

The following is an open letter to my pastor-friend David. I have been asked repeatedly if the letter can be copied, etc. You may forward it, post it, publish it, copy it and print it ...if your motive is, as mine, to:

- (1) increase authentic Christian witness to Muslims,
  - (2) reduce the naïve and imprecise thinking that has afflicted so many Christians regarding the Islamic agenda,
  - (3) decrease abuse of Muslims, yet avoiding the "knee-jerk" reaction of "platforming" them in Christian churches, and, above all,
  - (4) dramatically increase passion for Christ - as unabashed Jesus-followers.
- Warning: If you are somewhat "politically correct," you will not enjoy this letter, and may prefer not to read it.

(Note: The quotes {in the postscript} from the Koran and other selected Muslim writings were not compiled by me. The compiler is unknown. However, we have confirmed that all Koran texts were quoted accurately.)

Sincerely...a follower of Jesus,

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Tues., Sept. 25, 2001 (edited Oct. 3, 2001)

Dear David,

Without a doubt, this season is an unprecedented opportunity for Christians to impact their Muslim neighbors in meaningful and loving ways. At the same time, I have several "ruminating" questions regarding the Christian-Muslim interaction that I am observing.

In the pages that follow, I will make three points:

- (1) while Muslims should be loved, they should not be "platformed" in services designed to honor Christ,
- (2) if Muslims are genuinely peace loving (as so many contend), they must renounce the many Koran texts which call for the killing of Jews and Christians, and
- (3) Christians should stop referring simply to "God" so as not to offend, but boldly and unabashedly proclaim the name of Jesus, including praying "in Jesus' Name" in places where non-Christians may be gathered.

### **Muslims being "platformed" in Christian Churches**

You told me that you brought Muslims to your church last Sunday and everyone stood and applauded.

That is certainly "in vogue" right now in many churches. It seems to be "chic" - very "cutting edge." I have a question - actually a number of questions - that I am processing regarding the appropriate interaction between Christians and Muslims. So, with your permission, here goes.

Are the people you brought to your church considered "good, faithful" Muslims? If so, they follow the Koran, I presume?

Did they comment to you regarding the texts of the Koran which call for you (as a non-Muslim) to be killed by them? As Christians, we have asked forgiveness for the atrocities done by "Christian" Crusaders (nothing about their conduct was "Christian") when they, in the name of Jesus, pillaged, raped, burned Muslim (and Christian) villages and villagers in 1099 - and for their actions that continued for the next two hundred years. Christians have returned to those (Muslim) communities and asked forgiveness as recently as 1999 (actually on the 900th anniversary of the atrocities), and we should ask forgiveness - for the horrible things done to them!

But, do Muslims ask forgiveness for killing 1,000,000 Christians in North Africa and Egypt in 640AD? Allow me to skip over 1400 years of atrocities and speak in the present tense. More currently, Saudi Arabia (America's friend) was just voted the worst persecutor of Christians. Do American Muslims ever ask forgiveness for (or at least, call for a halt to) the wholesale slaughter of Christians (in Muslim nations)? Or do they even acknowledge the above facts?

Muslims don't have "missionaries" in the way we view that word; they "evangelize" with swords (rifles/tanks/bombs); and that is why they control a massive section of the globe - 1.4 billion people.

I, too, like you, think mosques and Muslims should not be attacked and burned. That is repulsive to the Gospel, and harms our Christian witness. Succinctly stated, Jesus would never "graffiti" a mosque (and, if we know of so called "Christians" doing such an act, we should repent on their behalf for it being done "in Jesus' name"). It is wrong for Muslims to be harassed in this country, just as it is wrong for Christians to be harassed in Muslim countries. But at the same time, we should have an accurate historical understanding of the precise nature of the Muslim faith.

Do your Muslim friends (that were applauded in your church last Sunday) reject the Koran scriptures (see postscript below) which call for the killing of all Jews and Christians? Wouldn't that (killing) include you? And your children? And your wife? And all the people who applauded them on Sunday, Sept. 16th? Did anyone, including you, ask them to renounce the violence that is called for in the Koran and the Hadith, or other Muslim historical documents?

Islam is not a religion in the way we think of it. It is a legal system, a form of government, a coercive tyranny (in virtually every Muslim nation). And we, as Americans, are ignorant, thinking that they are just like us - just a "religion" - and that we all worship side by side - together - worshipping the same God. Not so!

Islam (according to the Koran) commands its followers to slaughter all infidels (non-Muslims). And that includes you and me!

George W. Bush said, "Islam is all about peace." Surely he must have said that for purely political purposes. He could certainly not have meant that theologically - or historically. Theology (interpretation of the Koran) and history defy that statement.

George Braswell, Jr. (B.D., Yale; Ph.D., U of NC) who lived in Iran for seven years, helps define "peace" from a Muslim perspective, "The world ... of Islam must conquer and rule over those of ignorance and disobedience .... The peace of the world cannot be secured until the peoples come under the rule and protection of Islam." (What You Need To Know About Islam and Muslims, p. 87) "Peace," to a Muslim, is Muslims controlling non-Muslims. "All (Note: the text states all, not some) Muslims are under mandate to practice jihad because they believe that Islam is the correct and perfect religion and that all other religions are inferior. Not only are they to follow the teaching of the Quran, but they are also to emulate the model of their prophet Muhammad, who led his fighting forces into battle to defend Islam and to make Islam dominant." (p. 4)

Islam is not about peace (real peace) - if the Koran, Mohammad (the founder), and contemporary Muslims are to be regarded as "Islamic." Ask the people in Mecca in 622AD (the first persons ever killed by Muslim armies) if Islam is "about peace." The Koran is quite clear about killing those who do not embrace its teachings. A simple historical and geographical overview demonstrates that point powerfully.

