

DISCIPLING MIDDLE EASTERN BELIEVERS

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1 Introduction

When I first started relating to Muslims and studying Islam, the major question among Evangelical Christians with a heart for the Islamic world was, ‘Can Muslims really come to the Lord?’ We were taught by great scholars and Islamicists like Dr. Kenneth Cragg to exercise patience in our interfaith witness with Muslims. Today, after almost 40 years, the relevant question is, ‘How does a Muslim background believer grow in Christ?’ A resurgence of fanatical Islam has brought about catastrophic world events. At the same time, a growing number of Muslims are becoming believers in Jesus in every Islamic country. The sowing of the good news of salvation in Jesus is reaping a harvest in the midst of persecution and turmoil. This book is a sequel to my first on *Dialogue and Interfaith Witness with Muslims*.¹ It addresses the observation of the late Dr. Elmer Douglas, my professor of Islamic Studies at Hartford Seminary Foundation, that, ‘The question is not whether Muslims can come to Christ, but what do we do with them after they become believers in Him?’ He, as many others working in Muslim countries, had faced the difficulties of the Muslim believer in Jesus in dealing with the hostility of his own Muslim culture, and the lack of welcome into the existing Christian community.

I therefore share the following observations and experiences in trying to disciple Muslim background believers in Jesus with the hope and prayer that they may be helpful to all who work in and pray for the Muslim world. Our goal and expectation is that you may see the living Christ shape your Muslims friends into his im-

¹ Ray G. Register, Jr., *Dialogue and Interfaith Witness with Muslims* (IAM Partners, Escondido, 1979).

age. I must admit my own limitations in that the majority of my experience has been with Sunni Muslims of Palestinian origin who live in or once lived in the Holy Land. Many are men who, though oral communicators, can read and write. An excellent resource for working with Muslim women who are oral communicators and often involved in occult practices is *Ministry to Muslim Women, Longing to Call Them Sisters*, which is a compendium of over 40 women who worked among Muslim women worldwide². The most candid and sympathetic description of these Muslims is by Professor Bill Baker in his recent book, *Arabs, Islam and the Middle East*.³ A Muslim from Jordan shares his personal testimony of faith in *The Man from Gadara*. *The Camel Training Manual* provides a practical approach to discipling Muslims. Caring for converts from Islam is emphasized in *Welcome Home*. The groundbreaking work in *Servants in the Crucible*, provides invaluable insights from 450 interviews with Muslim background believers and others. I have had some limited experience with Muslims from other areas of the Middle East and around the world. I apologize to you and to my Muslim friends for what may appear to be stereotypes. Muslim background believers in Jesus are from every nation of the world and represent a wide variety of economic, education and social groups. Each has his or her individual personal experience with the Lord. It would be naïve to think that one approach fits every Muslim. On the other hand, all Muslims are part of a family, tribe, sub-culture and the Nation of Islam. Therefore, some of what I share about discipling, mentoring and counseling Muslim background believers will have application to all Muslims.

² Fran Love & Jeleta Eckheart (eds), *Ministry to Muslim Women, Longing to Call Them Sisters* (William Carey Library, Pasadena 2000).

³ William G. Baker, *The Cultural Heritage of Arabs, Islam and the Middle East*, (Brown Books, Dallas, 2003).

I must make clear the use of terminology. I call a Muslim who has trusted Jesus Christ as personal savior from his sins, a Muslim background believer or MBB. They would be considered in the C4-C5 Spectrum with a few in C6. He or she is still a Muslim by culture. They are not Christians in the cultural sense any more than a Jewish Messianic believer in Jesus is a Christian. Many Jewish Messianic friends protest vehemently if we call them Christians. Even though they have found the fulfillment of the Scriptures in Jesus their Messiah, they have not entered the Gentile world of Christians emotionally or culturally. Many still observe the Jewish Sabbath, attend Messianic synagogues, and observe the Jewish feasts. Most Muslim background believers, especially the first generation whom we are dealing with, still live in Muslim families and Muslim cultures. They will observe the Muslim holidays, express themselves in Muslim terminology and act like Muslims. Do not expect to see crosses in their homes any more than you would expect to see one in a Jewish Messianic home. We have to correct our thinking and expectation that a Muslim background believer automatically becomes a cultural Christian when he or she receives Jesus as personal savior from their sins. This certainly will not happen in the Middle East where a vast majority of the people are Muslims and have as much as 1400 years of tradition as Muslims. Jesus is entering the Muslim world from within and beginning to transform Muslims individually, as groups and hopefully as nations as the Holy Spirit enlightens their hearts through the reading and hearing of the Word of God in the Bible and through the testimony of other Muslim background believers and Christian friends. If you expect a Muslim background believer to automatically become a 'Christian' you will be disappointed in this book. But if you are willing to let God work from within the Muslim community as he did in the Jewish and Gentile community in the first century and is still working today, then you may benefit, and your Muslims friends in turn.

I am grateful to my friends ‘Hamdi’, ‘Barnabas’, ‘Fredrick Wedge’, ‘Ferruchi’, ‘Athanasios’ and many others who have taught me, increased my patience and led me to trust the Lord more in my life’s calling.⁴ I also owe my prayer life to a Muslim I only met once, ‘Trusty Hajj’ who inspired me to practice daily prayer and Bible study through his prayer rug in the YMCA at the University of Virginia in 1953. Many expatriate friends whom I cannot number have inspired, informed and corrected me through the years as I have tried to assist Muslim friends in drawing closer to Jesus. My wife, who is a lovely Rose, has patiently and wisely shared her gift of discernment in encouraging me. To all and especially to the Lord, I am grateful, and dedicate the following book to her.

2 Their religious and cultural background

Muslims are unique people and distinct from cultural Christians in many ways. In order to help Muslim background believers grow in their knowledge of Christ we must recognize where they are different as well as how they are similar to Christians. Again, I am most acquainted with Palestinian Muslims from the Holy Land, but will try to share some ways that Muslims in general differ from the average Christian to enable you to adapt the Gospel to their unique ways of thought and life style.

The basic motive of the Muslim religion, from which Muslim background believers in Jesus come, is the fear of God (Arabic: *takwah*). God is feared, because according to the Quran, the Muslim’s Holy Book, God is a righteous judge who will bring every man to judgment on the Last Day.⁵ The motive force of Islam is the fear of Hell fire. The mournful call to prayer from the Mosque

⁴ All names are pseudonyms to protect the identity of the Muslim background believers and those working with them.

⁵ Daud Rahbar, *God of Justice* (Brill, Leiden, 1960).

five times a day strikes fear into the hearts of the followers of Muhammad. I once asked a Muslim background believer why the call to prayer from the Mosque sounded so awesome and he told me it was because Islam is a religion of force and fear. There is a spirit that permeates the reading of the Quran and the prayers of Muslims that captivates the hearts of Muslims. The shout *Allahu Akbar* (Arabic: God is greater) is a battle cry used to send fear into the hearts of the enemies of Islam, and to give courage to Muslim fighters and suicide bombers. It is also the 'hinge of prayer', which the Muslim chants every time they bow in daily prayers. When you disciple a Muslim background believer you need to recruit numerous prayer partners to pray for you and your Muslim friend for protection and freedom from the power of fear that once dominated the Muslim's life. Fear not only dominates the religion of Islam, it acts as a deterrent for Muslims leaving Islam. An apostate, or *murtad*, who leaves Islam for Christianity, is under the threat of death.

The fear motive of Islam stands in stark contrast to the love motive of Christianity. As John Ashcroft is reputed to have said, 'Islam is a religion whose God demands you to give your son as a sacrifice for him. Christianity is a religion whose God gives his son as a sacrifice for you!' The selfless *agape* love of the Christian Gospel is unknown in Islam. The God of Islam would never have a son, and if he did, he would certainly not give him as a sacrifice for man, who is regarded as a slave of God. We must be aware of the two major objections of the Muslim religion to the Gospel when discipling Muslim background believers. First, Islam rejects the sonship and divinity of Jesus Christ, and secondly it rejects his sacrificial death on the cross. There are special ways that these two major doctrines can be explained to a Muslim background believer which we will clarify later. The claim that 'Islam is a religion of peace and love', is a recent innovation adapted for Western consumption by Sufi proponents. It has little truth in reality.

Along with the fear motive in Islam, the capriciousness of God in Islam also affects the Muslim background believer's attitude toward the Gospel and toward truth in general. According to the Quran, God can change his mind. The Quran is a collection of piecemeal sayings that Muhammad claims to have received from God on various occasions during his prophetic lifetime. God would often give to Muhammad a better verse than he gave before which substitutes for the former verse as the situation demanded. An entire system of abrogation was created by Muslim scholars to determine which verse was revealed last and is therefore more authoritative. In the Christian-Muslim polemic the Muslim will often tell the Christian, 'Your Scripture has been changed', or, 'The Quran is the last Word from God'. This is a carry over from the theory of abrogation in the Quran. It also affects the Muslim attitude toward history, and makes it very difficult for a Muslim to have a regard for any history prior to Muhammad who lived in the 7-8th Century AD. In his opinion, Islam was revealed last, and therefore supersedes both Judaism and Christianity. According to the Quran, 'The religion of God is Islam' (3:19).

The combination of the capriciousness of God and the fear motive that dominates Islam leads Muslim background believers to express a great degree of distrust in personal relationships. I knew a husband and wife who did not know the other was a believer in Jesus until about six months in the faith. They both showed up at the same meeting and were surprised to see each other! Distrust is an ingrained feature in people from Islamic background. There is a verse in the Quran that says that 'God is the greatest of deceivers!' (3:54) Maintaining a climate of confidentiality is necessary to generate trust with Muslim background believers. We must realize that they could pay with their lives if betrayed.

Distrust is also engendered by the practice of not having allow to tell the truth in Muslim society. What is considered as deception and outright lying is unfortunately a matter of lifestyle in some Muslim cultures. The truth can be twisted according to

what a Muslim thinks the listener wants to hear. Everyone assumes that there is an ulterior motive behind what is being said. It is customary for a Muslim to be allowed to lie in at least three circumstances. First, a man can tell each wife he loves her best in order to keep harmony in the home. Secondly, he can tell a lie to deceive an enemy of Islam in time of war. And thirdly, he can tell a lie to convert a person to Islam. These lies are all justified as a means to a good end. You can expect a Muslim background believer to tell you many times the story behind the story as to why he or she could not tell the blunt truth in a given situation.

Fatalism is also dominant in Islam and leads to an attitude of resignation to whatever life brings. *Insha Allah* (if God wills) is the answer to most questions about a Muslim's plans for the future. While this certainly has some positive aspects in the complexities of today's world, it can be a cop out from assuming responsibility for one's actions. A Muslim background believer's willingness to admit a mistake or wrongdoing is an indication that the Gospel is beginning to affect their life. Jesus says in John 8:32, 'You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free'. A Muslim never knows for certain that he will go to heaven. Muslim suicide bombers are deceived into believing that martyrdom insures a place in Paradise. Contrary to the Quran they are taught that to destroy others and themselves is a way to atone for their sins. What a difference when a Muslim understands the salvation in Jesus Christ. The wife of my friend Barnabas, 'Lydia', said that when she accepted Christ, she felt like a newborn babe. She knew she had been set free from the guilt of sin. Discipling Muslim background believers demands a careful balance between the need to live a righteous life and at the same time to rely on the grace of God to continually cleanse us from all sin.

History has not been kind to the Muslim countries from which most Muslim background believers come. Many have a love-hate relationship with the west. They abhor what they consider the sexual looseness of Westerners, but at the same time they covet the freedom to act as they please. They have a deep anger over

the victories of Israel over the Muslim dominated Middle East. Christine Mallouhi⁶ amplifies the reasons for this anger in her description of 'The Problem of Palestine' in her thoughtful book, *Waging Peace on Islam*. Privately I have heard Palestinians express an admiration for what the Jews have done in that tiny country. They know that their own leaders have squandered the wealth that God has given them through the rich oil fields. The Palestinians, while fiercely loyal to the dream of a state of their own, are very disillusioned by the inability of their leaders to bring them to this goal. I am amazed at the change that comes into the life of a Muslim background believer when he or she studies the Bible and sees the plan that God has for both the Arabs and the Jews. One proof of a real born-again experience is when a Muslim loses their hatred for the Jewish people and vice versa.

You must also be aware of the Muslim's attitude toward sex when disciplining or counseling Muslim background believers. Muslims have a very earthy attitude toward sex. Marriage for a Muslim is made on earth, not in heaven. It is a legal contract between a man and a woman (or up to four women!) which provides for the care of each wife and her children in return for her exclusive sexual favors given only to her husband. The Arabic expression a man uses for his wife in the Muslim community is *huramti*, that is; the one that is permitted for me and forbidden to others. The popular word for the *haram* comes from the Arabic word meaning to forbid. A Muslim background believer who is new in the faith can easily propose marriage to a single woman who may be divorced or a widow, even though he already has other wives. We had to explain to Muslim background believers that this was simply not done in the Christian community. Some Muslim background believers who already have multiple wives come to Christ. It is very interesting to watch the dynamics as God deals with

⁶ Christine A. Mallouchi, *Waging Peace on Islam* (Monarch Books, London, 2000), pp. 100-151.

this situation. In the two cases I dealt with personally, the men eventually gave each wife and her children a home and part of the property and lived with the youngest wife. They did not divorce the older wives since this would have disgraced the wives in their Muslim community. The Gospel spread through multiple family groups as each wife came to the Lord.

The attitude of the Muslim is that Islam builds a fence around women to protect them. They assume the woman is the weaker vessel, and is unable to control her desires. In any case, where a woman commits fornication or adultery, she is assumed to be the guilty party. 'She gave me a face', similar to the western expression, 'She gave me the eye', is the justification for a man to make advances to a woman. In Middle Eastern society a woman who goes astray sexually is killed by her family. Muslim women live in daily fear that their husband will divorce them or bring in a second, third or fourth wife. She is legally prohibited from objecting since a woman cannot testify by herself against a man in a Muslim court. According to the Quran, it takes two women to testify against a man, since a woman is only worth one half of a man legally. The deep fears that women live with in the Muslim world gives a divine opportunity for a Christian woman to encourage Muslim women. I have known Christian women who have experienced the trauma of divorce who have had great opportunities to disciple Muslim woman because there is an immediate affinity with each other's suffering. It is always wise for a woman to be chaperoned when in the company of a Muslim man, so as not to give occasion to the devil. Anytime a man is alone with a woman who is not his wife, mother or sisters, or close female relative, others in the Muslim community assume it is for a sexual liaison.

