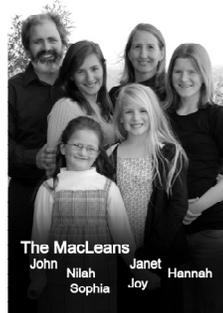


About John MacLean

- I have an amazing family!
- I just finished three years of teaching English at the American University of Beirut.
- Also in ME from 1989-1999
- I am starting a PhD program in English Studies at Illinois State University. I hope to study the role interfaith dialog can have in the English classroom.
- After my course work at ISU (two years), we hope to return to AUB to teach and research.



How should we as Christians be relate with Muslims?

- The basic, most foundational answer is easy.
- Jesus tells us to love our neighbors.
- Muslims are our neighbors – both locally and globally.
- BUT...
- There is a particular need NOW for us to have loving, Jesus-like interaction with Muslims.

Jesus-like interaction needed NOW

- The events of the past decade have resulted in many Christians thinking and speaking in ways that displease God and hurt Muslims.
- This is understandable, but still a problem.
- Let's look at:
 - What is NOT Jesus-like interaction
 - What IS Jesus-like interaction

NOT Jesus-like interaction

- Allowing fear and anger to control our attitudes and words about Muslims
- Accepting a “clash of civilizations” mentality that pits the “Christian West” against the “Muslim World”
- Wanting / accepting simplistic good and evil characterizations

"If only it were all so simple! If only there were evil people somewhere committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them.

But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?"

- Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn,
The Gulag Archipelago

NOT Jesus-like interaction

- Failing to notice or speak against injustice and oppression perpetrated by “our side” or “our allies”
- Making or accepting statements about Islam or Muslims :
 - that are not true,
 - that are true only of a small minority,
 - that twist and abuse “facts”, or
 - that refuse to allow Muslims to interpret their own religion

NOT Jesus-like interaction

- Discriminating against or advocating discrimination against Muslims (or refusing to condemn discrimination)
- Here is just one really nasty example (I could give you others – that I have noticed or that my Muslim students and friends have told me about):

“First, the most compassionate thing we can do for Americans is to bring a halt to the immigration of Muslims into the U.S. This will protect our national security and preserve our national identity, culture, ideals, and values. Muslims, by custom and religion, are simply unwilling to integrate into cultures with Western values and it is folly to pretend otherwise. In fact, they remain dedicated to subjecting all of America to sharia law and are working ceaselessly until that day of Islamic imposition comes.

The most compassionate thing we can do for Muslims who have already immigrated here is to help repatriate them back to Muslim countries, where they can live in a culture which shares their values, a place where they can once again be at home, surrounded by people who cherish their deeply held ideals. Why force them to chafe against the freedom, liberty and civil rights we cherish in the West?

In other words, simple Judeo-Christian compassion dictates a restriction and repatriation policy with regard to Muslim immigration into the U.S.”

-Bryan Fischer, American Family Association
(source: <http://www.afa.net/Blogs/BlogPost.aspx?id=2147493343>)

NOT Jesus-like interaction

The AFA is a Christian organization. On their website, they stated that the AFA “did not take a position on this issue”.

A Christian organization taking NO position on religious discrimination – deporting someone based on their faith!?!

(source: <http://www.afa.net/Blogs/BlogPost.aspx?id=2147493343>)

Jesus-like interaction

Proverbs 18:2, 5

Fools have no interest in understanding;
they only want to air their own opinions.

It is not right to acquit the guilty
or deny justice to the innocent.

Jesus-like interaction

Proverbs 18:13, 17

Spouting off before listening to the facts
is both shameful and foolish.

The first to speak in court sounds right—
until the cross-examination begins.

Jesus-like interaction

- Truth loving. How do we evaluate what we hear about Muslims? Do we ask:
 - Does this support MY side? OR
 - Is this true?
- Respectful and honorable, full of integrity.
 - No devious, “ends justify the means” methods.
 - Respect their free will (as God does).
 - An “all religions are one” approach does NOT respect Muslims or Christians. We should explore, not minimize or elide the differences in our faiths.

Jesus-like interaction

- Seeking understanding of the other – and offering mercy. Jesus understands us:
 - as our creator, but ALSO
 - because he became human. (Heb. 4:15-16)
- “This High Priest of ours **understands** our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will **receive his mercy**, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.”

Jesus-like interaction

- Humble.
 - We are human, not divine. AND
 - We have the example of Jesus’ kenosis (self-emptying) for the sake of love (Phil. 2:1-11, Heb. 12:2-3)
- Serving. “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others” (Mt. 20:28)
- Personal. Think about how Jesus related in a unique, personal way with those he met.

Jesus-like interaction

- Witnessing. Jesus was/did all these things. BUT he also preached the good news of the Kingdom.
- Praying – for ourselves and others. Jesus commanded it and modeled it.
- Peacemaking. “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God” (Mt. 5:9)

Jesus-like interaction

In a word, LOVE, not power (2 Cor 6:4-10)

In everything we do, we show that we are true ministers of God. We patiently endure troubles and hardships and calamities of every kind. We have been beaten, been put in prison, faced angry mobs, worked to exhaustion, endured sleepless nights, and gone without food. We prove ourselves by our purity, our understanding, our patience, our kindness, by the Holy Spirit within us, and by our sincere love. We faithfully preach the truth. God’s power is working in us. We use the weapons of righteousness in the right hand for attack and the left hand for defense. We serve God whether people honor us or despise us, whether they slander us or praise us. We are honest, but they call us impostors. We are ignored, even though we are well known. We live close to death, but we are still alive. We have been beaten, but we have not been killed. Our hearts ache, but we always have joy. We are poor, but we give spiritual riches to others. We own nothing, and yet we have everything.

Jesus-like interaction

- As churches and individuals, we should be involved in loving, self-emptying, incarnational interaction with Muslims. And, we should be encouraging each other to do this.
- One great way to do this is what I call “sincere-believer interfaith dialog”. I have been involved in dialog at AUB and hope to be involved in it at ISU.

Thank you!

- I am willing to help your church in 2 ways:
 - Understanding Muslims and Arabs
 - Interfaith Dialog
- Contact info
 - john@mac6.org
 - 309-263-8151
 - www.mac6.org (my blog) Look here for copy of this presentation and other resources – the “Thank you, E Free” entry.
 - www.majlis.org (interfaith dialog – just started)