

PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS IN AFRICA

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INTRODUCTION

The president of the AACCC, the general secretary and deputy, church leaders from across this beautiful continent and beyond, ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the organisers for a timely theme, **RESPECTING HUMAN DIGNITY AND GOD'S IMAGE IN EVERY HUMAN BEING.**

This theme is very relevant in matters of Christian Muslim Relations and coexistence. The church in Africa is here called upon to start this movement of

ensuring respect for the dignity of all regardless of their religious affiliation.

Africa has become home to the two major religions in the world. Although both religions are seen as foreign in some sense, the truth of the matter is that the two have slowly taken their rightful place in the continent and they have to find ways of living together since none can wish the other away.

In the case of Christianity for instance, whether you are talking of the Old Testament or the New Testament, Africa was always interlinked with the Jewish history and religion. Coming to the New Testament, starting with baby Jesus parents refuge in Africa to several Africans who played strategic roles in the founding of Christianity. The writing of the history of the church

would not be complete without several chapters touching on Africa at different parts.

As the Islamic tradition goes that when M u h a m m a d s m e s s a g e on monotheism was unpalatable to the Meccans, he asked his followers to seek refuge in a Christian kingdom in Abyssinia, Africa; here we see that from the seventh century, the three, namely, Africa, Christianity and Islam were meant to be.

While Christianity and Islam seem to be the more dominant religions, African Traditional Religion that initially welcomed them seemed to serve a pivotal role of setting the context within which the two have sought to establish themselves.

As Africa embraces religion to be the backbone of society, there are several

challenges. Some the challenges are contextual, external, political, economic, ideological and even historical.

As we look at the postcolonial Africa, we have to appreciate that these challenges will greatly influence the present and future inter religious atmosphere.

It is however the thesis of this paper that the path to the well-being of the human community today in Africa passes through the field of religion generally, and Christian-Muslim dialogue in particular (Miller 2011).

A LOOK AT THE PAST

As seen above, Christianity came to Africa in the first century of the church and subsequently established itself in the northern part of the continent.

Subsequent entries into the continent happened at different stages including the 15th century Portuguese settlement on different parts of the continent. The most recent entries include the 19th century missionary activities that approached the continent mainly from the west, south and eastern Africa.

Islam on the other hand came to Africa from the seventh century, through Egypt in the North and the Eastern coast in the East. In the more recent times, other entries came through the south and spread to most parts of the continent (J. Mutei 2012).

Islam and Christianity in Africa experienced Peaceful coexistence over the years. This is best illustrated by the way communities lived harmoniously with their neighbours, where families often had members of

all the main religions: children did not have to follow their parents faith; brothers and sisters were left free to choose their path (LAST 2007).

The Arab colonisation of the east African coast and the subsequent establishment of western colonial administrations in the continent brought mixed fortunes for the religious enterprise in the continent.

While there was little friction in the past based on religion, the Christian Muslim Milieu that had seen plenty of the attitudes of friendship and respect was slowly changing into that of opposition, mistrust and competition.

Certainly, there are places in the African continent where Christian-Muslim relations are relatively harmonious today, however, since we do not pay much attention to what is

not problematic or headline news, they tend to go unnoticed (Miller 2011).

The Roman Catholic document, *nostra aetate* on the faiths outlook on other religions gives a reflection on the not so good past, as well as project on the way forward:

Over the centuries, many quarrels and dissensions have arisen between Christians and Muslims. The sacred Council now pleads with all to forget the past, and urges that a sincere effort be made to achieve mutual understanding; for the benefit of all men, let them together preserve and promote peace, liberty, social justice and moral values (Borelli 2004).

CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM POLITICAL HISTORY

Christian history began with the crucifixion and the catacombs, but has included Armenia (the first Christian state), Byzantium and Christendom. So, however hard western Protestants today want to separate church and state, the Constantinian model is part of our history (Chapman 2012).

The Christians understanding of the conversion of Constantine in 313 and the adoption of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire will greatly disturb anyone who would like to disassociate Christianity from politics.

