we listen to the voices of others, we will also hear of exclusion and discrimination because of other characteristics – gender, disability, sexuality, background, education, and so on. *I Am Because You Are* has been put together in response to this observation.

Episode 1 concluding questions

Where do you feel accepted as you are?

Can you recall an occasion when you have experienced
a change of mind, heart or attitude about others?

2. What does discrimination look like?

Jane Day, Baptists Together Centenary Enabler:

'I've heard some really good stories, particularly from women who have been in ministry perhaps 10, 20, 30 years, and they said, "Jane, things have really changed for the better." So that's good news. The reverse is, I've also heard some not so good stories. And I think I'd label these as disruptive or disturbing comments. Some of those might be of a sexist nature, with some unhelpful comments or language, particularly where women have been talked down. And the other category I might call disparities. Things like stipend, for example, where I know that in some contexts, men are being paid more than women.'

'The first thing I'd want to say to [women who have suffered discrimination] is, "I'm sorry, that this has happened to you to a woman minister." It grieves me. And I think it grieves God. I would hope that there are spaces where women tell their stories to another individual or a group. I would want to encourage that. And there might be people watching this today that are actually in this place now. So, I would encourage them to speak. I think I would also say that if there are situations where a complaint needs to be made, then women need to process this through the appropriate channels.'

'If people are going out of their way, whether that is men or women, and intentionally and deliberately doing anything that is of a discriminatory nature, I would want to challenge that and say that's wrong. That's bad behaviour. So, I would want to call it out and name it. I encourage people just to say, "Ouch, that really hurt." And then what often happens is, there's a pause. And if nothing else, it makes people think.'

'[For men], I think it's about seeing it and saying something. I love it when men do that. It makes women, not in a patronising way, feel like they've got good allies around them.'

'As a reflective leader, do I make time to ask myself the difficult question – "Where did I show unconscious bias today?" I also allow people to speak into my life, to challenge my behaviour, and try to be accountable.'

Some of the ways people have observed discrimination in operation within Baptists Together are as follows. Which, if any, of these resonate with you?

When a leader is constantly challenged because they do not fit the stereotype of who a leader should be.	When a person or whole community is unaware of and unwilling to examine their own privilege and advantage.	When anyone fails to listen to the story of a person unlike them.
When the majority in a Baptist community give silent assent to an inequitable reality.	When people prioritise the protection of an organisation – whether church or Baptist structure – over the well-being of individuals.	When church leaders get defensive against whoever points out discriminatory practice.
When ministers-in-training are shaped by predominantly white, male sources of learning.	When those with certain needs, including disability, have difficulty in funding training for ministry and ministry itself.	When Baptist churches and spaces cause or permit psychological or even physical harm to some who attend.
When online or face-to-face meetings become toxic through the belittling or dismissal of other points of view.	When ministers fail to act as advocates on behalf of those discriminated against.	When there is a lack of pastoral support for oppressed people or groups.

Whether the above observations do or do not describe our experience, our common commitment should be to listen to others in the body of Christ for whom these matters are personal.

Intersectionality looks at the intersections between multiple types of difference. Civil rights advocate Kimberlé Crenshaw, says:

‘[Intersectionality] is basically a lens, a prism, for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other. We tend to talk about race inequality as separate from inequality based on gender, class, sexuality or immigrant status. What’s often missing is how some people are subject to all of these, and the experience is not just the sum of its parts.’

If those who differ from a perceived norm in more ways than one face particular disadvantage, should we be especially concerned to advocate for them?

Episode 2 concluding questions

Do you have your own stories where you have felt overlooked or disadvantaged, within a church setting or elsewhere, because of who you are? If the answer is no, why might this be?

Are you aware of times when you have realised you have contributed to discrimination or rejected diversity? If so, when you became aware, what did you do about it?

3. What is equality and diversity?

In our surrounding culture, the words equality and diversity are in common use. The Trade Union Congress website offers some definitions:

***Equality** is about ensuring everybody has an equal opportunity, and is not treated differently or discriminated against because of their characteristics.*

***Diversity** is about taking account of the differences between people and groups of people, and placing a positive value on those differences.'*

In legal terms, it is unlawful to discriminate against another person on the basis of their age; sex; disability; race; religion or belief; sexual orientation; marriage or civil partnership status; pregnancy or maternity; or gender reassignment – the nine 'protected characteristics.' To look into this and where there are exceptions, follow the link to further resources on www.baptist.org.uk/e&d

However, as those who believe in the fundamental dignity of all people, made in the image of God, we want to go above and beyond what is simply legal.

