

# Interfaith Dialogue Quotations

The following quotations relate directly or indirectly to the field of interfaith dialogue. You may find various ways to use them. One way they can be used is to trigger reflection or small group discussion. Please feel free to post all or part of this document on websites or social media. Kindly send me any quotations on this theme that you have collected.

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“Dialogue is the art of conversation across boundaries of difference.” **Sr. Mary Boys SNJM**

“If we take the world’s enduring religions at their best, we discover the distilled wisdom of the human race.” **Dr. Huston Smith**

“By dialogue, we let God be present in our midst, for as we open ourselves to one another, we open ourselves to God.” **Pope John Paul II**

"I believe that although the religions of the world are apples and oranges and are more different than they are alike, still there is a quality of 'fruitfulness' that characterizes them all and out of which a 'common ground' for shared conversation can be established." **Dr. Paul Knitter**

“God is too big to fit into one religion.” **Bumper sticker**

“It seems to me that the world’s religions are like siblings separated at birth. We’ve grown up in different neighbourhoods, different households, with different songs, stories, traditions and customs. But now, we’ve been reunited, and, having found each other after so many years apart, we look into each other’s faces and we can see the family resemblance. We’re back together again, and it’s very good.” **Richard Watts**

“As you welcome whatever you find alien within yourself, extend that same welcome to whatever you find alien in the outer world. I don't know any virtue more important these days than hospitality to the stranger, to those we perceive as ‘other’ than us.” **Parker Palmer**

“Dialogue is not about debate....dialogue, rather, is about openness to transformation.  
**Source unknown**

“Why is interfaith dialogue so difficult? [It is] the confusion between the particular and the universal. Every authentic spiritual path is an avenue to a shared universal. But that universal is far greater than any particular path.”

**Rabbi Ted Falcon, The Interfaith Amigos**

“The world in which you were born is just one model of reality. Other cultures are not failed attempts at being you; they are unique manifestations of the human spirit.” **Wade Davis**

The great religious traditions can be viewed.....at their mystical core.....as road maps and technologies for the induction of transcendent states of consciousness. **Dr. Roger Walsh**

“A lot of problems in the world would disappear if we talked to each other instead of about each other.” **Source unknown**

“Because of our interfaith chat today, your faith has become as important to me as my faith is important to me.” **Source unknown**

“How do we live together in difference?” **Source unknown**

“We have enough religion to hate each other but not enough religion to love another.”  
**Jonathan Swift**

“We are talking only to ourselves. We are not talking to the rivers, we are not talking to the wind and the climate. Most of the disasters that are happening now are a consequence of that spiritual ‘autism.’ “ **Thomas Berry**

“To see ourselves as others see us.” **Robbie Burns**

“When we are celebrating what is different from ourselves, that’s when we know that we are actually doing interfaith dialogue” **Paul McKenna**

“We're talking about calling the entire world of religion into a global dialogue,"  
**Bishop William E. Swing**

“The influential Austrian philosopher, **Ludwig Wittgenstein** (1889-1951), is quoted as saying, ‘the limits of my language are the limits of my world’. Accordingly, can we not say: ‘the limits of my interfaith experience are the limits of my experience of God?’ ” **Paul McKenna**

“The surest liberation from idolatrous religion is to have to meet God in people who are very different from ourselves.” **Peter Haynes**

“Tell me and I forget.  
Teach me and I remember.  
Engage me and I learn.”  
**Chinese proverb.**

“We are here to awaken from the illusion of our separateness.” **Thich Nhat Hanh**

“Dialogue is born from an attitude of respect for the other person, from a conviction that the other person has something good to say. It is necessary to know how to lower the defenses, open the doors of your house and offer human warmth.” **Pope Francis**

“People fail to get along because they fear each other;  
they fear each other because they don't know each other;  
they don't know each other because they have not communicated with each other.”

**Martin Luther King Jr.**

“Dialogue is not a method, it is a way of life.” **Sr. Mary Boys SNJM**

“My religion is kindness.” **The Dalai Lama**

“Let us join our solitudes in the communion of struggle.” **Denise Levertov**

“What if our religion was each other?” **Ganga White**

“If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.”

**Mother Teresa**

“Cuban-American author, **Anais Nin** (1903-1971) writes: ‘Each friend represents a world in us, a world possibly not born until he or she arrives, and it is only by this meeting that a new world is born.’ It seems that what Nin is saying here is that friendship serves to awaken the many potentialities within us as human beings. One thing that is common and vital to both friendship and interfaith dialogue is relationships. Accordingly, can we not say – inspired by Anais Nin – that ‘each religion represents a world in us, a world possibly not born until we encounter that religion, and it is only by this meeting that a new world is born.’ Each religion we encounter has the capacity to awaken us to new potentialities within us, both as religious individuals and as religious traditions.” **Paul McKenna**

“As difference in degree of capacity exists among human souls, as difference in capability is found, therefore, individualities will differ one from another. But in reality this is a reason for unity and not for discord and enmity. If the flowers of a garden were all of one colour, the effect would be monotonous to the eye; but if the colours are variegated, it is most pleasing and wonderful. The difference in adornment of colour and capacity of reflection among the flowers gives the garden its beauty and charm. Therefore, although we are of different individualities...let us strive like flowers of the same divine garden to live together in harmony. Even though each soul has its own individual perfume and colour, all are reflecting the same light, all contributing fragrance to the same breeze which blows through the garden, all continuing to grow in complete harmony and accord.”