In Islamic history, an indissoluble link between religion and politics was introduced with the *Hijra* and the creation of the first Islamic state in Medina, in which, as Kenneth Cragg has written, 'Muhammad was from the

outset its (Islam's) Constantine as well as its Prophet.' So if we ask why so many Muslims seem to be politically motivated, and why many are insistent on the principle *din wa dawla* (religion and state), part of the answer must lie in the very origins of Islam with Muhammad being both 'prophet' and 'statesman' (Chapman 2012)

Therefore Kenneth Cragg concludes that, 'Islam must rule' or in the words of Sayyid Qutb '*al islam la budda an yahkum* (inevitably Islam shall rule)'" (Cragg 2000).

With this kind of mind-set, the Muslims would never imagine themselves out of power or control. Thus, Chapman (2012) points out a very painful experience for the Muslims:

Western colonialism was such a bitter pill for Muslims to swallow because it

represented a great reversal: after ten centuries in which Muslim had been ruling over Christians throughout the Middle East and North Africa, Christians were now ruling over Muslims throughout the Muslim world with the exception of Arabia, Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan (Chapman 2012).

What we are dealing with here, therefore, is how the two faiths have tried to deal with the relationship between truth and power, between religion and state. Moreover, no reflection on Christian-Muslim relations can ever be primarily or mainly about theology (Chapman 2012).

The power equation of the two religions in Africa becomes a key entry point on how the religions relate with

each other. The question of religious vs cultural or national identity also comes into play. Hence the questions; *Am I an African first, and then a Christian or Muslim?* or *Am I a Christian or Muslim first, and then an African?* On the national level, this question will be: *Am I a Kenyan or Nigerian first, and then a Christian or Muslim?* or *Am I a Christian or Muslim first, and then a Kenyan or Nigerian?* (Ellingwood 2008)

Africa is the one place whereby religious influence also amounts to political control. The appropriation of power in countries such as Tanzania and Nigeria serve as good examples where religious consciousness shapes and determines national political balance. These two countries have democratically seen the two religions

alternate in the leadership of their countries.

The rationale for the two religions desire to advance in Africa and beyond is worlds apart in terms of their differences:

'The Islamic doctrine of salvation does not conceive of men and women as sinners who must be saved through spiritual regeneration. Rather it holds that since man is not dead in sin, he does not need spiritual rebirth ... The basic emphasis of Islamic salvation lies instead in the historical responsibility of its followers, namely the establishment of the ideal religio-political order with a worldwide membership of all those who believe in God and His revelation through Muhammad...' (Sachedina 1986).

As noted above, for the Christians, the desire for saving souls overrides the political arm; while on the Islamic side, it is more territorial in line with the expansionist history since the time of its founding prophet, Muhammad.

In order to move away from the colonial associations with religions as found in Islam's association with Arab occupation and Christian association with the western hegemony, Amjad-Ali (2009) notes:

[Christians] have to overcome the political and social legacy of Some Critical Issues for Muslim-Christian Relations and Challenges Western Christianity and its close association with the imperial, colonial, and expanding Western hegemony. On the other hand, we have the related problem of overcoming the theological

and epistemological legacy of Western Christianity as the universal voice/grammar of World Christianity (Amjad-Ali 2009).

The politicization of religion is not new as it builds upon a complex structure of ancient rhetoric and long-past histories, of memories of Muslims and Christians with examples of slights and oppression experienced by fore bearers (LAST 2007).

Historical Africa saw certain demarcated areas for either religion; nonetheless, this is slowly becoming non-existent with the globalised nature of the current society. New upcoming cities and social structures are forcing people to occupy very new areas or areas that are not traditionally marked as either Christian or Muslim.

It is possible to view the new forms of Christianity that are developing on the continent as no longer weighed down by [their] missionary past.

This is an important observation relevant to interfaith relations in sub-Saharan Africa, where African Christians continue to bear the brunt of the colonial legacy as many Muslims see Christianity as a residue of colonialism that has to be done away with altogether. (Ellingwood 2008)

Despite on-going conflicts and problems resulting from Western colonialism, the end of the colonial period brought advantages to Christians and Muslims in terms of significant numerical growth and the expansion of both religions in sub-Saharan Africa.

As Philip Jenkins writes in his study of global Christianity, it was precisely as Western colonialism ended that Christianity began a period of explosive growth that still continues unchecked, above all in Africa. Just since 1965, the Christian population of Africa has risen from around a quarter of the continental total to about 46 percent, stunning growth for such a short period. (Ellingwood 2008)

The early post-colonial period in sub-Saharan Africa had brought with it new emphasis on national unity and cooperation between citizens of different linguistic, cultural and religious backgrounds (Ellingwood 2008). This was seen as the hope of inter religious cooperation and the impetus so needed for nation building

in the newly created African nation states.