To avoid treating others unfairly, we pay attention to our unconscious bias. Unconscious bias pushes us to make judgments without knowing we are doing it. The Royal Society says,

'Unconscious bias is when we are unaware that we are making judgments or decisions on the basis of our prior experience, or our own personal deep-seated thought patterns, assumptions or interpretations... The irony is that prejudice and discrimination are inevitable by-products of the efficiency of human cognition.'

Unconscious bias is universal and quite natural. Our minds are wired to make rapid judgments based on experience, assumptions and cultural conditioning, without taking the time to analyse each decision. But when it comes to dealing fairly with people unlike ourselves, it can be problematic.

Clare Hooper, youth specialist and SCBA Regional Minister; Martin Hobgen, Baptist minister and disability theologian; and Hayley Young, NBA Regional Team Leader and Baptist Union President 2022-23 in conversation:

Hayley: *'I think younger people are more aware of those prejudices that we have, as we've grown up in a very different educational system. We were taught a very different way of viewing history from before. Also, younger people growing up now have not had the heritage of church. So, they don't come with that inherited interpretation of Scripture that other generations have.'*

Martin: *'With regards to attitudes towards disabled people, young people have a very different perspective. And that's primarily because they've been brought up in a generation where disability is understood much more in terms of attitudes and relationships rather than as physical, mental or emotional characteristics.'*

Clare: *'I was meeting up with some children's, youth and families' workers, and we were reflecting on the LGBTQ conversation. There was a real difference in the room. But the one thing we were all saying is that where our young people were at was so different in their understanding as to where the rest of the church were. And that kind of generational gap was really obvious.'*

Rhaea: *'I think they have more access to information enhanced by the technology and social media platforms that they have at their disposal. However, I feel that a lot of the solutions in addressing some of these systemic issues are situated with what we see in older generations – the emphasis on relationships; on being able to pick up phones; not just engaging in email chains and social media arguments.'*

Pause to ask : What is your experience of how younger generations approach equality and diversity, both inside and outside the church? How does their approach compare with your own thinking?

Rhaea: *'Our conversations around unconscious bias have to be based on the premise that the issues that we're trying to address are structural. So all of the initiatives around equality and inclusion need to be understood from the lens that the structures have been made to serve a few, not the many... I think two things that are absolutely central are committing to a process of discomfort and de-centering. We need to get comfortable with de-centering ourselves. That*

sometimes can feel quite powerless which can often lead to inaction instead of action. We need to be really, really intentional. We're not just going to change how things are by sort of agreeing and nodding and sitting and not moving.'

Hayley: *'It's about living with that discomfort and being okay with that. When we do this well, when we prefer each other's needs, we're doing what Jesus taught us to do. And that's the kingdom of God. Everyone in unity, not uniformity, but everyone in unity in Christ.'*

Clare: *'For me it's about the listening. I think young people want to be heard but they want to make sure that other people have been heard too. I love the fact that young people are able to live with difference so well and to live with a plurality of stories without any of those diminishing their own story, which I just think is really beautiful.'*

Martin: *'The fostering of what I would call covenant friendships is important here. [These] need to be intentionally inclusive of others. And that means listening and valuing the other's opinions and voices. They need to be explicitly mutual, particularly in ratios of power between the leadership or the body of the church and those who are on the fringes. And they need to be particular, taking into account the particular context of that church or that group of people and also the particularity of those who are involved in that friendship and covenant relationship.'*

Episode 3 concluding questions

Can you give any examples from within your own ministry setting where the church or community has either fostered or obstructed equality?

What might it look like to 'place a positive value' on the differences between us, and is it always right that we should?

Can you recall times when your immediate assessment of another person based on their appearance or other characteristics had to be corrected as you got to know them?

4. How do I think through this?

John 4:3-30 (CEV)

Jesus left Judea and started for Galilee again. This time he had to go through Samaria, and on his way he came to the town of Sychar. It was near the field that Jacob had long ago given to his son Joseph. The well that Jacob had dug was still there, and Jesus sat down beside it because he was tired from traveling. It was noon, and after Jesus' disciples had gone into town to buy some food, a Samaritan woman came to draw water from the well.

Jesus asked her, "Would you please give me a drink of water?"

"You are a Jew," she replied, "and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink of water when Jews and Samaritans won't have anything to do with each other?"

Jesus answered, "You don't know what God wants to give you, and you don't know who is asking you for a drink. If you did, you would ask me for the water that gives life."

"Sir," the woman said, "you don't even have a bucket, and the well is deep. Where are you going to get this life-giving water? Our ancestor Jacob dug this well for us, and his family and animals got water from it. Are you greater than Jacob?"

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will get thirsty again. But no one who drinks the water I give will ever be thirsty again. The water I give will become in that person a flowing fountain that gives eternal life."

The woman replied, "Sir, please give me a drink of that water! Then I won't get thirsty and have to come to this well again."

