

Beyond Our Differences

A FILM BY
PETER BISANZ

GUIDE TO DIALOGUE



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Dear viewer, after watching *Beyond Our Differences* we hope that you find this guide as a useful tool in examining some profound and relevant issues that have played, and still play key roles in the shaping of our society as we know it now. Through examining the opinions of a collected tapestry of profound voices, social movements of the past, and current examples of people doing extraordinary things to better our society, we have divided the film into seven discussable chapters.

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1. THE POSITIVE ROLE OF RELIGION
2. RELIGION USED NEGATIVELY
3. AFGHANISTAN
4. HUMAN RIGHTS
5. NON-VIOLENCE MOVEMENTS
6. ISRAEL & PALESTINE
7. FATHER KIERAN CREAGH

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If you have not had the chance to watch the film yet, many the questions asked in this discussion guide are still relevant, however, for further insight, we urge you to tune in to 'Bill Moyers Journal' on PBS this December 26 to watch a short version of our full feature, and you can log-in online to www.shoppbs.org, where the DVD will be available for pre-order on December 23, 2006.



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Chapter 1 - The Positive Role of Religion

“The values of justice, the values of charity, the values of protection of the poor...These are religious values.” ~ Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf

Discussion Questions:

Why might it be important for people to be in dialogue with the religious world and its leaders, even if they don't agree with their doctrine, or don't consider themselves religious?

What are some basic tenants of every major religion? Why do you think most major religious works write extensively on the value of compassion?

What do you believe are the main factors that have contributed to the increasingly negative image of religion in the world today?

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Chapter 2 - Religion Used Negatively

"Today we happen to be in a period... in which extreme fundamentalists are taking hold of society"
~ Noam Chomsky

Discussion Questions:

When does 'certainty' in one's faith become an inhibiting trait?

How do violent fundamentalists justify what they do? Are there peaceful solutions to stop the harm they inflict?

How can extremist viewpoints be diluted?

Why is it important not to impose one's faith on others?

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Chapter 3 - Afghanistan

“Islam never means the lack of freedom.” ~ Shukria Barakzai

Discussion Questions:

Should women's rights be viewed as a separate issue from human rights?

How can religious communities implement progressive ideas while maintaining their traditional values?

Where do we draw the line between respecting orthodoxy and respecting all members of the community?

How does the subjugation of women in Islamic cultures go against the teachings of Mohammed?

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Chapter 4 - Human Rights

"I don't believe that we have any throw-away children, or any throw-away neighborhoods, or any throw-away nations or continents, or species" ~ Van Jones, Esq

Discussion Questions:

Do multinational companies have a moral responsibility to help those in need? Do local businesses? Do individuals?

Who should decide what the standards for universal human rights should be?

What do you think of Van Jones' outreach to prisoners? Does any sort of imprisonment contradict the religious value of forgiveness?

How do criminals reconcile and repent what they did to society if imprisonment is not the answer? What rights should and shouldn't be extended to prisoners?

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Chapter 5 - Non-Violence Movements

“The aftermath of non-violence is the creation of the beloved community” ~ Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Discussion Questions:

Is it necessary, or even useful, to combat today’s problems with a romantic or utopian view of the world?

How have leaders such as Gandhi and Dr. King used religion as a force for inclusion and peace?

Why is it important for various religious and secular communities to engage with one another? How can this be achieved?

Why is it important for religious people to not claim a higher sense of morality over those who do not practice organized faith?

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Chapter 6 - Israel & Palestine

“For religion to make an impact on the work we are doing, we need to find some heroes ... religion needs to be used as a healing factor instead of a separating one” ~ Melisse Lewine-Boskovich

Discussion Questions:

How can Middle Eastern youth respect the traditions and struggles of their elders, while still reaching out to other cultures and people?

What was Noah’s revelation during his time in prison? How can others reach a similar attitude?

How should people attempt to interact and communicate with their enemies when there is a very real danger of violence when stepping out the comfort of one’s community?

Is forgiveness really a powerful enough force to be applied in all situations?

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Chapter 7 - Father Kieran Creagh

“Each one of us has the capacity to become a saint. Incredible... just incredible” ~ Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Discussion Questions:

Do you find Father Creagh to be an incredible inspiration or too extreme an example to use a practical role model?

What general themes and attitudes can we take away from Father Creagh? How can we apply them in small ways in our everyday lives?

Was taking the AIDS vaccine a productive thing for Father Creagh to do? Why or why not?

After being shot by robbers, Father Kieran returned to the hospice. If you found yourself in a similar situation, how would you suppress feelings of anger?

Notes:



