

Religions for Peace

Podcast Discussion Guide

Episode 1: Introducing Shared Sacred Flourishing

Overview

This episode introduces the **Shared Sacred Worldview**—a framework developed by *Religions for Peace* that views human and planetary well-being as deeply interconnected. Rather than evaluating human progress through a purely material or secular lens, this model asserts that true flourishing requires addressing the spiritual, relational, and moral dimensions of global crises.

Through the insights of diverse religious leaders, this six-part series of our podcast will explore how diverse religious traditions can pivot away from dogmatic debates and unite to heal a fractured world.



Part 1: Key Concepts & Definitions

Before beginning your group discussion, review how the speakers define these foundational ideas:

- **Shared Sacred Flourishing:** A state of collective well-being where an individual's wholeness is directly linked to the flourishing of their neighbor, community, and the Earth.
- **The Global Polycrisis:** The compounding, systemic entanglement of modern crises, including climate change, war, sovereign debt, social isolation, and unguided technological expansion.
- **The Secular vs. Sacred Framework:** A secular view measures development primarily through material and economic indicators (e.g., income, GDP). A sacred framework expands these goals to include conscience, moral responsibility, beauty, and human dignity.

Part 2: Discussion Questions

Module 1: The Root of the Polycrisis

1. Dr. Francis Kuria argues that modern global crises are driven by a powerful secular worldview that forces people to "compete, be the best, and live only for themselves." Do you agree that hyper-individualism is a root cause of environmental and economic crises? Why or why not?
3. Dr. William Vendley notes that Shared Sacred Flourishing does not try to define the Sacred – that each religious tradition defines the Sacred. For your tradition, whatever it may be, how do you define the Sacred?
4. Dr. Judith Simmer-Brown explains that in Buddhism, the Sacred is found in our "embeddedness" and absolute dependence on ancestors, farmers, animals, and ecosystems.

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How does this compare to Abrahamic concepts of the Divine? How can both views cooperatively address climate change?

5. Rabbi David Rosen notes that, “the fundamental idea of the Sacred is that I need to behave towards you in the right way; to love you as yourself, precisely because there is the divine within you as within me.” How does this aspect of the Shared Sacred Worldview lay the foundation for interreligious collaboration?

Module 2: Interreligious Collaboration

6. Dr Vendley notes that people of diverse religions often work together to advance the common good and also in times of crisis. Can you recall a time you worked with someone of a different faith on a project? What were the outcomes?
7. Dr. Kuria uses the metaphor of different types of tea (distinct flavors, histories, and aromas) inside a single "common cup" (our shared world). How does shifting the focus from *theological debate* to *protecting the cup* change how religious communities interact?

Module 3: Spiritual Capital in Times of Crisis

5. Dr. William Vendley shares powerful stories from the Bosnian War and the Sierra Leone civil war where secular political mechanisms were too slow or ineffective, but "spiritual resources" allowed unarmed women of faith to broker peace. What unique "assets" do religious communities possess that secular NGOs or governments lack?
6. Rabbi David Rosen states: *"If I love you only because it's good for me, then I might not love you tomorrow... But the fundamental idea of the Sacred is that I need to love you as yourself, precisely because there is the divine within you."* Discuss the stability of secular humanism versus a sacred mandate when tackling long-term crises like global debt or refugee displacement.

Module 4: Accountability and the Misuse of Religion

7. The host notes that religion only heals when it is "humble and accountable." Dr. Kuria explicitly warns that the weaponization of religion for political or exclusionary purposes is a constant threat. How can interfaith coalitions credibly call out religious extremism or abuse within their own traditions?

Part 3: Call to Action & Moving Forward

To close your session, have each participant select **one** of the following hyper-local action steps to pursue this month:

- **Convene:** Organize a brief, informal interfaith dialogue over coffee with neighbors of differing beliefs to discuss shared community values.
- **Restore:** Initiate or participate in a local environmental cleanup or conservation project, framing it as a shared duty to protect our common home.

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- **Invest:** Direct time, advocacy, or financial support to a local, women-led or youth-led community initiative that crosses traditional cultural divides.

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