Jesus told her, "Go and bring your husband."

The woman answered, "I don't have a husband."

"That's right," Jesus replied, "you're telling the truth. You don't have a husband. You have already been married five times, and the man you are now living with isn't your husband."

The woman said, "Sir, I can see that you are a prophet. My ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews say Jerusalem is the only place to worship."

Jesus said to her:

Believe me, the time is coming when you won't worship the Father either on this mountain or in Jerusalem. You Samaritans don't really know the one you worship. But we Jews do know the God we worship, and by using us, God will save the world. But a time is coming, and it is already here! Even now the true worshipers are being led by the Spirit to worship the Father according to the truth. These are the ones the Father is seeking to worship him. God is Spirit, and those who worship God must be led by the Spirit to worship him according to the truth.

The woman said, "I know that the Messiah will come. He is the one we call Christ. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

"I am that one," Jesus told her, "and I am speaking to you now."

The disciples returned about this time and were surprised to find Jesus talking with a woman. But none of them asked him what he wanted or why he was talking with her.

The woman left her water jar and ran back into town, where she said to the people, "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! Could he be the Messiah?" Everyone in town went out to see Jesus.

Clara Rushbrook, Co-Principal at Northern Baptist College and Steve Finamore, Principal of Bristol Baptist College:

Clara: *'Jesus is going into Samaria. He's going to somewhere other precisely to encounter this woman, and he knows about her. And I don't think he knows about her in a way of kind of shaming her, but he knows about her in a way that sees her. And it reminds me of the story of Hagar where she names God as the one who sees me, God who sees me and that is really powerful. This is an unnamed woman. But we're beginning to see who she is, through this encounter. This is also a story where a woman has agency. She is able to encounter Jesus and have a deep conversation with him and be changed by that conversation.'*

Steve: *'[This story] is one of the ways that John is demonstrating that the words of his prologue, that 'He came to His own people, and they received Him not, but to those who did receive Him, He gave*

the power to become the children of God,' is being fulfilled. And this is one of those biblical type scenes. A man meeting a woman at the well is something that happens in Genesis, it happens in Exodus. It is one of those standard story patterns. And they are usually about betrothal, about human love. But here this is about the love of God for a whole people... So, what we are seeing here is the fulfilment of the ancient promises of God, that the people of God is going to be a body which incorporates all the nations of the world, and is part of a renewal of the whole of creation.'

Clara: *'Scripture is a narrative a story of our growing understanding of God or changing understanding of God. And what I see throughout Scripture is God continually seeking out those who are on the margins, those that we might least expect to be the people through whom God works.'*

Pause to ask: In what ways do you relate to the story in John chapter 4 and how would it feel to be so surprisingly included? Which of the barriers dismantled by Jesus are sometimes still present today?

Clara: *If we see Scripture as that narrative of our unfolding understanding of God and unfolding relationship, we see that time and time again we get it wrong, we mess up, we make mistakes, we mis-hear what God might be saying to us, and do some horrendous things. And I think we also need to understand that the Bible is set within a particular context, particularly times, particular places that have their own worldview, their own societal norms and ways of being that may be very different to the way we are now. So we need to read Scripture in the light of this, that it's a trajectory that is moving in a certain direction.'*

Steve: *'God loves everybody, just as they are, but there are none of us that God wants to leave just as we are. He wants to do work of transformation in our lives, which brings who we are and what we do into line with the great renewal of all things that is coming. And it's holding those two things together, which means that in one sense, there are no boundaries. But in another sense, there have to be.'*

Clara: *'I wonder if there's something about bringing this much more close to home, because it's not just about how we engage with people who are different from us. Actually, one of the key challenges we have as church Christian communities is, how do we dialogue about some of these difficult things together? How do we challenge each other? How do we learn to live with disagreement where we don't have the same opinion? ... We as Baptists need to be better at dialoguing and understanding and respecting each other.'*

Steve: *'We do need to listen carefully to one another. And that way, we can work out exactly where the differences lie, and figure out how significant they are for us. But of course, sometimes collectively, we have to make decisions. It's one thing at college where we can talk together and agree to disagree, because we don't have to make a decision about a particular ethical issue. But sometimes, our structures have to make decisions about particular issues. And on those occasions, it can be very painful, because it brings the divisions between us to the surface.'*

Episode 4 concluding questions

How, if at all, has your theological thinking changed in recent years as you have encountered the diversity of other people and people groups?

What stories or principles found in the biblical text shape your own approach to welcome, hospitality and inclusion?