However, new realities in African democratic states are presenting new challenges to Christian Muslim dialogue beyond the colonial era. Such challenges as poverty, ethnic animosity, marginalisation of some regions dominated by some religious groups, bad governance are some of the current areas that are presenting themselves with religious lasing. This has led to the emphasis on religion as a source of conflict evolving in sub-Saharan Africa (Ellingwood 2008).

PROCMURA, which is an organisation dealing with Christian Muslim relations in Africa, envisaged a situation where from the late 1970s onward that there would be more cooperation sought by

Christians and Muslims to foster peace for the continent.

Intended to have further impact in its quest to assist the African churches in their constructive engagement with Muslims, it would have to adopt a holistic approach. After careful consideration, a five-fold approach was adopted at the turn of the century, an approach that includes Christian constructive engagement with Muslims in the political, economic, cultural, social, and religious spheres. Mbillah argues that Islam as a religion is an embodiment of these five spheres, which Christians in Africa have to take seriously in their encounter with Muslims (Ellingwood 2008).

CHALLENGES TO BE OVERCOME IN SEEKING NEW CHRISTIAN MUSLIM ENGAGEMENT

Secularism and de-spiritualised society

Secularism is slowly creeping in to the society and therefore pushing religion in the periphery. More and more people are embracing ways that show little regard for religious life.

One area for theological dialogue between Christians and Muslims could involve discussion of our relationship to the contemporary world a world of consumerism, multi-national corporations, globalization, a secularized media and society, religious reform movements, growing democratization, and religious pluralism (Borelli 2004).

Radicalisation and threats of terrorism

One of the major issues that has emerged over the last decade or so is the question of radical Islam, which was a reworking of what a decade or so earlier was called Islamic fundamentalism or fundamentalist Islam. With the end of the Cold War, Islam was already seen as the new other, being positioned as the enemy and already described in the grammar of the Cold War, Soviet being replaced with Islam. The most famous articulation of this was of course Samuel Huntingtons thesis the Clash of Civilizations, which acted almost as a self-fulfilling prophecy. (Amjad-Ali 2009)

The recent events in some African countries where the religious

adherents have taken extremist positions have been a challenge to matters of Christian Muslim relations in Africa. These extreme positions have led to several cases of conflict and tensions that have often escalated to some sort of civil wars in some regions, for instance, Northern Nigeria, Sudan etc.

In the recent past, acts of terrorism have taken religious dimensions, with most suspects being viewed as Muslims and therefore causing tension between the two religions. In Nigeria and Kenya, both Boko Haram and Al Shaabab have been involved with some terrorist attacks resulting to strained relations between Christians and Muslims.

Strategies of engagement and approach

These three words all derived from Greek, sum up three significantly different approaches:

- ***Polemics*** involves attacking Muslim beliefs, seeking to show that they are false or misguided.

- ***Apologetics*** involves giving a reasoned defence of Christian beliefs in response to challenges or attacks from Muslims.

- ***Dialogue*** basically means a conversation between two parties who meet on a level playing field. (Chapman 2012)

In saying this, I have to reckon with the fact that many Christians are still very uneasy about the word 'dialogue' because they associate it with liberalism and pluralism; they suspect

that it means compromise, the lowest common denominator and the avoidance of the hard issues. I am therefore constantly encouraging Christians - especially evangelical Christians - to embrace the word 'dialogue' and to practise it with enthusiasm (Chapman 2012).

Interreligious dialogue is:

*First and foremost an ***attitude*** that someone acquires or the kinds of options open to him in developing his own point of view of other religions. An attitude could be defined the manner of his acting or his thinking; ones disposition, opinion or mental set. Some believe that all other religions are false except theirs. Some others assert that each religion is the appropriate expression of its

own culture. Still others think that all religions are the same. So people may have different attitudes towards other religions.

