

## Dialogue versus Debate

Episcopal Migration Ministries | Epiphany Curriculum 2019  
Adult Christian Formation

Dialogue is collaborative with multiple sides working toward shared understanding.

In dialogue, one listens to understand, to make meaning, and to find common ground.

Dialogue enlarges and possibly changes a participant's point of view.

Dialogue creates an open-minded attitude and an openness to being wrong and to change.

In dialogue, one submits one's best thinking, expecting that other people's reflections will help improve it rather than threaten it.

Dialogue calls for temporarily suspending one's beliefs.

In dialogue, one searches for strengths in all positions.

Dialogue respects all the other participants and seeks not to alienate or offend.

Dialogue assumes that many people have pieces of answers and that cooperation can lead to workable solutions.

Dialogue remains open-ended.

Debate is oppositional; two opposing sides try to prove each other wrong.

In debate, one listens to find flaws, to spot differences, and to counter arguments.

Debate affirms a participant's point of view.

Debate creates a close minded attitude and a determination to be right and defends assumptions as truth.

In debate one submits one's best thinking and defends it against challenge to show that it is right.

Debate calls for investing wholeheartedly in one's beliefs.

In debate, one searches for weaknesses in the other position.

Debate rebuts contrary positions and may belittle or deprecate other participants.

Debate assumes a single right answer that someone already has.

Debate demands a conclusion and a winner.

Adapted from a paper prepared by Shelley Berman, which was based on discussions of the Dialogue Group of the Boston Chapter of Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR). Other members included Lucille Burt, Dick Mayo-Smith, Lally Stowell, and Gene Thompson. For more information on ESR's programs and resources using dialogue as a tool for dealing with controversial issues, visit [www.engagingschools.org](http://www.engagingschools.org).

