

Grace and Truth: A Behind-the-Scenes Look

by Rick Love

Background

The idea for *Grace and Truth: Toward Christlike Relationships with Muslims: An Exposition* was spawned during a global gathering of some 50 evangelical leaders concerned about the increasing alienation between the church (especially in the West) and Muslims. To counter this trend, we set out to create a statement on how followers of Jesus should relate to Muslims. Thus, this document focuses primarily on discipleship (how to live out our faith), rather than methodology (how to share our faith).

Producing *Grace and Truth* was no simple task. Our editorial team went through more than 20 revisions, drawing on input from over seventy leaders worldwide. We then asked leaders from across the globe to support this effort by signing the *Grace and Truth Affirmation* (available for download at ijfm.org), an abbreviated summary of the *Grace and Truth Exposition* that follows. [Editor's note: Because of the impressive diversity of those who signed the *Affirmation*, we've appended a partial list at the end of the *Exposition* document. Please note, however, that signing the *Affirmation* does not necessarily imply complete agreement on the part of the signatories with every detail of the *Exposition*; they are two distinct documents.]

One Point Finally Omitted

One of the early versions of the document included a point about the role of government as it relates to terrorism. It read as follows:

Differentiate between the Role of God's People and the Role of Government

In Romans 12:9-13:10, Paul describes a godly response to evil (which includes terrorism). He portrays a sharp contrast between how God's people are to respond to evil versus how

the government should respond. Jesus' followers are called to a peacemaking ethic of sacrificial love. Paul begins the section with an appeal to love (Rom 12:9-10) and closes the section by a repeated call to loving our neighbor (13:8-10). Moreover, he exhorts believers to bless our persecutors, respond non-violently to evil and seek peace with all.

By contrast, a government is clearly called to bring justice within its borders, using force if necessary. Thus the justice wrought by the state reflects a partial and provisional manifestation of God's justice on earth against evil. A truly biblical response to Muslims makes two important distinctions: 1) We distinguish between the role of God's people and the role of the state, and 2) We differentiate between terrorists and the majority of Muslims in the world.

After approximately a hundred of hours of writing, editing and revising, we could not reach consensus on this controversial issue. Some felt the document was stronger with it included, while some others would not sign it as written. So we omitted this one point from the final document.

A Consensus Document

Grace and truth is a consensus document. As such it uses language and emphasizes themes that bridge the spectrum of evangelical thinking. For some, it may feel too conservative (with too much emphasis on "truth"). For others, it may feel too affirming (with too much emphasis on "grace").

The most important thing for us is to encourage evangelicals to address these issues biblically. I have told many people, "If you can't sign the document, let me encourage you to at least use it as a starting point for discussion within your organization! Have your people critique it and rewrite it in such a way as to better reflect the perspective of your organization." As we do, may we all come closer to reflecting "Grace and Truth" to the Muslims in our lives. **IJFM**

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Grace and Truth: Toward Christlike Relationships with Muslims: An Exposition

by a Global Network of Christians who love Muslims, including many who live and serve among them

Introduction

Jesus calls his followers to experience and live out the love of God, made accessible to all people through Christ. This includes showing God's love to all people, including those of ethnicities and worldviews different from our own. The gospel reveals that the Word became flesh in Christ and dwelt among us "full of grace and truth."¹ In that spirit, we as his followers seek to show grace and truth to all people, as manifestations of God's love.

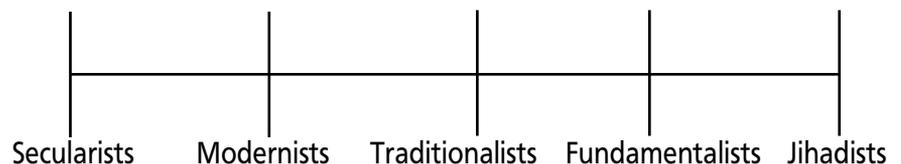
How can followers of Christ be people of peace² and faithfully bear witness to Christ in today's world? The threat of terrorism, negative stereotypes of Muslims, and ignorance sometimes cause the church to shrink back from fulfilling Jesus' command to love and to make disciples. Instead of loving Muslims as Jesus would and sharing His teaching, we too often perpetuate prejudices which only increase alienation and hostility.

To help us better understand Muslims, we will look at the beliefs of the majority of Muslim people,³ as well as those involved in terrorism. Then we will seek to discern from Scripture how followers of Christ can interact with Muslims in a Christ-honoring fashion. This important task demands Berean noble-mindedness on our part, eagerly learning and rigorously studying the Scripture (Acts 17:11). In the word of God we can find discernment to walk in wisdom and seize every opportunity for Christ, while not failing to recognize the evil of these days (Eph 5:15-17).

