

## 9/11 – Seeking Peace Fifteen Years Later

Sept 11, 2016 - Brad Bailey

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God’s call to peace...

### 1. Live at peace with everyone

*If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. - Romans 12:18*

### 2. Start with the heart

Matthew 7:3-5

### 3. Make every effort

*“...make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.” Romans 14:19; Ephesians 4:3; Hebrews 12:14*

*“Peace, like war, must be waged. It must be waged courageously, persistently, creatively, with imagination, heart, and wisdom.” - Glen Stassen*

### 4. Share the Gospel of Peace

Colossians 1:19-20

*For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

### 5. Seek the Peace of the City (The Common Good)

*“... seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.” - Jeremiah 29:7*

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Intro

Today is the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a day that changed the world dynamics.

I imagine everyone who is old enough seems to remember exactly where they were on morning of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001....15 year ago this morning.

**On that morning we awoke and discovered something horrendous was happening... we watched the horrific loss of life. Ultimately there were 2,996 who lost their lives... and over 6,000 others injured.**

- **Last year** my family had a chance to **visit NY** for the first time...and we went to the 9/11 memorial...and then the museum now opened beneath where the towers stood.
- Once again **brought back** to the **horror** and the **profound loss**.

**But I also remember that moment** on 9-11 when the basic sense of **horror took on a darker reality. Perhaps you recall this as well as you watched the events unfold that morning...when we began to realize that it was not an accident...it was an act. We realized that this was an act of intention...an act of violence. This was not an accident...this was an attack.**

> **Beneath the horror there was hatred.**

**On that day we all began to awaken to the depths of hatred that have grown in our world.**

**Today we want to stop and remember those whose lives were lost that day...sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, fathers, and mothers.**

**But we also stop to listen...to let God speak to us....about what is inside of us.**

Today...**the shock** of those events **may have worn off a little...**but the deep distrust...suspicions and fears and hatred continues to be sown.

This is especially true in our relationship with Muslims.

**On that day 15 years ago... we were given an opportunity to reduce the reality of good and bad to “us and them”...and for many in the west...the “them” became Muslims.**

To consider what arose in how so many of us may have begun to feel towards Muslims is hard. There can be **suspicion and sympathy**.

There can be the **natural desire to distinguish** between **what “type” of Muslims**.

I want to acknowledge that if you find that question in you...wanting to relate to a group of lives but feel uncertain because you sense there are different “types”...and it makes it challenging... two things that may help to understand.

Muslims know that better than you...they know that the same beliefs can be interpreted and lead to very different directions. Muslims understand the distinction better than any of us.

Secondly... realize that it is the same issue that we have. I have often said that the first time you refer to yourself as a Christian... the second thing someone wants to know, though rarely says, is, “What kind of Christian?” Rae you like Jesus who seems at least admirable in ways. Or are like the Westboro Baptist group the media often notes...who go protesting with signs that declare “God hates fags” and protest at the funerals of our fallen military to decry them? [1,2]

**In the midst of many questions... our focus is to hear God’s call to peace... to be peacemakers.**

Jesus taught us,

***“Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God.” - Matthew 5:9***

He tells us that it is those who seek peace who God can call His children...who God sees as reflecting His image in the world. That is a serious statement to take in.

In a time of conflict...peacemaking can seem out of pace. In a world where **religious affiliations seem so at odds**... especially between Muslims and Christians... peacemaking **may seem naïve... pie-in-the-sky... idealistic... and even dangerous.**

> **But Jesus**...was **quite serious**... and knew exactly what was involved.

**He told his fellow Jewish listeners a story to challenge their understanding. We often refer to this story as the Parable of the Good Samaritan. A fellow Jewish man is traveling a mountainous road...is jumped by bandits who leave him dying. A fellow Jewish man...religious leaders comes upon him...and leaves him to die. Another ...does the same. Finally...a Samaritan comes along...and this would be the point that a Jewish hearer of the day might boo and hiss...for the Samaritans were deemed the unclean and unfaithful...racially and culturally enemies.** Jesus tells how he cared for the man...and the point he brings home is that the one who acted most righteously could be a Samaritan. He did not say he was more righteous ...but that he **acted more righteously**...and the **background would suggest** that there would be **quite a parallel** to telling **Christians about the Muslim who acted more righteously.**

**That truth is essential for us to hear ourselves. We must hear what the heaven’s are seeking for us to understand.**

### **James 3:17-18 (NIV)**

*But 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.*

The very idea of “peacemaking” can seem out of place among typical Evangelical church environments. We value truth and perhaps have found that so much of what is referred to as “peacemaking” has been about giving up truth...disregarding truth for the sake of a peace that may be a false peace.