Miriam Adeney describes graphically the disadvantage women face in Islam. In Islam, women are polluted and polluting. All bodily processes which secrete substances are unclean. Men must wash ceremonially after urinating, defecating, ejaculating semen, or touching something ritually unclean. Women do more: They

menstruate, give birth, suckle infants, and clean up children's messes. Menstruating women cannot pray. God will not hear them. Pregnant and nursing women do not fast. Given a high birth rate, a woman may miss fasts for years. But every missed prayer and fast adds to a person's spiritual indebtedness. All in all, then women are always 'behind' spiritually. And 'this required abstention from worship is a proof of their deficiency in faith', according to a saying attributed to the prophet Muhammad. Even though women may try to 'make up' days of prayer and days of fasting, they never really catch up with what God requires.⁷

While we are thinking about the special situation of discipling Muslim women it is good to understand the prevalence of folk Islam among women. Muslim women are very dependant on occult practices to gain power in a male dominated society. The use of incantations, potions, amulets, prayers to saints, and various other forms of occult practice are prevalent in Muslim society, especially among women. It is common for Muslim women to read tea leaves or coffee grounds in a cup to determine the future. Miriam Adeney affirms: 'As for religion, many Muslim women know little about Islamic doctrine and theology. They resort to folk religion, shrines, sacrifices, amulets, divination, and spirit possession as often as they turn to Muslim institutions.'⁸ Other resources for a better understanding of the Muslim reliance on the occult is Bill Musk's book, *The Unseen Faces of Islam*, and *Muslims, Magic and the Kingdom of God* by Rick Love.⁹

Many Muslim women consult sheiks or occult practitioners for health and marriage problems. The use of magical words is very common. The *bismallah* or blessing 'in the name of God' is uttered

⁷ Miriam Adeney, 'Why Muslim Women Come to Christ', in *Ministry to Muslim Women, Longing to Call Them Sisters*, p. 113, excerpted from her book, *Hagar's Daughters: Ministry with Muslim Women*.

⁸ Adeney, op. cit. p. 102

⁹ Bill A. Musk, *The Unseen Face of Islam* (MARC, Eastbourne, 1989), and Rick Love, *Muslims, Magic and the Kingdom of God* (William Carey Library, Pasadena, 2000).

many times during the day and even at the moment of the conception of a child, so that every act comes under the protection of Allah. *Halal* or permitted food is from those animals slaughtered in the name of Allah.

The ideal man, according to Islam, follows the practices or *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad. The way he dresses, talks, eats, drinks, does business, sleeps, goes to the toilet and has sex is supposed to mimic the very practices of Muhammad. Muslims pride themselves that Muhammad had the strength to sleep with all of his dozen wives on the same night! Western Christian women who attempt to disciple their Muslim background believer friends should be aware that Muslim women dress modestly as a measure not to cause undue excitement on the part of the men in their company. Also do not be surprised that a male child is looked upon with much more favor in the Muslim home than a girl. The leveling of the sexes and uplifting of the role of women in society is a hallmark of the Christian world, though Muslim propagandists would claim otherwise.

A final observation to help you understand the background of Muslim background believers is that many Muslims and in particular, Muslim women, are functionally illiterate. Many women in Muslim countries may not have the opportunity of an education. Extensive interviews with MBBs from a number of countries revealed that a vast majority were male and literate in an environment where most are illiterate. Consequently the vast majority of the illiterate and virtually all females get few chances to hear and believe in Muslim lands.⁸ Most Muslims come from oral communication societies and respond much better to storytelling than to analytical explanations of the Gospel. One mission society which specialized in written material for the Muslim world hired a secular marketing firm to test audience response to their books. They were surprised to find that the majority of the population of the Muslim world, especially in the Middle East, are functionally illiterate. They wisely added audio and visual presentations of the Gospel to their materials. You will find that many Muslims who

have immigrated to English speaking countries of the world will respond with appreciation to English as a second language (ESL) training.

These are only a few of the characteristics of the backgrounds of many Muslim background believers that I know. Again, I apologize for any stereotypes. You will meet Muslims who are highly educated, especially in the college and university world and in the business world who will belie these stereotypes. I do not mean to belittle their achievements. They must be recruited and disciplined to improve the lot of other Muslims. I truly believe that only faith in the living Christ will restore the image of God in Muslims worldwide and enable them to fulfill the purpose for which God has destined their great nation of people.

3 How do they come to the Lord?

Muslim background believers come to Jesus in many of the same ways that other people come to the Lord. At the same time, they are unique people with special needs and God uses unusual ways to speak to them about Jesus. In recent years I have known many Muslims who came to the Lord through a simple presentation of the Gospel, such as the *Four Spiritual Laws* adapted especially for Muslims. A multiplicity of approaches and responses are bringing more and more Muslims into the kingdom.

A majority of Muslims come to the Lord through the personal witness of other Muslim family members and friends who have come to know Jesus as savior. Some are led to the Lord through the witness of missionaries, teachers, doctors, nurses, and other Christians. Some come to the Lord through the reading of Scriptures. Others receive Jesus through the radio, television, audio and videocassette presentations of the Gospel, especially the Jesus Film.

You will hear of Muslims receiving Christ through personal visitations of the Lord in dreams and visions. They seem to be

particularly sensitive to this type of revelation of the Lord. Some have accepted Christ through physical healings of themselves or loved ones. Others may experience Christ through the casting out of demons.

A common factor seems to be the yearning for a faithful friend who sticks closer than a brother. They find this friend in Jesus, and in the ones who witness to Him. Muslims have many problems and need a friend and advisor whom they can trust. The emptiness of Islamic rituals and the spirit of distrust and murder which pervades many Islamic communities make them hungry for a Word from God.

The Fuller Theological Seminary of World Mission made a survey of Muslim background believers from 39 countries and over 50 ethnic groups and found similar reasons that Muslims come to believe in Jesus.¹⁰ Among the reasons given were:

A sure salvation

Muslims are attracted to Jesus because he offers the assurance of salvation. This is contrary to the uncertainty Muslims have regarding their eternal security. I had many Muslim friends tell me about the thread that they believed is stretched over Hell Fires that all Muslims must pass over on the Day of Judgment. If their bad deeds outweighed their good deeds they would fall into the fire. The assurance of the forgiveness of their sins by Jesus is a major reason they come to accept him as personal savior.

Jesus

The pure and sinless nature of Jesus is a major attraction to Muslim background believers. The willingness to forgive even those who crucified him is totally opposite from the Muslim motivation for retaliation. The Muslim knows in his

¹⁰ J. Dudley Woodberry and Russell G. Shubin, 'Why I chose Jesus', on www.missionfrontier.org/2001/01/muslim.htm

heart that Muhammad had to pray for the forgiveness of his sins. Only Jesus was sinless. Attempts of Muslim apologists to instill the belief of the sinlessness of all the prophets, including Muhammad, are a weak copy of the nature of Jesus Christ.

The Bible

Muslims are attracted to God in Christ though the testimony of the Bible. The Quran has a high view of the Bible as Holy Scripture, which belies the common belief among Muslims that the Bible has been corrupted. As I found while discipling Barnabas, the Fuller survey found that the Sermon on the Mount is the section of Scripture most helpful to the new Muslim background believer. Genesis, Psalms and Proverbs are also very much liked by new Muslim background believers, along with the Gospel of John. The Book of Acts serves as a guidebook for church planting movements. Muslims find that the Bible contains the truth that amplifies and corrects the Bible stories that the Quran tells in sometimes vague ways. The Bible clarifies the context of God's Words to man.

Dreams and visions

The Fuller survey revealed that a quarter of new Muslim background believers credited dreams and visions as a vital part of their conversion experience. My friends Muhammad and Barnabas and others related many times about dreams and visions they had which gave them guidance and encouragement in their spiritual growth and trials. Similar to the Fuller survey they often related seeing the Lord dressed in white as He came to give them courage in difficult situations in life. Muhammad had a dream of his father who had recently died, telling him to listen to the missionaries because they have the truth.

Dreams and visions should be treated cautiously. One Muslim background believer I knew told his parents that he had a

vision of Jesus which justified his becoming a Christian and being baptized. He later confessed to me that he had invented this story to justify his conversion. He did not think his parents would be persuaded if he told them the truth that he had grown up in a Christian school and this positive experience had led him to become a Christian. Despite the occasional invention of stories, dreams and visions are known worldwide to play a significant part in convincing Muslims to turn to Christ.

Love

The Fuller survey found that the most compelling reason for the greatest number of Muslims turning to Christ was the power of love. This included the love they saw between Christian believers, as well as the love of God they experienced when they became convinced of Jesus' sacrifice for their sins. They saw in God's love in Jesus a contrast to the love in Islam and the Quran which was a partial love. One Muslim background believer remarked sadly that Islam was 'a tool used by Arabs to oppress non-Arabs'.¹¹

Relationship with God

Some 10% of the Muslim background believers in the Fuller survey related that a relationship with God as friend and father was a factor in their accepting Christ. One of the main reasons a Muslim with multiple wives can adapt to a monogamous life style is the teaching of Christ's love for the church as the bride of Christ in the Epistles. God in Christ offers a personal relationship to the Muslim background believer that cannot be found in Islamic teaching. It is highly possible that the opening verses of the Quran, 'In the name of God, the compassionate, the merciful', is a disguised adaptation of the Trinitarian expression, in the name of the Father,

¹¹ *ibid.* p. 10

Son, and Holy Spirit. There is a relationship of love in the Godhead which is felt by the Muslim background believer.

Blessing in persecution

The Fuller survey found, as we found among Palestinian Muslim background believers, that persecution played a great role in strengthening the faith of new believers. The Muslim background believers I have known suffered beatings, burnings, accidents, divorce, poverty, illness, and starvation. But despite it all, most remained steadfast and even grew in their faith. I once asked the Lord why the believers had to suffer so much and it was as if he told me, 'I am molding them into my image'. The verse in Mathew 5:11 in the Sermon on the Mount which says, 'Blessed are you when they revile you and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for my sake', is certainly a reality for most of the Muslim background believers I have known.

Another study presented in a conference in Canada listed the following paths that lead to Christ:¹²

1. Read Gospel story.
2. See Jesus in dream or vision.
3. Struggle with evil spirits—find name of Jesus frees them.
4. Abused or in dysfunctional relationship—greater power in Jesus.
5. Long for justice in society and find this in Jesus.
6. Desperate for freedom from immoral lifestyle.
7. Fearing death and longing for assurance of paradise.
8. Women find that Jesus affirms them.

¹² 'Many Paths Lead to Christ', VMMP Conference, Burnaby, BC, Canada-1 November 2003, copied from G. Stevenson, 'Meeting the Needs of MBBs in North America', COMMA Conference (Wheaton, 2003)

9. Since a child, longed for intimacy with God and finds it in Jesus.

Miriam Adeney expands on five milestones that recur in Muslim women coming to Christ: Scripture, power encounters, the love of Christians, sex and beauty issues and social justice issues in *Ministry to Muslim Women*. She explains: ‘God, whom the Muslims call *the merciful and compassionate* demonstrates those qualities of mercy and compassion most of all in Christ. This is why Muslim women come to Christ. Through Christ, the God who they knew incompletely and from afar becomes their heavenly Father.’¹³

Ulterior Motives

Those who disciple Muslims must be aware of the many motivations which cause them to become inquirers. These motivations are so dominant that many Eastern Christians distrust Muslims who claim to be believers. We must admit that some of us come to Christ with ulterior motives. We therefore do not judge the Muslim who seeks him, but we must not be naïve.

Some Muslims will expect to receive a Christian wife when they accept Christ. Muslim wives will sometimes refuse to sleep with their believing husbands as a way to force them to return to Islam. Often the families of the wives will pressure them into refusing to sleep with their believing husbands. I knew a Palestinian government official who became a believer. His wife, under pressure from an elder aunt who lived with them, refused to sleep with him. After several months of a celibate life he came to me and told me the problem. He said, ‘I cannot live like this. You have to get me a Christian wife!’ I asked him how long it took for him to receive the Lord? He told me, ‘Several years’. I then suggested he be patient with his wife, especially since it took him so

¹³ Adeney, *Ministry to Muslim Women*, p. 103

long to come to Christ and he knew she was being pressured by her family. He waited and she soon reconciled with him.

There have been occasions in the Churches in the Middle East where a Muslim has come into the fellowship pretending to be a believer. Unfortunately, when he marries a Christian girl and leaves the fellowship, it is devastating to the dwindling Christian community. Christian girls and women are forced into marriages in some countries, only deepening the mistrust against Muslims who claim to be believers in Jesus. That is a major reason for encouraging Muslim background believers to marry women from their own community, if these women will tolerate, or better still, adopt the faith of their husbands. If we insist that Muslims become 'cultural Christians' we will be expected to provide them with a new family and possibly a new wife.

Another ulterior motive some Muslims come to the Lord with is the expectation of financial help. Muslims are usually in great financial need, especially if they have multiple wives and numerous children. I once knew a Muslim teacher who came to us as a new believer. He had three wives and numerous children. He was a man with great potential and influence. I helped him buy a used computer for his high school aged son. Unfortunately, he decided instead to order a much more expensive computer while I was out of the country and used my name as a guarantee. He had his wife sign a check for this more expensive computer; the check bounced. When I returned to the country the computer store manager told me that I owed him for the computer! I told him I had been out of the country and showed him my passport and visa stamp as proof. He called the man and told him that the check had been returned and he was going to report his wife to the police if he did not make it good. The only alternative was to return the computer to me and take the other one that I had ordered for him. The man said he would comply. When I arrived at his house with another believer I changed the computers. The teacher arrived before we left and began cursing me since I had discovered his deception. This man left our fellowship and tried to turn other Muslim back-

ground believers against us. He did not succeed. He tried to get the police to investigate other believers. He persisted in making problems and threats for the believers until one day he dropped dead on the street.

