

RENEWING OUR MINDS

Exploring Brain McLaren's

Why Don't They Get It: Overcoming Bias in Others (and Yourself)

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect.
(Romans 12:2)

Outline

Week One (May 26, 27) – Introduction; Enter Jesus; Confirmation Bias

Week Two (June 2,3) – Complexity Bias; Community Bias

Week Three (June 9, 10) – Complementarity Bias; Competency Bias; Consciousness Bias

Week Four (June 16,17) – Comfort Bias; Conservative/Liberal Bias

Week Five (June 23, 24) – Confidence Bias; Catastrophe Bias; Contact Bias

Week Six (June 30, July 1) – Cash Bias; Conspiracy Bias; Next Steps

Complexity Bias (Chapter 2)

Complexity Bias: "Our brains prefer a simple falsehood to a complex truth."

"Along with being biased against anything that doesn't confirm what we already think, we have a built in bias toward simple concepts or explanations, even if they're inaccurate or incomplete."

"When a new idea that is complex shows up on our doorstep, we compare the intellectual effort of inviting it in and showing it hospitality to the intellectual effort of slamming the door and sticking with the simple idea we already have."

Rejecting the new complex idea conserves intellectual effort – and our brains do this very, very quickly, "they reject the complex new idea before you've even had time to consciously think about it."

Emotional Intelligence – Murray Bowen, Edwin Friedman, Daniel Goldman

~ Experiences travel through our brain stem ('reptilian' brain) to our limbic system ('emotional' brain) to our neocortex ('rational' brain) – we feel before we think

~ Emotional Intelligence is your ability to recognize and understand emotions in yourself and others, and your ability to use this awareness to manage your behavior and relationships.

~ "Respond, don't react"

Overcoming Complexity Bias (Chapter 18)

In Responding to Confirmation Bias – “Jesus briefly, confidently, and repeatedly articulated and repeated his core message in images and metaphors that were disarmingly simple yet bottomlessly deep. He saved the complex details until curious people asked for them – as confirmation, after their viewpoint had begun to change.”

Jesus to his disciples during the Last Supper, “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.” (John 16:12-16)

“He met people on a simple level... He told simple stories ...He spoke in simple sentences, and repeated simple but powerful images.”

- ~ The kingdom of God is at hand. (Mark 1:15)
- ~ Don't judge and you won't be judged. (Matthew 7:1)
- ~ If you live by the sword you'll die by the sword. (Matthew 25:52)
- ~ You can't serve God and wealth. (Luke 16:13)
- ~ Love one another. (John 13:34)
- ~ Do to others what you would have them do to you. (Matthew 7:12)
- ~ Give to Caesar what is Caesar, and to God what is God's. (Mark 12:17)

He “started simple. But he always enticed people to go beyond simplicity. He met them at the shallow end but led them to the deep end.”

The Apostle Paul wrote, “We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.” (Ephesians 4:14-16)

“Not only that, but Jesus constantly challenged false simplicities with questions that expanded the frame, with parables that confounded expectations, with hypothetical situations that raised deep questions over shallow rules, and with interactions that showed profound nuance.”

~ “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” (Matthew 9:28)

~ “Suppose one of you has only one sheep and it falls into a pit on the sabbath; will you not lay hold of it and lift it out?” (Matthew 12:11)

~ “But who do you say that I am?” (Mark 9:29)

~ “And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?” (Luke 12:25)

~ “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” (Luke 10:26)

~ “Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?” (John 6:5)

~ “Whom are you looking for?” (John 20:15)

“His goal wasn't simply to tell people what to think, but rather, to draw them into thinking afresh for themselves.”

“He didn't spend a lot of time repeating or refuting the false statements of his critics, and he didn't counterpunch when he was attacked or insulted, but instead, he used every criticism as an opportunity to restate, clarify, and illustrate his true statements. He had, to use a contemporary phrase, message discipline, which drew people to his central simple message: an invitation to overcome long-held biases, to think again, and to see and live life in a new light.”

