

Module 7: Inter Faith/Strategies

"Until one has loved an animal, a part of one's soul remains unawaken."

- Anatole France

Our Animal Chaplain program is an Inter faith approach to ministering that respects the beliefs, isms, customs, traditions, and diversity of every religion.

With the passage of time more religions have evolved bringing diverse thinking and customs as well as cultural changes within faiths that have been followed for centuries.

This fact leaves us totally unbiased regarding the religious preference of a family.

Following is a list of the world's major religions with the views on animals that comprise the very core of their belief system.

- Hinduism – Animal souls and human souls are equal in every respect. No injury is permitted to any living creature.
- Buddhism – Compassion for all life. Omnivore dining customs are shunned in favor of a vegan menu.
- Judaism – Save all living creatures from pain. Kosher law restricts the eating of flesh, organs, milk and eggs from certain animals.
- Islam – Kindness to all living creatures.
- Christianity – Respect for all creation. Some Christians believe animals were put on earth for human use.

If everyone respected the teachings of their religious heritage, animals would be much more loved and respected than they actually are. This leads us to an important consideration.

- Do not judge any religion or belief system. Instead, accept people for who they are and what they believe in, assuming they adhere to the belief that kindness, respect, love and dignity for all creation are to be unconditionally practiced.

To accomplish this goal and to make certain the celebration/event you are presiding at has the greatest positive impact on those you are serving, it is advisable to meet and become acquainted with the family in advance.

Through my experiences, I have discovered that transparency, honesty, empathy, compassion and asking the appropriate questions are the most essential ingredients to this conversation. Always inquire about the religious preferences of those you will minister to. If you are not familiar with a particular belief system, do research and learn how you can help them achieve serenity and acceptance.

Never assume the members of a family practice their religion in the ancient traditional manner of biblical times. Some Catholic families might prefer the intervention of specific saints, whereas others will desire a more general invocation. This is why I suggest a meeting. An open dialogue in advance will allow you to establish belief customs.

With respect to scripture readings always inquire if individuals have preferences. Select several passages you feel may be pertinent, and share beforehand to get approval or otherwise. Be willing to accommodate their wishes. I will elaborate in greater detail on scripture readings in future modules.

Module 7: Assignments

Assignment Number 1

Name an animal or research one (species or specific animal) who you feel can stand side by side with a leader of each of the religions stated above.

Assignment Number 2

Draft the first five preliminary religion/faith oriented questions you will ask a family who engages your services for the funeral of their dog.

We will be reviewing more ways to personalize every celebration/commemoration in future modules. In the meantime, focus on your preparation based on religious beliefs.

"The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated."

— Mahatma Gandhi

Congratulations!
You have successfully completed
Module 7.

Please take some time to celebrate this accomplishment and refresh yourself before moving on to Module 8.