Another man we will call 'Sam' claimed to receive the Lord as a result of meeting believers in the taxi he drove. He was taken in and interrogated by the Secret Police and imprisoned for almost a month. Due to pressure from expatriate believers he was finally released after being threatened by the police. He fled the country with his wife and six children. We assisted Sam to live at our conference center for almost a year. He had Bible studies in his home and many of his relatives joined the Muslim believer's movement because of him. On one occasion I mentioned his case to a leading politician from his home country. This man told me that our friend was deceiving us. I had some doubts about Sam. He had a secret life which caused conflict with his wife. I felt that his wife and children were sincere. Due to political problems he was never able to get a work permit in our country. Sam was in desperate financial straits and I helped to raise a sum of money to pay his house rent, even over the objections of some of my ministry partners. I made the first admitted mistake of my career. I gave Sam the money rather than giving it to his landlord. Early the next morning he fled back to his hometown, leaving all his Bibles and tracts in the empty apartment. His landlord dumped them in the trash. Sam took the money I had given him and finished his house in his hometown. The upshot of the story is, Sam was jailed again, tortured and was struck dumb. His girlfriend from his hometown was shot and killed. Evidently they had been running a prostitution ring. Sam had refused to let his own daughters get involved. He eventually died in prison. These are sad stories that reveal that Muslims come to the Lord with many motivations and problems. One Muslim background believer categorizes 'converts' into the following types:

1. Grateful Converts: They feel Christ set them free and they are very grateful to him.
2. Switching Converts: They feel that Islam is not fulfilling and they are attracted to the West so they adopt the western faith.
3. Hating converts: Mostly they hate Islam for a personal reason, they are believers in God and they could not live without believing in something.
4. Converts with expectations: Those who think that they will gain some benefits by their conversion.

It is because Muslim background believers come to the Lord with many and various motivations and baggage that they are your best mentors and coaches in work with other Muslims. They already know what is in their minds and hearts. They will warn you about deception and possible danger. They will give you feedback after visits with other Muslims and tell you who was really interested in the Gospel. They will coach you on words and methods to use in witnessing and discipling other Muslims. It is only a short step to releasing them to be the frontline person to lead other Muslims into the Kingdom and to disciple them into mature believers.

We must not omit the most powerful reason Muslims are coming to Christ in unprecedented numbers today, that is, the power of prayer. Since the *10/40 Window* emphasis in prayer was started about the time of the second Gulf War in the early 1990's Muslims have started turning to Christ. Christians in the West finally awoke to the fact that if they do not pray for Muslims the Muslims will be their eternal enemy. It took the shock of the battlefield to arouse the attention of the Christian world to the need of Muslims for a personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord. The attacks on the USA on 9/11 drove home the desperate need of praying for Muslims to come to Christ before they turn themselves into suicide bombers. We now have an Email network of over 700 people praying for one specific

Muslim unreached people group and there are many more networks for prayer. God is remaining faithful and he answers these prayers to send forth laborers into the harvest. Many are paying the ultimate price for witnessing and discipling Muslims in this harvest.

Now that we understand a little better the motives of Muslims who come to us, or whom the Lord allows us to influence for him, we need to look at our attitudes as disciplers and mentors of Muslims of Muslim background believers.

4 Attitudes needed by mentors of MBB's

An attitude of acceptance is essential in discipling Muslim background believers. We need to accept the Muslims for who they are and the Gospel for the power it has to change their lives. How are you going to react when a Muslim comes to you to be disciplined and he has two or three wives? Do you feel it is more necessary to change his lifestyle and that of his wives than it is to teach him the essentials of the Gospel message? Do you trust the power of the Gospel to change his or her heart and in the process to change their lifestyle? Paul declared in Romans 1:16, 'For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, for in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.' In other words, the Gospel has the power of God to save and then to lead to right living when a Muslim receives it in faith.

Dealing with the matter of polygamy is a challenge for those of us from Christian monogamous backgrounds. It can have its interesting moments. A sister of my friend Hamdi was married to a man who decided to marry another wife. At first she was upset and went home to her brother. We prayed for her. She later decided to return home since her husband gave her the honored position in the family. She became the mentor for the younger wife. Later the family visited in our home. My wife and I noticed with

amusement as the two wives swapped positions next to the husband at our dinner table and serving in the kitchen! The children of the older wife became high achievers. Through our acceptance of this situation we were able to share the Gospel with the families involved on numerous occasions.

Muslim background believers see our example in our monogamous married life and this becomes a model for them in the discipling process. In the discipling process we are able to share with them the secret of the monogamous love of a husband for his wife, that is, Christ's love for the Church. At the same time, we must be careful that we do not get infected by the spirit of polygamy in Islam. I know of at least two colleagues working with Arabs who divorced their wives and married other women, bringing untold sadness to their wives and families.

We also need an intense loyalty to the Bible as the written Word of God, while at the same time an acceptance of the use of the Quran as a bridge to dialogue and witness. If you attack Muhammad and the Quran you will most likely offend the Muslim so much that it could drive them back further into Islam. My own parents had some glowing weaknesses, but I did not like anyone outside my immediate family talking about them! Criticism of Muhammad and the Quran is usually counterproductive in both witness and discipling Muslim background believers. It is better to allow the Muslim background believer to make their own comparison of Muhammad and Jesus. I never challenge a Muslim to do this. This is usually an exercise the Christian Arabs like to do. I prefer to assign Christian Arabs the exercise of comparing Muhammad to Peter or Moses, since I do not believe there is any equal to Jesus, either in the Bible or in the Quran. The Quran elevates Jesus above all the prophets. The honest Muslim will already realize this. Jesus, according to the Quran, is born of a virgin, is a Word and Spirit from God, creates life, heals the sick, raises the dead, suffers rejection, dies, is closest to God, and is returning again. Therefore, properly explained and amplified by the Bible, the Quran can become a bridge for faith in Jesus.

Muslims are very sensitive to our attitude toward them. Before I would bring untested persons with me on visits to Muslims I would invite them to my home at a time my friend Hamdi would be there. I would leave them alone with him for a few minutes. Later he would tell me whether the person loved Muslims or not. One well-known Christian Arab evangelist visited his town and spoke out against a prominent Muslim clergyman. I was told never to bring him back again.

Trust is an essential element in discipling Muslim background believers. They must be able to trust us. We may be the only friend they can really trust. Therefore, we should never give their names to other people, especially other Muslims, without their permission. We should not brag about Muslim background believers, nor write their names in publications without their permission. We should let them do their own testifying. Remember, they could lose their jobs, families and lives if the wrong person were to learn about them.

Friendship and loyalty are essential attitudes in dealing with Muslim background believers. You will have a hard time winning a hearing or doing effective discipling and mentoring if you offend the Muslim background believer. Saving face, or 'whitening the face' (Arabic: *beyadh al-wiji*) is very important in Muslim and Eastern cultures. The positive reward of friendship with Muslims is that you will be remembered as long as they live.

Speaking the truth in love, or honesty, is also a needed characteristic or attitude in discipling and mentoring Muslim background believers. Remember, they live in a world full of half truth and deceit. They naturally look for the motive behind every act and word. You must be as wise as a serpent and as harmless as a dove. The Muslim background believer will sometimes tell you what they think you want to hear rather than the whole truth behind a matter. We must remember that they are under the threat of a *murtad*, or apostate, by fanatical Muslims and could lose their lives if they are betrayed in a situation in which they do not have protection or security.

The attitude of the mentor or discipler of Muslim background believers is very important in discipling them. Much wisdom and patience is needed. There are methods that will enhance the process of spiritual growth which will be presented in the next chapter.

5 Methods of discipling

Two New Testament keys of discipling Muslim background believers are to find the 'man (and woman!) of peace' and to disciple them on condition that they disciple other Muslims.¹⁴ Jesus practiced and mentored this method as he trained and sent his disciples out two by two to preach the Gospel. He selected key men, trained and disciplined them and sent them out to share all that they learned. He empowered them for their task and gave them his blessing as they went forth. He carried out his ministry in their own towns so they could see how he did it, and then reap the harvest behind him. When they had practiced he sent them forth in pairs to cast out demons and to heal every disease and infirmity.¹⁵ They returned rejoicing when God blessed them with a harvest. We will see the same results when we seek out those Muslims God has called to salvation, teach them and send them back to their own people, trusting the Word of God and the Spirit of God to empower them for the harvest.

The first method of discipling Muslim background believers is to make a contract or covenant with them; that what you teach them, and model for them, they will in turn teach others. As Paul told Timothy, 'what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.'¹⁶ If we wait until we think a Muslim has understood every-

¹⁴ Matt 10:13, Luke 10:6.

¹⁵ Matt 10:1.

¹⁶ 2 Tim 2:2 RSV.

thing, or become as mature as we think they should be, in order to empower them to tell others, we will never see a church planting movement among them. It was when I trusted the Lord and the power of his Word and Spirit to empower Muslims to teach others that I began to see the harvest I had prayed for years to see.

I mentioned earlier about Sam who betrayed me and went back to his hometown with the rent money. Before he left, his friend who I call Barnabas, sneaked my mobile phone number off Sam's phone when Sam went to the bathroom. He called me and told me he had to see me. He told me that he had been married to a Christian wife some years back in another country. She had taken him to the Orthodox Church, but he could not understand their prayers. He wanted me to teach him how to become a Christian, how to live with his wives (!) as a Christian, how to raise his children as Christians, how to pray, fast and worship as a Christian. I agreed on one condition; that what I taught him he would pass on to others. He agreed. I led him through the *Four Spiritual Laws* and he received Christ. He later called me and told me he met a friend who wanted to hear the *Four*. I told him, 'On one condition; Next time you give him the *Four*!' We met for Bible study and prayer almost daily for several weeks until he was baptized. Later he called me and told me that some young men in the Arab villages had received the *Four* and wanted to be baptized. He feared that if I baptized them that they would be interrogated by the secret police. So, I told him, 'You baptize them! Do it the way I baptized you. If you need any help call me and I will coach you by mobile phone.' He began to disciple and baptize other Muslim background believers. The church planting movement started to grow.

When it became known in his family that he was a believer in Jesus each wife began to react differently. He was married to three women, each living in a separate city. The oldest wife was sickly, having borne him eight children. She nearly died giving birth to the last son. They were about to send her to a hospital in another country to die. So, we prayed for her. She got well! The

result was that she and all her adult children scattered throughout the area became believers, and the movement grew more.

His middle wife was a fundamentalist Muslim. She divorced him and demanded the *nafaka*, or alimony. She opened a case against him in the local Muslim *Shariah* Court. He had to scramble around to come up with the money to settle with her. Her oldest daughter, a very bright high school student became a believer in Jesus. She began to discover teachers in her school who were secret believers, so the movement grew even more.

His third wife, the youngest, held out the longest. Her brother was a *sheikh* and she feared his reaction. When she finally came through for the Lord, he beat her up and kicked her out of the family home. His two oldest sons became believers, as well as his brother. His mother was a silent supporter of the Muslim believer's movement until her death. It seems that she had taken her family to a Catholic Church when they lived in a Christian village. Barnabas' youngest wife, who we now call 'Lydia' attended a Quaker High School and spoke some English. She became a Bible woman and witnessed to many of her family and friends. Her sisters became believers and many of their children accepted the faith. The movement kept growing. One day Barnabas told me it was difficult in the Muslim culture for a man to baptize a woman who was not from his own family. He asked me, 'What do you think if Lydia was to baptize the women?' I told him, 'I do not think we Baptists do it that way.' He responded, 'Well, you better get used to it because we do!' The movement began to mushroom. Her nephews and nieces began student movements in the universities they attended. The student leader in one university became our first martyr when he was stabbed after being accused of being a *kafir*, or apostate, during a student demonstration.

I share this experience to reinforce the method of concentrating on the 'man and woman of peace' who in turn will share the Gospel with their friends and relatives, while remaining cultural Muslims. I kept checking to see what they were teaching their friends and family, and coached them in methods of Bible study,

discussion, and gave them basic instructions in holding of meetings, the Lord's Supper and baptisms.

The main point to emphasize is; Muslims learn by doing. We cannot expect them to become perfect overnight. The most important method of discipling them is one-on-one Bible study and prayer. We will talk more in the next chapter about the content of these studies.

Muslim believers accommodate themselves readily to small groups. Muslims love to socialize. Each Muslim culture has rituals of entertaining. The Arab Muslim culture is rich in hospitality. They are very group and family oriented. They love to socialize over coffee and food. They are an oral culture. Therefore small groups comprising of friends, family, or affinity groups are a natural method of gathering Muslims for their own lay-led Bible studies and discussion groups.

A middle aged woman studying in a Christian College in Georgia asked me to recommend a project in a Muslim town to her for her mission class. I was able to place her in a woman's club in a town near a major historic Muslim city. She and her teenage children spent their evenings in a local Christian hospice and she worked with the women's club during the day, teaching English as a second language. She made friends with the leader of the woman's club and her daughter. When the summer project was over, she left a Bible in Arabic with the leader of the women's club. The woman had her daughter read the Bible to her and the other women in the club. Soon there was a believers group gathered in the woman's club. Later, the leader suffered kidney failure. Another Muslim background believer, a male who lived in a nearby town, donated a kidney to her. She died about a year later. There were so many Muslim background believers at her funeral that the local sheikhs became angry and left her home. The believers were then able to have a Christian funeral for her, as she had requested before she died.

Muslim background believers meet often for fellowship, eating and prayer. They meet any time, anywhere and they meet often.

They do not necessarily have regular meeting places. We have had meetings in cars, in fields, under trees, in garages, in stores, in homes, and occasionally in churches when these are available and open to having Muslims meet with them. A point to note is, if the meeting becomes too visible it can bring a backlash from fanatical fundamentalist Muslims in the community. One group I knew used to meet in a kindergarten building in the evening. The building was burned at least twice, and the homes of the believers in the area were burned. High visibility of Muslim background believers meetings can be counterproductive in the beginning of a church planting movement due to severe opposition of other less tolerant Muslims.

Muslims will usually adopt the ecclesiology of the one who wins them to the Lord and disciples them. I used to take the Muslim background believers to a number of different churches after explaining to them the different forms of worship of the Baptists, Pentecostals, Episcopalians, Catholics, and Messianic Jews. Churches are often scarce in predominantly Muslim countries. In the end, my believers preferred to return to the Baptist meetings because of their quiet simplicity and lack of political emphasis. We never saw a movement among them toward a 'Jesus Mosque'. Most of the believers in our movement had quit praying in the mosque years ago, and would not prefer to go back to that style of prayer. I noticed that if I held my hands out in prayer as Muslims do and prayed with my eyes open, the Muslim believers would do the same. If I did not, they would pray just as I did with my head bowed and eyes close. Usually Muslim prayer forms were more effective as a bridge to unbelieving Muslims or to new believers. When a Muslim background believer returns to the mosque to pray it is usually a sign that they have succumbed to community or financial pressure to return to Islam.

