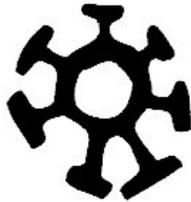


Discussion Guide

# Different Books, Common Word

Baptists and Muslims

A Documentary by [EthicsDaily.com](http://EthicsDaily.com)



[EthicsDaily.com](http://EthicsDaily.com)  
P. O. Box 150506  
Nashville, TN 37215-0506  
[www.ethicsdaily.com](http://www.ethicsdaily.com)  
[info@ethicsdaily.com](mailto:info@ethicsdaily.com)

## A Note About Viewing

"Different Books, Common Word: Baptists and Muslims" is a 58-minute documentary produced by EthicsDaily.com. Beginning in January 2010, it was supplied to ABC-TV stations through an arrangement with the Islamic Society of North America, the Interfaith Broadcasting Commission and ABC.

The DVD contains the original version of the documentary as broadcast on ABC-TV stations across the country.

The documentary weaves together five stories of Baptist-Muslim engagement in different parts of the country. For your convenience, DVD "chapters" have been created to represent each storyline.

The DVD also contains several deleted scenes. They are:

- Muslims in Beaumont, Texas, discuss their efforts to be good neighbors
- Farhana Swati identifies what mosques can learn from churches
- Sayyid Syeed talks about his family, including twin boys named Moses (Musa) and Jesus (Esa).
- Daoud Abudiab comments on Baptist churches that teach Islam is a wicked religion
- Ingrid Mattson talks about the centrality of scripture in both Muslim and Baptist traditions
- David Goatley and Sayyid Syeed discuss Baptist and Muslim extremists
- Amir Faezi talks about peace and justice in Islam
- Mitch Randall remembers the role his Creek Indian heritage has played in his family's spiritual life
- Imad Enchassi tells an important story about Prophet Muhammad and the Christian king of Abyssinia

One or more of these features may be of special interest to your viewing group.

## Introduction

Imad Enchassi recounts his experience of the immediate aftermath of the Oklahoma City bombing on April 19, 1995, which destroyed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building and killed 168 people.

Do you remember the bombing? What was your reaction? Who did you think was responsible at first? What did you think when it was revealed who actually committed the crime?

The following texts are shown on screen:

Worship God, and join nothing with Him; and do good -  
to parents, relatives, orphans, to the needy,  
to neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers ...

The Qur'an  
(4:36)

Jesus said:

“Love the Lord your God  
with all your heart and  
with all your soul and  
with all your mind.”

This is the first and greatest commandment.

And the second is like it:

“Love your neighbor as yourself.”

The Gospel According to Matthew 22:37-39

Ask Baptists in the room how familiar they are with the text from the Qur'an. Have they ever read this text or other parts of the Qur'an for themselves? Likewise, ask Muslims in the room how familiar they are with the text from the New Testament.

Some of the people in the opening montage look more like you than others. What were some of the impressions or thoughts that ran through your mind when you saw people in the montage who were unlike you in some way?



Washington, D.C.

We meet Sayyid Syyeed, national director of the Office for Interfaith and Community Alliances at the Islamic Society of North America, whose office is next to the Supreme Court building.

Syed says: "Each time there were statements made by certain Baptist leaders, there were statements made by other Baptists to assure Muslims that they don't represent all Baptists. This has to be done by our side as well."

Syed is making a crucial point: that people must be willing to denounce extremists in their own religious tradition if they expect other faiths to denounce their extremists.

What do you think about this line of reasoning, especially in light of calls from some quarters that one should not criticize faith leaders or name others publicly?

On screen comes a quote from Robert Parham, executive director of the Baptist Center for Ethics, who on Sept. 11, 2001, wrote to constituents: "When some quickly denounce Muslims and demonize them, we must avoid the false witness that universalizes harmful attributes to those of different religions."

Whether you are Baptist or Muslim, what were some of your feelings on Sept. 11, 2001?



Norman, Oklahoma

Mitch Randall, the Baptist pastor of North Haven Church and one-quarter Creek Indian, recalls being mistaken for a Muslim on Sept. 11, 2001, and consequently verbally abused.

Have you ever been verbally abused by someone because of your religious or ethnic identity? Share your experience.

Imad Enchassi, imam of the Islamic Society of Greater Oklahoma City, tells a story about a Baptist church leaving flowers and cards at his mosque after Sept. 11, 2001, adding that the single act of kindness started a relationship that he still cherishes.

Would you or your church/mosque ever reach out to a congregation or group of a different faith in similar kinds of circumstances? Why or why not? What would be some consequences - positive or negative - of doing so?



Memphis, Tennessee

Toni Campbell, a Baptist and an assistant professor at Southwest Tennessee Community College, says she grew up in a town where everyone was basically like her.

