

Small Group Ministry  
Session Plan  
**Classism**

**Opening Words:**

May the light we now kindle

Inspire us to use our powers

To heal and not to harm,

To help and not to hinder,

To bless and not to curse,

To service you, Spirit of freedom. Passover Haggadah, *Singing the Living Tradition* # 453

**Check-in**

**Topic: Classism** Rev. Cane Johnsen

Social structures keep us bound up in issues of class, race, ability, etc. We can hardly escape their impact on our thoughts, words and deeds. We can only be aware and mindful of how we participate or actively work to change systems both personal and institutional.

Let's review definitions from [classism.org](http://classism.org) as a reference.

**Class** - relative social rank in terms of income, wealth, education, status and/or power.

**Classism** - differential treatment based on social class or perceived social class. Classism is the systematic assignment of worth based on social class; policies and practices set up to benefit more class-privileged people at the expense of the less class-privileged people, resulting in drastic income and wealth inequality and causing basic human needs to go unmet; the rationale and the culture which perpetuates these systems and this unequal valuing.

**Class Privilege** - Tangible or intangible unearned advantages of higher-class status, such as personal contacts with employers, good childhood health care, inherited money, speaking with the same dialect/accent as people with institutional power.

**Class Ally** - A person from the more privileged classes whose attitudes and behaviors are anti-classist, who is committed to increasing his or her own understanding of this issue related to classism, and is actively working towards eliminating classism on many levels.

**Individual Classism** - This term refers to classism on a personal or individual level, either in behavior or attitudes, either conscious and intentional, or unconscious and unintentional.

**Institutional Classism** - This term refers to the ways in which intentional and unintentional classism is manifest in the various institutions of our society.

1. How would you characterize your family's socio-economic background? (For example: poor, working class, lower middle class, middle class, upper middle class, upper class, ruling class).  
How did your family see itself related to class?
2. What impact does your class background have on your current attitudes, behaviors, and feelings about the following: money, work, relationships with people from the same class/from different class, your sense of self, expectations about life, your politics?
3. What are the challenges around classism for you?

Likes and Wishes: How was the session for you?

Closing words: May the ways of your heart meet the wisdom of your days. Rev. Cane Johnsen