I took the fifteen pastors on my staff to a major Los Angeles Mosque a couple years ago. We sat and talked with their leaders there for more than an hour - in a very congenial, gracious and cordial environ. I asked forgiveness for atrocities committed by Christians on Muslims through the years - specifically the time frame of 1100-1300AD. I did not apologize to him in order to "extract" an apology from him. (This was simply my first opportunity to ask forgiveness of a Muslim in a position of authority. My apology to him "stood on its own" and had merit whether or not he ever "returned" an apology. In other words, my apology was not "conditional.") But what happened next was interesting: I outlined an abbreviated history of Muslim attacks on Christians. Not only did the Muslim leader not apologize, he would not acknowledge any truth in what I was saying. He denied historical reality (and that was under the most cordial circumstances).

Read the Koran (attachment below, or you can go to

[www.stg.brown.edu/webs/quran\\_browser/](http://www.stg.brown.edu/webs/quran_browser/)

and research the Koran; you can download a Koran online from [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com) for \$8) for yourself. Can you find a credible Muslim leader that will repudiate their sacred scriptures? If so, he would have to stop being a Muslim. Have you found any like that?

As Christians, we apologize for the actions of some so-called "Christians" (the Crusaders, for example) because they contradicted and violated Jesus' teaching). In contrast, those Muslims who kill are not contradicting or violating Mohammad's teaching (see the Koran passages below). (I have also heard Muslim suicide missioners compared to Christian martyrs. There is one enormous and significant difference: Christians are willing to lay down {give up} their lives - period. Muslims lay down their lives too - but with the result of destroying other lives.)

Robert Schueller had a Muslim cleric in his church (The Crystal Cathedral) Sept. 16, Sunday (which aired Sept. 23, 2001) - on the platform. The Muslim addressed the crowd as "my brothers and my sisters."

As I understand the Bible, it teaches me that my "brothers" and "sisters" are those who are "in Christ." Is the Muslim my "brother" or "sister?" Certainly he/she can be my friend; he/she can be my neighbor; I can reach out to him/her in love - and I should. But should he/she be honored (as a Muslim - and simply because he is a Muslim) in the "house" that is set aside for Jesus-worship? No!

Dr. Schueller's congregation gave the visiting Muslim cleric a standing ovation. It was offensive. In my opinion, the applause was based on a "platitudinal love" (a gentle "lets all get together now - and just be nice to everybody" kind of love) - as opposed to bona fide "biblical love" (Jehovah God created you; He loves you passionately; we love you; but without Jesus, you will go to a Christ-less eternity - and we love you way too much not to tell you about Him). But they (the applauding people) are not to blame. They were set up for it. They did not know. They had no grasp of the dimension of their actions. (Imagine if some Christian being tortured in a Muslim jail would have been forced to watch that sight!) They applauded in ignorance, I believe, not in knowledge.

Now I would have stood and applauded too - if those 3000+ attendees would have been urged by their pastor to do individual acts of kindness, compassion and Christian witness to their Muslim neighbors. I would have been excited if their leader (and to be fair to Robert Schueller, he has done so much good for the cause of Christ) would have admonished them to "seize this moment" to love Muslims - both in action (such things as buying groceries for them if they themselves were afraid to go to a store) and in word ("may I, during these difficult days, tell you why I care for you so much? May I speak with you about Jesus - who He is - and His love for you?") For that, I would stand and applaud. Why? Because it is good and right - and Jesus-honoring! And it is Jesus' strategy.

But we do not need to "platform" Muslims in our "Jesus" services (or what are supposed to be Jesus-centered services) and clap and cheer for them?

And, at the risk of being quite politically incorrect (as if I'm not already) I cannot, in a "Jesus house of worship," applaud those who have slaughtered every follower of Christ they could - from 622AD to the present.

I chose to stand and applaud the hundreds of thousands of Christian believers who have not recanted their faith in Christ - many of whom were killed by Muslims who were following the Koran.

I stand and applaud the martyrs through the centuries who would not deny their Christian faith as they watched their wives and daughters being raped and their sons tortured, as their own arms and legs were being amputated.

I stand and applaud Jesus followers who have withstood the unspeakable acts done to them - even by Islamics - yet would not back down.

I acknowledge that I am not a scholar; but I do try to be a good student. I have spent a significant portion of my life (from 1971 to the present) studying the history of Christianity - through three Masters degrees and a Ph.D., and I spent two years writing a 400 page book (a kind of "walk" through 2000 years of Christian history) entitled How God Saved Civilization. Many times while working on the book, I would write until 3 A.M., almost weeping as I went to bed, thinking of the millions of Christians that had been slaughtered - just for believing in Christ!

I choose to stand with them! They are my heroes! I stand and applaud the martyrs (most of them unknown) of the faith. I do not (in a "Jesus house of worship") stand and applaud persons committed to a book (The Koran) which calls for more of them (us?) to be killed! I stand and applaud those who have been killed for my Christ!

I care not that the above is not considered acceptable in contemporary culture. I would clap for the martyrs (and keep telling their stories) even if I was the last voice - and the last pair of hands to clap for them. I cannot and will not applaud - especially in a "Jesus house of worship" - those who are part of a movement which slaughters, mutilates, rapes, tortures, disfigures my true brothers and sisters. Those who do this to my true brothers and sisters are not my brothers and sisters. Ask the Christians in Muslim jails right now, in most of the 22 Arab nations, if they think we should bring Muslims into our Christian worship services and applaud them. Ask them!

Should we love the Muslim "in Christ?" A thousand times - yes! Applaud them in our Christian churches? A thousand times - no!

I was asked today to do a one-hour video of the history of Christianity to be used by Chinese Christians (ages 15-25 - 100,000 of them!) who are willing to buy one-way tickets to go all over the world, to be "invisible" missionaries, supporting themselves as drivers, cleaning persons (lowly, "tent-making" jobs), with the knowledge that they may never see their homeland again - but determined to take Jesus to countries where no Westerner could ever go.

These amazing young believers will live on \$1 per day, just \$30 a month - which they will earn themselves - just so they can share Jesus. They are young, single and radical - sold out for Jesus.

These are the ones I want on my platform. In fact, I am not worthy to introduce them. I need to learn from them, rather than me teaching them! If I could, I would put them all on my platform - and applaud and applaud and applaud and applaud and applaud!

Many of them may be imprisoned (and they know it), and some of them will die. Yes, they will die! Why? In some regions, it will be because of the teaching of the Koran and its followers. I choose to applaud the Jesus followers.

**"Peace-loving Muslims" need to renounce the many violent Koran texts that explicitly call for Jews and Christians to be killed.**

I have already addressed this issue in some of the above paragraphs, but let's take a deeper look at this one, for it is critical. (As we go to this area, let me state clearly: I firmly believe the best strategy for Christians relating to Muslims is with love, tenderness, acts of kindness and compassion, along with Holy Spirit directed and prayerfully timed conversations about Jesus. But I do not believe we should approach the Christian-Muslim dialogue with syrupy sentimentality. We should be informed regarding Muslim beliefs {and there are admittedly so many different groups [not unlike Christianity] that this can be difficult}, the Koran, Islamic history and present day Muslim nation's governmental structures, specifically regarding Christians and Christianity. I am not a Muslim scholar and make no such pretense; I do desire to be a good student, however.)

Recently, I have heard some Christians defend the Koran and its violent statements by saying, "Well, the Old Testament has many violent statements about killing others" - implying that "our" book is just like "their" book. These types of statements reveal the depth of biblical-historical ignorance of Christians.

A course in "Hermeneutics 101" (hermeneutics = "science of interpretation") would be of great help! Certainly the Old Testament does have some commands to kill others. No honest Christian can deny that. But what thinking, honest Christian can justify killing their unbelieving neighbors today (using these same Old Testament texts)? None! Why? Because we all know the Old Testament had a very specific function in a pre-Christian ethic.

The major message of the Old Testament is "separate," "do not intermingle," "do not inter-marry," etc. It is one of separation, even to the point of using the sword in order to stay separate.

Why? Because Yahweh (although we say "Jehovah," it is more correctly pronounced "Yahweh," as is the name for God in the Old Testament, occurring more than 6,000 times) wanted the Israelites all to Himself, in order to establish Himself in them - away from any contaminating influences of any other pagan religion. (Yahweh wasn't particularly politically correct! The Bible even calls Him "jealous.") Thus, God told Abram to leave Ur (present day Iraq) and go to a land far away (Israel today). And for 2000 years (from Abraham to the beginning of the New Testament), the message was

"stay separate!" And, in order to do that, it was occasionally bloody - not at all to any of our liking. So, some contend, the Old Testament has its own version of jihad - holy war or "struggle."

But - after this long period of "pouring Himself" into them so that they would recognize Him when He came in the flesh (although they never really obeyed Him and remained truly separate) - He said precisely the opposite of "stay separate." He said "Go - into all nations!" In effect, He is saying, "Now I have established Me and My Ways in you. You should now be strong enough to stay true to My ways, even though you will no longer be insulated from other cultures. And you should be able to recognize Me when I show up in the flesh (Jesus), so now you can ethnically and nationally intermingle. In fact, I am commanding you to do exactly that."

Thus, the Great Commission: "Go! Disciple. Preach the day of the Lord. Heal. Evangelize. Deliver. Set the captives free. Lift up the poor. Instead of being 'separate' (Old Testament) because you were not strong enough, you are now to infiltrate (New Testament) because you are strong enough - and in so doing, carry to everyone the fabulously wonderful news, the Gospel - the good news!" (And notice - and this is key - in the distinctly Christian ethic of the New Testament, the sword is never used to "evangelize." The sword was used (for purposes of keeping a people-group separate) in the Old Testament - a pre-Christian ethic - but not in the New Testament.

Now contrast that to the Koran. Where does it say the violence (kill the "infidels" - Jews and Christians) was for a previous "dispensation," thus it should be stopped. Where are the credible, well-positioned Muslim clerics who have said either "we repudiate the Koran's call for a death to all non-Muslims" or (closer to the analogy of the Old Testament/New Testament distinction) "the command to kill non-Muslims is not for today? It must be stopped because we are in a 'new era.' And we must set free all Christians who are in Muslim jails!" I am not hearing any of the above. In contrast, no reference is being made to these violent texts.

The Koran, followed by nearly 1/4th of the Earth's population (estimated by the U.N. to become 1/2 the Earth's birthrate by 2055), still calls for death to everyone who is not Muslim. And New York City, Washington, DC and Pennsylvania have learned that in such a tragic, painful way. Nearly 7,000 killed! A horrific act! (That number - 7,000 - is, by the way, the same number of Christians killed somewhere on the globe every 15 days {one every 3 minutes-or 160,000 per year!} simply for following Jesus, many of whom are killed in Muslim countries.) To my knowledge, no other major world religion has, as its written corpus, such clarion calls for the deaths of Jews and Christians. This is unprecedented.

The summary of this issue is: as followers of Christ, we are accountable for our strong commitment to the words of Jesus and His teaching as summarized by the New Testament writers; followers of Mohammad and Allah must be accountable for their strong commitment to the Koran (which calls for death to Jews and Christians). Simply

saying Muslims are "peace-loving" (the new contemporary "buzz-word") is inadequate. The question stands: what about the Koran's call for death to non-Muslims?

Now are there some Muslims who are "peace loving?" Are there some Muslims who do not embrace the notion to kill all non-Muslims. Well, of course. I hope there are many. I think I know some. Are the "peace loving" ones in the majority among the Earth's 1.4 billions Muslims? I am not qualified to answer that. To answer that, it would be best to interview persons who have attempted to live as non-Muslims in Muslim nations. Those interviews, I suspect, would not be comforting.

Some believe that "perhaps today's American Muslims (approximately 5-7 million here in America) just don't feel that way (like their Arab nation counterparts) anymore." My question still stands: if it is true that the U.S.A. based Muslims are truly of "a different strain," then we invite American Muslims to join Christians in calling for a world-wide end to the persecution of Christians in Islamic nations, a freeing of the hundreds of thousands of imprisoned Christians, including (most recently-since August) Heather Mercer, held in prison in Afghanistan for simply carrying materials that were Christian.