'**Abdu'l-Bahá**, (son of Bahá'u'lláh – founder of Baha'i faith) Promulgation, page 24

## **Listening**

“Our biggest communication problem is that we do not listen to understand. We listen to reply.”

**Source unknown**

“Our listening *creates* a sanctuary for the homeless parts within another person”.

**Rachel Naomi Remen**

“Wisdom is the reward for listening over a lifetime.” **Source Unknown**

“Listening is spiritual hospitality.” **Source unknown**

“Listen. The ear never lies.” **Bernie Krause**

“Listen, or your tongues will keep you deaf.” **Native American Proverb**

“Listen as if the other person might have something valuable to teach you.” **Source unknown**

“To ‘listen’ another’s soul into a condition of disclosure and discovery may be almost the greatest service that any human being ever performs for another.”

**Douglas Steere,**

“Every human being needs a human ear to pour itself into.” **Source unknown**

“Dialogue is about listening, not talking.” **Source unknown**

“Listen if you can stand to.” **Rumi**

“Listen more than you speak.” **Olivia McIvor**

“Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.” **Winston Churchill**

“Being listened to is so close to being loved that most people can’t tell the difference.”

**Kay Lindahl**

“The mystics say that eventually you have to shut up.”

**Rabbi Rami Shapiro**

“For, while *the tale of how we suffer, and how we are delighted*, and how *we* may triumph is never new, it always must be heard.” **James Baldwin**

“Never pass up the opportunity to keep your mouth shut.” **Will Rogers**

“How can we claim that the years have taught us anything if we have not learned to sit and listen to the secret that whispers in the brook.” **Carl Jung**

## **DIVERSITY AND COMMONALITY IN DIALOGUE**

Diversity is not the stumbling block to dialogue, but the prerequisite for it. Were we to determine that Christians and Buddhists are in actuality expressing the same things, it could only

signify the end of dialogue. Only where there is difference, where there is tension, and where there is the possibility of confrontation and complementarity can there be born insight. Commonality is not the beginning of the dialogue but its end.

But is there no common factor, no underlying principle as the basis of the world's religions? The similarity has to do not with their respective conceptions of the Ultimate. It has to do with the existence of human suffering and humankind's ability to extricate itself from it. None of us desire misery and all of us want happiness; and these are the very issues upon which the world's religions focus. So in a way, dialogue is based on one identity, our common humanity.

(**Thubten Losel** in **M. Darrol Bryant and Frank Flinn**, *Interreligious Dialogue: Voices From A New Frontier*, Paragon House, New York, 1989, pp. 194-196.)

## Passing over

Passing over is a shifting of standpoint, a going over to the standpoint of another culture, another way of life, another religion. It is followed by an equal and opposite process we might call "coming back", coming back with new insight to one's own culture, one's own way of life, one's own religion....

The holy person of our time, it seems, is not a figure like Gotama [Buddha] or Jesus or Mohammed, a person who could found a world religion, but a figure like Gandhi, a person who passes over by sympathetic understanding from her/his own religion to other religions, and comes back again with new insight to her/his own [religion]. Passing over and coming back, it seems, is the spiritual adventure of our time.

**John S. Dunne**, (American theologian) *The Way of all the Earth*, "Preface", University of Notre Dame Press: Notre Dame, Indiana. 1972

## Mystical Awakening

Mysticism is the awakening to and cultivation of transcendental consciousness. It is unitive awareness. All forms of mystical wisdom are unitive, that is, non-dual. This is a significant point of convergence among the religions themselves. (...) Interspirituality (...) is a term to describe the breaking down of the barriers that have separated the religions for millenia. It is also the crossing-over and sharing in the spiritual, aesthetic, moral and psychological treasures that exist in the spiritualities of the world religions. The deepest level of sharing is in and through one another's mystical wisdom, whether teachings, insights, methods of spiritual practice and their fruits.

The mystical life, in its maturity, is naturally interspiritual because of the inner freedom that is ignited in the depths of the person on the mystical journey. This path frees us from the obstacles within us that would hold us back from that generosity and willingness to partake from the mystical springs of other traditions. To drink this precious nectar requires openness and a capacity to assimilate the depth experience of these venerable traditions. More and more it is becoming common for individuals to cross over the frontiers of their own faith into the land of another or others. We can, indeed, speak of this new millennial period as the *Interspiritual Age*.

**Wayne Teasdale.** (1999). *Mysticism as the Crossing of Ultimate Boundaries: A Theological Reflection*. Retrieved from: <http://csp.org/experience/docs/teasdale-mysticism.html> on 16 Dec 2012.

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