

Giving Word to our Faith



Partnership guidance on speaking boldly and courageously about what our faith means to our work.



But make sure in your hearts that Christ is Lord. Always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks you about the hope you have. Be ready to give the reason for it. But do it gently and with respect.

1 Peter 3:15 (NIRV)

This challenging and encouraging passage was written by Peter the Apostle to the churches of Asia Minor. The letter provides clear and practical guidance to the early church members on how to live and represent their faith to others around them. He encourages them to remain faithful and to answer honestly and with reason any questions about the difference their faith makes to their lives.

This is a message that is as relevant and challenging today as when it was originally given and, in World Vision, we too must be able to answer anyone who asks us about the hope we have, gently and with respect. The need to express our faith clearly, unequivocally and boldly is at the very heart of our identity.

The **Giving Word to our Faith** messaging framework is a Partnership effort led by a consortium of people from Faith and Development, Global Communications, External Engagement and Global Resource Development. It seeks to clarify and enhance understanding about how our faith influences our work and how we can courageously, clearly articulate this in our own contexts. Many leaders from across the Partnership have been involved; praying and discerning where God is leading and encouraging us.

As the Christians of Asia Minor suffered religious persecution and experienced tension with the local population, it was necessary for them to hold themselves to account. World Vision works in some of the hardest and most challenging places in the world, but it is vital that we do not shy away from expressing what our faith means for our work. The **Giving Word to our Faith** framework is designed to enable our leaders and staff to do this appropriately, gently and with respect for others.

Giving Word to our Faith includes a messaging framework as well as accompanying guidance and contextual examples of how to express what our faith means to our work in different contexts.

May God give us the discernment and wisdom to use this resource well, as we seek life in all its fullness for the world's vulnerable children.

The Giving Word to our Faith messaging framework

	WE BELIEVE	WE SEE	WE ACT
	<i>Our faith leads us to believe...</i>	<i>Shaped by our faith, our experience of the world...</i>	<i>Compelled by our beliefs and experiences, we respond...</i>
EVERY CHILD	IA Every person is created in God's image and deserves life in all its fullness. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We believe in upholding, restoring and honouring the dignity, value and identity of every human being. 	IB In a world of broken relationships† we see children being kept from reaching their full potential. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We see injustice, inequality, corruption and disasters (man-made and natural) affect the lives and futures of children in every context. 	IC We are responsible, along with others, for ensuring every child thrives; their futures filled with hope, well-being and promise. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We work through relief, development and advocacy approaches in contexts where the most vulnerable children struggle to survive.
	2A There is hope and a future for all people through faith in Jesus Christ. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We believe that through hope, restoration and renewal is possible even in the most difficult places. 	2B We see hope reflected in transformed lives and restored relationships. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Credible hope and rebuilt relationships bring human transformation. 	2C We seek to transform lives through hope in Jesus Christ, expressed through life, deed, word and sign. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through the joy of transforming vulnerable children's life stories, we have evidence that this hope is credible.
LOVE	3A Because Christ loved us, we show our experience of His unconditional love in our work. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are called to be witnesses and serve as a reflection of God's unconditional love. 	3B We see children valued, loved and protected as a result of transformed relationships. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through restored relationships, we see communities working together, helping each other so that their lives and futures are filled with hope, promise and well-being. 	3C We seek transformed relationships as an expression of God's unconditional love. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We take a reconciliation approach to issues of injustice and poverty, boldly building bridges.
	4A God can work through all people to achieve His purposes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We cannot achieve our mission on our own; we seek to collaborate with a wide spectrum of partners, supporters and others to transform the lives of children, families and communities. 	4B We see that most people share common values of compassion, love and mercy and are willing to partner in changing children's lives. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faith plays a vital role in our world. More than 85 per cent of the world is religious and faith leaders are the most trusted in many places. 	4C We are part of a movement of people who share common values of justice, love and hope that fulfil God's purposes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We ignite and join movements for child well-being, mobilising all people including donors and supporters, Christians and the Church, as well as other faith leaders, secular institutions and government actors.
ALL PEOPLE			

† Poverty isn't just a lack of material things – it's rooted in broken relationships with God, self, others, and the rest of creation. We were created to glorify God, reflect His image, love one another, and steward the rest of creation. But the fall and sin marred what God originally created. As a result, none of us are experiencing the fullness of what God intended for us. (<https://www.chalmers.org/our-work/redefining-poverty/what-is-poverty>)

The Giving Word to our Faith (GWF) framework and how to use it

The **Giving Word to our Faith** messaging framework is a guiding document created to help all staff speak boldly, openly and unapologetically about our faith and how it affects our work. The framework draws from our Core Documents, Statement of Faith and relevant policies and guidance, to help staff answer the key question: “What does our/your faith mean to our/your work?”.

