

Press Kit
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Different Books, Common Word

Baptists and Muslims

An hour-long documentary
produced by EthicsDaily.com

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EthicsDaily.com Produces TV Documentary

NASHVILLE, Tenn. - From Boston to the Bible Belt and from Beaumont to the nation's beltway, Baptists and Muslims are changing history with the way they change each other. Tired of being defined by extremists, some Baptists and Muslims in the United States have sought and found common ground: the common word in both traditions to love God and love neighbor. The courageous Baptists and Muslims in "Different Books, Common Word" will surprise you.

"Different Books, Common Word: Baptists and Muslims," produced by EthicsDaily.com, begins airing nationwide on ABC-TV stations Jan. 3, 2010 and continues through Feb. 28, 2010. Check your local listings for airtimes.

The hour-long documentary follows five stories of interfaith dialogue and action among Baptists and Muslims - two faith traditions often popularly characterized by their extremists.

Shooting on "Different Books, Common Word" began in January 2009, when 40 Baptist and 40 Muslim leaders gathered outside Boston, Mass., for the first-ever national dialogue between the two Abrahamic faith traditions. Shooting continued for six months and covered stories in other locales:

- Washington, D.C., where the Islamic Society of North America maintains an interfaith office;
- Oklahoma City and Norman, Okla., where Baptists and Muslims have developed friendships and humanitarian partnerships amid the legacy of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing that initially was blamed on Muslims;
- the Texas-Louisiana border, where a Baptist pastor and Muslim businesswoman have pooled resources for hurricane relief and other community needs;
- Memphis, Tenn., where a Baptist professor and Muslim medical physicist struck up what initially seemed an unlikely relationship to many;
- and Columbia, Tenn., where the Islamic center was firebombed in February 2008 by white supremacists, prompting various community responses.

Participants include:

- Sayyid Syeed, national director, Office for Interfaith and Community Alliances, Islamic Society of North America;
- Roy Medley, general secretary, American Baptist Churches USA;
- Daoud Abudiab, president, Islamic Center of Columbia, Tenn.;
- Kenny Anderson, pastor, Mount Calvary Missionary Baptist Church, Columbia, Tenn.;
- Farhana Swati, managing director and co-owner, Pak Oil, Port Arthur, Texas, and CEO, Humanity Hope;
- Sam Tolbert, pastor, Greater Saint Mary Missionary Baptist Church, Lake Charles, La.;
- Orhan Osman, executive director, Institute of Interfaith Dialog, Oklahoma City, Okla.;
- Bruce Prescott, executive director, Mainstream Oklahoma Baptists;
- Carol Richardson, associate pastor, First Baptist Church, Memphis, Tenn.;

- Toni Campbell, assistant professor, Southwest Tennessee Community College;
- and more than a dozen others.

"Different Books, Common Word: Baptists and Muslims" is produced by EthicsDaily.com. The program will be supplied by EthicsDaily.com to ABC-TV stations beginning in January 2010 through an arrangement with the Islamic Society of North America, the Interfaith Broadcasting Commission and ABC-TV.

The documentary will simultaneously be available for purchase on DVD, which includes numerous extras. A free discussion guide will be available for download at www.differentbookscommonword.com.

"The Bible calls us to love our neighbors, not as a means of conversion, but because it's the right thing to do," says Robert Parham, executive editor of EthicsDaily.com and the documentary's co-producer/director.

"Viewers will be surprised to see new stories of respect and partnership that are emerging in the United States between goodwill Muslims and Baptists," said Parham. "We hope these stories will begin to replace the negative ones about both Muslims and Baptists."

"Our hope is also that this documentary will bring Baptists and Muslims together on the local level for conversations and community-building," said Parham. "If Muslims and Baptists are peacemakers together in the United States, then they will show the rest of the world a better way and provide a challenge to follow to other Christians and Muslims."

"Different Books, Common Word" is EthicsDaily.com's sixth production. Previous DVDs included examinations of Baptist-Jewish relations, global poverty, and faith and politics.

EthicsDaily.com's most recent production was "Beneath the Skin: Baptists and Racism," which won the best documentary award at the International Black Film Festival of Nashville in October 2008 and a similar award at the Cine-Fest Motion Picture Expo in Louisville in December 2008. It was accepted for screening at the San Diego Black Film Festival in January 2009 and was nominated for the best documentary award at the Texas Black Film Festival in February 2009. It has also been used in countless churches and programs, including the American Baptist Churches USA biennial meeting in Pasadena, Calif., the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship general assembly in Houston, Texas, and various regional gatherings of the New Baptist Covenant.

