

# Dialogue in Islam

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*As-salámu ‘alaikum wa rahmatul láhi wa barakátuh!”*

*“A-úthu billáhi minash shaytánir rajeem. Bismilláhir rahmánir raheem.*

*Al hamdu lillahi nahmaduhu wanasta’eenahu, wanastagh-fíruhu, wanatoobu ilayhi, wana’oothu Billaahi min shuroori an-fusinaa, wamin sayyi aati a’maalinaa.*

*May- Yahdillahu fa huwal muhtad, wa may- yudlill falan tajidaa lahu waliyan murshida. Wa ash-hadu an Laa ilaaha ill-Alláh, wahdahoo laa shareeka lah, wa ash-hadu anna Muhammadan ‘abduhoo warasooluh”*

**In the Name of Allah, Most Merciful, Most Compassionate.**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In today’s *khutbah*, we shall have a look at how we, as Muslims, should act towards people of other faiths and what our relationship with them should be. We will see that the Qur’an teaches us to accept and respect diversity. Accordingly, as faithful Muslims we should be concerned to engage in dialogue. By “engaging in dialogue” I mean making an effort to get to know people of other faiths and cultures and to interact, speak and work with them in a respectful and friendly manner.

We are reminded in the Quran that Allah (SWT) has created us in different nations and groups on purpose:

***“O mankind! We have created you from a single (pair) of male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, so that you may know one another (not so that you may despise each other).***

***Surely the most honored of you in the sight of Good is the one best in piety, righteousness, and reverence for God. Verily, God is All-Knowing, All-Aware.”***

(49:13)

From the above verse we can see that Allah the Almighty with infinite wisdom has created different nations and groups with a purpose for them to learn and know about each other. It is us humans who create disorder and divide different nations and communities with our ideologies and our perception of right or wrong. However, to us Muslims, it should be clear that plurality was intended and that a difference of belief, opinion or race is not and must not be a destructive divider of people.

Nowadays people are divided even on the most trivial of things; therefore we need dialogue between these people to help them unite around values that bind them together rather than concentrating on their differences.

It is we human beings who insist on people having the same views and the same opinions; it is not the will of Allah (SWT).

It is stated in the Quran:

***“If your Lord had so willed (and withheld from humankind free will), He would have made all humankind one single community (with the same faith, world view, and life-pattern), But (having free choice) they***

***never cease to differ”.***

(11: 118”)

We should, therefore, reflect on and understand this verse in order to apply it in our everyday life.

We all have free will, and Allah (SWT) has allowed us to choose our own paths and to make our own decisions.

These might be right or wrong, and we as Muslims have an obligation to try and help our fellow humans and try to explain things to them. However, we should not interfere in their lives nor think ourselves better than others.

Allah (SWT) has created us with differences, with different beliefs and opinions; we should live out our faith to the best of our ability in piety but not force others to do the same. Faith comes from Allah (SWT) and Him alone.

Another verse in the Qur’an says:

***“If your Lord had so willed, He could have made mankind one People: but they will not cease to differ. Except those on whom your Lord bestowed His Mercy: and for this did He create them.”*** (11:118-119)

Another verse expresses the same idea:

***“For every one of you did We appoint a law and a way, and if Allah had pleased He would have made you (all) a single people, but that He might try you in what He gave you, therefore strive with one another to hasten to virtuous deeds.”***

(5:48)

People belong to different social and ethnic groups, and this should not be used as a means to establish a sense of superiority over one another. Superiority can be measured not according to God-given characteristics such as race or descent, but only according to the values that people gain through their own will, which the Holy Quran terms “*taqwa*.” The Prophet (SAW) clearly underlines this fact in his hadith: ***“O people! Remember that your Lord is one, your father is one. An Arab is not superior over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab is superior over an Arab; also a white is not superior over a black nor a black is superior over a white except by taqwa (fear and respect of God).”***

(Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Musnad, 5/411)

What we learn from these verses and hadith is that Allah (SWT) intended diversity and that it is not possible for everyone in the world to believe in the same religion.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, that is why dialogue is absolutely essential in our lives if we are to live in peace and harmony with others. We should learn to interact and work with each other as one human race, to have respect for all regardless of differences. Islam is a faith that accepts and embraces plurality. We can live out this aspect of our faith through dialogue with people of different faiths and cultures.