Did you grow up in a community where everyone was basically like you? What do you think some of the consequences of that have been? Do you still mostly move and operate in communities where everyone is basically like you? Why or why not?

Campbell says she expected Ishtiaq Bercha's Muslim faith to be like what she had seen on television or in the movies: "very fundamentalist, very narrow-minded."

Whether you are Baptist or Muslim, is that the impression of Islam you have from television or movies? Why? If that's not the impression you have of Islam, why or why not?



Lake Charles, Louisiana and Port Arthur, Texas

Sam Tolbert, pastor of Greater Saint Mary Missionary Baptist Church in Lake Charles, recounts how he met members of the Muslim business community when he was serving on the Lake Charles City Council.

Does it surprise you that a Baptist pastor would help Muslim businesspeople? Why or why not?

Farhana Swati, managing director and co-owner of Pak Oil, says her neighbors in Port Arthur, Texas, have told her, "What we hear on the news is totally different from what we see in you or your family."

Does what you hear on the news - about Baptists or Muslims - affect how you deal (or don't deal) with people sharing that identity? Does that situation bother you? If so, what are you going to do about it?



Columbia, Tennessee

Daoud Abudiab, president of the Islamic Center of Columbia, recounts the morning in February 2008 when the center was firebombed.

Have you ever been the victim of a violent act because of your religious or ethnic identity? How did it make you feel?

Have you ever reached out to victims of a violent act because of their religious or ethnic identity? Why or why not? Did any sort of faith teaching play a role in your decision?



Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Bruce Prescott, executive director of Mainstream Baptists of Oklahoma, says the following:

“When you’re talking about the prejudice that Baptists have toward Muslims, what they’re really most concerned to do is to assert the superiority of their own faith. I think most Baptists are willing to let Muslims worship as long as they know that they’re second-class citizens and that they don’t have any equal space in the public square. They’re not going to prohibit them from worshipping. They’re just doing the best they can to make sure that the predominant form of faith in the public square is their brand of faith.”

Do you agree with Prescott’s assessment of general Baptist feeling on this matter? Why or why not?

Prescott also shares about taking out an ad in the local newspaper taking issue with Jerry Falwell’s 2002 comment, “I think Muhammad was a terrorist.”

Whether you are Baptist or Muslim, what would you have thought about seeing such an ad?

Whether you are Baptist or Muslim, do you feel a need to “apologize” to members of other faiths for something said or done by members of your own religious tradition?



Lake Charles, Louisiana and Port Arthur, Texas

Sam Tolbert and Farhana Swati talk about combining resources to aid victims of the hurricanes along the Gulf Coast.

Does it surprise you that a Baptist pastor and a Muslim businesswoman worked together in this fashion? Why or why not?



Memphis, Tennessee

Ishtiaq Bercha, a medical physicist at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, says, "There are a lot of things that we have in common as opposed to the things which we do not believe in." He cites "love for neighbor" as something both Baptists and Muslims believe in.

In what ways have Baptists and Muslims demonstrated love for neighbor? Has this common belief trumped the differences between Baptists and Muslims? Why or why not?



Washington, D.C.

Sayyid Syeed and David Goatley, executive secretary-treasurer of the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention, discuss the 2007 letter "A Common Word Between Us and You," sent to Christian leaders by Muslim leaders. The letter sought to identify common ground based on love for God and love for neighbor - commands found in both traditions.

Talk about how the common ground of love for God and love for neighbor might help illuminate a path forward for Baptists and Muslims.



Columbia, Tennessee

Kenny Anderson is pastor of Mt. Calvary Missionary Baptist Church in Columbia, Tennessee. He talks about wanting to show the world that Christians do not promote hate.

Do you think the landscape of Baptist-Muslim relations would be significantly different if more Baptist pastors thought and responded like Kenny Anderson? If you think so, how does Anderson's kind of response make a difference?

Daoud Abudiab says, "I was not surprised to see kindness from the Christian community. I was surprised that the individuals who firebombed our center quoted the Bible and said that what we were doing in that building was illegal according to the Bible."

"Every document can be distorted," Abudiab goes on to say.

How does a faith community go about establishing whether its central documents(s) are being distorted by some members of the community?



Memphis, Tennessee

Toni Campbell and Ishtiaq Bercha reflect on the birth of their son, Liam, and his future life of faith.

Toni Campell says, "I knew that some day Liam would make the decision to be a Christian or not be a Christian."

If you are a parent, do you ever doubt or question which faith route your child(ren) will take? Why or why not?

Ishtiaq Bercha says, "I'm hoping that he [Liam] will have a very positive role in bringing people together."

What must a person do to bring Baptists and Muslims together? Do you believe it's possible to bring Baptists and Muslims together?



Boston, Massachusetts

In January 2009, 40 Baptist and 40 Muslim leaders gathered outside Boston for the first-ever national dialogue between Baptists and Muslims. The weekend began at an Islamic center on Friday night, at which time Muslims prayed and Baptists were invited to observe.

