

Y Team Method for Examining Belief Systems

Two subjects that most people try to avoid are discussions about *politics* and *religion*, especially with strangers. Of course, *politics* and *religion* just happen to be two major factors in many of the conflicts and issues that are dividing Americans today. So, if people who live in a democracy won't or are unable to find mutually beneficial ways to discuss these things, how will their conflicts and issues be resolved?

The Y Team Method for Examining Belief Systems creates an option for successfully engaging in the "must have conversations" most people try to avoid. One thing that *politics* and *religions* have in common is that they are both *belief systems*. **The Y Team Method for Examining Belief Systems** creates the open safe environments that are essential for having successful conversations. The first step is for each participant to agree to follow this guideline:

My Belief System will be large enough to include all of the facts, open enough to be examined and questioned, and flexible enough to change when errors or new facts are discovered.

Obviously, trying to have a conversation about conflicting beliefs with people who consciously choose to ignore facts, refuse to allow their beliefs to be examined or questioned, or will not change their beliefs when they know they contain errors or are in conflict with newly discovered facts will not produce mutually beneficial outcomes.

Engaging in conversations requires the use of the following terms, so it is important for everyone to share the same meanings:

1. **memes** ó *pieces of information that only exist in human brains that are communicated to other humans and copied in their minds.*
2. **facts** ó *things that are sensory perceivable and measurable by all people.*

Participants must also be able to make clear distinctions between the following types of *memes*:

1. **opinion** ó *a judgment that is not founded on certainty or proof.*
2. **belief** -- *a judgment in which trust or confidence is placed, although without absolute proof that one is right in doing so.*
3. **truth** -- *a judgment, proposition, or idea that is based on authority and accepted as real or the state of being the case.*

Science is based on *facts*, while **religions** are based on *truths*. The publication in 1543 of Nicolaus Copernicus's *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres* marks the beginning of the scientific revolution. The three major monotheistic religions of the world -- *Rabbinic Judaism, Christianity and Islam* ó had been in existence for almost a thousand years or longer by the time of Copernicus. *Judaism, Christianity and Islam* existed before *facts* became part of conversations

about *God, humans, sin, Scriptures, salvation, afterlife*, etc. Each religion has its own *truths* about those things.

In our conversations about *religious truths*, the first questions participants attempt to answer are these:

1. *When (date) did the truth first appear?*
2. *Where (place) did it appear?*
3. *What (person or group) was the source?*
4. *What authority is it based on?*

In our experiences of having these conversations, we have witnessed a transformation in the relationships of the participants. Instead of maintaining the usual *us vs. them mentality* they become a *team helping each other find answers* to questions that arise.

Y Team Members come from a variety of backgrounds and many have conflicting beliefs. So being able to learn how to hold conversation about these subjects with people who are already members of the same team is a real bonus. We have discovered that once people become skilled at using **The Y Team Method for Examining Belief Systems**, instead trying to avoid conversations they enjoy the opportunities they present.