An Accurate and Discerning Look at the Muslim World

The media has bombarded us with sound bites and stereotypes. Sometimes we are told that Islam is a religion of peace. Yet the more disturbing and frequent picture painted is of militant Islam.⁴ We need a view of Muslims that is as accurate and discerning as possible,⁵ so we want to view them from a number of perspectives.

The chart below shows how some Muslims describe the spectrum of Muslims in the world today:⁶



This document was authored by an editorial team that emerged from a global gathering of evangelical leaders. In consultation with over 70 leaders and after more than 20 revisions, Grace and Truth was produced in the forms of an Exposition and a more condensed Affirmation, which Christian leaders from around the world are being encouraged to sign (see p. 199 for a partial list of signatories to that abridged document).

Secularists reject Islam as a guiding force for their lives, whereas Modernists have a “West is best” approach to Islam. They want to change and adapt Islam to the modern world. Traditionalists view Islam as a source and treasure which must be wisely and flexibly applied to the modern world.⁷ Fundamentalists are literalists who strive to obey the Qur’an and the Hadith, while ignoring or rejecting many of the classical traditions of Islam. They seek to model their lives after Muhammad and his earliest disciples. Jihadists are militant Muslims who espouse violence to force all peoples to Shariah⁸ law. They declare Muslims who think otherwise as apostates. Therefore, they believe less strict Muslims and all non-Muslims need to be coerced to submit to their truth, even if violence is needed to accomplish their mission.

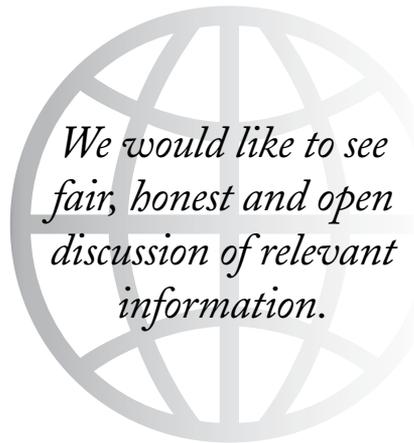
We also want to address relevant questions raised by the Bible. The most important question raised by the Bible is the one Jesus himself asked: “Who do you say that I am?” (Mark 8:27) Muslims have important points of theological agreement and disagreement with Christians, and these are crucial to understanding their attitude toward Jesus Christ. Most Muslims would agree with us on the following important beliefs:

- There is One Almighty God, who created the heavens and the earth.
- God has given us commands and laws and will judge us at the Last Day. Human beings are sinful and need God’s forgiveness and mercy.
- Jesus is God’s Messiah who was miraculously born of his virgin mother Mary. He is the Word of God. During his life on earth Jesus healed the sick and raised the dead. Jesus is an infallible Prophet (Acts 3:22,23).
- The Torah, the Psalms (which Muslims call the *Zabūr*) and the New Testament (which Muslims call the *Injil*, or Gospel), were (in their original manuscripts) the

verbally inspired, inerrant word of God.⁹

Most Muslims would disagree with Christians on the following important beliefs:

- The One God is revealed in Scripture to be triune.
- Jesus Christ, the Word of God, is with God and is God. He is rightly referred to as the Son of God (most Muslims understand this title in a literal, carnal sense).
- Jesus died on the Cross and rose from the dead. His death atones for our sin.



- The biblical manuscripts are sufficiently reliable, and the Bible we read today is trustworthy.

The areas of agreement are very significant, and represent more similarity than the Apostle Paul found with the Athenians in Acts 17, when he made use of points of contact in his presentation of the good news about Jesus. The areas of disagreement are also very significant and include matters which the Bible holds to be necessary for salvation. Fortunately many Muslims are eager to discuss these very matters with Christians, and both the Qur’an and Islamic theological texts through the centuries allow for more openness and pluralism on these questions than is generally supposed. Sometimes face-to-face conversation with Muslims reveals that the problem (e.g., with the title “Son of God”) is partly one of misunderstanding, not entirely one of substance.