It is, in my opinion, historically naïve to assume that somehow all the violent ("kill the infidels") texts are simply the result of "proof-texting" the Koran, thus obscuring the actual intent of the "whole" of the Koran. Well, if the Koran, as these persons say, is all about peace, then simply outline for us an unambiguous Koran-based "apologetic" which would affirm that all the Christians being tortured in Muslim nations should, by Muslim mandate, be pardoned, apologized to, and set free.

Some like to point out that the Koran has some passages that speak kindly towards non-Muslims, and that is true. They call attention to Koran texts which suggest that Muslims should be courteous to Jews and Christians. (Examples: an-Nahl 16:125; al-Ankabut 29:46; az-Zukhruf 43:88-89).

Let me illustrate why those texts fail to impress. Suppose you were to receive, from a family, a letter in which it said both "I will treat you nicely" and "I am going to kill you." Which would most get your attention? Of course, it would be the "I am going to kill you" portion. The violent threat negates the "I will treat you kindly" portion. And suppose that through the generations, significant members of this "family" had lived up to the threats of "I am going to kill you", with many persons becoming victims of their attacks. And suppose that some members of the family (although they still embrace the whole letter with its dichotomous "I will treat you kindly"/ "I am going to kill you" statements), only read you the "I will treat you kindly" portions without ever deleting the "I am going to kill you" portions from the letter, yet asked you to trust them. How trusting would you be of them? Not very! You might respond as follows: "if I am going to believe you, you are not only going to have to condemn the acts of killing done by other members of your family, you are going to have to delete all the 'I am going to kill you' comments from your letter. Then assure me that those portions of your letter were erroneous, and vigorously call for all members of your family to stop following that portion of the letter until it gets re-written. And, finally, apologize for all the killing that your family has done

during the last 1400 years, while freeing all the persons that your family presently incarcerates." Then, and only then, you might be able to trust them again.

The application from this illustration is obvious. But just in case an explanation is needed, here it is: the "letter" is the Koran; the "I love you" portions are the parts of the Koran which affirm Jews and Christians; the "I am going to kill you" are the portions of the Koran which encourage Muslims to kill Jews and Christians; the "family" are the Muslims; the ones who are saying "our letter says I will treat you kindly" are the ones claiming that Islam is all about peace. The "you" in the illustration is us, all of us who are not Muslims. And all of us have two choices: (1) assume that only the "I will treat you kindly" portions of the letter count, and naïvely ignore the "I am going to kill you" portions hoping those words are somehow not going to be fulfilled, or (2) take the whole letter seriously, including the "I am going to kill you" portions. I choose to take the whole letter seriously, including the portions which call for the deaths of all Jews and Christians. And, when I study history, I discover that it is with good reason that I should take those portions seriously. Due to those portions of the Koran, millions have been killed. And more will.

Here is the core of the issue: when contemporary, American Muslims condemn the Sept. 11th terrorist attacks (and I do appreciate that), they are not addressing the epicenter of the problem. They condemn the act or acts of terror. I want them to address the source for the act or acts. (Huge difference!) And that source (according to a growing mountain of FBI evidence, including handwritten letters) is the Koran, and its portrayal of Allah and Mohammad's commands

A simple illustration: if a group of us adhere to a document that says "rob banks" and some of our group begin to rob banks, it is meaningless for me to say, "I decry this terrible act of robbing the bank." I need to disassociate myself from the document that calls for them to rob the bank. I need to say that this document (which tells them to rob banks) is wrong - or at least needs to be changed so that people will stop robbing banks. And I should not hide behind the fact that the same document, may somewhere say "don't rob banks." The application to the Koran and contemporary American Muslim spokespersons is too obvious to need explanation.

The American press will not deal with this one. (However, I do compliment the media for their phenomenal coverage of the events of Sept. 11th and following.) On Monday, Oct. 2, the usually hard-hitting Bill O'Reilly, Fox News' alleged "no spin zone" guru, totally "caved in" as he interviewed Iman Johari Abdul-Malik (Howard University's Chaplain) and Iman Maher Hathout (of the Islam Center of Southern California). Both imans simply said the Koran verses were "taken out of context," to which Bill O'Reilly agreed, without listing the extensive texts in question. And that is the pattern.

Some will feel that I am being unfair to the Koran. Let us assume for a moment that I am wrong in my understanding of the Koran (I have certainly been wrong many times), and that, in fact, most Muslims do, in fact, re-interpret the violent Koran texts so as not to call for the deaths of Jews and Christians.

In that case, let's use one other test: geography. How many of the 22 Arab nations (all Muslim countries) are "peaceful" to live in if you are not an Islamic? Would any of the Christian pastors who claim "Islam is about peace" desire to go to any of the Arab nations and try to begin a Christian church? If not, why not? And what would America be like if it was under the rule of Islamic law? Would that be "peaceful?"

And if the Koran and geography are not convincing, let's embrace history: how about studying the last fourteen centuries? Is there evidence that Muslims have killed Jews and Christians? I rest my case. (As noted earlier, Christians have killed Muslims as well - and for that despicable and unChrist-like conduct, we make no defense, and we do and have repented.)

I do acknowledge that Muslims are not the only ones that have innocent blood on their hands. Over 40 million pre-born babies have been legally mutilated in America - some of them only a few hours/days/weeks from birth! Surely we have and will pay a dear price for this wholesale governmentally approved murder. (Remember, the primary function of government is to protect its citizens - even its most innocent.) I acknowledge that the Islamic fundamentalists are right when they say that America has violated God's ways by killing (abortion) and its massive distribution of pornography, immorality, adultery by way of film, along with electronic and print media. (More "hits" occur on pornographic websites everyday in America than any other category of websites; the one exception: immediately on and following Sept. 11th, news sites ranked first.) When Islamics condemn our present day, widely accepted morals, they are, unfortunately, correct.

(And, as a side note, on a totally unrelated theme: I have often wondered: Are evangelical, born-again, Bible-believing Christians being invited to Mosques? To

speak of Jesus? Are we being applauded there? Just curious. Simply haven't heard of any. If not, why not?)

