Andrew Lin

**Beyond our Differences Discussion Questions**

**Chapter 1 – The positive Role of Religion**

**Discussion Questions:**

**Why might it be important for people to be in dialogue with the religious world and its leaders, even if they don’t agree with their doctrine, or don’t consider themselves religious?**

A: I think it may be important for people to be in dialogue with the religious world and its leaders even if they don’t agree with their doctrine or consider themselves religious because most religion are based on the morals of the followers and it’s a good way for people to understand one another.

**What are some basic tenants of every religion? Why do you think most major religious works write extensively on the value of compassion?**

A: Some basic tenants of every religion is to treat everyone as equals, value of human life, importance of family, and to show compassion to others even if they don’t agree with your beliefs or if you consider them your enemy. I think most major religious works write extensively on the value of compassion because they envision a world where everyone can come together and have a sense of community within the religion.

**What do you believe are the main factors that have contributed to the increasing negative image of religion in the world today?**A: I believe the main factor of the increasing negative image on religion today would be the violence in the name of religion. ISIS and the Taliban would be examples of this. Of course, most religious people don’t agree with violent practices but the few that do support violent practices are put into the spotlight. Another factor could be that some people believe that religion puts restrictions on the follower’s freedom especially after the Taliban.

**Chapter 2 – Religion Used Negatively**

**Discussion Questions:**

**When does ‘certainty’ in one’s faith become an inhibiting trait?**

A: It becomes an inhibiting trait when people decide that they don’t want to be compassionate but would rather be right.

**How do violent fundamentalists justify what they do? Are there peaceful solutions to stop the harm they inflict?**

A: Violent fundamentalists justify what they do by saying it’s the will of god. A peaceful solution to stopping the harm they inflict would be to reeducation them in their own religion as most if not all religions teach people to be nonviolent.

**How can extremist viewpoints be diluted?**

A: By teaching that “once you say that it’s right to kill in the name of God, then you have lost the plot in religious terms”. (Quote from the documentary). All of the religions teach stopping violence not committing it.

**Why is it important not to impose one’s faith on others?**

A: It is important not to impose one’s faith on others because then people will follow religion for the wrong reasons since it would not be of their own free will and may even become resentful towards the religion.

**Chapter 3 – Afghanistan**

**Discussion Questions:**

**Should women’s rights be viewed as a separate issue from human rights?**

A: I don’t believe that they should be viewed as a separate issue because women are humans too. Also, human’s rights fights for the equality of rights for every human, and women’s rights should be seen as fighting for the equality rights for both genders, they are essentially the same.

**How can religious communities implement progressive ideas while maintaining their traditional values?**

A: They could implement progressive ideas while maintaining their traditional values applying and interpreting the teachings to the current world. Of course, as the world changes values and ideals change and teachings from thousands of years ago may not be applicable to the needs or values of the followers today.

**Where do we draw the line between respecting orthodoxy and respecting all members of the community?**

A: I personally draw the line when it infringes on the rights of an individual and limits their freedom.   
**How does the subjugation of women in Islamic cultures go against the teachings of Mohammed?**

A: It goes against the teachings of Mohammed because in the Quran it states that males and females should be equal to one another.

**Chapter 5 – Non-Violence Movements**

**Discussion Questions:**

**Is it necessary, or even useful, to combat today’s problems with a romantic or utopian view of the world?**

A: I believe that it would be useful to combat today’s problems with a romantic or utopian view of the world as being nonviolent when fighting for what you believe in is the ideal way to fight for change, however it may be unrealistic as everyone believes in different methods and ways of settling disputes.  
**How have leaders such as Gandhi and Dr. King used religion as a force for inclusion and peace?**

A: They used religion as a force of inclusion and peace by teaching that those should love and bless those that persecute you.

**Why is it important for various religious and secular communities to engage with one another? How can this be achieved?**

A: It is important for various religious and secular communities to engage with another because they could learn about each other’s religions and how similar they are to each other, especially when it comes to human equality and compassion towards one another. This can be achieved by the religions not only teaching their own religion, but others as well so people can learn about how similar they really are.

**Why is it important for religious people to not claim a higher sense of morality over those who do not practice organized faith?**

A: It is important for religious people to not claim a higher sense of morality over those who do not practice organized faith because it would go against their own beliefs of all people being created equal and should be treated equally.

**Chapter 6 – Israel & Palestine**

**Discussion Questions:**

**How can Middle Eastern youth respect the traditions and struggles of their elders, while still reaching out to other cultures and people?**

A: People can respect the traditions and struggles of their elders by still following teachings of the religion such as loving one another and treating the people of other cultures the same way the elders who struggled wanted to be treated. A good way of showcased in the film was through art, or something where people of all cultures can connect with and understand each other with.

**What was Noah’s revelation during his time in prison? How can others reach a similar attitude?**

A: Noah’s revelation during his time in prison is that himself and the Jewish people are the same. Both are humans. So why is he hating them when he has never met them? People can reach a similar attitude to Noah just by thinking about why would you hate someone outside of their religion when you don’t even know them.  
**How should people attempt to interact and communicate with their enemies when there is a very real danger of violence when stepping out of the comfort of one’s community?**

A: By showing that they show nothing but respect and compassion to their enemies there may be a lowered risk of being in danger of violence. I will not guarantee being safe from violence but it will set an example to the other side and promote nonviolence.

**Is forgiveness really a powerful enough force to be applied in all situations?**

A: Forgiveness should be a powerful enough force in most situations, however there are times when forgiveness may not be reasonable for example a murder of someone for a reason outside of self-defense may not be able to be forgiven by most people. Which doesn’t mean to carry hate, but rather it’s just not something to be forgiven.  
**Chapter 7 – Father Kieran Creagh**

**Discussion Questions:**

**Do you find Father Creagh to be an incredible inspiration or too extreme an example to use a practical role model?**

A: I though that Father Creagh was an inspiration. I don’t find him too extreme as he just followed what he believed in and wasn’t nonviolent or give into hate even when he was shot. He was also someone who obviously cared for the wellbeing of others as well.

**What general themes and attitudes can we take away from Father Creagh? How can we apply them in small ways in our everyday lives?**

A: The general themes and attitudes of Father Creagh was to set himself as an example to help others believe how serious he was in the prevention of AIDS as well as never giving into hatred. We can apply them in small ways in our everyday lives by just living the way that you would want others to treat you, as well as sticking to your beliefs in a nonviolent way.

**Was taking the AIDS vaccine a productive thing for Father Creagh to do? Why or why not?**

A: I think that it was a productive thing for Father Creagh to do because he was able to set himself as an example for how serious he was in trying to prevent the spread of AIDS in others.

**After being shot by robbers, Father Kieran returned to the hospice. If you found yourself in a similar situation, how would you suppress feelings of anger?**

A: I would try to get them to be incarcerated if they were not caught yet. It would help suppress my feelings of anger if they weren’t able to hurt myself or others again.