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Watch and embed clips at
www.youtube.com/ethicsdaily



Download production stills at
www.differentbookscommonword.com



Read articles about Baptists and Muslims at
www.ethicsdaily.com



About EthicsDaily.com

EthicsDaily.com is an imprint of the Baptist Center for Ethics, which was founded in 1991 as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that challenges people of faith to advance the common good. BCE early on held conferences and produced curriculum, and in 2002 it launched the flagship Web site EthicsDaily.com. The news and information site has become a go-to source for people in the pew as well as reporters at the nation's media outlets. EthicsDaily.com topped a half-million page views in August 2009. In 2006, BCE/EthicsDaily.com began producing videos, first delivering Always ... Therefore: The Church's Challenge of Global Poverty, and following that up with: Golden Rule Politics: Reclaiming the Rightful Role of Faith in Politics; The Nazareth Manifesto; Good Will for the Common Good: Nurturing Baptists' Relationships with Jews; and the award-winning documentary Beneath the Skin: Baptists and Racism. EthicsDaily.com continues to innovate and educate for positive social change.

SYNOPSIS

From Boston to the Bible Belt and from Beaumont to the nation's beltway, Baptists and Muslims are changing history with the way they change each other. Tired of being defined by extremists, some Baptists and Muslims in the United States have sought and found common ground: the common word in both traditions to love God and love neighbor. The courageous Baptists and Muslims in "Different Books, Common Word" will surprise you.

STORYLINES

"Different Books, Common Word" weaves together five stories from across the country:

Columbia, Tennessee - In February 2008, the Islamic Center of Columbia, Tennessee, was firebombed by three white men, two of whom claimed affiliation with the extremist Christian Identity movement. This tragedy set a new course for the center and its president, Daoud Abudiab, who eventually crosses paths with a local Baptist pastor ...

Washington, D.C. - Sayyid Syeed heads up the interfaith office for the Islamic Society of North America, which he helped pioneer in the early 1980s. Indefatigable, Syeed has been reaching out to Baptist leaders, believing early Baptists in the United States modeled a religious liberty that he values. His work takes a unique turn when, in January 2009, 40 Baptist and 40 Muslim leaders meet in Boston for the first-ever national Baptist-Muslim dialogue ...

Memphis, Tennessee - Toni Campbell, a Baptist, and Ishtiaq Bercha, a Muslim, met online. Their different faiths at first posed an obstacle, but watch what eventually happens ...

Oklahoma City and Norman, Oklahoma - After the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, Bruce Prescott, a Baptist leader in Norman, became friends with Orhan Osman, a Muslim leader in Oklahoma City. Their partnership widened to include other Baptists and Muslims in the area still marred by the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah federal building, when Muslims were initially accused of the bombing ...

Louisiana/Texas Border - When Muslim businesspeople in Lake Charles, Louisiana, had problems getting permits, they approached Councilman Sam Tolbert. Tolbert, who also happened to be a Baptist pastor, helped. That experience set off a chain of events that spread across the state line to involve Farhana Swati, a Muslim businesswoman in Port Arthur, Texas. Then the hurricanes hit ...

INTERVIEWEES AND PARTICIPANTS

Daoud Abudiab, president, Islamic Center of Columbia, Tennessee

Kenny Anderson, pastor, Mount Calvary Missionary Baptist Church, Columbia, Tennessee

Toni Campbell Bercha, education professor, Southwest Tennessee Community College

Ishtiaq Bercha, medical physicist, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital

Imad Enchassi, imam, Islamic Society of Greater Oklahoma City

Amir Faezi, dean, Bait-ul-Ilm Academy, Streamwood, Illinois

Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, sociology professor, Colby College

David Goatley, executive secretary-treasurer, Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention, Washington, D.C.

