

- c. Be prepared to grow and change your mind about some things. (In other words, "Walk humbly with God" who may have spoken to your neighbour of a different faith).
- d. Be fair and practice the "Golden Rule." (This means not using hurtful words, not hanging on to false ideas about the other people when they are shown to be false, and not insisting on using your own terms to define the other's beliefs. Let them use their own terms to define their own faith).
- e. Witness to what you believe most deeply. (In fact, as you listen to other's deepest beliefs you are given permission to witness to your own).
- f. Agree to disagree, if necessary. (That assumes you will question the others about aspects of their religion that you do not like, and they will do the same with you).
- g. Work together with your neighbours of another faith to make the world a better place. (Try inviting them to join in common efforts with you).
- h. Where possible, share each other's celebrations, rituals, worship and meditation. (As mutual respect and understanding grow, it becomes possible to participate in common religious activities).
- i. Do your "homework" to learn about each other's history and scriptures, if there are any.
- j. Have hope that dialogue will make for peace and justice and fulness of life. (Without such vision the dialogue will perish).

8. In summary, if we love God and love our neighbours, as Jesus commanded, we will overcome the attitudes of indifference, hostility or competition that prevent dialogue and cooperation with people of good will from many different religions.

Christians in Interfaith Dialogue

1. The time is here to dialogue and cooperate with people of other religions. For many Christians, attitudes of indifference, hostility or competition have prevented dialogue and cooperation.

a. Indifference leads to isolation from other faith communities.

It assumes that other people's religious beliefs are none of our business. It says, in effect, "As long as the other religions do not threaten us in any way, why should we bother with them?" Indifference implies that there is nothing of value to be gained from dialogue or cooperation with people of other faiths.

b. Hostility, on the other hand, sees other religions as a real threat to the existence and the expansion of Christianity. It assumes that other religions are not simply ignorant of the truth but are perverse and deliberate in threatening Christianity in various ways. Hostility is very suspicious and resentful of any growth and well-being in other religious communities.

c. Competition is an attitude based on the sense of one's own superiority over other religions. It expresses certainty that other religions are inferior or deficient and that they need to be told what is the better religion. It sees competition as divinely ordained in religion just as it is in business, war and sport. It assumes that if Christians are not competitive then Christianity will lose out to other religions.

2. There is a great need now to overcome such unChristian attitudes. We are living in a time when many cultures and religions meet in our local neighbourhoods and at our places of work. We can and do travel to the ends of the earth, and we learn from the media what is happening in other parts of the world. It is no longer possible to avoid being deeply involved with people of a great diversity of religions and beliefs.

3. Does our Christian faith not require us to have dialogue and cooperate with those of other faiths? We believe God is creator and lover of all human beings. Our God is too small if we think God is God of Christians alone. God's Spirit goes out to the ends of the earth

(Psalm 139). We dare not say that the Holy Spirit is confined to the Christian church. When we see the fruit of the Spirit — love, joy peace, patience, gentleness, temperance, self-control, etc. in people of other faiths, should we not praise God for them? How could we keep the first Great Commandment to love God with all our heart and mind and not give God glory for the presence of the Spirit in all the earth? Dialogue is the way we see the glory of God in the face of other religious people. It can be very encouraging and inspiring.

4. The second Great Commandment also requires us to dialogue and cooperate with our neighbours of different faith. "To love is to step into the presence of the other and listen." (Martin Buber) This is as true for our neighbours or our enemies as it is for our children. Love requires listening and talking. We have a moral obligation to understand the deep religious convictions of those we would treat as neighbours.

5. Of course, we believe that we must "test the spirits" to see if they are truly of God. (1 John 4:3) And we believe that the Spirit of Jesus is the criterion by which we accept what we accept as being of God. In dialogue we try to remain faithful to Christ as we respect the other people and as we disagree with them when necessary.

6. The world is crying out for people of good will to join together to make right all that is harming the earth. Some of the worst problems of prejudice and conflict cannot be resolved without people of different religions working together to overcome the problems.

7. If we truly want to dialogue and cooperate, what should we do about it? Here are 10 suggestions for interfaith dialogue.

a. Actually meet some people of other faiths. (Dialogue doesn't happen in your mind alone.)

b. Listen to the conviction of your neighbours of different faith. (Remember: "To love is to step into the presence of the other and listen".)