Community Bias (Chapter 3)

Community Bias:

“It’s almost impossible to see what our community doesn’t, can’t, or won’t see.”

“Because we humans evolved as social creatures – like horses in a herd or bees in a hive or wolves in a pack or chickens in a pecking order, we filter new ideas not only through our own personal biases, but also through the biases of the primary communities to which we belong. We don’t just ask if an idea seems reasonable or acceptable to us. We instinctively ask, ‘What will my peer group think of this idea? And what will they think of me if I accept it?’

Because we are wired to cherish belonging and to fear being excluded or rejected, any idea or truth that doesn’t fit in with the confirmation and complexity biases of our communities is very hard for us to accept as individual members of those communities.”

“In fact, if I become convinced of the truth of an idea which is unacceptable to my group, I will be faced with a painful, even agonizing choice.”

– share the new idea, cause a disturbance, be seen as a threat, and possibly be expelled from community

– stay silent and hold out-of-sync views, feeling divided, complicit, dishonest, and being drained by keeping up a false front – perhaps eventually seeking a new community... which will have its own biases, because “Community Bias isn’t simply a problem of this or that group: it’s a factor of human psychology and sociology”

Overcoming Community Bias (Chapter 19)

In Responding to Community Bias – “Jesus created a more free and friendly new community of learners and he taught them to accept people where they are and welcome them into the movement.”

Jesus called disciples who spent three years with him learning how to be like him (Mark 1:16-20; Matt 4:18-22; Matt 9:9; Luke 6:12-16; John 1:35-51)

“He kept sending people back to their communities of unchallenged bias to be gentle disruptors, using images like ‘sheep among wolves,’ (Luke 10:3), ‘light of the world’ and ‘salt of the earth,’ (Matt 5:13-16) ‘yeast in bread,’ (Luke 13:21) or ‘wise as serpents, innocent as doves’ (Matt 10:16) to help them understand both the danger and beauty of their transformative work.”

Jesus created safe space for new ideas – and when his disciples made mistakes “by judging or excluding people, he corrected them because seekers needed a safe community where questioning conventional bias was not only acceptable, but encouraged.”

~ When the disciples tried to prevent parents from bringing their children to Jesus, he said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.” (Luke 18:15-17)

~ The disciples were “astonished” Jesus was speaking with a Samaritan Woman (John 4:4-42)

~ After the disciples wonder at Jesus asking ‘who touched me?’ in a crowd, Jesus heals the ritually unclean woman who touched him and affirms her faith (Mark 5:25-34)

~ Jesus defends his disciples against the Pharisees who criticize them for doing what is “unlawful” because they pick grain on the Sabbath (Matt 12:1-8)

~ Jesus appeared to the disciples after his resurrection, and “opened their minds to understand the Scriptures” that he is the Messiah and “repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem”

How can we do the same?

- ~ How can we love people enough to accept them fully right where they are, but love them too much to leave them there?
- ~ How can we inspire people with the courage to differ graciously?
- ~ How can we challenge people to be in their social communities, without being conformed to them?
- ~ And when people are experiencing rejection from their current communities because they refuse to conform, how can we create new communities where they will be welcome? And how can we demonstrate love even as we are rejected?

“To our most bitter opponents we say: ‘We shall match your capacity to inflict suffering by our capacity to endure suffering. We shall meet your physical force with soul force. Do to us what you will, and we shall continue to love you. We cannot in all good conscience obey your unjust laws, because noncooperation with evil is as much a moral obligation as is cooperation with good.

Throw us in jail, and we shall still love you. Bomb our homes and threaten our children, and we shall still love you. Send your hooded perpetrators of violence into our community at the midnight hour and beat us and leave us half dead, and we shall still love you. But be ye assured that we will wear you down by our capacity to suffer. One day we shall win freedom, but not only for ourselves. We shall so appeal to your heart and conscience that we shall win you in the process, and our victory will be a double victory.” — Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.