So I want to offer a **little clarity** about what *Evangelical peacemaking* is. A man by the name of Rick Love has given some of the best thought to this challenge. Rick serves as the International director of Frontiers Missions...and then gave his life to helping to lead Evangelical Christians into thoughtful peacemaking. He did his doctorate studying such...has written books to offer guidance...and has helped lead our Vineyard movement in this area. So I want to invite you to hear Rick clarify the box that such peacemaking fits.

SHOW: What Box Are You In - 6:20 long –<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wqfhXygzd4w>

Explains ‘evangelical peacemaking is not in the boxes many want to put them in...

Not ‘inter-faith’ box...but rather multi-faith cooperation

Not pacifist box – respect both pacifist and just war views, but embrace the just peacemaking which emphasizes all that can be done for peace

Not liberal box...yes to social justice but are ‘both and’ personal reconciliation and social... that Jesus taught exclusive truth claims and inclusive love aims.

As I hope you could hear from Rick, there is value in understanding our unique approach. I want to quickly share some guiding principles that are also drawn from Rick. [3]

### **God’s call to peace...**

#### **1. Live at peace with everyone**

### **Romans 12:18 (NIV)**

*If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*

He says... “*With everyone*”... how much easier if we could choose some to leave out...but he we are called to live at peace with EVERYONE.

He says... “*As far as it depends on you*”...the **responsibility is on us**. We are not responsible for what others do...but for what we do.

He also begins...*“If possible.”* The Scriptures understand that we don’t control others... and so... peacemaking is not always peace achieving

## **2. Start with the heart**

Start with our own issues...resist the blame game.

### **Matthew 7:3-5 (NIV)**

"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? <sup>4</sup> How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? <sup>5</sup> You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

It’s so common when we feel attacked... when we have conflict...to form a courtroom in our heads...where we develop the whole presentation. The problem is...wee like to **portray our best** and the others worst. In the same way...

*We tend to compare the best representation of Christianity with the worst expressions of Islam.*

We naturally want to espouse how those who follow Christ are peaceful...while at least some Muslims follow a militant understanding of jihad...holy war.

It can help to realize that some claimed the authority of the church during the Crusades that sought to take land from Muslim enemies. It can be helpful to consider how those felt who were burned at the stake for heresy during the Reformation. It can be helpful to consider how native Americans may have felt when those who came to their land used force while claiming they were trying to convert the...or how those claiming to be representing Christians came terrorizing African families and enslaving them as animals... or the work of the Klu Klux Klan in the years that followed. One wrong does not justify another wrong...but it causes us to stop and realize that we may not be judging others as fairly as we might think. We need to stop and really consider how Jesus’ command affects how we relate to Muslims when he said: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” (Matthew 7:12)

Start with humility of heart... looking at our part no matter how equal or not it is.

## **3. Make every effort**

Peacemaking is hard. It’s **not passive. We hear this in reference to what we must do to make peace.**

### **Romans 14:19 (NIV)**

*“...make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.”*

### **Ephesians 4:3 (NIV)**

*“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”*

**Hebrews 12:14 (NIV)**

***“Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy...”***

Glen Stassen wrote...

***“Peace, like war, must be waged. It must be waged courageously, persistently, creatively, with imagination, heart, and wisdom.”***

Hatred is often simply cold indifference...that needs to be warmed by relationship.

**MY EXPERIENCE –**

During the first days of the 9/11 events... as the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary approached.... Convicted that I had never reached out... the global animosity was only more saturated...and I could imagine that it was felt locally by Muslims in our community. So I wrote to a few leaders...and that led to meeting Usman Madha. **Usman was** formerly the Director of Administration and Public Relations at King Fahad Mosque. Met again over the past couple weeks. What a gift this relationship has been. Usman was born in Burma...grandmother from India... lived most of his life in the US since the age of 18...as well as work in Saudi Arabia.

Would you welcome my friend Usman to come share with us.

[Usman came up and shared in response to these two questions...]

1. What have you and fellow Muslims faced on and following the events of 9/11?
2. What would you like those who identify with Christ (as “Christians”) to better understand that might help us relate more freely and respectfully with those who identify as Muslims?

[I would value an **opportunity for you** to be able to **engage with Usman more... ask some questions** you have. So we are going to both have some time of open Q & A after our gathering...in the room on the **north lot called the Station.**]

I'd like to quickly note two more principles God gives us for being those who seek peace...

**4. Share the Gospel of Peace**

Our Scriptures culminate in what is referred to as the Gospel...and particularly the Gospel of PEACE. (5x in NT)

The God of peace has sent the Prince of peace to bring a world of peace

It's helpful to understand that while it is often reflected in reference to the cross...as the that which captures Christ's sacrifice for us... that very symbol was used and became a sign of war upon Muslims through the conflicts and crusades of the past.