The framework has been designed with a loosely organised logical flow which enables the user to enter at the point that is most relevant to their audiences – but reading across the rows outlines an argument for how what **We Believe** and what **We See** in our contexts, drives us to how **We Act** (as indicated in the headers for the framework). Each box in the framework includes a main statement in bold and a supporting statement below which aim to bring together an articulation of our key faith concepts and an understanding of what this means for our work.

Users are then encouraged to take these key messaging points and to articulate them in a narrative that is relevant to their audiences; any narrative should be aligned to the substance of the framework and should not stray from it.

Tools and contextual examples for usage are provided along with the framework.

HOW TO USE THE FRAMEWORK

- **Read the entire framework.**
- **Create bold and forthright messages about how our faith informs our work using the ideas in the framework.** This is a guiding document to help all World Vision offices speak the same way. It does not lay out policy or replace our core Partnership mission, vision, or values statements.
- **Enter and leave at any point in the grid that speaks to the audience you are addressing.** Each square in the grid represents a message. You do not have to use all the messages in one column or one row, only the ideas that apply to your communication piece.
- **Make sure your communication does not violate any of these message points.** This framework gives wide room for creativity, but be sure nothing expressed contradicts other messages in the grid.
- **The framework does not lay out everything that can be said about how our faith informs our work.** Do not be afraid to say more than what is in the document, especially if you are speaking to a Christian audience. Where possible, use supporting Scripture, stories, photos, and examples of how these messages are played out in your context, to make your communications compelling and relevant.

WHAT THE FRAMEWORK IS AND IS NOT

What it is:

- An illustrative, guiding document for articulating boldly and clearly how our faith informs our work.
- A set of messaging points that can be used as is or to craft communications that convey these ideas.
- A loosely logical framework that allows users to enter and exit conversations, as needed.
- A document to be used in conjunction with other Partnership messaging pieces such as the “Who We Are” document and the brand guidelines.

What it is not:

- A replacement of our organisational Statement of Faith and other core documents.
- A policy document.
- A document that has a strict flow that you have to follow.
- A stand-alone document that answers all the organisation’s Christian messaging needs.

In summary, this framework is about giving word to our faith as we experience the joy of creating thousands of transformative life stories of the world’s vulnerable children, supporters and donors, staff, families and communities.

Giving Word to our Faith



Contextual guidance and examples

The **Giving Word to our Faith** messaging framework is guidance to enable us to speak boldly and unapologetically to people of various contexts about what our faith and Christian identity mean for our work. The contexts that have been identified are: 1) secular 2) multi-denominational Christian 3) multi-faith 4) Islamic/Muslim.

The examples provided below are indicative only and based on insights about contextual audiences gathered during workshops. End users will need to articulate their own insights for their audiences and apply the framework accordingly.

Giving Word to our Faith in a secular context

I. INSIGHTS

There are different definitions of secular audiences. They can be defined as people disconnected from religious institutions, not necessarily of no faith, and could regard themselves as spiritual but not connected to an institution.

Research has identified “allergy points” for this audience i.e. religious arrogance and religious power abuse – for example perceptions of hypocrisy and proselytism.

We therefore need to engage generously with people regardless of their religion when speaking to this audience. We should cite true partnerships with other faith communities and ensure humility in communications.

For secular audiences, there’s a real value in leading with our vision as an area of common ground, but expressing it as ‘life in all its fullness for children’ - as starting with an image of God can be misconstrued.

It is important to use inspirational stories as a way of finding common ground and provide evidence of where faith plays a role in human transformational outcomes and impact in communities.

