



The Grace and Truth Study Guide

Introduction

The Grace and Truth Project was spawned during a gathering of about 50 international evangelical Christian leaders concerned about increasing alienation between Christians and Muslims. To counter this trend, they composed a statement proposing ways followers of Jesus can relate more biblically to Muslims. “Grace and Truth: Toward Christlike Relationships with Muslims” includes a detailed exposition and an abridged affirmation for readers to sign.

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”).

This study guide is designed primarily to help you wrestle with these issues in a small group or Sunday school class, but is also suitable for individual reflection. It is our hope that this study will challenge and inspire you concerning your relationship with Muslims. More importantly, we hope to help you think biblically about what it means to follow Jesus in the world today. So use this guide as a starting point for discussion. The questions will help you understand the main

issues and explore how you or your group might want to either affirm what is written or rewrite portions to make it more in line with your group or organization's thinking.

Some groups will prefer studying the Grace and Truth Exposition (the longer document) while others will prefer the Grace and Truth Affirmation (the shorter document). The questions for each are similar, except that the Exposition contains a section describing the Muslim world).

Study Questions for the Grace and Truth Exposition

For effective discussion, each participant should read the document (or section of the document) beforehand.

Read the first two sections of The Grace and Truth Exposition: "Introduction" and "An Accurate and Discerning Look at the Muslim World."

1. What are some of the issues raised and challenges noted in the introduction? Which aspects of this are most relevant to you and why?
2. Note the chart and brief commentary on the spectrum of Muslims in the world today. In what ways can this chart help you be more discerning in your understanding of Muslims? What parts of this chart are most helpful for you? What new insights (if any) have you gained?
3. The exposition lists four important points of theological similarity and difference between Muslims and Christians. What are some practical implications of the similarities for how we relate to Muslims? What are some practical implications

of the differences for how we relate to Muslims?

4. Concerning the massive diversity described within the Muslim world: what points seem most relevant to you?
5. How do you feel as you consider the range of diversity among Muslims? How does this impact your understanding? Do you see an understanding of this diversity affecting the issue of fear?
6. This section closes with a quote from Colin Chapman. What do you consider to be Chapman's most important point(s)? Are there any points that make you uncomfortable or that you would take issue with on biblical grounds?

Read the first two affirmations: "Be Faithful to God's Truth – the Whole Truth" and "Be Jesus-Centered in our Interaction."

1. Why are these two affirmations important for Christlike relationships with Muslims?
2. Why do you think they are the first two affirmations on the list?
3. What are the strengths of these affirmations? Weaknesses? Any concerns you have about the content of either of these two affirmations?
4. Would you like to rewrite any part of these affirmations? If so, which part?

Read the next three affirmations: "Be Truthful and Gracious in our Words and Witness," "Be Wise in our Words and Witness" and "Be Respectful and Bold in our Witness."

1. Why is it important to be both truthful and gracious when speaking to Muslims? Do you think it's important to be both truthful and gracious when speaking about Muslims? Why or why not? How does a Christian commitment to truth and grace impact our interaction with mass media?
2. How should a Christian commitment to wisdom impact our relationships with Muslims? How should a Christian commitment to wisdom impact our interaction with mass media, as it relates to Muslims? What is the role of discernment (biblical critical thinking) as we process information we receive from various sources about Islam or Muslims?
3. Being both respectful and bold in our witness is easier said than done. The exposition claims that “many of us tend to fall short on one side or the other (or both).” Do you feel that your group (your church, small group, or friends you identify with) tends to fall short on one side or the other? If so, where? Do you feel that you personally need to grow in one or both of these areas? What might it look like to become more Christlike in these ways?
4. What are the strengths of these three affirmations? Weaknesses? Any concerns you have about the content of any of these three affirmations?
5. Would you like to rewrite any part of these affirmations? If so, which part?

Read the next two affirmations: “Be Prudent in our Google-ized World” and “Be Persistent in our Call for Religious Freedom”

1. Why is prudence important in a “google-ized world? Do you agree that

Christians should be careful of what they say, in light of the fact that Muslims might “overhear”? What guidelines does Col 4:5-6 provide for living in a “google-ized world? Are there other biblical guidelines you can think of?

