

An Open Letter from Faith Leaders to Wal-Mart and Lee Scott

Mr. Lee Scott, CEO
Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.
702 Southwest 8th St.
Bentonville, AR 72716

December 21, 2006

Dear Mr. Scott,

Many of us in the faith community are deeply troubled that Wal-Mart seems to be promoting religious intolerance in our volatile political and religious climate. The video game, “Left Behind: Eternal Forces” encourages Christian characters to kill all others if unable to convert them. In an age where faith leaders around the globe are calling for religious tolerance, how can Wal-Mart justify marketing a video to our young people with content that advocates religious violence and glories in the death of others? This is not only appalling, but is in direct contradiction to many of our shared and deeply held religious beliefs.

It is incomprehensible that a company that purports to support traditional family values would endorse violence. “Thou shalt not kill” [Exodus 20:13] is one of the Ten Commandments handed down to Moses, the New Testament advocates turning the other cheek to acts of violence upon one’s person, and in the Quran it states that if anyone kills a person, it is as if humanity has been killed [Q 5:32]. These sentiments are diametrically opposed to the premise of the video game “Left Behind: Eternal Forces”

In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, we have seen many forms of religious intolerance which, as people of faith, we have fought tirelessly against. Wal-Mart’s careless choice to sell this reckless and dangerous product undermines interfaith efforts to build tolerance and peace in a volatile world. This game sponsors the notion that God sanctions brutal violence against those who are different, and dehumanizes those who are not Christian.

We find it inexcusable that any Christian groups would support the underlying premise of this game. In the past all of us — Christians, Muslims, and Jews — have sat at various tables to talk about peace and justice in our communities, nations, and the world, and have been working toward a better understanding and acceptance of each other. Our efforts have been focused on promoting unity across all faiths. This game, however, works to undermine the substantial progress we have made together.

Wal-Mart promotes itself as a family friendly business with a social conscience, and thus has a responsibility to ensure the quality and impact of its merchandise. Children learn values not only from their parents and school, but from the media to which they are exposed. By planting the seed that murder for any reason is justifiable and that death is part of a game seems a disreputable and immoral way to make a profit. We firmly believe that Wal-Mart is being socially irresponsible by continuing to sell this game after its potential harmful impact has been brought to the company’s attention.

As people of faith, we are also saddened that Wal-Mart would exploit religion to sell youth entertainment products rooted in violence. We have to ask whether Wal-Mart has considered the repercussions should impressionable teenagers and adults follow through with actions based upon the misguided religious beliefs expressed in this game.

Please, we urge you, remove the video game “Left Behind: Eternal Forces” from your stores immediately before one of these children commits an act of violence they believe is sanctioned by God and the society they live in.

Signed,

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