Muslims who practiced the ritual prayers before becoming believers are familiar with what Paul described in Philippians 4:6, 'Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.'

Prayer and supplication, or in Arabic: *salat wa du'ah* are two different functions in prayer. For the Muslims and for many Eastern Christians prayer, or *salat*, is a physical ritual with scheduled kneelings, and specific words of confession. It is preceded by ritual cleansing or ablutions with water. Supplication, or *du'ah* is a petition for personal needs and is a private form of prayer. When a Muslim comes to faith in Christ as personal savior he or she can become confused by the evangelical Christian practice of extemporaneous prayer. Many Muslim women do not attend the Mosque and may be totally unfamiliar with this type of prayer. They will have to be taught by example of how to pray from the heart to God as heavenly Father. Also they can be encouraged to 'wash their hearts' through the reading or singing of God's word in Scripture which is a spiritual form of ablution referred to in Ephesians 5:26. This kind of personal, intimate communion with God is the secret of spiritual growth for the Muslim background believer, and is reinforced in the corporate group prayer in fellowship groups which become the church. Some churches have written prayer books in Arabic and other local languages of MBBs which can assist them in verbalizing their prayers. This can be an aid to literate Muslims, but there is no substitute for spontaneous prayer from the heart, which can be expressed by all oral communicators and meet the needs of hungry hearts.

An effective method of discipling Muslim background believers is storying the Gospel. Muslims are oral communicators and are used to memorizing long passages of the Quran by repeating them out loud. They are attracted to the stories in the Bible, beginning in Genesis and ending in Revelation since the core of many of these stories is found in the Quran. Stories have an appeal to all ages. In some areas drama is an effective method of involving Muslim background believers in acting out and testifying to their faith. A.H., a friend and colleague who teaches Muslim women immigrants the Gospel in the Middle East and Europe explains how we apply the lessons we learn from Jesus and Paul to our situation of discipling MBB women.

First of all, we need to look at the preferred learning style of the women we are discipling. Most Muslim women are oral communicators. Most of the disciples and people around Jesus were oral communicators. Jesus taught them by telling stories, by giving examples, and by modeling for them what to do. The disciples learned in a group and not as individuals. Oral communicators learn in groups and from stories. Jim Bowman, who teaches Chronological Bible Storying, tells us that oral communicators learn by listening, repeating, by example, form a holistic overview and through memorization. They use narrative, oratory, recitation, drama and music. They are event oriented and community oriented. A.H. goes on to explain:

The oral communicator needs a structure into which she can place the truths she is learning. When biblical truth is given in chronological order, she can see how God reveals His truth. Things make sense. She can keep it straight in her mind. Then once she has chronological structure, she can add new stories by putting them into their proper place in the chronological structure. As I would tell you to open your Bible to Genesis 29, I would tell the MBB oral communicator, 'You know that Jacob is the Father of Joseph. Today the story tells about Jacob's family.' By studying the biblical truths in a group setting, Timothetta can talk about them with her family and friends. As a group, they decide that they can accept and apply the truths learned to their lives. Some would say you couldn't do this sort of study with groups in restricted access countries. Story telling is the natural form of communication and learning for oral communicators. It is possible to tell stories to groups in restricted access areas.¹⁷

Printed literature, brochures, and correspondence courses are effective discipling tools for Muslims who can read. About 10% of Muslims who take Bible Correspondence courses indicate faith in

¹⁷ A.H., 'Discipleship of MBB Women', unpublished paper and 'Discipleship of Muslim Background Believers through Chronological Bible Storying', in *Ministry to Muslim Women*, pp. 146-173.

Christ during the course. The course can be followed by regional seminars for 'graduates' that can further solidify and clarify their faith in Christ. It is best that these meetings be held discreetly and at the discretion of the students, due to strong community pressure. I have known those who try to follow up on correspondence students to be very disappointed when they could not find many of the so-called converts. Muslims are much more likely to express their interest in the Gospel in private than to let this interest be known to family and friends who may be hostile to their interest.

One of the most effective correspondence courses in our area was called the Academy of Theological Studies (ATS) led by a Druze background believer for the benefit of Arab Muslims, Druze and Christians. It used newspaper advertisements and word of mouth to recruit students from all levels of the professional society in the Middle East. The ATS enrolled priests and teachers who needed to upgrade their professional credentials to teach religion in the local schools. The program was enhanced by yearly seminars led by professors with academic level degrees. Hundreds of Arabic speaking professionals studied the Bible and at the same time elevated their academic credentials in the community. The only difficulty was that accreditation remained an ongoing problem. Some students were motivated to study simply for the accreditation, but nevertheless heard the Gospel in the process.

The Internet now offers a golden opportunity to disciple Muslim background believers who are computer literate. Such sights as Answering-Islam.org and others offer a wealth of material for the inquiring Muslim background believer, as well as strong apologetic material from the Bible and the Quran. The Muslim believer can study from the privacy of his or her own computer, and can be networked to other believers in their area for mutual support. We must be aware that the Muslim fundamentalist movements are also using the Internet to try to refute the Gospel and entice Christians to become Muslims. Also they watch the

Christian Internet sites in order to apprehend inquirers or to sabotage the sites.

Radio and Television, along with audiocassettes and videos play an important role not only in attracting new believers, but also in discipling Muslim background believers. The Gospel Recording Bible storying and church planting audio cassette in Arabic has proven to be an effective tool in discipling Muslim background believers and encouraging them to form believing groups in their local community.¹⁸ The cassettes are available in many languages. One side stories the Gospel message, keyed to a *Wordless Book* and the other side tells about how to witness, disciple believers and form into Bible study groups. We have discovered that using this cassette leads to demands for the Jesus Film which has been one of the best tools of outreach for the Gospel in known history. The *Jesus Film* is available in many languages and has been adapted recently with a special introduction and closing for Muslims. The premier of *The Passion of the Christ* increased demand for the Jesus Film worldwide and spread the exposure of the Gospel among Muslims.

An area that needs more attention is the production of music for Muslim background believers. Their style of music is much different from that of the west and even that of Arabic Christian believers. Adult Muslim background believers have great difficulty in vocalizing the tunes of the Christian Arabs, though they try! Music is very important in conveying the Gospel message among oral communicators. Music aids in retention of Bible verses and may explain the popularity of the Psalms among Muslim background believers. The Quran has been chanted in the mosque for centuries, copying the chants of the Byzantine Church. For the Middle Eastern mind to recite a verse of scripture is to chant it.

There are many methods of discipling Muslims. The core of all these methods must be the imparting of the Gospel message in

¹⁸ Gospel Recordings, 41823 Enterprise Circle North, Temecula CA 92590.

the Bible, and the living out of this message in daily life as the Muslim background believer faces the challenges of living their new life with God in an often hostile environment. Those who opposed the disciples in the early Messianic movement noted in Acts 4:13 that 'they were unschooled, ordinary men. They were astonished and took note that these men had been with Jesus'. What was Jesus' methods in discipling these men who would lead in the building of the church and how can we apply these same methods in discipling Muslim background believers? I note at least these points:

1. He taught them with authority: We have the same Word, the same Spirit and the same authority.
2. He lived with them: He had daily contact. Discipling Muslims demand our daily time and togetherness.
3. He disciplined in small groups or 3, 6, or 12: We make a mistake if we look for large numbers. The core men and women of peace need intensive, personal training in order for them to train others.
4. He knew their capacity to learn: He began simple and only entrusted them with what he could trust them to keep. Security is a major issue for Muslim background believers.
5. He taught them from the beginning how to deal with opposition and persecution: When you call a Muslim to trust Jesus as Savior and Lord, you call him to come and die!
6. He disciplined during teachable moments: Peter was a good example, i. e. The confession at Caesarea Philippi, the Lord's Supper, before the cock crowed and even after the resurrection beside the Sea of Galilee. We need to know when to be gentle, firm and direct in discipling Muslim background believers.

In methodology of discipling Muslim background believers it is also important to have times of retreat for them to consider what

has been learned and to assess the cost of discipleship. It is better to let the Holy Spirit deal with them rather than to force a premature commitment. We will deal next with the content of discipleship which in some case is unique for Muslim background believers.

6 The content of discipleship

The majority of books written by evangelical Christians about Muslims are geared toward explaining Islam, defending Christianity from the polemical attacks of Muslims and presenting the Gospel to Muslims. They are by and large polemical or apologetic in nature. Now that Muslims are responding in significant numbers to the Gospel around the world, we need to know how to help Muslims grow in their faith in Christ. What is the content, or subject matter of the discipling process? How does it need to be adapted to the particular needs of Muslims who may have little, or at best, distorted information about the Gospel?

We remember from earlier discussion that the Muslim background believer comes to the faith from many and varied motivations and perhaps some misconceptions. They may be sensitive to negative statements about Muhammad and the Quran. They face opposition and open persecution for their willingness and desire to learn more about Jesus and the Bible. It is best to assume, as with any new believer, that the Muslim background believer is starting at zero regarding knowledge of the basics of the Gospel. Perhaps they are hostile to some of the basic principals such as the need for salvation through the shed blood of Jesus on the cross. They are taught from birth that man is not a sinner and no one can die or intercede for another's sins. Despite these learned objections to the Gospel, I have been amazed at the openness of many Muslims to hear the plain message of salvation without argument in the last few years. In the beginning of my ministry to Muslims I hesitated to use the Four Spiritual Laws in witness to

them because of their strong objection to the cross. Muslims are taught that Jesus did not die on the cross, but someone else, like Judas Iscariot, was crucified in the place of Jesus. I have heard this argument less and less in recent years. Muslims, whose heart has been opened by the Holy Spirit and their desperate circumstances, are receiving a simple presentation of the Gospel without argument. They may not understand it, but they are not opposing it as was formerly the case.

Therefore, I now recommend the *Four Spiritual Laws* as a basic discipleship tool for Muslim background believers.¹⁹ The basic laws of God's love, his divine plan for your life, our sin which separates us from God, Jesus' death for you and your need to receive this offer of salvation personally are basic to helping the Muslim to understand and experience the new birth. The *Four* are not the last word, but they are a good beginning in the discipleship process. Incidentally, a little brochure, *Sin of Smoking* or *The Cigarette Talks* often provoked inquiries about Jesus, who is given as the answer in this tract to the addiction of smoking that is prevalent in the Middle East.²⁰ We used to call the *Sin of Smoking* tract our 'hook,' and the *Four Spiritual Laws* our 'bait'.

My friend Barnabas has created his own 10 steps to discipling Muslim background believers. He feels that the *Four Spiritual Laws* are too much to absorb by a new believer and are not understood by most Muslim inquirers. Therefore he has steps of discipleship before the Laws and steps after them. He also has special materials designed for leaders of Muslim believers groups.

I found that the Sermon on the Mount contained excellent content for discipling Muslims. It speaks to the desire of the new Muslim background believer to know the basic motivations of the message of Jesus, God's care as a loving heavenly Father, how to

¹⁹ *Four Spiritual Laws*, Campus Crusade for Christ, available in various languages through the Internet, www.campuscrusade.com.

²⁰ 'Sin of Smoking', available in many languages from: All Nations Gospel Publishers, P.O. Box 2191, Pretoria, 0001, R.S.A.

pray, fast, treat the poor, deal with family problems and respond to persecution. It gives Jesus' interpretation of key Bible or Old Testament principals of living. The Sermon on the Mount is understood by Muslims, since it is written in Middle Eastern proverbial style and thought form. It was probably used as an early church catechism and is hard to improve on. The Beatitudes make a good study of the stages of personal repentance, acceptance of God's righteousness, purity of heart, peacemaking, and facing persecution for the sake of the kingdom. The Kingdom of Heaven provides for the Muslim background believer a worthy replacement for the Islamic concept of the *ummah*, or the believer's community. The Sermon on the Mount ends with the emphasis of seeking the Kingdom of God and his righteousness. It appeals to the Muslim's desire for worthy motivations for good works -*niyyat* in Arabic.

One of the most important aspects of the Sermon on the Mount is the Lord's Prayer, since it gives the Muslim background believer a model for prayer that he or she can use daily to approach God. Christine Mallouchi was asked by Muslim friends, 'Do you pray?' They were curious because they had never seen her do the formal kneeling and gestures they are accustomed to calling prayer. She recited for them the Lord's Prayer. The effect of this took her by surprise. 'Not only were their spirits touched by its beauty, they were astounded by the implications of 'Forgive as we want to be forgiven' and with one voice they stopped me after that sentence to discuss it. In a culture built on retaliation (Islam along with Judaism believes in an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth) free and necessary forgiveness is revolutionary. Since that day I no longer rattle off 'Our Father' but notice how revolutionary the whole prayer is.'²¹

My friend Barnabas often struggled with the mixed reception of his family and friends to the Gospel. I was able to remind him that Jesus' parables clarified the type of reaction of various people

²¹ Mallouchi, *Waging Peace on Islam*, p. 205.

to the Gospel. The Parable of the Sower or the Soils in Matthew 13:3-23 tells about those whose hearts are hardened to the Word and Satan quickly plucks it up. Others receive it with apparent joy, but fall away at the first sign of opposition. Some who receive it do not bear fruit because of their worldly concerns. But, thankfully, there are those who receive the Word, pass it on to others and bear much fruit. Muslims can identify with these word pictures.

The Psalms are a favorite of Muslim background believers who identify with David and others in their struggles to worship God in an often hostile environment. The Psalms offer encouragement when faced with personal failure and persecution. Discipling, counseling and modeling for Muslim background believers is a daily adventure. The Psalms are short enough to provide just the right amount of material for a daily discipling session, which at a minimum, involves sharing, Scripture and prayer. They also contain model prayers that enable the Muslim to express their needs to God.

The Proverbs also provide excellent material for discipling Muslim background believers. New believers of all backgrounds need the wisdom for devotion and living that the Proverbs provide. Muslims are conditioned by their backgrounds to be less than honest in all their dealings with others. The Proverbs are couched in the Middle East mindset regarding one's dealings with peers and with superiors, and appeal to the Muslim who is used to intrigues and deception as a way of life. Proverbs offers down to earth advice in daily living in terms that the Muslim understands.

