

THEOLOGY PUB

With Special Guest **Rabbi Rick Winer**, from Congregation Beth Emek

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INTERFAITH DIALOGUE IS IMPORTANT NOW!

More than at any time in the past, we need to search – each faith in its own way – for a way of living with, and acknowledging the integrity of, those who are not of our faith. Can we make space for difference? Can we hear the voice of God in a language, a sensibility, a culture not our own? **Can we see the presence of God in the face of a stranger?** Do we speak to and within the circumscribed loyalties of our faith, or does our sense of the all-encompassing nature of the divine lead us to recognize the integrity of the search for God by those outside our faith?

- **JONATHAN SACKS** -

CHIEF RABBI OF THE UNITED HEBREW CONGREGATIONS OF THE COMMONWEALTH)

QUESTIONS

- Why is interfaith dialogue important?
- What are the goals of interfaith dialogue?
- What are the obstacles to having productive interfaith dialogue and relations?
- If I'm going to engage in interfaith dialogue, isn't it just going to water down my own beliefs?



Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC) builds mutual respect and pluralism among young people from different religious traditions by empowering them to work together to serve others.



The Pluralism Project at Harvard University:

Our mission is to document and better understand the changing contours of American religious demography; study religious communities themselves; explore implications for America's new plurality across the nation; and to discern the emerging meanings of "pluralism."

OPEN TO CONVERSION

When we enter this dialogue with all the cultures of the world...we must be **open to conversion** – conversion to a fuller truth. If we are not open to conversion, then the process we are involved in is not one of evangelization but of **proselytism**. If we are not open to conversion, then we have no right to enter into true religious dialogue.

(VINCENT DONOVAN – CATHOLIC MISSIOLOGIST AND THEOLOGIAN)

WHAT IS INTERFAITH DIALOGUE *REALLY* LIKE?

There is often a misconception of what occurs in dialogue. Many believe that it is a polite meeting where **the depths of our respective faiths are set aside in the name of easy tolerance**. But this is a misconception. Genuine encounter and dialogue is a meeting of the deepest levels of our respective faiths, where we bear witness to what of the spirit and of God has been given to us. This we do not for the sake of persuading the other that we are right and they are wrong, but for the sake of bearing witness to what each has experienced and knows of the One who is beyond. When we meet in this way, when the dialogue goes this deeply, then both parties can grow not only in their own faith but in their recognition of the validity of the other.

(M. DARROL BRYANT AND S. A. ALI)



WHAT DO WE HOPE TO GET OUT OF INTERFAITH DIALOGUE?

We do not enter into dialogue with the dreamy hope that we will all agree, for the truth is we probably will not. We do not enter into dialogue to produce an agreement, but **to produce real relationship, even friendship**, which is premised upon **mutual understanding**, not upon agreement. Christians and Muslims...may find we agree on many things. We share prophets like Abraham and foundational values like justice. But a clear understanding of difference is as precious as the affirmation of similarities.

(DIANA ECK - PROFESSOR OF COMPARATIVE RELIGION AND DIRECTOR OF THE PLURALISM PROJECT AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY)

TOLERANCE • A CHRISTIAN THINKS IT'S A BAD THING...

I do not “tolerate” acceptance of other religions, but my heart breaks for their believers. To live without the knowledge or love of the one, true God is to live in a state—be it conscious or not—of hopelessness and despair. I have not always been a Christian; I know firsthand the void that is there without Jesus. We cannot allow others to live in that place, simply because we don’t want to offend them or because we’re all about tolerance. “Coexisting” is denying the very heart of Christianity. Stop caring about their worldly comforts and start caring about their eternal lives. We can’t just sit by, watching them promote a life without Christ, sanctioning their actions and events. We need to begin, here at Whitworth. Pray for them. Love them. Do not coexist with their gods.

(STUDENT AT WHITWORTH UNIVERSITY)