



FACILITATOR'S TOOLS:

**INTERFAITH CONVERSATION ON
THE SHARED VALUE OF SERVICE**

Interfaith cooperation gives us a chance to talk about our deepest religious and ethical values and why we care about making the world a better place. Use this guide to lead an interfaith conversation following a service project, to get a group talking about how they can work together, or to create your own interfaith conversation prompts. For more tools to use on campus, visit ifc.org/better-together.

Goals of the conversation

- To help participants discover the shared value of service across different religious traditions through text, storytelling and reflection on social action.
- To encourage participants to grow in their own faith identities, learning how to talk about what they believe, even as they learning to listen to others.
- To build a sense of cooperation and collaboration amongst religiously diverse young people on campus and in the community.

Setting a safe space for conversation — 5 minutes

Introduce the kind of discussion we will be having today:

Tell the students, “you will be asked to talk about your faith and your values today with others who don’t necessarily share your beliefs and ways of life.”

Brainstorm the guidelines for this unique discussion:

- What do you need from yourself and others in order to feel safe having this conversation?
- Take notes on your group’s responses, and then read the responses aloud to conclude the discussion.

Here’s a list of key safe space guidelines. When your group is done brainstorming, add to the list anything you might have missed:

- Everyone has the right to pass
- Everything said is confidential
- Seek clarification if you don’t understand something someone else is saying
- Make sure to listen to others without interrupting
- Suspend your judgment
- Use “I” statements
- Remember the importance of the other person’s faith or moral tradition in his or her own life
- Don’t expect others to know everything about your own tradition
- No question is stupid

Texts on the shared value of service — 10 minutes

- Ask your group to go around the circle and read the texts on service aloud. Make it clear that no one has to read if they feel uncomfortable doing so.
- Ask the group to reflect on what they've read: "Did any of these – either from your own faith tradition or not – particularly resonate with you?" "Did you hear anything that you found challenging or helped you to think about service in a new way?"
- Explain that these texts offer us a chance to think about how we interact with people who are different from us in light of our shared values, and that this will be the framing for the discussion and the reflection on today's service project.

Story-telling as a means of dialogue — 15 minutes

- Ask the group to share their thoughts on the service project they participated in today or to tell a story about another meaningful service experience. If they get stuck, share your own reflections on the project today.
- Now push the story further by asking participants to reflect on what inspired them to do this work, "What inspired you to do this act of service? Was it something from your faith tradition or moral perspective?"

Returning to the texts — 10 minutes

- Ask the group to read the texts aloud again. Encourage participants to see if they think about things differently after they've listened to stories about inspiration from different traditions.
- Ask, "Is there anything new that sticks out to you as you read through these texts a second time?"
"How did you see the themes of these texts playing out in our thoughts from today and the stories we just told?"

Texts on the Shared Value of Service

Baha'i Tradition on Service (from Abdu'l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha)

One amongst His Teachings is this, that love and good faith must so dominate the human heart that men will regard the stranger as a familiar friend, the malefactor as one of their own, the alien even as a loved one, the enemy as a companion dear and close.

Buddhist Tradition of Service (from Itivuttaka 18)

If beings knew, as I know, the fruit of sharing gifts, they would not enjoy their use without sharing them, nor would the taint of stinginess obsess the heart and stay there. Even if it were their last bit, their last morsel of food, they would not enjoy its use without sharing it, if there were anyone to receive it.

Christian Tradition of Service (Matthew 25:35)

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?” And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

Hindu Tradition of Service (from Bhagavad Gita 3.10)

At the beginning, mankind and the obligation of selfless service were created together. “Through selfless service, you will always be fruitful and find the fulfillment of your desires”: this is the promise of the Creator ...

Jain Tradition of Service (from Tattvarthasutra 5.21)

Rendering help to another is the function of all human beings.

Jewish Tradition of Service (Deuteronomy 10:17)

For the LORD your G-d is G-d supreme and Lord supreme, the great, the mighty, and the awesome G-d, who shows no favor and takes no bribe, but upholds the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and befriends the stranger, providing him with food and clothing. You too must befriend the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Muslim Tradition of Service (Surah 93:1-11)

I call to witness the early hours of morning, and the night when dark and still, your Lord has neither left you, nor despises you. What is to come is better for you than what has gone before; for your Lord will certainly give you, and you will be content. Did He not find you an orphan and take care of you? Did He not find you perplexed, and show you the way? Did He not find you poor and enrich you? So do not oppress the orphan, and do not drive the beggar away, and keep recounting the favors of your Lord.

Secular Humanism Tradition of Service (from the writings of Pablo Neruda)

To feel the intimacy of brothers is a marvelous thing in life. To feel the love of people whom we love is a fire that feeds our life. But to feel the affection that comes from those whom we do not know, from those unknown to us, who are watching over our sleep and solitude, over our dangers and our weaknesses— that is something still greater and more beautiful because it widens out the boundaries of our being and unites all living things.

Sikh Tradition of Service (from Guru Granth Sahib)

The individual who performs selfless service without thought of reward shall attain God's salvation.