The Old Testament stories of the Patriarchs provide history and clarifications that benefit the Muslim background believer. The Quran contains brief stories of Adam and Eve, Abraham, Moses, Joseph, Noah, Jonah and other biblical characters. The Book of Genesis is particularly valuable, as well as Exodus. Part of the discipling process is to fill in the blanks and clarify the historical stories of the men and women of old whose lives, sufferings, and prophecies culminate in the coming of salvation in Jesus

Christ. Many of the different versions of the stories in the Quran can be attributed to the influence of Jewish folk traditions on Muhammad. Few realize that despite the anti-Jewish rhetoric popular in Islam, the Quran affirms the Promised Land for the Jewish people. Some have attempted to compare Muhammad with the Old Testament prophets due to his judgmental pronouncements on the sins of the Quraish and his multiple marriages. The Muslims, for the most part, finds themselves on familiar territory in the Old Testament. Muslim background believers, when trained in the Old Testament become good witnesses to Jews in showing them the fulfillments of their hopes in Jesus. I have seen Muslims weep when they heard the prophetic words of Isaiah 53, as it speaks of the suffering Messiah.

All of this content of discipling Muslim background believers combined lends itself to the use of storying the Bible for Muslims. Ultimately the Muslim background believer needs to understand the plan of salvation from Genesis to Revelation. Storying the Bible appeals to the Muslim usage of oral tradition and helps to overcome the functional illiteracy that plagues their world. A.H. faces practical issues in discipling Muslim women who have become believers. She explains:

Now that Fatma is a believer, barriers to living a Christ-like life are surfacing. She has practiced Folk Islam all her life. She has always gossiped. She likes to tell off-color stories and jokes. Fatma has 5 children. How will she raise them to know about Jesus? Lies and deceit between husband and wife in her culture are normal. What does she need to know in order to build a Christian marriage and home? Biblical forgiveness doesn't exist in Islam. How does Fatma learn to forgive? What should Fatma do with religious holidays like Ramadan and the feasts? Fatma needs to learn how to pray. Her previous experience with prayer doesn't help her now that she is a believer. Fatma and her husband need to get with other believers to form a fellowship that should become a church. What is church? How does she start one? What will happen to Fatma when others learn she is a Christian? She needs to hear Jesus' teachings about

persecution. Fatma needs also to learn about end times and how Jesus will come again. Most summers Fatma and her family go back to their country to their original home village for vacation. Fatma needs to learn how to share her stories with her family and friends back in her home country...With Chronological Bible Storying, the evangelism story track is based on the worldview issues that keep Muslim women from accepting Christ as well as the essential biblical truths about living a Christ-like life as well as on the worldview issues that keep Muslim Background Believers (MBB) from developing a mature faith that they can share with others. In preparing stories to share with MBB women like Fatma, I want to know what the issues are with her life, background, family structure, etc., that keep her from growing in faith.²²

How do you start a cell group, for example among Muslims? What type of study materials would you use? I start every Muslim who comes to me with the basics. If you build a house, you dig four main foundations. I use the *Four Spiritual Laws* translated and adapted to Arabic to begin this spiritual house. Amazingly, Muslims respond as readily as traditional Christians to these simple transferable concepts. This is available also in Hebrew. I find it wise to lead new Muslim believers in a study of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7, since it lays the basic foundation for prayer and moral living. Those who respond favorably can continue with a study *New Beginnings*, a programmed discipleship series that takes the new believer through the new life in Christ, Bible study, prayer, and life in the world and the church. *New Beginnings* is an excellent programmed discipling course which has been used to disciple Muslim background believers who are literate.²³ Somewhere around lesson 15 of the 50 lessons they are ready to make a full commitment to Christ, or to leave the study. *New Beginnings* was first created in the Philippines, proba-

²² A.H. op.cit. Those who want to learn more about Chronological Bible Storying should consult the website: www.chronologicalbiblestorying.com.

²³ Church Growth International, 13174 Owens Lane, Neosho, MO 64850, USA.

bly patterned after the successful church planting of Charles Brock. Brock designed a basic discipleship series, *Good News for You*, a pre-salvation study of the Gospel of John, and *I Have Been Born Again, What Next?* A pre-church study for new believers. These are available in English, Arabic, Russian and other languages.

Use of *New Beginnings* encourages participation by each person present. The programmed texts give a Bible verse and then a question with a blank. Each person takes a verse and gives the answer to the question. I found this breaks down the barriers between men, women, and children in the Muslim family. Otherwise, only the man will lead and learn. Patterned after my simple, indirect leadership, the man of the family can continue leading the study in my absence. Each person pays for his or her own programmed workbook, which covers most of the cost. Simple Bible chorus sheets with an accompanying cassette provide the music. These are easily memorized. Usually one of the children or young people leads out. At the end of each section of about twenty lessons, each person receives a simple certificate verifying their successful completion and the hours spent in study. One advantage of such studies in the Muslim sector is they can be identified to the outsider as a 'study' rather than as a religious meeting. A word of caution; avoid using commentary except to answer specific questions. Let the Scripture speak for itself. Commentary can lead to dispute and confusion. Commentary models a level of sophistication that others may not be able to attain, therefore limiting its transferability.

New Beginnings is actually the foundation study of a series of discipleship tools that can be used to train and disciple new believers.²⁴ *Survival Kit* is another discipleship tool my wife used successfully in discipling English speaking Jewish ladies in Gali-

²⁴ www.newbeginningsdiscipleship.org.

lee. More advanced believers can study *Masterlife* which is available in the major local languages.²⁵

The True Furqan is a recently published book that can be used as an effective tool for pre-evangelism with Muslims. It uses Quranic Arabic and vocabulary to critique the Quran and popular Muslim attitudes toward Jesus and ethical living. *The True Furqan* is becoming increasingly noticed by Muslim leaders and is available on the Internet.²⁶ I have been warned by MBBs to be cautious in the use of the *True Furqan* as it has attracted much media attention in Arab countries.

You might ask, 'Is it legitimate to use the Quran in discipling Muslim background believers?' Personally, I feel that the Bible is the best textbook for discipling them. Knowledge of the Quran and key verses and concepts is valuable in adapting the Biblical stories to Muslim thought forms. The Quran is more valuable as a bridge to witness. The stories of Mary and the virgin birth can be bridges to the Gospel accounts in Matthew and Luke. If you know the Quran well, as many Muslim background believers do, it can be used to point out that the Quran respects the Bible and the biblical prophets, therefore dispelling the violent polemic that Muslims and Christians sometimes fall into. You must be aware that the Quran contains contradicting verses which can bring confusion. The Muslim will assume that the Bible also contradicts itself, but will be amazed at the overall consistency of the Bible text.

An excellent witness-discipleship tool using the Bible and the Quran was designed by the late Fouad Accad, a Lebanese pastor and scholar. He incorporated verses from the Torah, Psalms, Gospels and the Quran to present the entire plan of salvation to a Muslim in Arabic. His book explaining this method has been pub-

²⁵ www.masterlife.org.

²⁶ www.islam-exposed.org.

lished by the Navigators, *Building Bridges, Islam and Christianity* ²⁷
Here are the very interesting and comprehensive 'Seven Muslim-Christian Principles':

1. God Has a Purpose for Our Lives
2. Sin Separates Us from God
3. We Can't Save Ourselves
4. The Cross Is the Bridge to Life
5. God's Provision Is a Person
6. Making Him Ours
7. What to Expect When We Accept God's Gift

My friend Hamdi used to visit me every Friday morning. I decided rather than waste our time on small talk that I would take him through the Seven. The lessons were too long to do in one sitting, so we divided each lesson in half. For over 14 weeks he came faithfully and read through all the Scriptures of each of the Principles. At the very end of the study there is a place to confess Christ as Savior and Lord. My friend read the statement which said, 'I, (so and so) give my whole life to Christ Jesus to be my personal Savior and Lord.' He made a point of reading it 'so and so.' I told him, 'You are supposed to say, "I Hamdi give my whole life to Christ Jesus to be my personal Savior and Lord."' He said, 'Oh, I did that years ago!'

Accad found that 80% of the Muslims who completed this study put their trust in Christ, so it is an effective method of pre-evangelism as well as an effective discipling tool. The *Seven Christian-Muslim Principles* provide a resource for those who want to use a 'contextualized' approach to those Muslims who can only be reached through the use of the Quran. This tool, developed for the Navigators in Lebanon in Arabic and English, presents a topical study of the plan of salvation using verses from the Bible and

²⁷ Fouad Elia Accad, *Building Bridges: Christianity and Islam* (Navpress, Colorado Springs, 1997), pp. 71-137.

the Quran. The seven lessons can be divided to use as a fourteen lesson series. Those who are not comfortable using the Quran may prefer not to use these tools. I found that many verses in the Quran emphasize man's depravity and God's judgment and combined with Bible verses can speak to the heart of some Muslims.

The *Camel Training Manual* has become a popular approach to witness and discipleship of Muslims. It uses the Quran to explain the message of salvation. It is highly contextualized for the Muslim who lives in a conservative community and has been effective in some Southeast Asia countries.²⁸ A similar approach using a conversation between Muslim friends was designed by a MBB entitled *The Belief of Isma'il*.²⁹ These 'Insider Movement' methods show us that God can use the Quran as a bridge to faith. The objective is to get the Muslim to read the Scriptures which will enable him or her to distinguish the truth and apply it to their lives.

The subjects of service and stewardship should be among the contents of discipling Muslim background believers. We should encourage the Muslim believer in bi-vocational leadership. They should keep their jobs and remain among their families in order to provide support for the Muslim believer's movement. Islam spread worldwide through Muslim merchants who married local women, in addition to the preaching and teaching of the Sufi missionaries. The Muslim believer's movements worldwide can use these indigenous models, clarified by the teaching of the Scriptures and the example of Paul and the early disciples in planting self supporting believer's churches in their society. I lived in the village of Josephus for about five years. One day I was amazed to see a group of Sufi's walking down the main street of this predominant Christian town. The leader, dressed in robes and a turban, much similar to what I would picture Jesus wore, strode with bold and deliberate steps, pounding his walking stick on the

²⁸ Greeson, Kevin, *Camel Training Manual*, WIGTake Resources 2004. Contact customerservice@landforceinc.com.

²⁹ Adan Ibn Isma'il, *The Belief of Ishmael* (2003).

pavement, and his disciples following beside and behind him. They were part of the modern Islamic *da'wah* movement that itinerates in the towns of the Holy Land calling Muslims back to prayer and devotion to Allah.

Many Muslims, particularly women, come to Christ from a background of fearing God, evil spirits, the evil eye, envy of others and ritual uncleanness. The content of discipleship should emphasize their identity in Christ, their position of wholeness, cleanness, and total acceptance by God who reveals his love for us through the shed blood of Christ and the continual cleansing and regeneration of the Holy Spirit.⁸

We also must prepare Muslim background believers to face persecution and martyrdom. To teach them all the positive aspects of the Gospel and not prepare them for possible mistreatment at the hands of their family and society is not to deal honestly with them. They will thrill at the story of the spread of the Gospel in the Book of Acts. Acts is the textbook for a church planting movement among the Muslim unreached people groups worldwide.

We can trust the Holy Spirit and the Word of God to lead Muslims in the development of culturally appropriate believers groups, or churches. We must allow them to develop their own ecclesiology, while acquainting them with ours. In most cases they will chose the ecclesiology of those who disciple and mentor them. We will look now at forming congregations or affinity groups.

7 Forming Congregations

Muslims, particularly of Middle East background, are a group and family oriented people. The individual Muslim receives their identity from his or her family, clan, and nation. Islam capitalized

on this group cohesion and called Muslims, 'the best of nations' or *khayr al ummah* in Arabic.³⁰ Group or clan loyalty requires total dedication. To leave Islam is to leave the family group which gives a Muslim their identity. Islam maintains a tight control over its adherents through physical, mental and spiritual bonds. There is no back door out of Islam. There is only a door to enter Islam. To leave is to become a *murtad*, or backslider who has returned to paganism and gone astray. The only alternative is to return to Islam or face the death penalty. A system of scolding, threats, bribery, sexual enticement or deprivation, exclusion, job loss, and finally death by starvation, stabbing or poisoning has been devised to insure that backsliders return to the fold.

All of the above are good reasons to encourage Muslim background believers to remain in their family or clan in order to quietly influence their spouses, children, relative and friends to receive the Gospel and be saved. The old method of requiring a Muslim background believer to declare publicly his faith in Christ resulted in 'extraction' of the believer to save his or her life. It meant having to provide them with a new family and occupation, and many time a new country. This is usually the case when a teenage Muslim receives Christ and their conversion becomes a point of rebellion against the authority of his parents. There are cases where extraction cannot be avoided, but we are finding that most Muslims have trusted friends and family members who will quickly share the joy of their new faith in Jesus. If they remain respectful of their parents and spouses and leaders of their family and clan they can slowly influence many of them to read the Bible and to discover personally the truth that they have found. Lifestyle changes cannot be hidden and this causes others to seek out the source of their new life.

Always pray for the Lord to lead you to the man and woman of peace in a household. Until there is a leader of the family who is a believer it is very difficult for a younger person to assert their

³⁰ Quran 3:110

faith. This is not a hard and fast rule, for there are some Muslim families who have tolerant parents or leaders who know that the Gospel of Christ is a good thing for their members to hear. The problem comes when the news gets out to the community and the family leader is pressured to take action against the believer in order to preserve the reputation of the family. This is one reason that Christian schools have a vital ministry in Muslim countries. A wise Muslim parent can send their children to a Christian school since it provides a quality education and chance for a better future for their children. The winners in Bible memory contests in the Christian school in our Middle Eastern town were Muslims, since they already practiced the memorization of the Quran which gave them good practice.