(One other side note: Public high schools, colleges and universities are rushing to bring in Islamic speakers to tell the students that "Islam is about peace." {Even Christian universities are being encouraged to do this.} Just curious: does "church and state separation" apply to Muslims - as it seems to apply to us Christians - in these state sponsored institutions? And, are they also bringing in speakers who can {through history and current political situations} demonstrate that Islam is not about peace. Are "liberal" institutions truly "liberal" {meaning open to the honest exchange and free flow of information}? Would the public schools {that are inviting Muslims to come and lecture} be open to honest and frank debates by inviting person expressing views other than "Islam is about peace?" Will anyone be invited to deliver a lecture entitled "Jesus is about peace" in one of these schools?)

As I close this section, let me restate what I feel strongly: the most Christ-honoring response to Muslims is to love them, cultivate relationships with them, direct acts of compassion toward them and verbally share, as the Holy Spirit allows and directs, the message of the Gospel. But, interrelate with Muslims with a knowledge of the Koran, Muslim history, and a with a firm grasp of the reality that Jesus is the only hope for all of humanity - which leads me to my next point.

### 3. The hesitancy to use Jesus' Name - by Christians!

On Sunday afternoon, Sept. 23, 2001, Yankee Stadium hosted "A Prayer for America." Thousands gathered. Muslims read (and I guess sang) the Koran (without mentioning those passages that called for death to "infidels"). Hindus prayed. Sikhs prayed. Oprah Winfrey, hardly America's best-known "pastor," emceed! Bette Middler was a type of "praise leader." Christians were represented (Catholics, Lutherans, Armenians {not to be confused with Arminians - the first one an ethnic group, the second a theological term}, Eastern Orthodox, and the ecumenical - and blatantly liberal - Council of Churches). All - every one of them - were either "liberal" or "liturgical" in "slant." No problem.

Include them! But, where - where were the Evangelicals - or Pentecostals - or Charismatics - or anyone of a "conservative" bent? Did someone just happen to overlook them? All of them?

Evangelical and conservative churches are among the largest attended churches in New York City: Jim Cymbala, at Brooklyn Tabernacle with thousands trying to get in every Sunday; A. R. Bernard, at the 5,000 seat Brooklyn Christian Life Centre with 10,000 attending weekly; David Wilkerson, at the Times Square Church who has thousands attending. All of these churches have worship services running continuously all day Sunday, due to so many trying to get in. I have been to all of them - on more than one occasion. On some Sundays, people have to wait two hours to get in! Where were these great men of God? Were they asked? If not, why not? These men are "Jesus" centered (like all Christians are supposed to be)! And being a "Jesus" Christian is not "cool," not politically correct.

Here is a clue to the answer to the above question. Listen to this amazing fact: Jesus' name was barely mentioned at Yankee Stadium. (I personally was listening for His name - and did not hear it. Two of my friends believe that they heard his name mentioned - perhaps in one song, or possibly in Spanish, or perhaps by the Armenian clergy. Let's assume that Jesus' name was mentioned. Tragically it was so infrequent that everyone I asked {except for the two persons mentioned above} was convinced it was not mentioned at all! With 9 out of 10 Americans saying they are Christians, Jesus' name should have been prominent - so that there would not have to be a discussion: "did we hear His name or not?") The bottom line: (assuming Jesus' name was actually stated,) His name was shockingly "scarce." Why? Because (some) "Christians" don't want to offend. And, as a result the "salt has lost its savor!" We certainly heard the name Allah - and several others! This failure to mention "Jesus" represents a colossal "dumbing down" of our Christian faith.

America is 86% Christian (or so surveys show), yet in the largest gathering of its type - at the epicenter of the tragedy (New York City) - the mentioning of the name of Jesus was conspicuously infrequent. We have offended the

Father by our unwillingness to openly, unabashedly acknowledge His Son's Name.

And why don't we mention His name? Why do we "downplay" it? Because we (or at least, some Christians) want to "blend in." We (they) long for "respectability" more than truth.

Let's leave New York City now, and go to the "heartland:" Salina, Kansas, population 45,000. Two thousand recently attended a memorial for NYC and Washington, DC, in Salina's Bicentennial Center. Christian pastors read the Bible, Hindu prayers were sung, a Jewish Kaddish was recited and two passages were read from the Koran. Salina's official city-run website lists 65 churches, but no Muslim Mosque, Jewish Temple, nor Hindu temple. I contacted a pastor-friend in the city to tell me how many Jews, Muslims and Hindus there were in Salina. He was unable to find any evidence of any Muslims or Hindus (that he was aware of - having lived there over 30 years) and thought there were probably 100 Jewish residents. The local newspaper said the service reflected "America's melting pot." No, it didn't - at least not demographically proportionate. And it certainly did not reflect the religion demographics of Salina, Kansas.

Furthermore, I am curious if the Christian pastors who read portions from the Bible publicly chose "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20:3 - the first of the 10 Commandments; Hinduism has many "gods") or "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one comes to the Father, but through Me.'" (John 14:6) Did any Christian pastor publicly read those verses that day? Or were we careful to find texts that would not offend?

Perhaps Yahweh's words for Israel are for America today: "What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him? And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today? ( Deut 4:7-8, NIV)

On Friday, Sept. 14, 2001, a service was held at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. In the opening

comments, Hindus and Sikhs were referred to respectfully, along with Christians and others - implying the pluralistic "we-all-worship-the-same-God" motif. And then there was the closure to a prayer, "in the name of Allah, the God of Abraham and Jesus"(if I heard it correctly) - all in one phrase. Nothing about that is Christian. That is Hindu (syncretistic: "let's just put all our 'gods' together") or Bahai ("just come in through any 'door' - because all religions serve the same god").

We act as if we are a "Muslim/Hindu/Jewish/Christian/Sikh/Buddhist/etc. nation" with "equal representation" required at any "public" prayer service. (Some, admittedly, would say, "Yes, we are!")

