

Christian Leadership in a Multifaith World Curriculum Designed by Interfaith America & CCCU

Module 1 – Christian Foundations for Interfaith Bridge-Building
Activity 7 – Stories of Interfaith Engagement, Part 1

Overview

In this activity students will encounter different stories of how people from various faith traditions connect their faith and vocation.

Learning Outcomes

Students who successfully complete this activity will:

- Explain the value of storytelling as a way to better understand self and other.
- Identify different ways that faith can inspire interfaith work.
- Begin to articulate how their own story of faith provides resources for connecting interfaith engagement to their future vocation.

External Materials

- Marshall Ganz, “Why Stories Matter” (*Sojourners*, March 2009), [Ganz, "Why Stories Matter"](#)
- The following videos and podcasts correspond to four options under “Engaging Other Stories”
 - [Why Interfaith Matters After Graduation](#): Interfaith America alumni (3 minutes)
 - [Ethics and Theologies of Interfaith Cooperation](#) Introduction to Interfaith Leadership; Lesson 6, Module 6B (12 minutes)
 - OnBeing with Krista Tippett [John Lewis interview](#) (2013) (50 minutes)
 - OnBeing with Krista Tippett [Shane Claiborne and Omar Saif Ghobash interview](#) (50 minutes)

Activity Content

We’ve all experienced the power of stories—to inspire, to make the abstract tangible, to touch our emotions. Each of us has a story to tell, and one of the best ways to help others get to know you, and to allow you to get to know them, is to tell and listen to each other’s stories.

In particular, stories can help to cultivate what ethicist Martha Nussbaum calls a “*Narrative Imagination*.” This requires one to cultivate an imagination which gives the “ability to think what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of

that person's story, and to understand the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have." A *Narrative Imagination* requires us to move beyond sympathy to the higher skill of empathy, to "imagine what life is like for you."

Learning to tell stories also helps us better understand our own motivations for religious belief and practice, as well as our vocational choices. In this activity, you'll have a chance to learn more about the value of stories, hear stories about how people from different religious traditions connect their faith and vocation, and begin to articulate how your own story of faith provides motivation for interfaith engagement.

Student Assignment Options

- **Unpacking the Ganz article:**
 - Read the article by Marshall Ganz, "[Why Stories Matter](#)"
 - According to Ganz, why do stories matter?
 - Describe what Ganz means by a story of self, a story of us, and a story of now.

- **Engaging Other Stories**
 - Option 1: Watch [Why Interfaith Matters After Graduation](#) (3 minutes).
 - Describe the story of self, story of us, and story of now for both Kevin and Usra.
 - Option 2: Watch [Ethics and Theologies of Interfaith Cooperation](#) (12 minutes).
 - Choose 2-3 of the people featured in the video and explain how their faith commitments provide a rationale for participating in interfaith work.
 - Option 3: Listen to Krista Tippett's [John Lewis interview](#) (50 minutes).
 - What are Lewis' stories of self, us, and now? How did Lewis' faith influence his vocation and how he interacted with others?
 - Option 4: Listen to Krista Tippett's interview "[Called and Conflicted](#)" (50 minutes) with Shane Claiborne and Omar Saif Gobash.
 - How are Shane and Omar's stories similar? How are they different? What motivates each to interfaith engagement?

- **Beginning to Write Your Own Story**
 - Why might interfaith engagement matter to you after graduation? In your answer, be sure to discuss your story of self, story of us, and story of now. How will interfaith engagement help you serve others as a Christian in your future vocation?

Going Deeper: Additional Resources

- *Explore:* Look for more stories of people whose religious beliefs have inspired interfaith work. Some great places to look are: [Interfaith America Magazine](#) and [The On Being Project](#).
- *Explore:* Here is a [Spiritual Autobiography Assignment](#) created by Dr. Rahuldeep Singh Gill at California Lutheran University using Eboo Patel's memoir, *Acts of Faith*.
- *Watch:* [The Power of Storytelling](#) (5 minutes) and [What Inspires You?](#) from Interfaith America's [Interfaith Leadership Video Series](#).
- *Read:* *Hearing Vocation Differently: Meaning, Purpose, and Identity in the Multi-Faith Academy*, David S. Cunningham, Ed. (Oxford, 2019) is an anthology of essays, written by people from different religious backgrounds, about the relationship between faith and vocation.