Baptism is the decisive turning point for an inquirer or seeker to become identified as a Muslim background believer. What we may think of as 'secret baptism' is not really secret when one Muslim baptizes another Muslim and some of their family and friends are there. Those who have been baptized gather very naturally into their family or friendship groups. They protect each other and provide for each other's physical and social needs. The timing of a Muslim background believer's baptism should be the prerogative of the man or woman of peace who won them to the Lord and is discipling them. I know of many occasions when Barnabas told me that a person he was discipling was not ready for baptism. It often involved a lack of comprehension of the Gospel and the security issue. We have had people who join the believer's movement to spy out other believers either for the local government security services or for the fundamentalist Muslim movements. Sometimes a Muslim's baptism is delayed until they can lead other family members or friends to the faith and join them to establish a believers group. In most cases, baptism gives new courage to the Muslim background believer and the Holy Spirit empowers him or her to grow stronger in their faith. Nik Ripken observed through many interviews with Mbbs, that their chief concern is:

'Have I been baptized into Christ and into a new community?' They are seeking a home, a place to belong and a community that will care for their spiritual and physical needs. Baptism is community, local and eternal. They likely will be baptized multiple times and pass through many foreign expatriate organizations in the search for real community. MBBs can practice baptism as symbol, sign and sacrament within the same family in one generation. Few Muslims find Christ in a vacuum, apart from some type of church around them. Interviews illustrate Muslim men who have been on a spiritual journey for years. They have experienced Christ through dreams, visions and miracles. God has miraculously placed His Word in the seekers' hands. Some near-culture believer enters the picture to help these seekers understand what they have read, dreamed and sought. After three to seven years of searching, these Muslims find Christ and are eventually baptized. Their baptism is a symbol of their new life in Christ. Still influenced by their Muslim background and male self-image, they carry a witness to their wives. Surrounded by different Christian faith systems, it is not unusual for these MBB men to baptize their wives in three to six months. These women were baptized because their husbands unduly influenced them, not because of a spiritual conviction arising from personal faith. It is surprisingly common for these MBB men to then baptize their infant child. They have viewed various denominations and their practices. They are not willing to take the chance that baptism itself might not provide salvation. Infant baptism also appeals to the residue of Islam within them, which suggests that faith is a result of external practices. In numerous interviews with MBBs, neither the wife nor the children could articulate the role of Jesus in salvation. When doctrinal practices precede faith, Christianity has a difficult task moving into and through succeeding generations. Baptism is not the primary debate here, though it is central to community. It is meant to be illustrative. In the presence of numerous Christian faith systems, baptism can travel from symbol, to sign, to sacrament in one generation. Such practices are due to observed behavior and imported doctrinal differences. An intentional effort will need to be made to return baptism to New Testament roots of

identification with Christ, centered within families and local community.³¹

The family becomes the ideal setting for a house church fellowship or congregation in a Muslim setting. This can happen in countries with mixed Muslim and Christian populations and where religious freedom is practiced. A Muslim family is usually an extended family with the aunts and uncles, nephews and nieces sharing meals with each other. It is not uncommon for one or two in each family to be 'religious' and to practice daily prayers as Muslims. Also, if the leader of the family is a believer he can have private meetings with other believers who come to visit, since he has the power to demand privacy. Men often meet for their own business at nights, to talk and drink coffee. They know how to keep secrets, and are cautious around people they suspect as informers. Women also have their own gatherings in other parts of the house or courtyard and the children usually stay with them.

We have had believers groups form in villages and rent their own place to meet. They usually use the place during the day as a kindergarten or some other legitimate community service activity. The meeting place is used in the evenings for teaching sessions and worship. The only difficulty is when a group becomes too prominent and becomes a threat to the established Muslim political leadership in the community. It is then that the meeting place is usually torched, and the houses of believers can be burned. In secure areas we now have house churches where the leaders from surrounding towns meet on a weekly basis for Bible study and prayer, and the breaking of bread.

Student fellowships form naturally on campuses where Muslim background believers attend college together. We had one group that became so large it became a threat to the Muslim student or-

³¹ Nik Ripken, *Servants in the Crucible* (Mohit Gupta, (<http://seebus.ws>) January 2005) p. 26

ganization on campus. Our leader had to intervene to guarantee that the believers group would not compete with the Muslim religious group. Despite this, the believing student leader was murdered during a demonstration on campus. He was drug out of the office where he had fled, was pronounced a *kafir* or infidel and stabbed to death. Despite persecution, students who are believers become the leaders of other groups as they return to their home communities or to other areas for jobs. It is recognized that student groups only last as long as the believing students are studying on campus, and are in a constant state of flux.

Many Muslims work away from home, and in other countries. Muslim background believers gather in their work locations for meetings and Bible study. They often find more freedom when away from home and have time to study the Bible without distraction in their off hours. There was a resort town in our country that had a large Muslim workers community. A Muslim background believer who was a law student became the leader of the believers group in the resort area where he had to work to make money for school. His uncle was the leader of the believers in his home town in another part of the country. Muslim background believers take their faith with them to other locations when they have to move. We try to network them with other believers in their work locations. This follows the popular pattern of the spread of Islam by Muslim merchants throughout the Middle and Far East, and all over the world today.

A Great Commission Christian partner has a very successful ministry among Muslim women in a city with a large refugee population. They rent a house dedicated to prayer in the name of Jesus with the permission of the wife of the President of the country and the protection of their security services. Women come for food rations, and for Bible study and prayer. The Lord has given signs of blessing through healings and divine intervention in a hostile political environment. The local government protects this house and its activities as a matter of religious liberty. Three to five hundred Muslims have been baptized through this ministry.

They now have home meetings throughout the city. A retired Christian pastor and his wife who have a heart for Muslims lead some of their Bible studies.

My personal opinion is, that where two or three Muslims gather in the name of Jesus, he is in their midst. I call this an 'embryo church'. It can be in a car, under a tree, in a field, a shop, or a house. It is a spiritual church and the Lord blesses it with his presence. We have to free ourselves of the Byzantine view of a church building and clergy who alone can share the sacraments. We must disciple Muslim background believers to gather their family and friends whom they can trust and study the Bible with them. We must train them to pray for their individual and group needs, for healing from their illnesses and courage to face persecution. The Lord answers these prayers often in miraculous ways.

There are Muslim countries which have experienced upheaval and invasion by other Muslims countries. One such county in South East Asia has seen tens of thousands of Muslims turn to Christ as a reaction to the rape of their women by an invading Muslim army. The movement has grown so large they are now experiencing the denominational problems Christian countries face. When we disciple Muslim background believers in Christ, we must help them to be as tolerant as Jesus was toward his wayward disciples, and to love each other. We must resist importing our denominational infighting to our Muslim believers. They will mimic our ecclesiology and our denominationalism. What a blessing when we see them worshipping across denominational barriers and ministering to each other and to believers from other faith backgrounds. We want to see Christ reflected in them personally and communally. The community of Muslim background believers becomes the church within the Muslim community to permeate their society with the love of Christ through word and deed.

Contextualization is usually involved as Muslim background believers seek to harmonize opposing worldview systems so that the believers can survive within their Muslim religious and cul-

tural system. One expatriate worker among Muslims has observed:

Fundamentally it is local believers finding ways for themselves to exist peacefully within a hostile host culture. Not being told how to do it by people who could escape the consequences...I spent a long time listening to ---- believers thinking out loud as to how they could “work it out” without compromising their faith. In the end I concluded that it was they who had to establish the terms because they had to live by them even though some went to the point where they could not associate with Western Christians, something which I have great difficulty with and which caused me much sadness.³²

There has been endless discussion over how far Muslim background believers can go in adapting the Gospel message to the Islamic worldview and culture of their specific country. A scale of C-1 to C-5 has been created to describe the various levels of adaptation or rejection of the host culture. The more a Muslim background believer and his fellowship group adapts to the local Islamic worldview, the further away from the Christian culture view they move.

One worker among Muslims observed that most of those who joined his movement quit praying in the Mosque and started to read the Bible years ago. To go back to a worship forms similar to that of their former life would be seen as a step backwards. Perhaps the real issue was the trend in their society in general to adapt more western forms of meetings for study and prayer, rather than the rituals of Muslim prayer. I observed that regardless of the styles of worship, most Muslim believer groups have been reluctant to be too closely associated with the Arab Christian groups in their area. They tend to stick to their own society except for a few individuals who cross over into the Christian culture, and these are usually Muslims who have married Christian women.

³² ‘Jameel’, specific people group omitted for security.

What are the changes that we should expect from our Muslim background believer in the discipling process, as Christ is formed in them? We shall look at the changes that result in the next chapter.

8 Changes that result

The experience of one who disciples, mentors and counsels Muslim background believer is similar to that of Paul who claimed it is like having labor pains until the Christ was formed in the Galatians. Discipling and counseling Muslim background believers is time consuming and demands great patience and flexibility. As we saw in the beginning, Muslims come to faith with lots of baggage, misconceptions, and fears. You will have many times of frustration and bewilderment. At least you know that when you see lifestyle changes in the Muslim background believer, that God is working in their lives. We have to relieve ourselves of the burden of feeling we are totally responsible for the relapses and the errors of our disciples. Our obligation is to teach them, model for them and pray for them on condition that they pass on what they learn from us to others. We also have an obligation, when possible, to observe those they are discipling in order to coach them in the discipling process.

The man of peace I was discipling, Barnabas, was very insistent that we read the Scriptures and pray every time we met. I learned through this experience that he was reading large portions of Scripture very fast as Arabs often do. He was not concentrating or meditating on the meaning of the passages. His wife and other believers confirmed that he was doing this. They were getting bored by the long readings. I then showed him how to read shorter passages and to concentrate on the meaning of the wording and their relation to other passages. I also helped him to use life applications and cross references to make the Scripture

relevant to his disciples. He later took pride in showing me how he read and interpreted the Scripture for others.

I also was under the leadership of another colleague in my organization who counseled me in my role as a team leader and mentor of Muslim background believers. He often asked me how my friend Barnabas was growing in his faith. I honestly told him that Barnabas was having some problems with money and persecution. My colleague then told me that he felt better hearing this, because if everything was going too well he could not trust the report! He had enough experience relating to Muslim background believers that he knew they had a rocky road to travel on the way toward spiritual maturity.

Barnabas was a chain smoker when he first came to me to ask to be taught the faith. He had three wives at that time and I use to say that he smoked three packs of cigarettes a day—one for each wife! He was constantly broke and having to pull deals on people to get extra money. I told him that as long as he smoked he would remain poor and his health would suffer. In fact, he had several heart attacks and finally had to have bypass surgery. The medications he was required to take made smoking even more dangerous for his health. I used the *Sin of Smoking* tract with him in our discipleship process along with the *Four Spiritual Laws* and regular Bible study, prayer and worship with other believers. As he began to understand the faith better he slowly cut down on the cigarettes and after his bypass surgery he quit, despite occasional relapses. I insisted on honesty, and had a very good nose for smoke since my mother had been a chain smoker. His friends would often tell on him if he smoked. I told him that believers did not lie. We had to be totally honest with each other if I was going to take the time to disciple him. One day after a particularly difficult time with persecution, bad health and finances he hung his head and said, ‘Despite all my problems, I have learned one thing.’ I asked him, ‘What?’ He said, ‘To tell the truth!’

On another occasion I was riding in his car with him. I noticed to my surprise, empty beer bottles rattling around in the floor-

board. I asked him if he had been drinking. He said, 'You drink. So I thought there was nothing wrong with it!' Then I realized that when he visited my home he had seen empty malt beer bottles. This is a non-alcoholic drink made in my host country which is a health drink and tastes sweet like Pepsi Cola. I had to explain that we normally did not consume alcoholic beverages, and especially when we were driving! The experience impressed on me how much the Muslim background believer observes us and our lifestyle in the discipling and mentoring process. Muslims sometimes assume that all Christians drink alcoholic beverages, which is contrary to Muslim teaching. This can give opportunity for a study of the Biblical instructions concerning excess and drunkenness and the responsibility of a believer to set an example for weaker believers.

Character formation is an essential part of the discipling and mentoring process. Muslim background believers have to deal with many issues that impact on their character and their witness to others. We have already discussed the issue of polygamy. The Muslim believer needs to understand the spiritual motivation behind monogamy, that is, Christ's love and devotion to the Church who is his spiritual bride. The instruction of the Scripture and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit will guide him and his wives in solving this delicate family issue. As mentioned earlier in the two cases of Muslim background believers who had multiple wives before they came to the faith, both arranged equal provisions for all their wives and lived with the youngest. The matter of divorce is not a real solution, since it turns the divorced wife out of the home and makes her dependant on her family, disgracing her, and could lead a woman to resort to prostitution. On the other hand, if the unbelieving wife divorces her believing husband, he has no alternative but to give her back her dowry and pay for child support. Whatever is done in the case of polygamy, the best interests of the wife and children should be taken into consideration. If dealt with sensitively and wisely, with good relations in the multiple families

affected, it can lead to the rest of the family receiving the Lord and their spreading the faith among their relatives and friends.

The situation is made more problematic when a Muslim background believer takes a new wife after coming to faith in Jesus. In every case it causes difficulties in relation to the first wife and her children. We have had to exercise discipline and exclude the husband from fellowship. In some cases he returns to the mosque as a way to get back at us. I have known Muslim background believers, or those pretending to be believers, to pull all kinds of tricks to manipulate others to satisfy their own lust and pride. Fortunately, these have been the exception rather than the rule. In reality, expatriates need to be aware that this is not as big an issue in the Muslim community as it is for us. Whereas monogamy has always been our accepted standard, multiple marriages and divorces is the practice of the Muslim community. I am not justifying polygamy, simply observing the major difference in our way of life. Muhammad had multiple wives and concubines, similar to our Old Testament prophets and he allowed Muslim men to marry up to four women at one time, if he could treat each one equally. Muslims jokingly say that he really meant for them to stay monogamous, since a husband naturally will favor one wife over the others!

Cursing is a definite problem for Muslims. In our country, where another language was spoken, if a person wanted to really express themselves, they would curse in Arabic! The Arabic language is noted for its color and descriptiveness. Little boys curse their sisters and mothers and the men laugh. Gutter language is a way of life. Unmentionable body parts and functions flavor expletives. Cursing a person's mother or sister is par for the course. The 'F' word is used in Arabic almost as much as the name of Allah. You know the Lord is beginning to work in the inner man when a Muslim background believer begins to clean up his language.

Unfortunately what comes out of the mouth often results from a boiling cauldron of pent-up hostility and anger in the heart

which can burst out at the least provocation. I have seen Muslim men stop cars in the street and begin fighting each other. In one case a man ran into a local butcher shop, grabbed a knife and stabbed another driver to death. The least provocation can set off a reaction to settle old grudges. Islam is a religion that tries to control man's evil tendencies by a rigid set of rituals and lifestyle rules that are practiced 24 hours a day. When a Muslim comes to the Lord, and the pressure of these rituals and rules are relaxed, they need guidance and discipline in living the new life in Christ. They must be taught to put on the whole armor of God every day, to guard against the strategy of the devil to drag men and women down to the level of predatory animals.

