



6. Mending Relationships, Mending the World

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

1. The first part of the video discusses some stereotypes about the other that have been widely held in the Jewish and Christian communities. For example, an enduring Christian caricature of Judaism is that it is more concerned about law than about people, while a recurrent Jewish viewpoint is that Christianity has weakened Judaism's emphasis on the Oneness of God. What might you say to your Christian or Jewish dialogue partner to clarify your own tradition's perspectives and practices on any of these subjects?

The video mentions a number of common caricatures. These are further discussed on the Information Sheet. This opening question focuses on one central misapprehension about each community.

Jewish participants might develop Prof. Kimelman's thought that love and grace can be intrinsically part of a legal system -- an idea that Catholic participants might appreciate. Some examples from the lived experience of Jews could be helpful. The facilitator could ask if the Jewish participants could give an example of how a mitzvah promotes a loving act or how "law" functions positively for them.

Some Christian participants may uncomfortably say that the Trinity is a mystery even to them. Christian teaching that the One God is triune could be approached in the context of the dialogue as the Christian experience of God as creating/sustaining (the Father), inviting into relationship (the Word), and inspiring the perception and acceptance of that invitation (the Spirit). Therefore, Christian participants might be asked to tell about times when they have experienced God working in these ways in their lives.

Although time will not permit much exploration of this, Trinitarian doctrine teaches that everything God does always involves all three "subsistents" or divine activities. Thus, from a Christian perspective Jews are in covenant with the entire Trinity, not simply with

the Father as some think. Jews thus are in relationship with God's Word and Spirit as well, and examples from Jewish prayers or writings could be cited.

The result of this conversation about Law and God could be a deeper sense that some commonalities accompany the differences between the two traditions.

2. What problematic ideas about your own tradition have you experienced in your faith community? What ideas about itself do you think your own community needs to examine?

This very open-ended question is meant to encourage some reflection on one's own community in the light of experience the other. The facilitator should keep things focused on matters pertinent to Christian-Jewish relations.

The video mentions a "lachrymose" view that sees Jewish history as a series of disasters as a problem for Jewish education. Christians can fall into a similarly skewed image of Jewish history. The vibrant creativity and contributions made to European culture by Jews in various times and places ought to be highlighted.

Christians, on the other hand, can be unaware of the evils committed by their ancestors and so can tend to view the church as a sinless community.

As participants share their reservations about their own community, there will be natural inclination from members of the other community to think of cognate issues in their own experiences. Some discussion of the similarities and differences between the two communities would be beneficial.

3. Prof. Lee suggested that people have to know their own faith tradition well before they dialogue with another one, lest they give poor answers to questions that might be posed. Sr. Boys, however, observed how much interreligious dialogue increases participants' understandings of their own religious community. How do these two thoughts relate? What have been your own experiences while discussing how the Jewish and Christian communities "walk God's paths"?

This question will elicit some reflections on what encountering the related religious other had meant to one's own faith. The facilitator might conclude consideration of this question by reiterating the unprecedented opportunities that interfaith dialogue between Christians and Jews presents today.

4. The video concluded with Prof. Levine comparing the Jewish *halakhah* and the Christian *hodos* as two ways that are leading toward the same future. How could the Christian and Jewish communities in your town or region work together to prepare for the coming of the Kingdom of God?

This conversation will depend on local circumstances and histories. It might begin with some brief discussion about how each community understands its obligations to prepare for the Kingdom of God or the Age to Come. Some participants might mention collaborative ventures that have occurred in the past. Hopefully, the experience of dialogue will encourage ideas for new or expanded initiatives.

5. As the WALKING GOD'S PATHS process draws to a close, what would you most want your Jewish or Christian dialogue partner to understand about your faith community? What subjects do you wish you could have discussed?

Again, this is an open-ended question. Typically, there will be a feeling in the group that something worthwhile is coming to an end. Hopefully, there will also be some desire to continue somehow. The question should provide some suggestions for the organizers about future interfaith dialogues and other activities.