A second question which the Bible raises (“Why do you persecute me?” Acts 9:4) can be applied to some Muslims’ actions toward Jesus’ followers—the Church. Muslim attitudes toward Christians vary widely around the world, from Muslims who demonstrate warm friendship and respect toward Christians to others who cruelly persecute the Church, and from those who respect the right of fellow-Muslims to consider the claims of Christ to those who seek to kill “apostates.”¹⁰ Muslim attitudes toward Christians are neither monolithic nor unchanging. Muslim attitudes toward the Church have often been changed for the better when Muslims have seen Christians living out the humility and love commanded in verses such as Eph 4:2, “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love,” and Eph 5:2a, “Live a life of love.”¹¹

Regarding questions asked by the news media (e.g., whether Islam is a religion of peace or a religion of violence), we would like to see fair, honest and open discussion of relevant information. This would include a balanced look at history and politics, considering present and past actions by both Muslims and non-Muslims, and also considering the ways in which those actions have been consistent or inconsistent with the values and the spiritual truths each one claims. This topic calls for further discussion beyond the scope of this paper.

We recognize that the Muslim world today is extremely diverse. There are over 1.3 billion Muslims, comprising hundreds of unique ethnic groups in some 52 Muslim majority nations, with large minorities in another 40 countries. There are huge differences and varied expressions of Islam: women fully covered in some countries, women who do not adopt a “Muslim” dress code in others, women omitted from the public sphere in some societies, and women serving as heads of state in others. There are Islamic states where government and religion

are intertwined, such as Saudi Arabia and Iran, and states with secular government, such as Turkey.

The Islamic World contains significant theological and ideological diversity as well. Islam has two major sects: Sunnī, comprising 85% of the Muslim world and Shī'ī comprising 15%, with several recognized schools of Islamic jurisprudence.¹² Islamism¹³ is on the rise, and at the same time important voices in the Muslim world are articulating an interpretation of Islam that calls for peaceful relations with non-Muslims.¹⁴

Sūfism is a widespread mystical tendency, expressing itself through many diverse Sūfi orders and organizations existing within various forms of both Sunnī and Shī'ī Islam. Some estimate that as many as 50% of the world's Muslims may be Sūfis in the widest sense of the term (Schwartz 2008:17). The impact of Sufism on the various branches of Islam can be compared to the Charismatic movement's permeation of Christianity.

Even those Muslims whom the media lump together under the label "fundamentalist" (a label often also used in misreporting about evangelical Christianity) are far from monolithic. For example the Usūlī branch of Shī'ism dominant in Iran has a relatively high view of human reason in relation to divine revelation, as compared with the Salafī tendency in Sunnī Islam influential in Saudi Arabia.

One important issue to consider is that of *da'wa* (Islamic mission: the act of inviting people to embrace Islam). Most devout Muslims believe in *da'wa* and long to see the world follow the religion of Islam. A complicating factor is the assertion of some Muslims that "Islam is both religion (*dīn*) and state (*dawla*)."¹⁵ While these Muslims trace this understanding to the practice of the early Muslim community after they moved from Mecca to Medina, the political component of Islam has been understood and practiced in multiple ways in the various contexts and

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periods of Islamic history. Today the spectrum of Muslim perspectives and practice ranges from secularists, modernists and traditionalists, to extremist Islamists who make their interpretation of *dīn* and *dawla* grounds for militant jihad. Most prominent Muslim leaders, however, have taken a strong and public stand against any form of terrorism.¹⁵

Most Muslims do not think of conquering the world for Islam. To the extent they consider Islamic advance, they think in terms of *da'wa* rather than violent means. Also, the majority of Muslims are too busy with family and work to think about proselytizing non-Muslims. Just as there are differing levels of commitment to fulfilling the Great Commission among followers of Christ, so there are differing levels of commitment to *da'wa* and *dawla* among Muslims.

In light of the massive diversity mentioned above, how should we understand Muslims? How can we discern between the average Muslim and the terrorist? Colin Chapman encourages us to find a middle path between demonization of Islam and naïve political correctness:

Many Christians feel that if they condemn the naivety of many secular people (and some Christians) who are willing to give in to Muslim demands/requests, the only alternative is to demonise Islam and take a hard line on every public issue related to Islam. A middle way between these two extremes would mean (a) being realistic about the real intentions of some Muslims, (b) recognizing the diversity among Muslims and relating to them as individuals and groups with openness and honesty, (c) taking a firm stand on issues of human rights, (d) working for the common good of the whole society, (e) demonstrating a fundamental respect for [Muslims] (without agreeing with all [the teachings of Islam]),¹⁶

and (f) unapologetically commending the Christian faith through word and deed. (Chapman 2007:5).