*An ***encounter*** of people of different religions and faiths in an atmosphere of freedom and openness for each partner to listen and understand himself and the other. One person speaks and another listens and responds and vice versa. Dialogue is no more than this respectful communication of two different subjects. Now we need a forum whereby African Christians will speak and African non-Christians will listen and respond; African non-Christians will speak and African Christians will listen and respond.

*A ***sharing -conversation-*** of the truth found in different religions and faiths. Thought the truth must be said, we need to know how, when and to whom to articulate it.

*A ***working and walking together*** in search of what is good and right with the desire of living together and in communion.

****Living*** together in spite of our differences. Differences make sense when they are well understood.

APPROACHES TO CHRISTIAN MUSLIM DIALOGUE FOR PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE IN AFRICA

Scriptural basis for Inter religious dialogue

Say: O People of the Scripture! Come to a common word between us and you: that we shall worship none but God, and that we shall ascribe no partner unto Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords beside God. And if they turn away, then say: Bear witness that we are they who have surrendered (unto Him). (Aal Imran 3:64)

However, when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. / Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, / Teacher,

which is the great commandment in the law?/ Jesus said to him, you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. / This is the first and greatest commandment. / And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself./ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets. (Matthew 20: 34 - 40)

Both Islam and Christianity have a strong scriptural push to live harmoniously through understanding with their neighbours. Core intuitions govern their view of human relations. For Christians, that fundamental theme is the self-giving love of God in Christ, who seeks the welfare of all humanity, and that approach is to be reflected by believers.

On the other hand, For Muslims, it is the principle of surrender to God, who wills obedience and piety as laid out in the Qur'an.

Since both of these core intuitions have to do with goodness, it is not surprising that there are common factors in their expression (Miller 2011).

Both Christians and Muslims are, as it were, breathing in a polluting atmosphere of fear and hate. That has produced a kind of emphysema (***a condition in which the air sacs of the lungs are damaged and enlarged, causing breathlessness***) of the spirit, a loss of the elasticity needed in common life, and a drastic worsening of mutual relations. The decline has become a major problem

of our time, and it can be ignored only at our peril (Miller 2011).

Having looked at the challenges facing Africa in the area of Christian Muslim Relations everybody wonders, how then do we face these challenges in the African context.

Collin Chapman and Roland Miller provide several models that could be used to propel the African inter religious context into a peaceful continent.

1.The Educational Model:

One overriding impression remains front and centre: the large majority of Christians and Muslims continue to view each other with "detailed ignorance" (Kimball 2004). Despite, or perhaps because of extensive media attention, confusion and

misunderstandings are readily evident among adherents in both communities. Most Christians in the Africa are aware of many details, ideas, images, and sound bite impressions of Muslims; and vice versa. Far too few have a broader, more coherent framework of understanding, a way to comprehend the religious, political, historical, and economic context connected to high profile events conveyed through different media. The problem is exacerbated by the heavy dependence for news on television and social media, a medium that tends to emphasize the most dramatic and sensational events.

To put it directly: Education remains the top priority. Intentional educational efforts through focused study and

personal encounter are more urgently needed than ever before. The obstacles are larger than a simple lack of knowledge. Much of what many people think they know is incorrect or rooted in a long history of misunderstanding and bias. The most negative images and fears are reinforced by the understandable media focus on the words and actions of extremists. A wise friend once observed that one who is standing on the edge of a cliff does not define progress as one step forward. Intentional educational efforts are the best way to take a few steps back from the cliff (Kimball 2004).

- **Organised Dialogue Programs Model:**

Nearly half a century after formal dialogue programs began under the auspices of councils of churches and the Vatican, much has been learned. Many major denominations (e.g., Presbyterians, Lutherans, United Methodists, etc.) have offices and resources committed to interfaith dialogue. Interested individuals or congregations can easily access official statements, documents providing guidelines, and stories chronicling successful and less-than-successful dialogue programs. With the advent of the world-wide web, helpful resources from denominational groups, councils of churches and various interfaith organizations are widely available.

These resources are helpful in both practical and psychological terms. One

need not reinvent the wheel each time a local group wishes to initiate a Christian-Muslim or multi-faith dialogue program. The accumulated knowledge and wisdom written and human resources from decades of intentional engagement can facilitate a more constructive dialogue. Knowing that one's efforts at a local level are part of a growing phenomenon helps empower people. While each setting is unique, it is nonetheless comforting to know that people of faith and goodwill have been seeking understanding and cooperation in various settings for many years. Conversations with counterparts in other cities or states can help focus programs, and identify particularly helpful approaches and people (Kimball 2004).

