



**W**e should “speak the truth in love” — Ephesians 4:15. But if we sacrifice Biblical truth, we are not showing love to anyone. A good parent understands “tough love.” That parent does not ignore the truth to make a child feel good about himself. That parent does not overlook danger or any threat just to help the child’s self-esteem. If a preacher or minister makes this choice to sacrifice truth on the altar of love, he puts his listeners at risk.

II Timothy 4:2 says “Preach the word.” Preach the truth. “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free,” John 8:32 KJV. Biblical truth does not bind or enslave sinners; it sets them free and gives them liberty. Biblical truth does not bring legalism. But Biblical truth does not allow for licentiousness.

We must balance truth and love in our treatment of Biblical material. Our concern for safeguarding truth

and love is not an either/or situation. It is a both/and situation. Truth and love are not mutually exclusive. Truth and love are symbiotic — “the living together of two dissimilar organisms in a close association that is advantageous to both,” (Webster’s New World Dictionary, 1962).

We must balance truth and love when we apply Scripture. “Balance” is “a state of equilibrium or equipoise,” (Webster’s New World Dictionary, 1962). Vertigo is a medical condition where one loses his equilibrium and balance. Too many modern preachers and teachers have spiritual vertigo. They stagger from one ditch to the other ditch — from one extreme to the other extreme.

## Vertigo

Vertigo is often caused by a medical problem in the ear — whether the middle ear or inner ear. Spiritual vertigo is a problem in the spiritual ear. “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears. And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables,” II Timothy 4:3-4 KJV. I have wondered who has the itching ears — the preacher or the listener. I am fearful that in some cases, both preacher and listener have itching ears.

One of Jesus’ last miracles, if not His final miracle, leading up to his passion, was to restore and heal the severed ear

of the servant of the high priest (Luke 22:51). In Revelation 2-3, Jesus repeats to all seven churches “He that hath an ear, let him hear.” In the vernacular of a CB radio talker, he would ask, “Have you got your ears on?”

The key to preventing compromise on Biblical principles is to balance truth and love. Too many ministers and members of our churches have spiritual VERTIGO. They have tried to elevate compassion for sinners at the expense of conviction from Scripture. SBC —MBC — have you got your ears on?

Compromise of Biblical truth for any reason will make you dizzy — spiritual vertigo. Don’t compromise!

*Digby is executive director-treasurer of the Christian Action Commission. He can be reached at (601) 292-3329/office, (662) 284-9163/cell, or by e-mail at kdigby@christianaction.com.*

# Pastor, prof team up on reaching Muslims for Christ

**ALPHARETTA, Ga.(BP)** — By the year 2050, the Muslim population in North America is reportedly projected to double. That figure might trouble some people in the United States but Micah Fries believes Christians have no reason to be concerned.

The North American Mission Board (NAMB) hosted a conference May 2 in the Southern Baptist entity’s Alpharetta, Ga., headquarters outside Atlanta, based on Fries’ and Keith Whitfield’s book, *Islam and North America: Loving our Muslim Neighbors*.

Nearly 40 people attended in person and roughly 300 individuals and locations joined by simulcast.

“If you ask the average American Christian to tell us what percentage of the U.S. is Muslim, the vast majority give you a number from 10%, 15%, even 20%. The truth is, it’s one percent. Projections estimate it will grow to 2.1 percent by 2050,” said Fries, pastor of Brainerd Church in Chattanooga, Tn.

That statistic is one example of the misconceptions about Islam that tend to generate fear and confusion, preventing Christians from loving their Muslim neighbors well, Fries pointed out.

The anxiety that regularly appears in the news media spurred Fries and Whitfield, associate professor of theology at Southeastern Seminary (SEBTS) in Wake Forest, N.C., to compile their book.

“Our desire is to create a conversation to help people see and become aware of an opportunity

and encourage them to” seize the opportunity to reach their Muslim neighbors, Whitfield said ahead of the conference.

Along with Fries and Whitfield, the event included speakers who contributed to their book:

■ Kambiz Saghaey, director of Persian studies at SEBTS.

■ Ed Stetzer, director of the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College in Chicago.

■ Bob Roberts, pastor of Northwood Church in Keller, Texas.

■ Andy DeFelice, director of Moriah International.

■ Bart Barber of First Church, Farmersville, Texas,

Topics ranged from the benefits of more multi-faith dialogue, clearing up misunderstandings about Islam, the need for religious liberty for all faiths, and methods for sharing the Gospel with Muslims.

Stetzer shared about his experiences as a researcher and participant in interfaith dialogue that led him to rethink how interactions between people of different faiths take place.

“For years, many people of various faiths have promoted ‘interfaith dialogue’ in order to discover common ground and work together for humanity’s sake,” said Stetzer. “That sounds good, until we start digging below the surface.”

Stetzer and Roberts, in their respective talks, discussed the need for believers in different faiths to be honest about the distinctions.

“Pretending that we all believe the same thing does not foster dialogue but in fact prohibits it,” Stetzer said.

Both Stetzer and Roberts described how honesty and genuine love have opened doors to build relationships with Muslims around the world and share the Gospel.

Fries, who has led his church to reach out to the Muslim community in Chattanooga, has seen several Muslims come to Christ. He also emphasized that Christians should not simply see the Muslim community as a project.

“We’re not doing this just because we want people to come to Christ. We value individuals whether they come to Jesus or not,” he said. “We want them to know that we value you as created in the image of God.”

David Tucker of ChristWay Church in Chattanooga was among those who attended the event.

“[Where] this has been amazing is taking a concern that we know we should all have in terms of engaging with our neighbors [and] starting to make some of that real but making sure that, in doing so, we keep our theology where it needs to be,” he said.

Meredith Ringwalt traveled from Rome, Ga., with a group from Three Rivers Church to participate in the conference. She said she has several Muslim neighbors where she lives, and the event encouraged her in sharing God’s Word and to trust that His Spirit will do the work.

Micah Fries | Keith Whitfield

ISLAM  
AND  
NORTH  
AMERICA

Loving our Muslim Neighbors