2. WHAT DO WE WANT TO COMMUNICATE TO THIS AUDIENCE?

- A sense of humility.
- We are here to serve because of our calling and not to manipulate other people’s faith.
- We work in partnerships with faith communities and other institutions.
- We seek to work with people of common values.
- We aim to help build understanding of the role of faith in human transformation.

3. RELEVANT MESSAGING POINTS FROM THE FRAMEWORK

- We see that most people share common values of compassion, love and mercy and are willing to partner in changing children’s lives. (4B)
- We act as connectors among these people, mobilising Christian, as well as other faith leaders and secular institutions. (4C)
- We seek to collaborate because we cannot achieve this mission on our own. (4A)
- We believe that God can work through all people to achieve his purposes. (4A)

4. EXAMPLE MESSAGING

Short version:

Compassion, love and mercy are common values shared by most people. We believe that it is every child’s right to reach their full potential and to this end we connect and mobilise like-minded people to help change children’s lives.

Two-minute elevator speech:

We mobilise people who share common values of compassion, love and mercy and want to change children’s lives. We believe every child has a God-given right to reach their full potential, but we cannot achieve these goals on our own, which is why we collaborate with like-minded people. As a Christian organisation, we also believe that God works through all people. We seek to achieve this goal together with others in places where children are the most vulnerable, through relief, development and advocacy approaches.

Giving Word to our Faith in a multi-denominational Christian context

1. INSIGHTS

We don't believe we have to resolve all of our theological differences to be able to carry out our mission. But our messaging needs to focus on the uniting factors of the various denominations, doctrines, styles and expressions of our faith.

Key among these is the inclusive nature of God's common grace for all humanity. We, as Christians, share the experience of God's unconditional love the same way that God sends the rain and the sun for all creation. All of us, as human beings, receive that common grace and love.

We agree God has a plan and that World Vision is part of that plan. Some expressions of the Christian faith are divided about whether God works through others who are non-believers who do not profess the faith.

Some specific points to consider while messaging for different expressions of the faith:

- Some expressions of our faith raise a red flag around the statement that God works through all people to achieve his purposes. Question – can people witness to Jesus Christ if they aren't Christians?
- Most denominations of Christians believe that all people are created in God's image. (Genesis)
- Most denominations of Christians also believe that every child is created in God's image and deserves life in all its fullness.
- Most Christian believers understand that there is a common hope and future for all people through salvation and redemption through Christ.
- The following of Christ compels us in our work. (*Deus Caritas Est* - Pope Benedict XVI)
- Our work is driven by love, hope and a thirst for justice. (Social Teaching of the Catholic expression of the Church)

2. WHAT DO WE WANT TO COMMUNICATE TO THIS AUDIENCE?

- Every person is created in God's image and deserves life in all its fullness. We are responsible, along with others, for enabling every child to thrive; their futures filled with hope, well-being and promise.
- Because Christ loved us, we show our experience of his unconditional love in our work.
- We see children thrive as restored relationships result in communities working together for their well-being.
- We collaborate with people of other faiths and none, who share common values of justice, love and hope that fulfil God's purposes for them and the world.

3. RELEVANT MESSAGING POINTS FROM THE FRAMEWORK

- All people are made in the image of God, and it is our responsibility to care for and serve them. (1A and 1C)
- We want to express our experience of God's unconditional love to others; this is the basis of our calling. (3A)
- Our main goals are to seek the emergence of God's hope and the healing of broken relationships. (3B)
- In most cases people of all faith share values of justice, love and hope and hence we seek to work in collaboration and partnership. (4C)

4. EXAMPLE MESSAGING

As a Christian organisation we believe God created everyone in His image and that every person and child has the right to a full life. So, we serve children in vulnerable areas as a God-given responsibility as well as an expression of God's perfect love that we have experienced. We see poverty and need as a result of broken relationship both between humans and nature; hence, our work is focussed on restoring these relationships, which keep children from their full potential. We are co-workers with God and other partners and collaborators of faith and none, letting Him use us to fulfil his purpose for the world.

Giving Word to our Faith in a multi-faith context

1. INSIGHTS

Our faith conversations in multi-faith contexts need to begin with our development experience before moving to 'what we believe' and then the implications. Our faith is seen as generally positive and can be inspirational, however, it can be negatively interpreted as World Vision having a conversion agenda or favouring Christians above other groups.