A Biblical Approach

As noted earlier, Jesus calls his followers to grace-oriented, truth-filled and loving interaction with all people (including Muslims). We commend the following nine biblical guidelines (first in summary and then with commentary):

1. Be Faithful to God's Truth—the Whole Truth
2. Be Jesus-Centered in our Interaction
3. Be Truthful and Gracious in our Words and Witness
4. Be Wise in our Words and Witness
5. Be Respectful and Bold in our Witness
6. Be Prudent in our Google-ized World
7. Be Persistent in our Call for Religious Freedom
8. Be Peaceable and Uncompromising in our Dialogue
9. Be Loving toward our Neighbors and our Enemies

1. Be Faithful to God's Truth—The Whole Truth

We seek to relate to Muslims on the basis of the core convictions of Christian faith, not by hiding or diminishing them. Relating to Muslims with respect, understanding and love includes bearing faithful witness to essential truths of the gospel. Jesus is Lord. Forgiveness, salvation and eternal life are free gifts of God's grace available to any person through repentance and faith in Jesus' death and resurrection. We seek to obey the whole will of God, with its implications for every part of our lives in this world (Matt 22:37, 39; 28:20; Micah 6:8).¹⁷

2. Be Jesus-Centered in Our Interaction

Our focus is Jesus because he is the essence of the gospel. God has revealed Himself to us by taking human form. We say with Paul: “For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2 NIV). We affirm a Jesus-centered approach to Muslims because it highlights the treasure of the gospel. It does not confuse the good news with Christendom, patriotism or our civilization.¹⁸ The famous evangelist to India, E. Stanley Jones described this well:

When I go to India I have to apologize for many things—for Western civilization, for it is only partly Christianised; for the Christian Church, for it too is only partly Christianised; for myself, for I am only a Christian-in-the-making; but when it comes to Jesus, there are no apologies on my lips, for there are none in my heart. He is our one perfect possession (Roberts 2007:155).

Thus, we don’t argue about Christianity vs Islam. We focus on who Jesus is and what he has done for us. As followers of Christ our message and ultimate allegiance is to the good news about Jesus. Jesus is our model, and we seek to embody his life in all we say and do.

3. Be Truthful and Gracious in Our Words and Witness

We seek to be accurate when we speak about Muslims and their faith. Overstatement, exaggeration and words taken out of context are commonplace in the media and politics. But this should not be the case among followers of Jesus, for he calls us to be careful about the words we speak (Matt 12:36). God commands us not to bear false witness against our neighbor (Ex 20:16) and to do unto others as we would have them do unto us (Matt 7:12). Thus we strive to speak truthfully about Muslims, *to respect Muslims’ own interpretation of them-*

selves, and “not to compare the best of Christianity with the worst of Islam.”¹⁹

Moreover, we seek to be clear and positive in our communication of the gospel to Muslims. We know that words can be literally true yet harmful. Thus the Bible calls us to both truthful accuracy and fullness of grace. As those who have received grace, we are to convey grace (Eph 4:29 NASB). Not only the content of our message, but also our motive and manner, are important. Gracious communication means our words should be kind and full of grace, even when we need to



speak “hard” truths. As much as it depends on us, we seek to live at peace with all people, while acknowledging that speaking the truth will offend some—even when that truth is spoken graciously. As Paul says, “Let your conversation be always full of grace ... so that you may know how to answer everyone (Col 4:6 NIV).

To cite one salient example of problematic use of words, in recent years the term islamofascism has been frequently employed in public discussions of Islam and of various groups within the worldwide Muslim community.²⁰ In principle, it is not problematic to discuss the idea that some Muslims (or some Christians, for that matter) behave in ways reminiscent of fascism in certain respects. But using a term that binds the two together in this way may violate the biblical command for our speech to be “full of grace.”

Many articles, books and websites about Muslims and terrorism present an alarmist and fear-inducing approach, focusing mainly on negative elements of Islam and the threat posed by radical Islam with its political aspirations. We recognize a valid role for identifying and monitoring the political and global aspirations of various Islamic groups, as accurate information along these lines should inform political policy decisions of the nations in which we live. We also acknowledge that respectful and gracious witness does not imply naiveté or silence about troublesome issues.²¹ We are called to speak the truth in love. Yet we have two concerns about approaches that focus mainly on the “darker” side of Islam. First, they often tend to project onto all Muslims a radical agenda espoused by only a few, resulting in unnecessary fear and alienation.²² Second, such approaches inspire many Christians to prioritize concerns of political power and self-protection above the commands of Scripture, such as love for neighbors (Matt 22:39) and care for aliens (Deut 10:18, 19).