Whether you are Baptist or Muslim, how do you feel when you see Baptists in the same room with Muslims and watching them pray?

If you are Muslim, have you ever attended a Baptist service? If you are Baptist, have you ever attended a Muslim service? Discuss your impressions and what the experience was like.

Sayyid Syeed says Muslims want to learn from Baptists about the latter's role in establishing religious liberty in the United States. He goes on to say that Muslims are stepping in Baptists' shoes.

Have you ever thought about what Baptists and Muslims might learn from each other? What is something you might learn from the other faith tradition?



Columbia, Tennessee

Kenny Anderson quotes the Bible and says, "They will know we are Christians by our love." He adds, "Not by our statements."

Discuss the role of statements about love vs. love itself. When is either appropriate?

Daoud Abudiab says, "When this [bombing] happened, we heard from some local clergymen, some city officials. But if I had to be honest about it, the number of people who expressed solidarity or dismay at what happened -- verbally, on an airwave, on the radio or in the newspaper -- would not register on an adding machine because it would be a lot less than one percent."

What do you think about Abudiab's comment? How does it make you feel? Why didn't more clergy or laypeople respond?



Norman, Oklahoma

Orhan Osman, executive director of the Institute for Interfaith Dialog in Oklahoma City, talks about surprising even himself when he said yes to an invitation to go on a “mission trip” with Baptists.

Why is the notion of a Muslim going abroad with Baptists - or vice-versa - so odd?

Mitch Randall, who became friends with Orhan Osman, recalls hearing negative statements about Muslims from Baptist pulpits while growing up in Oklahoma.

Whether you are Baptist or Muslim, did your religious leaders paint those of different faiths in a negative light? Why? What has been the effect of that on you? On your community? On the world?



Lake Charles, Louisiana and Port Arthur, Texas

Sam Tolbert and Farhana Swati discuss taking steps to help a church in Orange, Texas, get a loan to purchase a new property.

Swati, though a Muslim, took action to help a Christian church. Why? How do you reconcile helping others who believe differently about God than you do?



Memphis, Tennessee

As you see images of the dedication at First Baptist Church in Memphis, how does that make you feel?

Toni Campbell says she was asked to choose a “life verse” for Liam at his dedication. She chose Micah 6:8, which says, “He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

So Liam, the son of a Christian and a Muslim, is given a life verse from Jewish tradition. Present are all three strands of the Abrahamic faiths.

Some are comfortable with this kind of service, whereas others are not. Where do you stand and why?



Washington, D.C.

“We need to have that courage to move ahead,” says Ingrid Mattson, president of the Islamic Society of North America, speaking about “loud voices” that might try to keep Baptists and Muslims apart and at odds with each other.

What gives you courage?

“People think that in order for Baptists and Muslims to agree and do anything, that I have to water down my religion,” says Mohamed Magid, vice-president of the Islamic Society of North America. He counters that belief by saying, “By working with other people, you assert your own belief” and “dig deeper in the Scripture, where it calls you for service.”

Have you ever worked on a project with people of a different faith? How did the process affect your own faith?

Roy Medley, general secretary of American Baptist Churches USA, meets with Sayyid Syeed in Washington, D.C., to discuss steps forward for Baptists and Muslims.

“Our faiths also teach us that we are to work for the good of our neighbor,” says Medley. “Both of us are compelled by the teachings of our faith to do good for the other and to the other.”

Whether you are Baptist or Muslim, do you feel that members of the other faith have worked, or are working, for your good? Discuss.



Columbia, Tennessee

Daoud Abudiab and Kenny Anderson talk in the new Islamic Center of Columbia.

Abudiab tells Anderson, “You shared what you believe about Christianity and about the teachings of Christ. You more or less witnessed to us, about the love that’s within the church according to the teachings of Christ.”

How did Anderson witness to his faith? What was the result of that witness?

Abudiab also says, "We appreciate every Christian who acted Jesus-like. I also would encourage Christians to see that we also acted Jesus-like. We didn't point fingers. We didn't demonize the Bible. We didn't demonize Christians." He goes on to say his choice was out of respect for what he knew about his Christian friends.

What can Abudiab's comments and experience teach us?



Orange, Texas

Raymond Young, pastor of Greater St. Paul Christian Fellowship, gives Farhana Swati and Sam Tolbert a tour of his church's facility, which was purchased on account of help Swati had provided.

"When that happened," says Young in reference to Swati's help, "it basically changed my whole perception on things because I felt like that was God's way of saying, 'You're not here alone.'"

Has the help of someone unlike yourself ever changed your perception on things?



Conclusion

What do you think when Toni and Ishtiaq Bercha carry Liam down the aisle at First Baptist Church during the dedication service?