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A Conversation on Religion and Politics with Jon Meacham and Sally Quinn


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The Dalai Lama at 75
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Six steps to real interfaith work

By **Bob Roberts**. *Pastor*

June 21, 2010; 3:13 PM ET

How can conservative Christians and Muslims build positive and productive relationships with each other without compromising their faith?

After being part of last week's [Global Leadership Forum on Evangelicals and Muslims](#), hosted at Georgetown University, I am convinced there are six steps we must take to move beyond all the interfaith dialogue to action.

The meeting focused on how Christians who follow the Great Commission and Muslims who follow the Dawa can get along and actually partner to make the world a better place. Several of the Muslim panelist, as well as people I've been hearing around the world believe passionately that freedom of religion is the key to the future of faith in the world. With the world connected as it is we have to make space for each other.

The meeting was sponsored by the Institute for Global Engagement (IGE) and the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding (ACMCU) at Georgetown University. [Chris Seiple](#) of IGE and [John Esposito](#), the Founding Director of ACMCU were the driving forces.

Was it worth it? Definitely. Was it enough? No. Here's what we all must do to move beyond polite conversation.

First, recognizing that we all live in a connected world. All religions are all places. Christianity is flourishing in traditional Muslim places and Islam is flourishing in traditional Christian places. This demands a different kind of relationship with one another. It is a great opportunity for peace or a new pretext for long-term conflict and fear. There are no private conversations anymore, everything is public - what does that say about what we say, how we say it, and where we say it? We must have a single message that is clear.

Second, we need a new platform to relate. The interfaith dialogues are talk - not action. Often they are also driven by liberal Christians and moderate Muslims. Conservative Christians and Muslims do not want to compromise their faith in order to have a relationship. If getting along, means denying what we believe the truth is, then we can't go there. BUT, if there is a place that says we do have "irreconcilable" theological differences but the best of our faiths teach us to work together then we meet and partner around that.

Third, begin the relationship with the hand - not the head. Most of us in the room were all speaking heads. Most of our people don't read the books we read or follow the issues we do. As a result our relationship is more high level intellectual and academic. If we are building our cities, and we realize we are all citizens and as a Muslim friend says "brothers in humanity" then let's start with the hand. What can we agree upon that needs fixing in our cities and do it, and as we work together, we begin to get to know one another and become friends and our heart is engaged. Only after we can care about each other and work together, are we ready to talk about our differences. Hand, heart, and then head. The current conversation starts with head, hoping for hand, and who knows about the heart.

Fourth, focus on the followers of the faiths and not the clerics, academics, and geopolitical leaders. High level talks don't change things - our people do. Once they begin to talk and build relationships, respect can come. The role of clerics should be to find ways we can connect our people to one another and then release them. If keeping our people true to their faith means isolating them from people of other religions - we are all in trouble in this connected world. We've had a multi-faith weekend with the mosque, and synagogue, cooking classes for the ladies, home reconstruction for the men. November 11-14 we are having a Global Faith Forum where world leaders are coming to speak. The whole concept is based on mission - from a conversation among ourselves to a conversation with others.

Fifth, make it personal. I've enjoyed getting to know Rabbi Jeremy and Imam Zia here in Dallas. They've been in my home and my wife learned how to cook Kosher/Halal food - its still fattening! We worked together at a home we redid together. I went to the brias ceremony for the rabbi's son a couple of weeks ago. On my way back from a staff retreat I helped the rabbi with his speech he'll be giving to ISNA in a couple of weeks. I love those guys - and they love me.

Sixth, pray. Pray for peace, God's will, and for understanding. I believe God hears all of our prayers. The only prayers he says he doesn't hear are from those people who say they know him, but live like hypocrites. God hears our prayers, not because we have our theology right, but because our heart is right and we seek

Bob Roberts is pastor of [Northwood Church](#) in Keller, Texas.

By Bob Roberts | June 21, 2010; 3:13 PM ET Save & Share:       



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"How can conservative Christians and Muslims build positive and productive relationships with each other without compromising their faith?"

Pastor Roberts you already have your answer in the Enlightenment ideal of the secular society coupled with total religious toleration as embodied in the first amendment to the Constitution of the USA.

Worship as you will, associate as you will, advocate your ideas as you will, but don't claim a privileged place in our society for your religion and stop trying to use the coercive powers of the secular government to maintain that privilege.