The facts are, 86% of the people in American at least say they are Christian. Two percent say they are Jewish. One and a half percent (to as high as two percent, depending on who you believe) say they are Muslim. One third of one percent are Hindu. Less are Sikhs. With 9 out of 10 Americans saying they are Christian, we give equal billing to every other imaginable religion - and, on top of that - rarely mention the name of Jesus - the person that 86% of Americans, at least, say they follow.

Ironically, His Name was used on national television by David Letterman. While Dan Rather wept openly (and I mean openly - so choked up that Letterman offered to go to a station break) as he talked about the tragic events of Sept. 11th, David Letterman profaned the Lord's Name by repeating "Good God!" and finally "Good Christ!" (Ex. 20:7, the third of the 10 Commandments simply states, "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.") Imagine the outcry that would have occurred had Letterman said "Good Allah!" or "Good Mohammad!" the way he used our Lord's name. (I am not suggesting he do that; he should not violate anyone's religion in such a manner - including ours.)

Even the word "God," (let alone "Jesus") seemed strangely absent from much of Hollywood's two hour, multi-network fund raising/ "memorial service" on Friday night, September 21, 2001. One actor, quoting the "one nation under God, indivisible" portion of the Pledge of

Allegiance, managed to leave out "under God."  
Conspicuously inappropriate (due to the fact that the nation had been openly weeping and praying) was John Lennon's song "Imagine," with its "imagine if there was no religion." And blatantly offensive to so many of the 7,000 persons who had lost loved ones was the line "imagine if there was not heaven."

In the days following September 11th, virtually everything closed. Sports events, concerts, Broadway shows and conventions were cancelled. But churches were filled - in some cases reporting crowds exceeding Easter.

This was mentioned on the news programs ever so slightly on Sunday, September 16th, but never with any probing as to the real reason churches were overflowing. Profoundly disturbing was the lack of pastors on the talk shows to answer the news anchors continual hand-wringing and proverbial "we just don't know why this is happening" motif. Franklin Graham was allowed a few minutes of explanation, but he was one of very few that was ever interviewed. On Friday night, Sept. 21, MSNBC stated that they were going to bring someone on the air to explain the enormous spike in church attendance. I eagerly awaited - to see what pastor would be interviewed. They then introduced a psychotherapist who went into "psycho-babble," to which I found myself saying, "what on Earth is he saying!"

Pastors (at least many of them) would have been able to provide an answer to the question: "why would fanatics do such a senseless act?" The root of the struggle, as any biblically versed pastor knows, is found in Genesis, chapters 16-22 - the Ishmael-Isaac conflict. Ishmael's descendents (the Arabs, which are 95% Muslims, 5% Christian), and Isaac's descendents (14 million Jews) want to be in the same space at the same time (the land of Israel). Israel's 6 million Jews are surrounded by 1 billion Arabs who want the same piece of real estate. The United States, with its World Trade Center and Pentagon, is not the issue (although we are hated by Islamic Fundamentalists). The issue is the Middle East.

Why will Israel not "give in" to the Muslim Arabs? A glance at her history reveals the answer. Israel has been overrun by the Assyrians - present day northern Iraq

(700 BC - all dates are rounded off ), the Babylonians - present day southern Iraq (600BC), the Persians - present day Iran (500BC), the Greeks (400BC), and the Romans(100BC). It was under the Romans that Jerusalem was totally destroyed in 70AD and Israel ceased to be a nation - and would remain that way for the next 1,878 years - until May 14, 1948, when she would again become a nation.

Rome, as a city, was invaded in 400AD, the first time in 800 years - and the Roman Empire later collapsed. But Israel was still controlled by foreign powers: Arab Muslims (650AD - these are approximate beginning dates), "Christian" Crusaders (1100AD), Egypt (1250AD), the Turks (1500-1900), and finally by the British in 1917 in World War I. Then - after nearly 1900 years - Israel was a sovereign nation again. But her problems were far from over.

One day after she became a nation (May 14, 1948), she was attacked by surrounding Arab nations. And that was only the first of many wars that would follow: the Suez War in 1956, the Six Day War in 1967, the Yom Kippur War in 1973, and shelling from Lebanon by the PLO from 1980 on - to name a few.

Thus (and here is the point of this "crash" history lesson), after a struggle that has continued from 700BC to the present, the Israeli's (Isaac's descendents) are not about to surrender that land. The Arab nations (Ishmael's descendents) surrounding Israel, along with the Palestinians within Israel are equally determined to take it. And that is the key to understanding September 11th - but most Americans will never know, because the major media outlets do not invite biblically literate and historically attuned pastors to explain. Thus the assembly line of talking heads saying, "we just don't understand."

Now, after a very long detour regarding the electronic non-visibility of churches and pastors, let's go back to the key issue at hand: the refusal to mention the name "Jesus."

There was one evangelical leader who did speak at the National Cathedral (Sept. 14, 2001). However when he

referred to the cross of Jesus, he made a disclaimer, stating that "this (part) is for us Christians." (I am assuming that he did not mean that, and that that comment was a misstatement; he has been so bold in the past that the statement does not "fit" him contextually; and I have certainly made my share of misstatements in the past.) The cross is not "just for us Christians." It is for the whole world. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son..."

People sometimes wonder who the "antichrist" is, in Revelation. Those smarter than me can argue about that.

I think the antichrist is already here - in the "spirit of anti-Jesus." When I am asked to pray at "public" events now, I sometimes receive notes before the prayer informing me, in ever-so-subtle terms, to pray "in God's name." Implication? Don't use the name of Jesus.

I remind those who send me such notes that if I were to demand that a Jewish rabbi or a Muslim cleric could not pray a certain way - or if I demanded that they pray "in the name of Jesus" - that would be "intolerant" in our "pluralistic" culture. They agree with me. Then I remind them that it would be equally "intolerant" for them to demand that I pray a certain way in our "pluralistic" culture. And they, hesitatingly - knowing their logic has trapped them - agree.

The reason I feel so strongly about praying in Jesus' name is because, on one occasion (which I would rather forget) I was asked by the emcee of an event if I would please not mention "Jesus" in my prayer. Caught off guard (which is certainly a pathetically weak excuse), I agreed. I prayed. Honoring the request, I did not pray "in Jesus name." As I walked away from the podium, I felt as spiritually contaminated - as spiritually impotent - as I ever have. In my heart, I cried out, "Oh, Jesus, forgive me for what I have just done! I will never, ever again agree to leave out Your name. I don't want You to forget my name. I will never again leave out Yours!"

