

An open letter to Pastor Terry Jones
by an American Christian who has spent the majority of his life living in Muslim countries

Pastor Terry Jones
Dove World Outreach Center
Gainesville, FL

September 29, 2010

Dear Pastor Jones,

I have felt compelled to write you since the events in the media surrounding your plan to burn Qurans on September 11. I have lived most of my adult life in Morocco where I have done educational projects as well as openly practiced my Christian faith. I was in Casablanca on September 11, 2001 and the government there went to great lengths to make the Christian community feel safe.

I am assuming that you have not had a great deal of contact with Muslims and thought I would write with some reasons from the Bible that led me to **disagree with your idea to burn Qurans**. I hope you do not reinitiate this project in the future. I will list some of the principles from Jesus life and ministry as well as other biblical references that would indicate that indeed, Jesus would not burn Qurans if he were on earth today.

Perhaps the most clear principle is found in how Jesus gave a summary of God's law in the golden rule: "*So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.*"¹ Do you wish to tell the Muslim world that in doing this, you would like them to burn our Holy Bible? It would appear that this is the message they would receive from this principle, since Jesus said it should apply to everything..

I do not believe that Jesus condoned violence. He did say that His message would bring division of beliefs, but what I see Him advocating throughout His life is love. Again, Jesus listed these as the two greatest commandments of the law: "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.*' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: '*Love your neighbor as yourself.*' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."² It is very difficult for me to see how one would show love to his neighbor by burning their sacred books. My understanding of much of the criticism you have received from within the USA of your project is the reaction it would cause among Muslims. I do not condone violence, and we all know that violence begets violence.

Jesus taught this near the end of his life when, in the Garden of Gethsemane, one of His disciples attacked the servant of the high priest with his sword and cut off his ear. Jesus rebuked the disciple and healed the man's ear. He then admonished him: "*for all who draw the sword will die by the sword.*"³ We all know that there is a great amount of animosity in both directions in the Muslim and Christian world. As believers in Christ, we need actions of love, not of aggression. Even if we show love to our neighbors, we may see aggression in return, but it is clear that if we show aggression, the amount we receive in return will be much, much greater.

Jesus did have one moment of righteous anger when he cleared the Holy Temple of merchants. But he was not initiating aggression, nor was he responding to aggression against Himself as a man. He was angry that men were using God's Temple not for prayer but to rob sincere believers who came to pray.

I find these same principles among the apostles. I have seen that one of your desires is to make people aware of what you believe concerning the Quran. Speaking out is certainly necessary at times, but we must remember the admonition from the Apostle Paul to the church at Ephesus: “*speaking the truth in love...*”⁴ Pastor Jones, even if you want to demonstrate some truths, I have a very difficult time finding any love in your project.

We all have certain rights as American citizens, and you certainly have the right under American law to burn Qurans, in private or public. However, as the Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth: “*Everything is permissible for me*”—*but not everything is beneficial.*”⁵ I cannot think of anything beneficial or good that would come from your project, even if you have the right to do it.

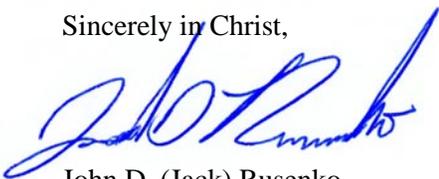
I have noticed that your church is named after the Holy Spirit (in the form of a dove). All believers in Christ must be empowered by the Holy Spirit and I am sure you are well aware of the fruit that results in one’s life from being under the control of the Holy Spirit: “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*”⁶ As I consider your project, I ask myself which of the aspects of this fruit is motivating you to burn the Qurans in public? It would seem to me that the Holy Spirit would guide a believer in Christ away from the type of provocation resulting from intentionally insulting other people’s faith.

In closing, I would like to encourage you from Christ’s word from the Sermon on the Mount. I do believe you would find great pleasure in being identified as a child of God (in a purely spiritual sense). The same is true of me. Jesus clarified in this teaching what those who believe in Him should do as they aspire to be like Him. “*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.*”⁷ Our world has enough people who create division, dissention and wars. May those who believe in Christ be known as peacemakers as Jesus was himself.

As I mentioned in the beginning of this letter, I was in Morocco on September 11, 2001. HM King Mohamed VI sanctioned a memorial service five days later in the largest church in the country which was attended by Moroccan government leaders and diplomats as well as the Christian community.⁸ It was unique in the Muslim world. This is a great example of the type of response to violence that leads to healing and peacemaking. May we see more events like this, which are desperately needed for us all.

I hope that you receive this letter in a positive spirit, as it is my wish to encourage you from God’s Word.

Sincerely in Christ,



John D. (Jack) Rusenko
jack@rusenko.com

¹ NIV, Zondervan : Matthew 7:12

² NIV, Zondervan : Matthew 22: 37-40

³ NIV, Zondervan : Matthew 26:52

⁴ NIV, Zondervan : Ephesians 4:15

⁵ NIV, Zondervan : 1 Corinthians 6:12

⁶ NIV, Zondervan : Galatians 5:22

⁷ NIV, Zondervan : Matthew 5:9

⁸ See www.rusenko.com for a video clip