Posted by: poosky | June 22, 2010 4:22 PM

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Pastor Roberts,

Please learn about the laws under which the non-muslims live in the muslim lands .. All of them. Do not abandon them in your zeal to get along here in the west. Learn about Islam, and learn about the stealth jihad that Islam teaches since the days of Muhammad. Please speak up for the brutalized Christians and other non-muslims of Egypt, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia, Iran, Yemen, etc. etc. as you enter into a one on one cooking sessions with your Imam friends. There is no one speaking up for them around the world at the moment. The UN passes resolutions to protect Islam, but not one to protect the kaafirs living in the muslim lands.

Posted by: AKafir | June 22, 2010 12:57 AM

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Quran 9:23 O you who believe! Take not for Auliya (supporters and helpers) your fathers and your brothers if they prefer disbelief to Belief. And whoever of you does so, then he is one of the Zalimoon (wrong-doers, etc.).

Quran 53:29 Therefore withdraw from him who turns away from Our Reminder (this Quran) and desires nothing but the life of this world.

Quran 3:10 Verily, those who disbelieve, neither their properties nor their offspring will avail them whatsoever against Allah; and it is they who will be fuel of the Fire.

Quran 7:44 And the dwellers of Paradise will call out to the dwellers of the Fire (saying): "We have indeed found true what our Lord had promised us; have you also found true, what your Lord promised (warnings, etc.)?" They shall say: "Yes." Then a crier will proclaim between them: "The Curse of Allah is on the Zalimoon (polytheists and wrongdoers, etc.),"

Quran 60:4/5 Indeed there has been an excellent example for you in Ibrahim (Abraham) and those with him, when they said to their people: "Verily, we are free from you and whatever you worship besides Allah, we have rejected you, and there has started between us and you, hostility and hatred for ever, until you believe in Allah Alone," except the saying of Ibrahim (Abraham) to his father: "Verily, I will ask for forgiveness (from Allah) for you, but I have no power to do anything for you before Allah ." Our Lord! In You (Alone) we put our trust, and to You (Alone) we turn in repentance, and to You (Alone) is (our) final Return. Our Lord, make us not [objects of] torment for the disbelievers and forgive us, our Lord. Indeed, it is You who is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

Quran 5:51: O you who believe! Take not the Jews and the Christians as Auliya (friends, protectors, helpers, etc.), they are but Auliya to one another. And if any amongst you takes them as Auliya, then surely he is one of them. Verily, Allah guides not those people who are the Zalimoon (polytheists and wrongdoers and unjust).

Quran 58:22 You (O Muhammad SAW) will not find any people who believe in Allah and the Last Day, making friendship with those who oppose Allah and His Messenger (Muhammad SAW), even though they were their fathers, or their sons, or their brothers, or their kindred (people). For such He has written Faith in their hearts, and strengthened them with Rooh (proofs, light and true guidance) from Himself. And We will admit them to Gardens (Paradise) under which rivers flow, to dwell therein (forever). Allah is pleased with them, and they with Him. They are the Party of Allah. Verily, it is the Party of Allah that will be the successful.

Posted by: AKafir | June 22, 2010 12:50 AM
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Bob,

I posted what follows for Eboo Patel. Maybe you can explain.

All the words on interfaith Dialog cannot sweep the words of Allah on other faiths. That is the central problem. Here is what Allah says on interfaith dialog:

Quran 3:28 Let not the believers take the disbelievers as Auliya (supporters, helpers, etc.) instead of the believers, and whoever does that will never be helped by Allah in any way, except if you indeed fear a danger from them. And Allah warns you against Himself (His Punishment), and to Allah is the final return.

Quran 3:85 And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted of him, and in the Hereafter he will be one of the losers.

Quran 3:118 O you who believe! Take not as (your) Bitanah (advisors, consultants, protectors, helpers, friends, etc.) those outside your religion (pagans, Jews, Christians, and hypocrites) since they will not fail to do their best to corrupt you. They desire to harm you severely. Hatred has already appeared from their mouths, but what their breasts conceal is far worse. Indeed We have made plain to you the Ayat (proofs, evidences, verses) if you understand.

Quran 4:144 O you who believe! Take not for Auliya (protectors or helpers or friends) disbelievers instead of believers. Do you wish to offer Allah a manifest proof against yourselves?

Posted by: AKafir | June 22, 2010 12:49 AM

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