People like Robert Spencer²³ play an important role in exposing terrorism and thus potentially enhancing national security. His work helps inform governments, and we affirm the need for this. However, Christ calls us to seek first his kingdom, before and above national or personal security. Loving our neighbors, showing kindness to our enemies and sharing our faith should take precedence over self-protection. Thus truth and grace call us to a Christlike perspective rather than a worldly one, in our attitudes as well as our words. As we interact with various sources of information about Islam, a helpful question to ask ourselves would be: “Is this drawing me more to defend my culture or to make known the Good News of Christ’s love?” The former is not necessarily wrong, unless in our hearts and minds it begins to eclipse the latter.

4. Be Wise in Our Words and Witness

God's word calls us to share our faith wisely. "Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity" (Col 4:5). Paul's words and witness were also characterized by wisdom: "We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ" (Col 1:28).

James describes what this wisdom looks like in practice: "the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness (James 3:17-18 NIV).

We do well to evaluate the articles and books we read and the commentators we listen to: to what extent do they reflect the peace-giving wisdom from above and to what extent do they take an approach of "earthly wisdom"?²⁴ We need to embrace that which is impartial and sincere, neither glossing over vital truths nor telling only one side of a story. God calls us to pursue the wisdom from above.

5. Be Respectful and Bold in Our Witness

In the spirit of the Prince of Peace, respectful witness focuses on giving a positive presentation of the gospel. It does not attack the other or avoid presenting truth.²⁵ Respectful witness has nothing to do with being politically correct. It is a matter of being biblical. As the apostle Peter says: "In your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15 NIV).²⁶

It is common to note the boldness of the early believers in their witness (Acts 4:31; 9:27-28; 13:46; 14:3; 19:8). The Lord calls us to be both respectful and bold in our approach.²⁷

Respectful witness has nothing to do with being politically correct. It is a matter of being biblical.

Yet many of us tend to fall short on one side or the other (or both!). One biblical example can help us see the model more concretely. In his ministry at Athens, Paul the apostle demonstrated that both are possible. The idolatry of the Athenians incensed Paul's monotheistic heart—"His spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols" (Acts 17:16). Nevertheless, he showed a respectful, gracious, and bridge-building approach to the Athenians. He affirmed their religiosity (17:22), used an altar as a point of contact (17:23) and quoted their own poets to help clarify the meaning of the good news (17:28). Then he also boldly called the Athenians to repent because of coming judgment (17:30-31). This fits with the engagement model commended by leaders of fifty-five Christian organizations from nineteen countries, in the statement, "Why Do We Share the Good News About Jesus with All Peoples, Including Muslims?"²⁸

6. Be Prudent in Our Google-ized World

In the past, when leaders in a religious community spoke, it was only heard by their own community. But today our words ricochet around the world. Perhaps the most powerful example of an interconnected world is the internet search engine, "Google." Type in a few words about anything and you can get a string of articles and information in seconds. In this "google-ized" world—when we try to explain who we are, what we believe, what we do, and why we do it—our words may reach beyond our primary audience and enter the global marketplace of ideas.

In many cases negative words merely offend, stir up hatred or cause division. But in other cases they lead to death. For example, a well-known

fundamentalist Christian preacher called the Prophet Muhammad a terrorist. One result: in Solapar, India, what started as a protest against this pastor turned into a deadly riot that killed eight and injured ninety.²⁹

After saying something controversial, an outspoken leader may try to clarify his statement. But the damage is already done. Words are powerful. Prudence is required. "A man of knowledge uses words with restraint" (Prov 17:27).

7. Be Persistent in Our Call for Religious Freedom

We affirm the right of religious freedom for every person and community. We defend the right of Muslims to express their faith respectfully among Christians and of Christians to express their faith respectfully among Muslims. Moreover we affirm the right of Muslims and Christians alike to change religious beliefs, practices and/or affiliations according to their conscience. Thus we stand against all forms of religious persecution toward Muslims, Christians, or anyone else. God desires all people to make faith choices based on conscience and conviction rather than any form of coercion or violence (2 Cor 4:2).

We concur with John Piper's incisive rationale for this perspective:

Christians are tolerant of other faiths not because there is no absolute truth or that all faiths are equally valuable, but because the one who is Absolute Truth, Jesus Christ, forbids the spread of his truth by the sword. Christian tolerance is the commitment that keeps lovers of competing faiths from killing each other. Christian tolerance is the principle that puts freedom above forced conversion, because it's rooted in the conviction that forced conversion is no conversion at all. Freedom to preach, to teach, to publish, to

assemble for worship—these convictions flow from the essence of the Christian faith. Therefore we protect it for all (2005).