We need to be upfront about our faith. We need to draw on ideas of Christian faith that emphasise the value of every child, respect all people equally and require us to have high standards of ethics and professionalism.

We can respond to specific accusations of conversion based on the issue and context. Our standards and practices and the resultant impact and change should make people ask questions about our God.

We need to make the point that "we don't believe in proselytism because we don't believe in exploiting the vulnerability of the poor".

We need to use inclusive language rather than speaking from an exclusive position, e.g. "we believe".

2. WHAT DO WE WANT TO COMMUNICATE TO THIS AUDIENCE?

- We have years of experience and evidence of lives changed for the better.
- We do this because of our Christian faith – which teaches us that all people are created equal in God's sight and should get a fair chance in life to reach their full potential.
- We work in partnership and collaboration with all people who share common values of compassion, love and mercy.
- We do not believe in proselytism as we do not believe in exploiting the vulnerability of the poor (while this is not in the framework, we may need to make this point clear).

3. RELEVANT MESSAGING POINTS FROM THE FRAMEWORK

- We see our work bringing credible hope to despairing communities, especially children. Through the stories of millions of lives transformed we have evidence that this hope is credible. (2B and 2C)
- Every person is created in God's image and deserves life in all its fullness. We believe in upholding, restoring and honouring the dignity and value of every human being. (1A)
- We collaborate with people of other faiths and none, who share common values of justice, love and hope that fulfil God's purposes for them and the world. (4C)
- We do not believe in proselytism as we do not believe in exploiting the vulnerability of the poor. (While this is not in the framework, we may need to make this point clear.)

4. EXAMPLE MESSAGING

World Vision is a global organisation that has contributed to transformation in the lives of millions of children around the world in vulnerable situations. As followers of Jesus Christ, we believe that every person is created in God's image and has a right to a full life filled with hope, promise and well-being; this drives our work. We believe that this mission cannot be achieved by us alone, so we collaborate and partner with other faith and non-faith actors who have common values of justice, love and hope. We do not have a proselytism agenda as we do not believe in exploiting people's vulnerability to change their faith.

Giving Word to our Faith in an Islamic context

1. INSIGHTS

Islam is a monotheistic faith with visible religious practices, reverence for God's work, and defined statutes of child well-being covering issues such as protection and care. People of Muslim faith are sometimes suspicious of outsiders such as World Vision, especially in relation to helping their children. They are highly sensitive to some Christian messaging by World Vision, such as the idea that 'children are made in the image of God'.

However, there are opportunities to:

- Emphasise common values as connectors; such as caring for one's neighbour and the poor, mercy and justice.
- Emphasise how we share common human challenges.

2. WHAT DO WE WANT TO COMMUNICATE TO THIS AUDIENCE?

- Our faith is at the centre of what we do.
- We share a common belief that all people are created equal.
- We share common human challenges.
- Here to serve because of our calling and not to manipulate other people's faith.
- We share common values with Islam such as compassion, mercy and justice.

3. RELEVANT MESSAGING POINTS FROM THE FRAMEWORK

- We believe in upholding, restoring and honouring the dignity and value of every human being (as all people are created equal in God's sight). (1A)
- We see injustice, inequality, corruption and disasters (man-made and natural) affect the lives and futures of children in every context. (1B)
- Both faiths share common values of justice, love and hope and are willing to partner in changing children's lives. (4B)
- We act as connectors among these people, mobilising Christian, as well as other faith leaders to change children's lives. (4C)

4. EXAMPLE MESSAGING

Short version:

Every child is created equal in God's sight, but injustice, corruption, inequality and disasters keep them from lives filled with hope, promise and well-being. In response to this we connect and mobilise people of faith who share common values of compassion, love and mercy to transform children's lives.

Two-minute elevator speech:

We believe all people, including children, are created equal in the sight of God and should thrive in their circumstances. But injustice, inequality, corruption and disasters rob children of their lives and futures. To this end, we connect and mobilise people of faith who share common values of justice, love and hope to change children's lives and uphold, restore and honour the dignity and value of every human being. We do this through relief, advocacy and development approaches that affect the most vulnerable children around the world.



For more information, guidance, tools and examples, contact your Faith and Development representative or the Global Communications representative in your office.

www.wvi.org