Charles Kimball, presidential professor and director of religious studies, University of Oklahoma

Mohamed Magid, vice-president, Islamic Society of North America

Ingrid Mattson, president, Islamic Society of North America

Roy Medley, general secretary, American Baptist Churches USA

Orhan Osman, executive director, Institute of Interfaith Dialog, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Bruce Prescott, executive director, Mainstream Oklahoma Baptists

Mitch Randall, pastor, North Haven Church, Norman, Oklahoma

Carol Richardson, associate pastor, First Baptist Church, Memphis, Tennessee

Louay Safi, executive director, Islamic Leadership Development Center, Islamic Society of North America

Muhammad Shafiq, executive director, Center for Interfaith Studies and Dialogue, Rochester, New York

Farhana Swati, managing director and co-owner, Pak Oil, Port Arthur, Texas

Sayyid Syeed, national director, Office for Interfaith and Community Alliances, Islamic Society of North America

T. Thomas, executive director, HISNets, Norman, Oklahoma

Sam Tolbert, pastor, Greater Saint Mary Missionary Baptist Church, Lake Charles, Louisiana

Raymond Young, pastor, Greater Saint Paul Christian Fellowship, Orange, Texas

PRESS INTERVIEWS AND STARTER QUESTIONS

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1. What do Baptists and Muslims have in common?
2. What keeps Baptists and Muslims apart?
3. What is something you've learned from participating in this project?
4. What do you hope this project will accomplish?

DVD INFORMATION

"Different Books, Common Word: Baptists and Muslims" is available on DVD beginning Jan. 3, 2010. Customers may pre-order the DVD to reserve their copy.

Individual Copy: \$20 (plus shipping and handling)

Institutional/Library Copy: \$100 (plus shipping and handling)

Running Time: 58 minutes 53 seconds

Color, Stereo, Widescreen

Extras on the DVD include:

- Scene selection menus
- Documentary trailer
- Deleted scenes:
 - Daoud Abudiab: Some Baptist Churches Teach a Wicked Islam
 - Sayyid Syeed: Twin Boys Named Moses and Jesus
 - David Goatley and Sayyid Syeed: Baptist and Muslim Extremists
 - Beaumont Muslims: Neighbors After the Hurricanes
 - Ingrid Mattson: Centrality of Scripture
 - Amir Faezi: Peace and Justice
 - Mitch Randall: Lessons of a Creek Indian
 - Imad Enchassi: Prophet Muhammad and a Christian King
 - Farhana Swati: What Mosques Can Learn from Churches

A free discussion guide is available at www.differentbookscommonword.com.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT "DIFFERENT BOOKS, COMMON WORD"

"During my years of meeting Muslim believers around the world, I have been impressed with the many things we have in common in our beliefs. People of every faith have the challenge to deal with the divisive and destructive attitudes of extremism. ... 'Different Books, Common Word: Baptists and Muslims' will enhance our efforts to serve God in a troubled world. I am sure that this teaching tool, which shares actual experiences of those of different faiths respecting each other as they look for ways to work together, will be of great benefit to us all."

Jimmy Carter, former U.S. president
Atlanta, Georgia

"'Different Books, Common Word: Baptists and Muslims' manages to avoid oversimplification of today's most important and controversial debate, all-the-while staying away from both demonization and idealization. Though surprised by the kindness and grace discovered in each other, Christians and Muslims in the documentary are not blind to the bigotry of some of those who claim adherence to the same faith as the one they follow. I hope that this documentary will be used to illustrate and support sermons, Sunday school lessons, Friday addresses, and seminary classes, motivating the Church and the Mosque into demonstrations of practical love towards one another all over the world, so that when our extremists attempt to captivate our communities with their brash characterization of 'the evil other,' we will be inclined to stand up and say: 'Thank you for sharing, but my own experience finds no affinity in your discourse.'"

Martin Accad, associate professor of Islamic Studies
Arab Baptist Theological Seminary, Beirut, Lebanon
and associate professor of Islamic Studies
School of Intercultural Studies, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California

"I would like to extend my thanks and gratitude for your documentary on Baptist and Muslim relations. I strongly recommend the documentary. It is coming at a crucial time where fear and mistrust are unfortunately the dominant realities in Baptist-Muslim relationship. The documentary is an important educational tool that will allow us to step beyond fear and mistrust and start an honest engagement based on our common love of God and neighbor. The labeling of every Muslim as a terrorist is a disservice to Muslims around the world, but especially to Muslim neighbors in American cities and communities."