8. Be Peaceable and Uncompromising in Our Dialogue

Dialogue between Muslims and Christians provides us with opportunities to understand Muslims, build relationships, engage in peacemaking and share our faith.³⁰ We seek to share the gospel respectfully and boldly, without compromise. We believe an important part of dialogue is explaining why the “good news” is good news!³¹

Through dialogue, we work toward mutual respect, graciously bearing witness to our faith and working toward religious freedom.³² Ultimately, we long to see as many as possible reconciled with God, through the person of Christ.

9. Be Loving toward All

As Jesus made clear in his answer to the question, “Who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29), neighbors include people of different ethnicity and religious views—not just those who live near us, but anyone with whom the Lord might bring us into contact. The command of God to his people stands for all time: “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev 19:18; Luke 10:27b).

The abominable terrorist acts around the world (in both Western and Muslim countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Spain, Jordan, Egypt, Israel/Palestine, Turkey, Morocco, Indonesia and India) along with the continuing threat of terrorist attacks, create profound security challenges. These terrorist acts also fuel negative attitudes toward Muslims. Yet most of the world’s Muslims are not our enemies.

How can a follower of Christ take seriously Jesus’ commands to love our neighbor and love our enemy, and yet address the real threat of terrorism? Jesus’ teaching about love of enemy (Luke 6:35) is among the most

radical and most ignored commands in the Bible. Many Christians think this command reflects an unrealistic and idealistic standard. Yet we need to not engage in the “hermeneutics of evasion”³³—figuring out ways to interpret Jesus’ command so it doesn’t apply to our lives.³⁴

We find a striking parallel between being a peacemaker (Matt 5:9) and loving one’s enemies. Both peacemakers and those who love their enemies are described as “sons [or daughters] of God” (Matt 5:9, 44; Luke 6:35). They are called children of God



because they are acting like their Father: the God of Peace (Phil 4:9; 1 Thess 5:23) who sent the Prince of Peace (Isa 9:6) to bring about a world of peace (Luke 2:14). In other words, peacemakers and those who love their enemies demonstrate their authenticity as children of God by their words and acts of peace.

Both Jesus and Paul give numerous practical commands concerning love for enemies:

- Do good to those who hate you.
- Bless those who curse you.
- Pray for those who mistreat you.
- Lend to others without expecting them to pay it back.
- Feed those who are hungry.
- Give a drink to the thirsty.
- Overcome evil with good.³⁵

These commands demonstrate that “loving our enemy” should not be interpreted in sentimental terms. In this context, love refers to acts of kindness,

including trying to understand those who make themselves our enemies. This challenges us to seek honest answers to questions like “Why are these people so angry with us and the West?” Acts of kindness also include what some call “transforming initiatives,”³⁶ that is, they help bring deliverance from the vicious cycle of hostility and violence. As Richard Hays notes:

By doing more than the oppressor requires, the disciples bear witness to another reality (the kingdom of God), a reality in which peacefulness, service, and generosity are valued above self-defense and personal rights. Thus, the prophetic non-resistance of the community may not only confound the enemy but also pose an opportunity for the enemy to be converted to the truth of God’s kingdom (1996:326).

The command to “love your enemy” comes from the one who modeled love for enemies. Jesus loved us and laid down his life for us, “while we were enemies” (Romans 5:10; cf. Col 1:21). After his enemies nailed him to the cross, he prayed, “Father forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34). In other words, responding to enemies with self-giving, sacrificial love demonstrates the gospel.³⁷

Conclusion

We have been entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation, and are commanded to make known the gospel “in season and out of season.”³⁸ The commission to “make disciples of all nations” has not been rescinded. Neither have the commands to demonstrate sacrificial love and to work toward peace. We may differ on our views of Islam and how to oppose or minimize acts of terror, but we can agree that there is no separate gospel for wartime and peacetime. The message of God’s love in Christ is for all times, places and peoples.

We believe the nine biblical guidelines outlined in this paper can help us as followers of Christ to remain faithful to him and become more fruitful in our relationships with

Muslims. We desire to live out and share the truth of Christ in ways that are filled with grace. In these difficult times, we face great challenges, but we also enjoy extraordinary opportunities. Let us use these opportunities to show forth the grace and truth of our Lord Jesus Christ. **IJFM**

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Endnotes

¹ John 1:14

² We take seriously God's admonition to "be at peace with all people" (Romans 12:18; Heb 12:14).