My friend Barnabas had a teenage son who was slightly mentally retarded. He had lost oxygen in childbirth and his mother had almost died delivering him. As he grew older and bigger he became more difficult to handle. One day Barnabas struck the boy. He went to school and his teacher noticed the bruise. She called the police and had Barnabas arrested. He was humbled by the experience of the few hours behind bars and the threat of long term imprisonment if he hit the boy again. We were able to use this as a growth opportunity by praying for patience and studying scripture related to controlling one's temper. The boy also became more obedient and started listening to the reading of the Word.

In the process of mentoring, discipling and counseling with Muslim background believers you can expect the Lord to discipline them, as well as impart the fruit of the Spirit of love, joy, peace, patience, and kindness. There will be lapses, as there are with all of us. It is very difficult when believers backslide and return to their vomit. We had three leaders who betrayed us. Two are now dead, having faced the judgment of God for their actions. The third is now the representative of his government in a foreign country. He evidenced some repentance before he left and we pray the Lord will redeem him. For every one who backslides, ten will remain faithful to the Lord. We have seen them share their

faith with others, their wealth, and even their lives as martyrs for Him. Through all the ups and downs of the discipling process, God is building a body from thousands of Muslim background believers worldwide. It is a beautiful experience to see the Lord change the hearts of Muslims to the place they can love their enemies and even witness to them to bring them to the faith.

Mert Hershberger refers to the stages of spiritual growth illustrated in Jesus parable of the growth of wheat in Mark 4:17. The new believer must die to self in order to put down roots of faith. Then they extend the stem toward the light of the Lord. The third stage of spiritual growth involves development of a head of grain for reproduction. Then the full head of grain appears representing the gifts of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23. Finally, the harvest gathers the ripe grain into the storehouse, where it can then be used to produce the bread, which is symbolic of the one loaf and wedding feast of the King and his Bride, the church. Paul, the missionary expands on the stages of spiritual growth in Romans 5:1-5. Faith leads to hope of the goal of the Glory of God revealed in the life of the believer. It is achieved by enduring troubles and sufferings which produce character and endurance. This hope does not disappoint us because of the love of God which is poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. Hershberger goes on to analyze the teachings of James, Peter and John describing how testing, trials, and needs issue in wisdom and the indwelling presence of God in the growth process. Character and self control is developed as the believer seeks the help of God in prayer and grows from a child in faith, to an adolescent, and finally to a reproductive adult who has stood the tests of their faith.³³

Those disciples or mentors of Pentecostal persuasion would add to the above list of changes and change agents in the Muslim

³³ Mert Hershberger, *Steps toward Maturity: NT Models for the Stages of Spiritual Growth*, World Christian Foundations: Module 2, William Carey International University (n.d).

background believer's growth in Christ, the baptism in or of the Holy Spirit. I come from a tradition that normally adheres to the giving of the Holy Spirit to the new believer when they first accept Christ. Most within the Baptist tradition will maintain that a believer receives all he or she needs from the Spirit at the time of accepting Christ as savior. Therefore, they are suspicious of the necessity for a second 'baptism' in the Spirit with the expectation of manifestations such as tongues. I personally believe the Holy Spirit is the active agent throughout the discipling process and manifests Himself through the new believer in a variety of ways. Certainly we want to give freedom to the Spirit to operate anyway He chooses in the growth of spirituality and maturity of the Muslim background believer. I have found them very open to accept all the Lord offers in the way of gifts, prayers for healing and other spiritual manifestations. They are especially open to dreams, visions, and what would be called miracles of healing, simply because of their spiritual world view. The Book of Acts is our best handbook of the changes we would like to see in the life of Muslim background believers, and the Epistles contain all that is needed for regulating and channeling these changes for the glory of God.

We need to distinguish between those changes required by the Word of God through the Holy Spirit and those changes which are a reflection of our own culture. In the past the 'extraction' method of conversion was advocated which effectively cut a Muslim background believer off from his family and culture. Christine Mallouchi reports that when her husband, Mazhar Mallouchi responded to God's call in the 1950's:

He was told that he needed to leave his old sinful life behind. He needed to change his name; stop drinking in coffee shops; refuse to join his family's religious celebrations; stay away from mosques; stay away from Muslims; stop fasting; pray with a different posture, and eat pork to prove he was converted. It was not surprising that his family angrily opposed his conversion and he soon no longer had

any relationships with his old friends who he had rejected. He experienced a terrible identity crisis and total dislocation from his culture, family and friends. In spite of this he was still not totally accepted by the Christian community.

Christine goes on to clarify that the New Testament states clearly the ‘the Kingdom of God is not a matter of food and drink, but righteousness and joy in the Holy Spirit.’ Moreover it tells us to stay put in the communities where Christ finds us. She writes:

As we share our faith with others it is vitally important to understand that our religious traditions are not the Gospel and may actually have little relationship to the Gospel message and even be obscuring it. Following Christ does not mean joining the *Christian* culture that has grown up over the centuries. It does not require leaving one’s family and people. To follow Christ does not require one to take a new *Christian* name, or to wear a different style of clothing. Nor does it require using the symbol of the cross, nor worshipping on a certain day, nor a certain style of worship. [...] The only reason we may need to change any of these practices—in any culture of the world—is if there is a direct link with sin or Satan. Then there is a need to beware of confusing culture and religion. [...] So what does it mean to believe in and follow Christ? The one thing following Christ requires is to believe his words about himself—that he is the Word of God bringing us back into unbroken communication with God...We have to die to self in order to walk in holiness; to follow God’s command, ‘Walk with me and be perfect. ’ It means to enter into a new relationship with the living Christ, to learn from him and obey his commands for living a life pleasing to God. It means acceptance of his other followers as family members.³⁴

Those of us from a cultural Christian background need to ask, ‘What is our role in assisting Muslim background believers in

³⁴ Mallouchi, *Waging Peace on Islam*, pp. 323-325.

growing into the image of Christ?’ That will be the theme of the next section.

9 Role of the expatriate mentor

Your role as an expatriate church planter in the discipling process with a Muslim background believer will change during the various stages of spiritual growth of the believer. You may or may not be the first person who gave a witness to the Muslim. In most cases there have been a series of persons or experiences that the Lord has used to bring the Muslim to a position of faith in Jesus as their savior. Their willingness to be disciplined by you is an indication that God has been working in their lives. Muslims are usually very determined to win you to their faith, and the simple fact that they are willing to learn from you can be considered an act of divine intervention. God may have used problems, dreams, visions, curiosity, or even envy to arouse the Muslim’s desire to learn more about Jesus. Some even come to the point of wanting to know more about Jesus through a study of the Quran. Others come through a rejection of the hypocrisy they see in the Mosques where they pray. Many come from a thirst for love and trust which is lacking in their home cultures.

In the beginning you will want to know their background and exposure to the Gospel. It is very easy to jump ahead of the leadership of the Holy Spirit and omit a necessary stage in the development of the spiritual maturity of the Muslim background believer. Perhaps it is best not to assume anything, but to begin with the basics. If the Muslim is not an English speaker you will need to learn their language and culture. A basic knowledge of Arabic is always a good tool in relating to the Quran. A course in Islam will prove helpful in understanding their background and culture. Cultural studies on the influence of the occult and syncretism in the specific Muslim culture will be very helpful.

Your role in the beginning may be that of a witness, then a teacher, counselor and mentor. An integral part of every discipling role is that of prayer partner and guide. In the end you may maintain the role of an advocate for their work among their own people. Friendship and trust are key elements in your role as a spiritual guide to a Muslim background believer. Since many Muslims will be unaware of how Christians live their life in Christ, lifestyle witness and mentoring are essential in your role.

Bill Hull elaborates on four stages of training through which Jesus took his disciples. First, he told them to 'come and see' what his ministry was like for a four month period as recorded in John 1:35-4:46. Secondly, he called them to 'come and follow me' during ten months of observation and learning, beginning in Mark 1:16-17. Eventually, he said, 'come and be with me', as an invitation to a twenty month period of practical ministry experience in Matthew 9:37-10:1. Finally, Jesus told his disciples on the night he was betrayed, 'You will remain in me', as he began to relate the way they would carry out his Great Commission in John 13-17.³⁵ Jesus did not expect his disciples to learn everything at one time, but shared with them in stages as they grew in spiritual maturity and could handle it. The process was not completed until they were filled with the Holy Spirit and empowered on and after Pentecost. This led all to be bold witnesses and many to suffer martyrdom. Such is the ideal progression for Muslim background believers.

Our problem as disciplers, mentors and counselors of Muslim background believers is being willing to commit the time to impart all this spiritual training and formation to our Muslim friends who are asking to be disciplined. It is time and labor intensive. We have to be willing to give up some of the activities that drain our time, and many of these are with Christian churches and

³⁵ Bill Hull, *New Century Disciplemaking: Applying Jesus' Ideas for the Future*, (Revell, Grand Rapids, 1997, 2000), pp. 221-222, quoted in Mert Hershberger, *Steps toward Maturity*, Endnotes, 1.

friends. We can be so busy being Christians and keeping our various churches and organizations going that we do not take the opportunity to really spend the quality time that discipling Muslims demands. I simply had to forego some church meetings and mission committees to give my Muslim friends the time they needed to be with me to learn from me. Some of the modeling they need can only be accomplished in the presence of our wives and other Christian friends. Jesus was willing to spend two to three years of intensive fellowship with his disciples to prepare them for the Cross and the filling of the Holy Spirit after the resurrection. We need to be willing to do the same. My friend Barnabas spends from one to three years with a Muslim background believer to bring them to the maturity of leadership.

The ideal is for a local Muslim background believer to disciple other Muslim believers. Nevertheless, in the beginning of a work it may be necessary for someone from outside the culture, that is, an expatriate, to come in and witness to and disciple new believers. Some local Christian believers will tell you that the Muslim is much more likely to listen to an outsider than to one of the local believers. Muslims may have a feeling of superiority over the local Christian population, especially if the Christians are in the minority. Also, an American or European is considered to be under the protection his government. Usually the worst he or she could suffer is expulsion from the host country. Whereas the local Christian believer could be the brunt of persecution were they to try to evangelize or disciple Muslims. This is not always the case as we have seen by the murder of numerous Western missionaries in recent years in Muslim countries.

I personally feel it is important for the expatriate church planter and discipler to conform to the language and culture of the Muslims they are trying to reach and develop. To expect the local Muslim to learn English and bond to the expatriate may cause them to be cut off from their native culture. This would make it even harder for the Muslim believer to convince his own family and friends of the truth of the Gospel. We must do every-

thing possible to allow the Gospel to take root in the language and culture of the Muslim background believer. As Bill Hull says in *New Century Disciplemaking*, ‘The disciple must be taught by both example and explanation how to reach the lost where they live, work and play—in the real world.’³⁶ We do not necessarily have to adopt Muslim religious and cultural forms, but we can use them as bridges to enhance the understanding of the Gospel.

Counseling Muslim background believers may necessitate a different role from that of the typical western counselor. In the west most counseling is done in private and in secret except in group therapy. Among many Muslim unreached people groups counseling is often done in group settings in the family and community. In the case of a couple who is having marital problems, often the entire family is involved in the cause and the remedy of the problem. Family reputation is at stake and the entire family and clan may be involved in negotiating a solution. In any case, we as expatriates must maintain the confidence and trust of the parties involved. For sure, anything you share with an outside party will soon get back to the persons involved. You have to be very careful in expressing opinions about anyone, since you will often be talking to one of their relatives. Some people will try to get you to say things so that they can tell the other person and get you in difficulty with them. So, be careful.

Also, western counseling is often indirect and non-confrontational. In Muslim cultures, counseling is often direct, even though it must appear to be in the third person so as not to offend. Muslims and people of Middle East origin are used to corporal punishment, or the threat of it to enforce discipline on children and sometimes on adults. A wayward husband who beats his wife may need to be told that you will personally punish him if he hits her again. You can make it clear that you do not want your reputation tarnished by his actions, and that her family might be led to take revenge on him for his mistreatment of her. In most

³⁶ *ibid*, pp. 179-180.

In most cases the face-to-face threat of physical punishment is enough to deter further mistreatment. Of course this should be accompanied with the teaching that husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her.

The need to discipline or correct a Muslim background believer can be threatening to the expatriate who may fear rejection if they call an error to the attention of the disciple. This is not necessarily the result, as experienced by a female expatriate who was disciplining a Muslim woman in France. She relates:

For me the fear is of being rejected. If I really talk to these Muslim women about issues that need to be talked about, I fear they won't want me to visit again. Recently, I was in the home of a new believer who is experiencing many problems. I noticed she had an amulet around her neck that I had never seen before. I sat through the entire meeting thinking, 'What am I going to do about this?' Yet I was afraid to talk to her about it, because I was afraid of the answer she was going to give. It would mean I had failed because I hadn't disciplined her enough and she had reverted to trusting this thing to help her. But God wouldn't let me leave her home without asking about it. She explained it was a gift from her father. She was afraid not to wear it because he had given it to her. We studied Ephesians 6 and the next time I saw her, she wasn't wearing it. This worker admitted being afraid that her disciple may later regret having removed the amulet if some misfortune happened to her.³⁷

I have found that counseling Muslims is a two way street. You can tell them your opinion on a matter, and give advice, or instruction. At the same time, they will observe your private life and reactions and call any deviation from your teachings to your attention. A good example will not go unnoticed as reported by Kay Waters, a health worker in North Africa. 'If the family

³⁷ Love and Eckheart, *Ministry to Muslim Women, Longing to Call Them Sisters*, pp. 60-61.

knows and trust us and sees our respect and love for their culture, and they perceive us as holy, God-fearing, hospitable, loving and generous people, they might be much less likely to reject the MBB. This may be particularly crucial for single women reaching out to unmarried daughters in Muslim families. We must be very careful not to be perceived as corrupting or destructive forces within the family.’ She notes a case in which the team leader was able to gain the respect of the key men in the family of one of the believing women, Lydia, who they were discipling. When some others in the family were pressuring Lydia to marry a Muslim man against her will, her colleague was able to share his concerns about the matter with the leading men of the family. Eventually he was accepted as a ‘surrogate uncle’, and the other members of the family agreed to let him be responsible to counsel Lydia in this matter.³⁸

As an expatriate we can share our testimony, read the Scriptures and pray with Muslim background believers. We can listen to their problems and complaints and share their victories. We need to bathe our relationship with them in prayer. In this way, we teach them to pray. They will ask for and expect our prayers when God calls us to another place. We can also build a prayer network to pray for our Muslim believer friends. We become their advocates as we share about their opportunities and the opposition they face.

