

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.

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