



SEEKING EQUITY (NOT JUST EQUALITY)

Understanding and embracing diversity,
equity and inclusion in your ministry



Photo courtesy of Camp Luther

As conversations about racial injustice continue to build momentum around the world, many organizations have embraced this moment to become more intentional about engaging issues of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) for their business and their impact on the communities that they work in. ▶



Photo courtesy of Forest Springs Camp, by Corrie Slaight

Using equity as a lens to assess the organization will help uncover implicit biases and take you on a road to innovating change that holistically propels you forward.

Creating systemic DEI change within any organizations often takes significant time, effort and resources. It requires leaders at all levels of the organization to listen well, learn often and seriously commit to improving several areas including business design, employee culture, talent recruitment and retention, decision-making processes, employee advancement, customer engagement, philanthropy, etc.

Over the past few decades, there has been much emphasis put on the importance of diversity and inclusion. These two ideas emphasized the need for diverse people and voices to be included at the leadership table to speak into organizational strategy and objectives. While this created some progress, it didn't necessarily help to systemically advance diverse people within organizations. This is why the concept of equity, which has been more prominent in recent years, is so important.

Please note that the term *equity* is not the same thing as *equality*. There's an important distinction here, even if the terms sound alike. Equality is defined as treating each other as equals, especially in status, rights and opportunities. On the other hand, equity refers to proportional representation in those same opportunities. Meaning, policies and procedures may result in an unequal distribution of resources to achieve equity in those same opportunities.

For example, in higher education, the intended role of need-based financial aid is to help students get a college degree alongside those who may not need aid. Both have equal access (i.e., equality) to a college, but one student needs unequal distribution of resources (i.e., aid) so they can experience college. The latter would be an example of equity.

Equality may inform infrastructure and opportunities, but equity will create change because it seeks to achieve proportional representation. This is why many people are asking to see more diversity at the highest levels of leadership and not just in entry to middle-management positions. Seeking equality alone without equity is at best a half-hearted effort with minimal impact.

If your organization seeks to lead new generations that grasp this and want this, starting a conversation around equity is a good place to start. Using equity as a lens to assess the organization will help uncover implicit biases and take you on a road to innovating change that holistically propels you forward.

If we want to see systemic change in our organizations, we can't settle for equality alone. Equity is the proof that progress is being made. This is why many have added "equity" to what was previously known as "diversity and inclusion." Let's keep pressing forward. ■



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