

A Faith Community Conversation Guide

Habits for talking through hard issues with the people you worship with.

Faith communities are bound together by something deeper than agreement on any one issue. They are also, increasingly, places where political and cultural divisions threaten to fracture relationships that took decades — sometimes generations — to build. These habits are built for the particular gift and challenge of disagreeing with people you worship alongside.

| What | How | What It Sounds Like |
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| <p>Lead With What You Share</p> <p>In a faith community, you are bound to one another by something deeper than agreement on any issue. Before you raise a disagreement, name the shared foundation — the worship, the calling, the commitments — that holds you together.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Beginning with the commitments you share, not the issue you differ on.• Reminding yourself that you'll be sitting in the same pew next Sunday.• Speaking as a member of the community, not as a critic of it. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>We share this faith, this community, this calling.</i>• <i>I'm raising this as someone who loves this congregation.</i>• <i>I want us to stay together while we work this through.</i> |
| <p>Distinguish Faith From Politics</p> <p>People of sincere faith often arrive at very different political conclusions from the same scripture, tradition, or teaching. Be careful about claiming that your political position is the obvious or only faithful one. The disagreement may be real, but the faith is shared.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Owning your political view as your own, not as the inevitable conclusion of your faith.• Recognizing that faithful people read the same texts differently.• Saving political tribalism for outside the sanctuary. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>This is how my faith leads me — I know yours may lead you elsewhere.</i>• <i>I don't think there's only one faithful answer to this.</i>• <i>We can disagree about this and still worship together.</i> |

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| <p>Speak From Your Own Experience</p> <p>In a community shaped by stories — of scripture, of faith, of life — your own honest experience carries weight. Resist the urge to speak for all believers, all members, or all people of your tradition. Speak for yourself.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using "I" statements rather than "we" or "all Christians / Jews / Muslims / etc." • Sharing the specific moment or story behind your view. • Owning your conscience as your own. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>In my own walk...</i> • <i>This is where I've landed, after a lot of prayer / study / reflection.</i> • <i>Speaking only for myself...</i> |
| <p>Listen as an Act of Love</p> <p>In most faith traditions, listening to another person carefully is itself a form of love. Treat the conversation as a spiritual practice, not a debate. Your goal is not to win; it is to know your neighbor.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening without rehearsing your reply. • Asking questions that help you understand their journey. • Sitting with what you've heard before responding. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Tell me how you came to that.</i> • <i>I want to understand your story before I share mine.</i> • <i>Let me sit with what you just said.</i> |
| <p>Disagree Without Excommunication</p> <p>It is possible to disagree, even sharply, with a fellow member of your community without questioning their faith, their salvation, or their belonging. The strongest communities are the ones that can hold real disagreement without breaking.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disagreeing with the position without judging the person's faith. • Avoiding language that questions whether someone truly belongs. • Naming what you still share, even as you name what you disagree about. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>We see this differently, and we are still family in this place.</i> • <i>I disagree with you on this — and I am glad you are part of this community.</i> • <i>I want to push back on the idea without questioning your heart.</i> |

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| <p>Trust the Long Work</p> <p>Faith communities live on a different timescale than the news cycle. Hard conversations within them are rarely resolved in one sitting. The work of staying together, across deep disagreement, is itself part of the witness.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letting some questions stay open for now. • Continuing to worship, serve, and study alongside people you disagree with. • Believing that the community is bigger than any one fight. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I don't have the answer to this today.</i> • <i>Let's keep walking together while we work this out.</i> • <i>I trust this community more than I trust my own certainty about this.</i> |

These habits work best when both people are engaging in good faith. You can only control your own behavior — modeling these habits often invites others to do the same, but not always. If a conversation becomes abusive, dishonest, or unsafe, it is always OK to step away. In faith communities, the long arc of belonging often matters more than any single debate. Some disagreements take years; the community is what holds you while you work them through.

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