- **Cooperative Efforts in Society Model:**

An increasingly important component of Christian-Muslim dialogue is connected to cooperative efforts in local settings, national and global contexts. More and more congregations, Islamic centres, and local organizations are recognizing that they can and should join together with other people of faith to address challenges confronting their communities. The sense of accomplishment and pride in modelling a cooperative approach within the community is unmistakable when the leaders of respective congregations share their stories based on their engagement.

• ***The Recollection Model*** - noteworthy examples of good Christian-Muslim relations do exist Throughout history and in our time, that they should be remembered and celebrated, and that they can be replicated. The good old days. As stated earlier, Abyssinian Christian King; the Christian king, called the Negus, welcomed Muslims when the Meccans had been hostile to Muhammads message of one God in Arabia. While in Garissa, in the event that there was impending *shifita* (bandit) attack, close Muslim friends whispered to their Christian counterparts and sometimes even hid them in their houses to shelter them from these attacks.

The Mandera bus attack and muslims shielding and protecting their Christian counterparts during terrorist attacks.

- ***The "Most Certainly Religious" Model*** - Have we forgotten to say, I'm sorry?'

In the case of both Christianity and Islam, the principles of penitence and forgiveness represent basic views. They express core ideas of what God does and what goodness demands. These principles also reflect what people generally think about religion itself that it has something extra to offer, something beyond the ordinary in the field of human relations. This model seeks to call upon the adherents of the different religions to go back to the core of their religion

and see how to engage with the others from this perspective.

- ***The "Talking Things Through" Model this he also calls dialogue.***

When we enter into relationships with people of other faiths, with open hearts and minds, stereotypes can finally begin to erode and true dialogue can take place, dialogue that enables mutual sharing in the context of true friendship, humility and respect; dialogue that is entered into without arrogance or ulterior motives, dialogue between friends (Miller 2011).

The three main types of dialogue are formal discussions with pre-set agendas, informal conversations at

local levels, and cooperative efforts to solve grassroots problems.

Religious communities around the world have become so polarized and segmented as to threaten the very fabric of contemporary society. The phenomenon of religious militancy is not peculiar to Islam, nor is it the exclusive preserve of religions...I believe that interfaith dialogue must be intensified. We must harness our effort for the common good of all believers.¹

- ***The Model of Peace making from Below***

The sacred scriptures ask that we walk through the doors of peace making service. They will not let their adherents alone. As for the Bible, after

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See *Christian-Muslim Dialogue, Theological and Practical Issues*, ed. Roland E. Miller and Hance Mwakabana (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 1988) 368ff.

Ps 34:14 says, "Depart from evil and do good," it immediately adds, "seek peace, and pursue it." Peacemaking may for some be a policy choice, but essentially it belongs to the good. So pursue it! Jesus, who is named "Our Peace," utters these famous words: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Matt 5:9). The Qur'an is straightforward in its demand: "Make peace among men, for God both hears and knows" (2:224). There it is, plain and simple, it stops you in your tracks: Be a peacemaker, God is watching! In Sura 23:96, the Qur'an goes on to advise that the normal way of thinking is an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but then it adds that there is a better way: "But he who pardons and puts things right, then his reward is

with God." The passage reminds us that someone has to start breaking the cycle.

For the wildest example of personal intervention in Christian-Muslim conflict, we have to go to the past, to Francis of Assisi (d. 1226). He had been persistent in his effort to journey into Muslim areas with his message of selfless love, but had been twice thwarted. Finally, he managed to take a ship to Damietta at the mouth of the Nile River. There, in 1219, under the command of Cardinal Pelagius, the members of the Fifth Crusade were facing a Muslim army. It was surely one of the weirdest of the Crusades, because Sultan Malik al-Kamal, the Viceroy of Egypt, was a conciliatory person and had contributed to a time of peace.