The word Gospel means the good news...but more like the breaking grand news...the announcement that changes everything. The Gospel or 'good news' of peace...is that God has come to reconcile us to all that has been separated. [4]

Through Christ...God is reconciling us to Himself, ourselves, others, and creation itself.

Jesus came to reverse from all of these alienations. So he calls us to multi-dimensional reconciliation

**Colossians 1:19-20 (NIV)**

*For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

**Finally, we are to...**

#### **5. Seek the Peace of the City (The Common Good)**

**It's natural when we feel that our group is threatened to want to focus on our needs...and protect what we need. That is why God spoke something revolutionary to those in exile. Through the prophet Jeremiah.**

**Jeremiah 29:7**

*"... seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."*

This is so profound when you consider that Jeremiah brought God's Word to those in exile... violence had ravaged them and they are now living as refugees in foreign lands...often oppressed. They are called to embrace that there is a common good...and to seek the common good.

I believe that speaks powerfully to us to consider the common good ...to love our neighbors as ourselves.

The peace being referred to here is not simply having more personal ease of mind. The Hebrew term is "Shalom" and refers to all dimensions of peace.

Cornelius Plantinga explains *shalom* as:

...the webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfillment, and delight...Shalom means universal flourishing, wholeness and delight—a rich state of affairs in

which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts fruitfully employed, a state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder as its Creator and Savior opens doors and welcomes the creatures in whom he delights. Shalom, in other words, is the way things ought to be.

CLOSING: Small group prayer” I want to invite us to have an opportunity to pray for such peace.

First... a minute personally... a minute silently...and then joining 2 or 3 others around you... and pray for peace.

RESOURCES: I found the work of Rick Love to provide the framework that was consistent with my position as an Evangelical, Vineyard pastor, and personal perspective. The five key points are fully drawn from his summary of Jesus’ plan for peace. (Comprehensive Peace Plan - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GdyDyny9eMo>) Rick Love is the former international Director of Frontiers, President of Peace Catalyst, and consultant to Vineyard on Muslim Relations.

NOTES:

1. It can be helpful to realize that what are often referred to as “moderate” Muslims (perhaps not a description they would choose), share many of the same feelings we do.

Both of us have some who espouse hate and superiority from pulpits

Both have those who have claimed affiliation while using a form of religious ideas to kill others...from Crusades...to Ku Klux Klan to some today.

Both of us have very different ways in which the faith has been drawn into power and politics... and related to the state.

Neither of us wants to be judged by what some who claim the name of our religion do..

Neither of us wants to be responsible for what some do in the name we identify with.

Neither of us wants to see those who share our faith targeted to be killed.

It’s helpful to grasp that ISIS has killed and even targeted more Muslims than any other particular group... including suicide and car bombs in strictly Muslim shopping areas.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dean-obeidallah/isis-defeat-muslims\\_b\\_10825028.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dean-obeidallah/isis-defeat-muslims_b_10825028.html)

On Sunday in July of this year ... bomb killed 165 in Iraq... Sunday’s suicide bombing struck a busy shopping district in Baghdad as families shopped for celebrations for the end of the holy month of Ramadan on Monday.



It was the single deadliest bombing to hit the Iraqi capital in more than a decade of war and insurgency, coming amid a series of almost daily attacks by the so-called Islamic State.

Many people were sharing an image bearing the slogan: “Isis is bombing Muslims in Muslim countries in the holy month of Ramadan. And you still say Isis represents Islam?” -

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/baghdad-bombing-attack-isis-islamic-state-iraq-ramadan-shia-most-victims-muslims-killed-a7120086.html>

2. It can be rightfully and fairly noted that the Bible includes great acts of violence, a few of which God calls for as the Israelites face opposition when they seek to enter the land God was leading them to. This is a topic which deserves more time to consider ...but briefly I would suggest that the only violence that the Bible clearly affirms are these incidents which secured those God was initially calling to know Him and to redeem the world through. God then flows towards the work of bearing and bringing peace.

3. Rick Love’s short video explanation of “What Box Are We In?” was valuable for our context in which it is difficult to leave unsettled fears that the call to “peacemaking” might imply fully embracing the position of certain boxes including inter-faith, pacifist, or liberal. This is a brilliant and gracious summation of those differences.

More of Rick’s work can be found at: <http://ricklove.net>

4. As Rick Love describes, and is commonly acknowledged, 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 *Injīl*, or Gospel), were (in their original manuscripts) the verbally inspired, inerrant word of God.

The central difference lies in the nature of receiving another prophet who re-casts the New Testament as having incorporated some false understanding of Jesus – including his divinity and therefore a rejection of the Trinitarian nature of God.. This includes not believing that Jesus actually died as an atoning sacrifice for our sins nor rose from the dead.