

## **A Dialogue Model that Distinguished Values from Worldviews**

This model might be especially suited for dialogues in which the participants are in strong disagreement and are moved by differing sacred convictions.

The setting of time limits and the establishment of shared ground rules is recommended.

1. Begin the dialogue with an exchange of personal stories, as in “what story brings you here today?” This could begin to individualize and humanize each person to the others.
2. Ask each person to say something about their basic values. People who strongly disagree about what is true or right often nonetheless share basic values. And when people become aware of that fact they sometime soften their stances towards each other.
3. Ask each person to say a few words about what they believe and why. What, for example, will happen if the path they support is not chosen? What would go wrong (or will remain wrong), and why?
4. Ask the group to consider what was just said in light of the possibility of there being more agreement between the various values endorsed than there is between the worldviews expressed. If so, what similarities and differences did they notice? If time allows and participants seem ready, move to open discussion.
5. If the conversation seems stuck, unproductive, too unfriendly for communication, or too friendly for communication, then try the following:
  - 5A. Ask those who ground their beliefs in the Word of God: “Is there a way you could state your view that might get a non-believer to connect to it? There might be “earthly” reasons – perhaps shared or established by God – why the belief you hold is the right belief, reasons such as the need for more justice or more happiness. Could you try talking in terms like that?”
  - 5B. Pose a similar challenge to the others, especially to those who during the discussion invoked secular ideas such as the primacy of individual rights: “Could you try to defend what you believe using language you think likely to resonate with the values and concerns you just heard expressed by your opponents? For example, if your opponent expressed a belief in personal responsibility, and you believe in that as well, maybe you could speak to that and how it fits in with your view.”

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