- ***The Model of Deep Friendship***

That is, can human friendship image divine friendship? With this model, we arrive at what in our view is the key paradigm in Christian-Muslim relations, the pattern of God's friendship. But first we must examine the principle of human friendship that is a model of its own and that is recognized for its value by both Muslims and Christians, without dissent. Human friendship and divine friendship are linked as are creature and Creator, and together they provide our major resource in human relations. Human friendship is a beautiful thing, and between Christians and Muslims it is desirable, possible, and personally highly rewarding. It is an informing element in the application of our other

models, lifting them above mere utilitarianism and crisis management. It is not time- or culture-bound. At its best it warms the heart and bridges relationships. It is "the bridge over the river why," answering the question of why we should bother about Christian-Muslim relations. I am not alluding to the casual use of the term friend, with a diluted content, but friend as represented by the words of Solomon (Sulaiman Nabi) who said: "A friend loves at all times" (Prov. 17:17). It is this kind of consistent friendship that is so highly esteemed by Muslims, and in their internal relationships, it is regularly combined with hospitality and generosity.

Nevertheless, the model of human friendship has its limitations, and to stay on that level is to miss its clue to

something more profound. Ordinary human friendship is often imbued with self-interest. It is frequently emotional and changeable. It may lack staying power. It is certainly too frail to bear the full load of Christian-Muslim relations. We need an unshakeable ideal and an influx of energy from outside ourselves, and so we turn from a creature quality to the deep friendship that we learn from God, our merciful and compassionate Lord.

Divine friendship As Muslims understand it, divine friendship is focused on God's created wonders, God's generosity to humankind, and God's care for believers. God is called "Our Protecting Friend." Christians share those emphases but take divine friendship as the key to the understanding of God's character and

God's relation to a straying world. In that sense, divine friendship is a virtual synonym for the term agape, selfless love. Christians believe agape to be the very nature of God, who is not merely friendly, but who is friendship itself. Because it is inherent in the divine character, God's friendship is not dependent on our response and is also shared with those who do not deserve it. It holds nothing back. It is not emotional, self-interested, changeable, impermanent, or frail. It is self-forgetting, even self-giving. The distinction between divine and human friendship is especially striking in the way it deals with rejection. It does not end when reciprocity fails. It reaches out and is ready to suffer. Jesus the Saviour said, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for

one's friends." And, having commanded love, Jesus adds, "You are my friends if you do what I command you" (John 15:12-14).

To these I add what Colin Chapman calls '**Scriptural Reasoning**' *represents the nearest thing possible to a level Playing field* **Allowing** each other speak about their scriptures freely, whether recitation or reading.

Conclusion

So How Should A Christian Respond?

Romans 12:19-21 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord. To the contrary, if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is

thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Psalm 34:14 Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

Matthew 5:44-48 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sunrise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You

therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Matthew 5:38-39 You have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

Matthew 10:16-24 Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it

is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. ...

#1 The Church in Africa needs to engage the different political systems in diplomacy

The political orders are mandated to maintain law and order. In areas where anarchy and religious conflicts arise, the church should engage with the government to find a solution to the immediate conflicts as well as the underlying grievances.

#2 Let's show the world in these desperate days what the love of God is like.

The discipline of love in the face of adversity is what distinguishes the Christian from other people ([John 13:35](#)). This is a time for us not only to show Christ's love to our brothers and

sisters in Christ, but also to others who need to feel the warmth of that love in the cold aftermath of loss.

#3 Let's be much in prayer for the safety of those who are demonstrating love to others by their brave actions.

Our military forces, police, firemen, rescue workers, doctors, nurses and volunteers of all kinds are living out Jesus' words, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends" ([John 15:13](#)). Those who risk their lives for others are set in stark contrast to the cowardly terrorists who used the lives of others as a shield for their despicable acts. Let's pray for these men and women and thank God for them.

#4 Let's speak up for understanding, tolerance, justice and forgiveness.

While you and I cannot tolerate the methods of these terrorists, their actions arose from the frustration of their feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. Who better to try to understand that hopelessness than those of us who have found hope in Christ. That will demonstrate the love of Christ. "But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins" ([Matthew 6:15](#)).

#5 Let's be a voice for calm in an atmosphere of hatred and retaliation.

James said it so well: "My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry. For

man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires" ([James 1:19-20](#)). This is both a time for patriotism and a time for patience. Let's be patriotic Americans who bring God's Word to bear on the national debate about how to respond to terrorism.

The Christian response is always to look for the fingerprints of God in every situation.

Amen

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