2. Do you have any thoughts about religious freedom for all people? Are there concrete steps you think the Lord might want you or your group to take in this area?
3. What are the strengths of these affirmations? Weaknesses? Any concerns you have about the content of either of these two affirmations?
4. Would you like to rewrite any part of these affirmations? If so, which part?

Read the last two affirmations: “Be Peaceable and Uncompromising in our Dialogue” and “Be Loving toward our Neighbors and our Enemies,” along with the conclusion.

1. What is the value of dialogue? Do you see any dangers in dialogue? If so, how could those be avoided?
2. How does the affirmation about loving neighbors and enemies impact you practically?
3. How well do you think the church in this country has shown love toward Muslims? How well do you feel you personally have shown love toward Muslims (in attitudes, actions or words)?
4. What are the strengths of these affirmations? Weaknesses? Any concerns you have about the content of either of these two affirmations?

5. Would you like to rewrite any part of these affirmations or the conclusion? If so, which part?
6. What part of the conclusion is most significant in your mind?

Study Questions for the Grace and Truth Affirmation

Read the first two affirmations: “Be Faithful to God’s Truth – the Whole Truth” and “Be Jesus-Centered in our Interaction.”

1. Why are these two affirmations important for Christlike relationships with Muslims?
2. What are the strengths of these affirmations? Weaknesses? Any concerns you have about the content of either of these two affirmations?
3. Would you like to rewrite any part of these affirmations? If so, which part?

Read the next three affirmations: “Be Truthful and Gracious in our Words and Witness,” “Be Wise in our Words and Witness” and “Be Respectful and Bold in our Witness.”

1. Why is it important to be both truthful and gracious when speaking to Muslims? Do you think it’s important to be both truthful and gracious when speaking about Muslims? Why or why not? How does a Christian commitment to truth and grace impact our interaction with mass media?

2. How should a Christian commitment to wisdom impact our relationships with Muslims? How should a Christian commitment to wisdom impact our interaction with mass media, as it relates to Muslims? What is the role of discernment (biblical critical thinking) as we process information we receive from various sources about Islam or Muslims?
3. Being both respectful and bold in our witness is easier said than done. Do you feel that your group (your church, small group, or friends you identify with) tends to fall short in one or the other of these? If so, where? Do you feel that you personally need to grow in one or both of these areas? What might it look like to become more Christlike in these ways?
4. What are the strengths of these affirmations? Weaknesses? Any concerns you have about the content of any of these three affirmations?
5. Would you like to rewrite any part of these affirmations? If so, which part?

Read the next two affirmations: “Be Prudent in our Google-ized World and “Be Persistent in our Call for Religious Freedom”

1. Why is prudence important in a “google-ized world? Do you agree that Christians should be careful of what they say, in light of the fact that Muslims might “overhear”? What guidelines does Col 4:5-6 provide for living in a “google-ized world? Are there other biblical guidelines you can think of?
2. Do you have any thoughts about religious freedom for all people? Are there concrete steps you think the Lord might want you or your group to take in this area?

3. What are the strengths of these affirmations? Weaknesses? Any concerns you have about the content of either of these two affirmations?
4. Would you like to rewrite any part of these affirmations? If so, which part?

Read the last two affirmations: “Be Peaceable and Uncompromising in our Dialogue” and “Be Loving toward All,” along with the conclusion.

1. What is the value of dialogue? Do you see any dangers in dialogue? If so, how could those be avoided?
2. How well do you think the church in this country has shown love toward Muslims? How well do you feel you personally have shown love toward Muslims (in attitudes, actions or words)?
3. What are the strengths of these affirmations? Weaknesses? Any concerns you have about the content of either of these two affirmations?
4. Would you like to rewrite any part of these affirmations or the conclusion? If so, which part?
5. What part of the conclusion is most significant in your mind?

Additional Reflection

One of the early versions of “Grace and Truth” included a point about the role of government as it relates to terrorism. 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. 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 nonviolently 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.

1. What's your response to this paragraph? What are the strengths of this affirmation? The weaknesses? Any concerns you have about its content?
2. Do you think this additional affirmation would strengthen the document or do you agree it is too controversial to warrant agreement from a wide spectrum of evangelicals?
3. Would you like to rewrite any part of this affirmation? If so, which part?