

Tenets for Civil Discourse

- **Respect** – Respect each person you meet and take the time to truly consider what they are saying. Respond, don't react. No blaming, shaming or attacking another person. Doing this does not mean accepting or upholding their ideas as your own; rather, it can help you understand their perspective, build your knowledge for future conversations, and open your mind to previously unfamiliar ideas—especially important even if you continue to disagree with them.
- **Listen Deeply** – Listen to what the person is saying, focus on the ideas presented, and discuss ideas and issues—not people. Don't start side conversations as they distract from engagement and listening. Do not interrupt while others are speaking.
- **Speak for Yourself** – Use “I” statements when commenting or responding. Share your personal experience. Own it.
- **Try to Understand** – Try to understand the thoughts and ideas of others. Ask questions for clarification. Note: sometimes we may be discussing the same concept, yet use different words. Make sure to pay attention to such areas of misunderstanding, and seek clarification where there is any confusion.
- **Share Talk Time** – If you are having a discussion with more than two people, make sure everyone has the opportunity to speak before speaking again. Take notes if there are things you want to follow up on. Ask what others think.
- **Speak with Humility** – You may not know everything about the topic at hand, and your experience may not be that of the other person's. Lean into your knowledge, personal experience, and expertise, but remain open to the truth others are sharing.
- **Gratitude** – If what someone has shared or asked helps with your own learning, say thank you.
- **Suspend Judgment** – We all have presumptions, biases, stereotypes, prejudices, and other pre-judgments. Try to suspend pre-judgments and seek first to understand.
- **Disagree and Love** – We seek to learn and listen. You can disagree with someone and still love them and listen to them. Civil discourse is about listening and learning together, seeking shared understanding and exposure to new ideas in the pursuit of improving our world and fulfilling our call as followers of Jesus.
- **Practice Forgiveness** – We learn from trying things out and sometimes we make mistakes. Seek to forgive and to be forgiven as we learn together.
- **Pay Attention to your Feelings and Thoughts** – If you do not feel safe asking a question or commenting on a topic, write it down and ask someone you're more comfortable or familiar with to help you voice or talk it through with you. If someone hurts your feelings, acknowledge that the comment hurt your feelings and explain why. Be open to others sharing that with you as well.