5. How is our journey so far?

During the early months of the pandemic, Simon Barrington from Forge Leadership Consultancy suggested that as organisations begin to recover from an emergency, there is always a growth in anger over injustice and inequality. Across Baptists Together, significant conversations have taken place about whether our structures and leadership reflects our diversity and fosters justice. It is clear that every level of our Baptist movement is being called to listen, reflect and, where necessary, change attitudes, habits and structures.

Lynn Green, Baptists Together General Secretary:

'In Jeremiah 9 it says, "Let him who boasts, boast about this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who exercises kindness, justice, and righteousness on the earth. For in these I delight." And those words really stuck with me at that time [after the murder of George Floyd.] This is who God is. And our call is to know and to understand him, and it really challenged me – do I love kindness, righteousness and justice? This delights God, why doesn't it delight me?'

'If I think particularly about women in ministry... there are still some circles in my wider ministry where I still have that unique quality of being blanked. To remember what it's like to be blanked helps me to remember what it's like for all sorts of people who maybe feel they're blanked, or they're marginalised or they're not valid and they don't belong.'

'It's easy to wring your hands and say, well, it's too hard to bring about change [in Baptist structures] because of our governance... It's all very well to lament what we can't do. But what can we do? And one thing we could do is sort out our own makeup. So, I encourage people who can't come, to send an 'alternate' to Core Leadership Team meetings from an under-represented group. And we decided that we would adopt a system of co-options. There was a real sensitivity about tokenism here, but there's so many people out there who are beginning to exercise trans local ministries, and often with our black and brown colleagues it's in informal ways. And so, how can we then invite them onto CLT because of what they have to bring?'

'So, Core Leadership Team said, "We can't fix the Union, because it's not our it's not within our power or our gift. But we can do our bit." And I think my challenge would really be to everyone: where do you have influence? Every one of us in our place has to sit and say, "What can I do in my bit?" and by the way that Baptists Together works, if everyone does their bit it will all come together to being a very wonderful bit.'

Episode 5 concluding questions

How much does the leadership structure in your own ministry setting reflect the diversity of the people it serves? Who is under-represented or missing altogether?

What benefits might emerge with greater diversity in local, regional or national leadership structures? And what challenges can you foresee?

6. What can I do in response?

Ingrained ways of thinking and behaving don't change simply because we engage with a brief training resource on equality and diversity. It may be the work of many years to comprehend and live out fully what Paul meant when he said, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

But we may make a start by intentionally adopting various actions and attitudes:

Be curious

We take responsibility to learn what it is like to encounter the world from the perspective of another.

Accept stories

We listen to and accept the stories of others.

Examine self

We work to understand our own story of receiving, causing, or colluding with discrimination.

Be an ally

We go beyond passive avoidance or silence in the face of discriminatory behaviour and start to act as allies for those who face disadvantage.

Give way

We are prepared to relinquish our own access to resources, influence or prominence in order to empower others.

Tim Fergusson, Baptists Together Ministerial Development Advisor:

'You can't just look back and beat yourself up for who you were [in the past] and the cultural assumptions you had, but ask, what would I do differently now? I think I would want to be a stronger advocate for people of different backgrounds, from diverse cultures or starting positions. You can look at something and be aware of issues of gender or race [injustice] and you can disapprove – that's one thing. But it's another thing again to actually stand alongside those people and speak up on their behalf and act as an advocate for them.'

'Continuing Ministerial Development continues to include for me a journey of growing awareness of other people. We talk these days about ministerial training as ministerial formation. The Holy Spirit is forming us to be the Christ-like disciples, the leaders, the pastors, the ministers that he wants us to be. So, I think it's that sense of spiritual formation, which is ongoing.'

'I cannot help but think that this should be a priority for ministers right now. In one sense it's been made a priority because the Baptist Union Council said all ministers need to go through this training. But I think that's right, because of what's going on around us and some of the issues about justice and diversity that have been raised in society. If it's a priority for us as ministers, I do think it should be broader than that, as well. It'd be fantastic if ministers are in dialogue with their churches, rather than just learning themselves. Maybe churches also will be watching some of these conversations, and it might be a learning experience for them as well.'

If you are a minister, there will be a sequence of more substantial resources that will now be made available. The first of these is called *Visions of Colour*. It is designed to develop the response of Baptist ministers towards racial, ethnic and cultural discrimination in Baptist churches. It aims to encourage anti-racism, a way of thinking and acting that dismantles racial discrimination, and to help us form an anti-racist strategy in our ministry settings.

You can find a link to *Visions of Colour* and other resources that will help you explore a number of other areas of difference, with regard to race, gender, disability or sexuality on our webpages at www.baptist.org.uk/e&d.

Episode 6 concluding questions

What issues have been raised in this series of videos that you now feel you should explore further?

With whom will you continue the conversation about equality and diversity? Who can act as your partners in learning and reflection?



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