I agree with Polycarp, who in 155AD, when asked to deny Jesus, so they would not have to burn him at the stake,

said, in effect, "for 86 years Jesus has not denied me; why should I deny Him now?"

Several years ago (while pastoring in another city), we put a flag on our church's 70 foot flagpole (which was seen by 120,000 persons per day traveling on the freeway). It wasn't an American flag, although I am unabashedly patriotic. It was a 25' by 15' "JESUS" flag, comprised of huge, red block letters (all capitals) on an all white background. John Vaughn, Director of the International MegaChurch Research Center, who knows more about churches around the globe than any other person, visited our church, complimented us for the flag and then said to me, "I have never seen this done anywhere in the world. You could have put the word "God" on the flag and you would not have been criticized. But you have chosen to put the name 'JESUS' on it, so beware of what is ahead." His name - so controversial, isn't it? So much so that even those who call themselves Christian, will avoid His name, so as not to "offend."

Well, count me on the side of the equation that prays "in Jesus' name" - that "flies the JESUS flag." And, I will, to the best of my knowledge and ability put only Jesus followers in a position to be applauded in my church (Yes, I know it's really His church).

### Summary

There is a showdown coming. Braswell states it soberly, "What does the future hold for relations between Christianity and Islam? That is uncertain, but one thing is clear: both religions have a message and a mandate. Christianity has a mandate to go into all the world and preach the gospel of salvation and reconciliation in Jesus Christ. Islam has a mandate to practice jihad and to bring the non-Muslim world under the rule of Allah and the injunctions of the Quran." (p. 8) Bottom line: someone is going to win; someone will lose.

So what should our strategy be?

Should we love the Muslim? Yes!

Should we direct acts of compassion toward them? Yes!

Should we establish meaningful relationships with them?

Yes!

Should we oppose all attempts to abuse or in any way harm Muslims or their Mosques? Yes!

Should we attempt to understand them? Yes - if we don't do it naïvely: know the Koran; (go to [www.stg.brown.edu/webs/quran\\_browser/](http://www.stg.brown.edu/webs/quran_browser/) and research the Koran; you can download a Koran online from [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com) for \$8;) know Muslim history - and its treatment of Christians, both historically and present day.

Should we witness of Christ's love for them? Yes!

Should we pray for them? Yes, yes, yes, to this one!

(This one is the key.) In fact, we should, as Jesus followers, be praying for Muslims to discover the liberating message of Christ.

Can we work with them in civic causes, as citizens of America? Yes! (And I do - on an ongoing basis.)

Should we put them on platforms - or positions of honor in our Jesus worship services? No! For by so doing, we are causing people to naïvely "buy into" the pluralistic notion that "we all worship the same God."

And should we stop saying the name "Jesus" so we don't offend? No! For He (Jesus) is our only hope in all this.

So here are my closing questions to you:

1. Do your Muslim friends acknowledge that the Koran and the Hadith call for the death of Jews and Christians?

And if so, will they renounce those texts? Or would they at least re-interpret them so that they openly state that the commands to kill non-Muslims were for another era (in the past) and should never be followed anywhere (including in the 22 Arab nations and other countries with large Muslim populations) in the present or in the future? And if they will not renounce the Koran's commands to kill, will you acknowledge that they are supporting the killing of you and all the applauding Christians in your church on Sept. 16th.

2. Are we straightforwardly and unabashedly going to mention the name of Jesus, or will we use the much less offensive term "God" thus "fitting into" all religions?

3. But if we use the name of "Jesus," aren't we implying that "Allah" and "Yahweh" ("Jehovah" of the Bible) are not the same, thus one of them is the real God - and the

other is not? And if so, which one is the real God?

4. And if their "god" or "gods" are not the same as our God (Yahweh in the Bible), do we have to worship with Muslims, or Hindus, or Buddhists, or Sikhs (i.e., National Cathedral, Yankee Stadium, and the other Christian churches across the country that are now inviting Muslims, sometimes to their platforms, who are in some cases leading in Islamic prayers in so-called Christian churches)? (Note: Some have asked why some Christians are willing to be at religious events with Jews, but not with Muslims. When Jews pray to the "God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob," that is Yahweh. As Christians, we believe that Yahweh was manifested in the flesh {Jesus}. Thus, the similarities {and one major difference}. If a Muslim were to pray to the "God of Abraham and Ishmael", this would actually be to the "God of Ishmael's descendents," because Islam did not exist during Ishmael's time, coming some 2600 years later. Bottom line: Is Allah the same as Yahweh? No!)

We can work with Muslims (and others), relate to them, pray for them and be compassionate towards them (and we should). But followers of Jesus should not worship with them.

5. Does "loving our neighbor and sharing compassion with them" mean that we invite the non-Christian to our churches and church platforms to be applauded? Or is there a more biblical, Christ-honoring way to do it?

Just five questions. Thank you for listening.

Blessings,  
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POSTSCRIPT:Quran And Hadith Quotes

Sources:

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The book, So What's the Difference

(Author/compiler of this particular article is not known)

INTRODUCTION

"The Quran is the sacred scripture of Islam. It is made

up of 114 surahs, or chapters. These have been arranged according to length. The longest surahs are in front, the shorter ones are in back (with exception of the first one). The ideas are all credited to God.

Muhammed's words were written down by his followers on everything from scraps of parchment to dried camel ribs.

After he died, these fragments were collected and compiled into one book. Despite the fact that much of the Quran is scrambled and confused, Muslims claim it is copied from an original now in heaven.

As Islam spread across the world, various sayings and teachings were developed. These were finally written down in the Hadith ("tradition"). A saying in the Hadith is called a sunna or custom. This is thought to describe the way Muhammed thought or acted in a given situation" (So What's the Difference, p. 67).