³ We are focusing on Muslims instead of an academic study of the religion of Islam. Certainly a focus on people who adhere to the religion of Islam means that we will be concerned about their beliefs. But we are focusing on actual Muslim people because ministry is primarily about relationship. What counts is how Muslims

We do well to avoid stereotyping Muslims based on news sound bites or the reductionism of focusing primarily on religion as the cause of conflicts between Muslim and Christian communities.

actually live and apply their religious system to their daily lives.

⁴ The Qur'an comprises recitations by Muhammad, believed to come from God, to meet the needs that arose on specific occasions. Some were peaceful; others were not. Therefore either position can be argued by selecting specific verses from the Qur'an or illustrations from history (Woodberry 2002:2).

⁵ We do well to avoid stereotyping Muslims based on news sound bites or the reductionism of focusing primarily on religion as the cause of conflicts between Muslim and Christian communities. There are many perspectives in the Muslim community, and even these are changing. Conflicts between Muslim and Christian communities in places like Indonesia and Sudan have ethnic, economic, and political, as well as religious, roots (Woodberry 2002:6).

⁶ These five categories are taken, with names simplified, from *Jihad and the Islamic Law of War*, The Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought (2007), 58-60.

⁷ *Freedom of Expression in Islam* by Mohammad Hashim Kamali (1998) is an excellent example of a traditionalist addressing a massively important topic (which includes freedom of religion and the law of apostasy).

⁸ Shariah law refers to a legal system based on Islamic principles of jurisprudence. Shariah law addresses many aspects of day-to-day life, including politics, economics, banking, business, contracts, family, sexuality, hygiene, and social issues.

⁹ Muslims of course add the Qur'an to this list, whereas Christians believe that the canon of Scripture closed with the Bible. Also, Muslims do not necessarily interpret the meaning of some of the terms in these points as Christians do—see the points of disagreement immediately below.”

¹⁰ The Qur'an contains verses which encourage loving friendship with Christians (e.g., al-Mā'ida [5]:82), and others which seem to discourage friendship with Christians (e.g., al-Mā'ida [5]:51), as well as others which note that not all Christians are alike (e.g., Āl 'Imrān [3]:113-115).

¹¹ Also verses such as 1 Pet 3:8,9; Matt 22:39 and numerous others. The positive effect these virtues can have on Muslim-Christian relations is acknowledged in Qur'anic verses such as al-Mā'ida

[5]:82—“You will find the nearest people in love toward those who have believed [i.e., Muslims] are those who say, ‘We are Christians.’ That is because among them are clergy and monks, and they are not arrogant.”

¹² “The Amman Message” 2008:16-17 refers to four Sunnī schools (*madhāhib*) and four non-Sunnī schools.

¹³ Islamism—“a fundamentalist Islamic revivalist movement generally characterized by moral conservatism and the literal interpretation of the Koran and the attempt to implement Islamic values in all aspects of life” (<http://wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn?s=islamism>).

¹⁴ For example, the The Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought in Jordan <http://www.aalalbayt.org/en/index.html>. See also Kamali 1998, Aslan 2006 and Bhutto 2008.

¹⁵ See, for example, “Global Movement Against Radical Islam” and “Islamic Peacemaking Since 9/11.”

¹⁶ Adjusted with the author's permission, from its original reading: “(e) demonstrating a fundamental respect for Islam (without agreeing with all its teaching).”

¹⁷ This commitment corresponds to the Lausanne Covenant's declaration: “World evangelization requires the whole Church to take the whole gospel to the whole world.” <http://www.lausanne.org/covenant>.

Also, the affirmation of the Lausanne Movement's Manila Manifesto: “The authentic gospel must become visible in the transformed lives of men and women.” <http://www.lausanne.org/manila-1989/the-manila-manifesto.html>

¹⁸ See *Muslims, Christians and Jesus* by Carl Medearis for an example of this approach (2008).

¹⁹ “Gracious Christian Responses to Muslims in Britain Today” 2008:2.

²⁰ For example, from a US presidential candidate and evangelical pastor: “It is right for us to be on the offense against Islamofascism, and not wait until they attack us on our soil. Unlike any war we have ever fought in this nation, this is not a war for soil. It is a war for our soul. We will either win it or we will lose it. This nation must rally to the point where we recognize there is no compromise. There is no alternative. We must win; they must lose. Islamofascism must disappear from

the face of the earth, or we will.” —Mike Huckabee. (For the full text of that speech, given at the Conservative Political Action Conference 2008, on Feb. 19, 2008, see: http://www.conservative.org/pressroom/2008/speech_huckabee08.asp)

²¹ Of course, the golden rule mandates that we acknowledge the historical and current weaknesses and problems within Christendom as well as those within Islam.

