

Building the Beloved Community

Lesson 3: The Cultural Iceberg

2.4.2024

Objectives: Use iceberg model to identify elements of culture not immediately visible.

Materials: Flipchart, laptop/screen for video, blindfold, *Circles of Our Multicultural Selves* handout (from previous class).

Time allotments suggested for 50 minute class, followed by 25 minute closing service.

1. Nametags and Graffiti Wall (5 minutes before class begins)

- Make nametags using blank paper, markers, and holders. Youth can create their own unique but LEGIBLE nametag. Make it a regular practice to wear nametags.
- “Graffiti Wall” questions: Write the following on whiteboard. Invite youth as they arrive to grab a marker and weigh in with their responses:
 - ▶ Draw something iconic and recognizable from another culture.
 - ▶ What is one defining thing that really makes you, YOU?
- Teachers complete attendance sheets.

2. Silly Fun: “Guess Who’s an Iceberg” (5 minutes max)

Put a chair in the middle of the room. Have everyone stand in a circle around the chair. Get a volunteer to be “IT,” who sits in the chair with blindfold over eyes. Shuffle the circle around. Teacher points silently to one of the youth, who then DISGUISES voice and says “I’m an Iceberg” and “IT” tries to guess the correct identity. Give anywhere between one and three guesses, depending on the size of the class. If “IT” guesses incorrectly, “IT” has to take one more turn.

3. Chalice Lighting: Light the chalice, saying these words together: “We light this chalice as a symbol of our faith; the light of truth and the warmth of love.”

Teacher reads: (from philosopher and Zen teacher, Alan Watts)

“We seldom realize, for example, that our most private thoughts and emotions are not actually our own. For we think in terms of languages and images which we did not invent, but which were given to us by our society.”

4. Iceberg Model of Culture (25 minutes total)

Teacher introduces: In 1976, an American anthropologist and cross-cultural researcher, Edward T. Hall, introduced the iceberg analogy of culture. Hall reasoned that if culture is like an iceberg, there are some aspects which are explicit and visible (above the water), and a larger portion which is implicit and invisible beneath the surface (below the water). The more immersed we become in a culture, the more these hidden aspects of culture become revealed to us.

Watch a video introducing the concept of culture as an iceberg:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=woPov-2nJCU> (1:50 minutes)
- After viewing, invite youth to offer up a few other elements of culture and identity not addressed in the video (*to help them ready for the following activity*).
- Were any identities from their *Circles of Our Multicultural Selves* exercise (from previous class) represented here?

Activity (10 of 25 minutes): Hand out worksheet *Features of Culture* (attached). Ask youth to get into groups of 2-3, and take 2 minutes to complete the worksheet by finding an example for as many features of culture they can. Begin with concrete features, then try for more abstract and challenging ones.

Then with the teacher using a flipchart drawing of an iceberg, ask the class to decide which features should be placed above or below the surface of the water, visible or invisible.

Questions for Discussion (10 of 25 minutes)

- What item below the water line might influence or shape any item above the water line? How?
- Beneath the tip of the iceberg are deeply rooted ideas, core values, and powerful worldviews that have great influence over our behavior, feelings, meaning, and purpose for our lives. How do you think people acquire these core values?
(*Hint: Are we born with them? Passed from generation to generation? Who we hang out with? Formally educated into us? Socialized into us through opinions/ideas we hear in the media? Just “how things are,” structured by our laws and social customs?*)
- Are these core values and powerful worldviews changeable? And if so, easily or with difficulty?
- What commonly happens when we compare only the visible feature of one culture (VFC1) with the visible feature of another culture (VFC2)?

(Hint: What's at work subtly shaping HOW we do the comparison, influencing our opinion whether VFC2 is good/bad or ugly/beautiful or slow/fast or tasty/nasty? **Answer:** the invisible features of C1)

- What happens when we begin to view the visible features of another culture but with greater awareness of the invisible features of our own culture?

5. Intercultural Activity: Turning the Other Cheek? (20 minutes):

Teacher asks: Does anyone know this saying from the early Christian teachings? “If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other also.” What does this saying mean to you?

- Allow youth to share responses (e.g. abuse, nonviolence, nonresistance, pacifism, right to self-defense, etc.)

Teacher guides: Now let's see what happens to our perspective when we look under the surface and begin to see the cultural worldview of first-century Palestine. Details take on much greater importance!

- Have youth pair up, stand facing each other, and (gently) act out “slapping one another on the RIGHT cheek, then offering the LEFT cheek.”

Questions for Discussion (follow sequence):

- Why is it first the RIGHT cheek, then offering the LEFT cheek?
- What if I told you that at that time and culture, (1) people would NOT be caught using their left hand in any public encounter with others, as that would be shameful in a right-handed culture. So with what hand would one slap another person? (Answer: right hand)
- What if I told you that in that culture, (2) the inside palm was considered clean while the outside back of the hand was generally considered unclean. So with what part of the right hand – inside palm or outside back of hand – would one slap another person without “soiling” their clean hands? (Answer: slap with the right back of hand, so palm stays clean.)
- **So now rethink carefully: What does it mean, “If someone strikes you on the RIGHT cheek, turn to them your LEFT cheek”?

(Answer: Turning the left cheek would dare the aggressor to slap, again with their RIGHT hand, but now be forced to use their PALM. In effect, it's challenging the aggressor to recognize that they can hit you again, but not without making themselves “dirty” in the act, or vice versa, not without considering you as “clean” and worthy of their palm. Nonviolent resistance!)

- Similarly, read through the story *How Many Birds Left?* (attached)
- What do you imagine about the two students led them to respond so differently?
- How does your identity affect the way you look at things, approach things?

6. Extinguish the chalice, saying together:

“May the light of truth and the warmth of love go with us in our hearts.”

7. Help clean up classroom before leaving: Please keep regular practice of readying classroom for the next class.

- leave lesson plan and all materials organized
- wipe the whiteboard clean
- tables and chairs neatly returned
- nametags collected in Ziploc bag
- leave any comments for RE staff on attendance sheets