#### Quran Quotes

When the sacred months are over, slay the idolaters wherever you find them. Arrest them, besiege them, and lie in ambush everywhere for them. If they repent and take to prayer and render the alms levy, allow them to go their way. God is forgiving and merciful. Sura 9:5 at-Taubah 9:5

Strike terror (into the hearts of) the enemies of God and your enemies. Surah 8:60 al-Anfal 8:60

Fight (kill) them (non-Muslims), and God will punish, (torment) them by your hands, cover them with shame. Surah 9:14 at-Taubah 9:14

I will instill terror into the hearts of the unbelievers, smite ye above their necks and smite all their finger-tips off them. It is not ye who slew them; it was God. Surah 8:12-17 al-Anfal 8:12-17

Believers, take neither Jews nor Christians for your friends. They are friends with one another. Whoever of you seeks their friendship will become one of their number. Allah does not guide the wrongdoers. Sura 5:51 al-Ma'idah 5:51

Prophet, make war on the unbelievers and the hypocrites and deal rigorously with them. Hell shall be their home: an evil fate. Sura 9:73 at-Taubah 9:73

Fight against such of those to whom the Scriptures were given as believe neither in Allah nor the Last Day, who do not forbid what Allah and His apostle have forbidden and do not embrace the true faith until they pay tribute out of hand and are utterly subdued. Sura 9:29 at-Taubah 9:29

Mohammed is Allah's apostle. Those who follow him are ruthless to the unbelievers but merciful to one another. Sura 48:29 Al-Fath 48:29

Let those who would exchange the life of this world for the hereafter, fight for the cause of Allah; whether they die or conquer, We shall richly reward them. Sura 4:74 an-Nisa' 4:74

Fight for the sake of Allah those that fight against you, but do not attack them first. Allah does not love the aggressors. Kill them wherever you find them. Drive them out of the places from which they drove you. Idolatry is worse than carnage. But do not fight them within the precincts of the Holy Mosque unless they attack you there; Sura 2:190-1 al-Baqarah 2:190-191

Believers, why is it that when it is said to you "March in the cause of Allah" you linger slothfully in the land? Are you content with that life in preference to the life to come? Few indeed are the blessings of this life, compared to those of the life to come. Sura 9:38 at-Taubah 9:38

Whether unarmed or well equipped, march on and fight for the cause of Allah with your wealth and your persons. Sura 9:41 at-Taubah 9:41

Ye (Muslims) are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind... Surah 3:110 Al-Imran 3:110

If any one desires a religion other than Islam, never will it be accepted of him. Surah 3:85 Al-Imran 3:85

And fight them on, until there is no more tumult (seduction) or oppression, and there prevail justice, and faith in God (and the religion becomes Islam). Surah

2:193 al-Baqarah 2:193

And if you are slain, or die in the way of Allah, forgiveness and mercy from Allah are far better than all they could amass." Surah 3:157 Al-Imran 3:157

Fight those who do not believe in Allah, nor in the latter day, nor do they prohibit what Allah and His Apostle have prohibited, nor follow the religion of truth, (which is Islam that abolishes all other religions ) of the people of the Book, (meaning the Jews and the Christians ) until they pay the Jizya (the tax imposed upon them) with willing submission and feel themselves subdued. (with humiliation and submission to the government of Islam.) 9:29 . (Commentary in parenthesis is from the Tafsir Al-Jalalein. i.e., Al-Jalalein Interpretation of the Koran.) at-Taubah 9:29  
Hadith Quotes (Hadith is the second most important writing in Islam, following the Quran)

Narrated Abdullah: Allah's Messenger said, "The blood of a Muslim who confesses that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah and that I am His Messenger, cannot be shed except in three cases: in Qisas (equality in punishment) for murder, a married person who commits illegal sexual intercourse and the one who reverts from Islam (Apostate) and leaves the Muslims." Bukhari, volume 9, #17

Narrated Ali, "Whenever I tell you a narration from Allah's messenger, by Allah, I would rather fall down from the sky, then ascribe a false statement to him, but if I tell you something between me and you, (not a Hadith), then it was indeed a trick (i.e., I may say things just to cheat my enemy). No doubt I heard Allah's messenger saying, "During the last days there will appear some young foolish people, who will say the best words, but their faith will not go beyond their throats (i.e. they will leave the faith) and will go out from their religion as an arrow goes out of the game. So, wherever you find them, kill them, for whoever kills them shall have reward on the Day of Resurrection. Bukhari volume 9, #64

I have been ordered by God to fight with people till they bear testimony to the fact that there is no God but Allah

and that Mohammed is his messenger, and that they establish prayer and pay Zakat (money). If they do it, their blood and their property are safe from me (see Bukhari Vol. I, p. 13).

Mohammed said, "I have been ordered to fight with the people till they say, none has the right to be worshipped but Allah." Hadith vol. 4:196

Mohammed also said, "Know that paradise is under the shades of the swords." Hadith vol 4:73

Mohammed said, "Whoever changes his Islamic religion, kill him." Hadith vol. 9:57

Mohammed said: "No Muslim should be killed for killing a Kafir (infidel). " Hadith vol. 9:50

Mohammed said to the Jews "The earth belongs to Allah and His apostle, and I want to expel you from this land (the Arabian Peninsula), so, if anyone owns property, he is permitted to sell it. " Hadith vol. 4:392

Mohammed's last words were: "Turn the pagans (non-Muslims) out of the Arabian Peninsula." Hadith vol. 5:716

Mohammed once was asked: what is the best deed for the Muslim next to believing in Allah and His Apostle? His answer was : "To participate in Jihad in Allah's cause" Al Bukhari vol. 1:25

Mohammed was quoted as saying : "I have been ordered to fight with the people till they say, none has the right to be worshipped but Allah" Al Bukhari vol. 4:196

Mohammed also said, "The person who participates in (Holy Battles) in Allah's cause and nothing compels him to do so except belief in Allah and His Apostle, will be recompensed by Allah either with a reward, or booty (if he survives) or will be admitted to paradise (if he is killed)." Al Bukhari vol. 1:35.