²² Benjamin-Lee Hegeman expounds well on the “fear factor” in his article, “Beware of Dhimmi Writers,” in which he writes: “Fear left untreated turns to hatred and both defensive writers and *dhimmi* writers leave the reader's fear intact. Engagement writers take one beyond one's fears” (2007: 433,438).

²³ Author of the well-known website “Jihad Watch” and books such as *Stealth Jihad: How Radical Islam is Subverting America without Guns or Bombs* and *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam* (and the Crusades).

²⁴ The Lord's command to “contend for the faith” (Jude 3) does not imply doing so in a contentious way, but rather as described in 2 Tim 2:24-26: “And the Lord's servant . . . must be kind to everyone . . . Those who oppose him he must gently instruct . . .” (NIV, emphasis added).

²⁵ See Joseph Cumming's helpful article, “Toward Respectful Witness” (2008:311-324).

²⁶ In *Islam and Terrorism: What the Quran really teaches about Christianity, Violence and the Goals of Islamic Jihad*, Mark Gabriel (former professor of Islamic history at Al-Azhar University) tends to be critical of Islam. Yet, when it comes to sharing the gospel he admonishes us: “Never denigrate Muhammad or the Quran . . . Respect their customs and sensitivities” (2002:200).

²⁷ For example, viewing “The Parable of the Waiting Father” (Luke 15:11-32) through the cultural value of honor (and shame) rather than the guilt perspective of the prodigal son's sin, Methodist bishop Hwa Yung illustrates a respectful and bold witness of the Cross that reflects the culture of the original gospel story and approaches Muslims in their cultural perspective (2008:133).

²⁸ Love: 2004.

²⁹ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/2323897.stm>.

³⁰ One of the terms used to describe how Paul the apostle communicated is *dialegoriai* (usually translated as reason, argue or discuss; Acts 17:2,17; 18:4,19; 19:8,9; 20:7,9; 24:12,25). According to the standard Greek Lexicon (BDAG), *dialegoriai* means: “to engage in speech interchange, converse, discuss, argue, esp. of instructional discourse that frequently includes exchange of opinions.” In other words, dialogue was one of the means Paul used to share the gospel.

³¹ One good example of this is *Muslims and Christians at the Table* by Bruce McDowell & Anees Zaka, which encourages Christ-honoring Muslim-Christian dialogue at the local level.

³² A good example of this is the “Global Movement Against Radical Islam.”

³³ See Stassen and Gushee 2003:128-132 and Hays 1996:320-324 for the various ways interpreters have engaged in the hermeneutics of evasion.

³⁴ Richard Hays argues that the problem is not hermeneutics but lack of obedience: “One reason the world finds the New Testament’s message of peacemaking and love of enemies incredible is that the church is so massively faithless” (1996:343).

³⁵ Matt 5:39-48; Luke 6:27-36 and Romans 12:17-21.

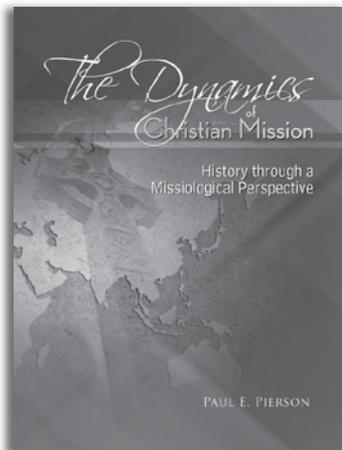
³⁶ See *Just Peacemaking* (Stassen 1992:33-88) and *Kingdom Ethics* (Stassen and Gushee 2003:125-145).

³⁷ “From Matthew to Revelation we find a consistent witness against violence and a calling to the community to follow the example of Jesus in accepting suffering rather than inflicting it” (Hays 1996:332).

³⁸ 2 Cor 5:18,19; 2 Tim 4:2.

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We, the undersigned, affirm this statement as a Christ-honoring, biblical approach toward Christian relationships with Muslims.

- Dr. Martin Accad, Associate Professor of Islamic Studies, Fuller School of Intercultural Studies*
- Amos Aderonmu, International Director Calvary Ministries (CAPRO) Lagos, Nigeria*
- Dr. Tokunboh Adeyemo, Executive Director of the Centre of Biblical Transformation, General Editor, Africa Bible Commentary*
- Devine Amattey, Author*
- Dr. Leith Anderson, President, National Association of Evangelicals*
- Rev. Johnson Asare, National Director, Markaz Al Bishara, Ghana*
- Sami Awad, Executive Director, Holy Land Trust*
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