M. Imad Damaj, president
Virginia Muslim Coalition for Public Affairs

"I just finished watching 'Different Books, Common Word' and was impressed with the balance, honesty, and grace of the presentation. It was very clear from those who were interviewed that having different faith perspectives did not negate some common human needs and desires. Thank you for a refreshing look at how people from different cultures and different religious traditions can work together positively and constructively. This is an important word to a divided world."

Phil Lineberger, pastor
Williams Trace Baptist Church, Sugar Land, Texas

“‘Different Books, Common Word’ provides a compelling antidote to adversarial framings of Christian-Muslim relations in our nation. The film introduces us to real-world interactions between Baptists and Muslims that humanize both communities. It clearly shows that when religious leaders earnestly seek to abide by the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad, they have the power to enhance peace and mutual respect in our society. This film should be seen in every church and mosque so that congregations can reconsider their assumptions and work towards greater harmony and cooperation based on shared core values.”

Shabbir Mansuri, founding director
Institute on Religion and Civic Values, Fountain Valley, California

“When September 11, 2001 happened, and Christians were struggling to know how to respond amidst the horror and confusion, our church discovered that we had no relationship with and very little knowledge about the Muslim community in Kansas City or anywhere. Since then, except for inclusive prayer and preaching and the occasional interfaith panel, little has changed. What good news to see that some Baptists have done better. ‘Different Books, Common Word: Baptists and Muslims’ tells five powerful and hopeful stories of Baptists and Muslims who, together, have broken through barriers of prejudice, ignorance, apathy and fear to show us all a way to the world we long for. ... These are stories of Baptists at their best. This excellent documentary avoids blame and guilt. It teaches, touches and inspires. We are guided by the wisdom and courage of everyday prophets among us. If every Baptist church would see this film, the world could change.”

Heather Entrekin, pastor
Prairie Baptist Church, Prairie Village, Kansas

Visit www.differentbookscommonword.com to see more endorsements

FACTS ABOUT BAPTISTS AND MUSLIMS

Facts about Baptists

- Baptists are part of the Protestant wing of Christianity and are therefore monotheists in the faith tradition of Abraham. They also embrace the doctrine of the Trinity.
- Baptists' scripture is the Christian Bible, divided into the Old and New Testaments.
- The Baptist movement began in Amsterdam in 1609.
- The Baptist World Alliance is the largest global body of Baptists. It counts more than 37 million baptized believers and a community of more than 100 million.
- Baptist bodies in the United States include the American Baptist Churches-USA, Baptist General Association of Virginia, Baptist General Association of Missouri, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, National Baptist Convention of America, National Baptist Convention-USA, Inc., Progressive National Baptist Convention and Southern Baptist Convention.
- Baptists have no hierarchical structure, so no Baptist can speak on behalf of another.
- Baptists historically have embraced and championed numerous ideals. Among them: separation of church and state, religious liberty, autonomy of the local church and soul freedom (or the ability of each individual to interpret scriptures for him/herself).

Facts about Muslims

- Muslims are monotheists in the faith tradition of Abraham.
- Muslims pray to Allah, the Arabic name for God.
- Muslims consider Muhammad, who lived in the sixth and seventh centuries, to be the last of God's prophets (earlier prophets included Abraham, Moses and Jesus).
- Muslims' scripture is called the Qur'an, which Muslims believe is the revelation of God given to Muhammad via the archangel Gabriel. The Qur'an has 114 chapters.
- Muslims also reference the Hadith, or the collected sayings and reported actions of Prophet Muhammad.
- Muslims follow the Five Pillars of Islam:
 1. reciting the statement of faith, which says there is no god but God, and Muhammad is His messenger;
 2. saying prescribed prayers five times a day;
 3. giving to those in need;
 4. fasting during the holy month of Ramadan; and
 5. making a pilgrimage to Kaaba, a structure in Mecca, built by Abraham and his son Ishmael and dedicated to oneness of God. Every Muslim who can afford to travel to Mecca in Saudi Arabia is expected to do Hajj (pilgrimage) at least once in lifetime.
- Muslims split, concerning who Muhammad's successor would be, into two main divisions after Muhammad's death: Sunni and Shiite. The vast majority of Muslims are Sunni.
- Major Muslim groups in the United States include the Islamic Society of North America, the Islamic Circle of North America, and the Council on American-Islamic Relations.
- Like Baptists, Muslims have no hierarchical structure or central authority.