A particularly sensitive aspect of the role of the expatriate in discipling and counseling Muslim background believers is the use of finances. Some expatriates will maintain a policy of not helping new Muslim believers financially under any circumstances. The motivation for this abstinence of financial aid is to prevent the Muslim believer from becoming dependant on the help of outsiders. The goal is worthy, but very difficult to put into practice in real life. I deal with the issue of financial support extensively in

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 179-180.

Chapter 4 of *Back to Jerusalem*.³⁹ The bottom line to me in discipling Muslim background believers is how to model love and wisdom in applying Jesus teachings in Matthew 5:42 and many other places to 'Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you'. Of course, if the expatriate simply does not have any money, then the problem is solved. But in most cases expatriate workers do have some ability to assist financially. This makes the situation more problematic. Many Muslims are in financial need because of their large families and due to deliberate persecution by their Muslim family and neighbors. Muslims are taught by tradition to visit, give gifts and to use material means to build friendship. A Muslim believer in financial need will naturally turn to his or her mentor as a first resort for help. I made it a practice not to carry large sums of money with me, so that any financial help would be kept to a minimum. I found it best not to lend money, since that places the Muslim background believer under an obligation that they may not be able to keep. It is always better to give a small gift than a large loan, which turns into a burden and barrier for both mentor and the Muslim background believer. Also, it is better to practice a 'shared purse' where the Muslim believer provides a part of the need from his or her own resources. Better still, is to train them for a job that will remedy the financial need in the long run. I personally believe that partial scholarships provided to believing Muslim students is a good investment in the future.

One of the most important functions of the expatriate discipler, mentor, and counselor is to equip the Muslim background believer with the spiritual, mental, and social tools necessary to pass on their faith to others. Start early, in the beginning of the discipling process and trust the Word of God in the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit to empower and guide the Muslim believer in winning, bap-

³⁹ Ray Register, *Back to Jerusalem, Church Planting Movements in the Holy Land* (Wine Press, 2000), pp. 97-132 (chapter titled Critical Issues Examined—Danger! Land Mines!)

tizing and discipling other Muslim background believers. If we wait until they are mature, they may never get there!

One of the most important lessons we have to impart to the new believer is how to deal with persecution, which will surely come, if they are faithful to the Lord. Some will face martyrdom. Will they be prepared? This we will deal with in the following chapter.

10 Preparing for persecution and martyrdom

The reality of life as a believer in Christ, in this fallen world, is that they will suffer persecution, especially if they are a believer from a Muslim background. An integral part of preparing a Muslim background believer to grow in Christ is preparing them for persecution and possible martyrdom. A Muslim who turns to Christ as Savior and Lord and becomes known to other Muslims for his or her faith is technically considered an unbeliever or *kafir*, and is subject to the death penalty as a backslider or *murtad* if they do not recant and return to Islam. Islam has a system of persuasions and punishments to persuade or force the Muslim background believer in Christ to renounce their faith, or at a minimum to return to Islam and remain silent about their faith. First, they are warned and threatened. Then they are bribed. If they do not yield to offers of money, jobs, new wives, or husbands, then they can be attacked physically. Men can be beaten up, burned, robbed, their property destroyed, divorced by their wives, forced from their jobs, arrested by police under false charges, disinherited, and various other manipulative types of punishments. Women can be forced to marry unbelieving Muslims, or isolated, and slowly starved to death. Their children can be taken from them. In the end, if all else fails, they can be murdered by stabbing, strangling, poisoning or other methods. I have known Muslim background believers to survive for years in supposedly liberal countries, and then suddenly be killed during periods of political unrest.

'Mark' was a handsome, muscular young man, who married the beautiful niece of Lydia, our woman of peace. He became the driver of Barnabas, Lydia's husband and the leader of the Muslim background believers in our country. Mark did not take faith in Jesus seriously until one stormy night in the middle of the desert, his car was forced off the road by fanatical Muslims, and overturned. He suffered multiple bruises, but Barnabas had numerous broken ribs and was in a coma for over a month in the hospital. I visited Mark after the accident to see what his reaction was. He told me, 'I really did not take my faith seriously until the accident. Now I know that I have to be sold out for my faith in Jesus! Now I know what it means to be a believer.' He started going to his hometown with Bibles and Gospel cassettes and videos and sharing his new faith with his family and friends. The other believers helped him get a loan to open up a business in town. One evening he received a desperate call that his mother and brothers were in serious trouble and he needed to come immediately. He closed the shop and took the money from the cash drawer with him. He was never seen again alive. After he had disappeared several weeks, his body was finally identified. It had been cut into three pieces. His beautiful wife was left with three small children. Her father, a policeman, buried Mark and told me, 'Mark died because he had become a Christian.' Now Mark's wife is being sued by the man who loaned him the money to open his business. To make matters even worse, the religious and political opposition put out word that he was not killed, but is still alive, causing both the believers and his family much distress.

'Paul' became a believer in his town. He donated his kidney to the leader of the women's group of believers in a nearby city. He grew quickly in the Lord. His house was burned, as well as the kindergarten, meeting place in his town. His son was standing beside the road early one morning waiting for a ride to work. A group of fanatics sped up and struck the boy with their car, leaving him with numerous broken bones. He is still recovering from his injuries. A teenage girl whose family members are believers

was severely burned when her home was firebombed by fanatics in the same area. She spent many weeks in the hospital for skin grafts. The story goes on and on.

The latest martyr was a young man who lived in a supposedly protected area. A group of fanatics forced his car off the highway into a cement bridge support and he was killed. When complaints were made to the police the believers were told they needed 'proof'. This and other cases convinced me that when a Muslim comes to faith in Christ he or she is signing their death warrant. We have to prepare new Muslim background believers not only to live for Christ, but to die for him.

Jesus taught his disciples that they are to be congratulated, or be blessed when they are persecuted for righteousness sake, and when people insult them and persecute them and falsely say all kinds of evil about them because of their faith in him. He promises the kingdom to them.⁴⁰ Paul promised Timothy that all who live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.⁴¹ This is certainly true of Muslim background believers. Mentors in Pakistan in *Longing to Call Them Sisters* report that:

As we begin to witness to Muslim women, it's wise to say to them, 'Not only is it given to you to believe on Christ, but also to suffer for his sake.' (Phil. 1:29) Then they will understand that it is part of being a Christian. We've urged our people never to rush to tell their family about their profession of faith in Christ. Instead, we encourage them to live Christ before their family so that their family will have the opportunity to ask why they have changed. [...] We've seen our young people threatened and beaten. Many of them have been threatened to have their limbs cut off or their arms broken. Some of them have been put out of their homes. Many of the women have been beaten. I don't know of any of our children who have escaped beatings in school. But we've taught them from 1 Pe-

⁴⁰ Matt 5:10, 11.

⁴¹ 2 Tim 3:12.

ter 2:20: 'If you do wrong and suffer for it, what is that to you? But if you do no wrong, but your suffering for Christ's sake, it is glory.'⁴²

I have known some Muslims who have kept their identity as Muslim background believers hidden, or low key, while remaining within the Muslim community. One of them who was a judge told me that it is best to send Muslim believers to another country to disciple them until they can become strong enough in the faith to be transplanted back into their home cultures. This has happened in some cases where Muslim believers have traveled abroad, studied, married and then returned to their home countries. The disadvantage of this is that they do not impact their families and friends during their discipling process. Also when they return they may be so westernized that their impact on the local community is marginalized. There is something about suffering inside the community which bonds the believers to others in the community. Even their enemies are impressed and some eventually come to the faith, similar to the experience of Saul who persecuted the church, but remembered the martyrdom of Stephen.

I do not advocate that Muslim background believers deliberately seek persecution and martyrdom. I counsel them to be cautious in relating their faith to other Muslims, until they can know that their message will be received. I somehow feel that their societies are so full of conflict as a normal way of life that they are more capable of suffering than those of us from western societies, where comfort is a premium.

If the Gospel can be shared by other Muslim background believers it will spread quicker among their own people. In some areas of the world, westerners and Christians in general can put Muslim background believers in danger just by being seen with them. Therefore it is better in some cases to meet with the leaders in a secure area, and train them to go back to their homes and

⁴² Love & Eckheart, *Ministry to Muslim Women, Longing to Call Them Sisters*, p. 137.

businesses to share the Gospel in culturally sensitive ways with their families, associates and friends.

There was a well known evangelist who led twelve Muslims to the Lord. They were all killed. I asked him if he changed his discipling approach after this. He said, 'Of course!' If he persisted in encouraging them in public profession of their faith in Christ, they would all be killed. He began to caution them to only share with other Muslims as the Spirit gave opportunities, and to do this in private after long testing. Each culture has its own norms and we need to advise our new believers to be aware of the dangers as well as the opportunities.

It is important that Muslim background believers be taught to memorize the Scripture in order to face persecution when neither the Bible nor other believers may be present to encourage them. The memorized Word of God is always present in their hearts to comfort and guide and to provide a witness to their persecutors. This need is enhanced through storying the Bible and through the memorization of Scripture choruses and hymns which are proven methods of discipling Muslim background believers who are oral communicators.

God is building the church among Muslims today. We will deal with the aspects of church planting as an integral part of the discipling process in the last chapter.

11 Carrying the great commission to others

More Muslims are accepting the salvation of Christ today than any other time in history. They are sharing their new faith in God's forgiveness for sins with their families and friends. Some are developing into evangelists who are proclaiming the Gospel to many around the world. The Great Commission applies to Muslim background believers as well as to believers from other backgrounds. In the Great Commission Jesus said, 'All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make

disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.⁴³

Every Muslim who takes his or her religion seriously is afraid of Hell fire. This fear is the chief motivating power of Islam. Muslim women are especially afraid of the final judgment. The Great Commission provides within it the message needed to help Muslims overcome this fear through faith in Christ. The setting of the final days of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection was the Passover of the Jews which looked back to God's miraculous rescue of the Jews from the domination of Pharaoh through the sprinkling of the blood of the Passover lamb on the doorposts. Someone has organized the Great Commission witness into the 'seven commandments of Jesus' which are very appropriate for sharing the Gospel with Muslims and enabling them to establish believing groups among other Muslims.⁴⁴

1. Jesus commands them to **repent**. They must turn from their sins to God. This first commandment is the most basic, but often the hardest to accept and apply.
2. Jesus commands them to **believe**. They must open their hearts to the Gospel of the Kingdom that Jesus paid the penalty for their sins. They must receive Him as personal Savior for the forgiveness of their sins. He is the Great Sacrifice offered for the sins of all men.
3. Jesus commanded them to **be baptized**. Baptism by immersion in water symbolizes the death of the believer to sin and the resurrection to new life in Christ. It is the ceremonial door to the body of believers, the new *ummah*.

⁴³ Matt 28: 18-20, NASV.

⁴⁴ Dr. George Patterson, Seattle, Washington, idea received in Bible Study in Rancho Bernardo, April 30, 2004.

These first three commandments are the beginning of the Muslim's pilgrimage to life in Christ. By obeying these three the Muslim personally enters the Kingdom, or the new *ummah* under the leadership of a new *Caliph*, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the God-man redeemer of all men.

4. Jesus commanded them to **pray**. The simple prayer, 'Our Father who art in heaven' is the equivalent of the *fatiha* in Islamic prayer. It contains the basic elements of prayer for the new believer; adoration of God, request for his guidance, petition for our daily needs, the request for the forgiveness of sins, protection from temptation and evil and the affirmation of God's glory and reign over all men.
5. Jesus commanded them to **love one another**. Love is the motivating power of faith in Jesus. Love covers a multitude of sins. It is the distinguishing mark of the believer. God is love. Perfect love casts out all fear. This is the most difficult of Jesus commandments, since its power comes from complete dependence on the Spirit of God which Jesus places into the hearts of the believer. It is a supernatural quality which cannot be inspired by human action alone.
6. Jesus commanded them to **remember him** though the Lord's Supper. 'Do this in remembrance of me', he commanded at the Passover meal, indicating the hidden Messiah unleavened bread or *matzah* and the Messiah cup which he fulfilled in his blood shed on the cross.

By keeping these next three commandments, the Muslim background believer takes part in the life of the community, or the Church.

7. The final commandment is **you shall be my witnesses**.⁴⁵ This is the commandment which benefits the world. Muslims are to bear witness in their Jerusalem, Samaria, and to

⁴⁵ Acts 1:8.

the uttermost parts of the world. In this way they share Christ's salvation with their own people and with the people of the world. What better testimony to a Jew than a Muslim who has had their sins forgiven and forgives those who trespass against them!

The above commandments are a simple method for Muslims to spread their faith to other Muslims and to start believing groups that multiply. We do not need complicated programs and doctrinal statements for Muslims to use in outreach. The Bible provides us with the simplest approach as well as the most effective approach. The book of the Acts of the Apostles serves as an excellent church planting manual for Muslim background believers.

Many methods are proving fruitful in reaching Muslims for Jesus. One is the use of the Internet. Muslims have many websites designed to entice Christians to become Muslims. Muslim background believers also have sites designed to share their faith with their Muslim brothers and sisters. One new site is being developed by the Academy of Theological Studies, which used to enroll Arab professionals in Biblical studies. Those enrolled to study were invited to regional seminars which allowed students and professors to meet each other on a personal basis. Another group sponsored large regional Islamic study courses led by Christian scholars.

Distribution of the *Jesus Film* has been a primary way to share the Gospel with Muslims. This has been done by house-to-house visits which distribute pamphlets advertising the film. Those who respond are sent the film and later visited for follow-up. Sometimes newspaper advertisements offer the film or a copy of the Scriptures in the local language. A successful method of distributing Gospel Recordings audiocassettes, CD's and wordless books among Bedouin Arabs resulted in many requests for the Jesus Film. A number of baptisms and believers' groups resulted.

The goal of discipleship is not just to see Christ formed in the new believer but to have him glorified in believers groups or fel-

lowships which produce other groups. Muslims are usually part of gregarious, family oriented societies. When they come to faith in Christ and begin to manifest the fruit of the Spirit, i.e. love, joy peace, patience and the rest, it undoubtedly impacts their families, friends, business partners and the society around them. As more Muslims come to the Lord, they naturally gather daily or at least weekly to share and celebrate their faith together. Family celebrations and rites of passage become time of sharing about what God has done in their lives. Kay Waters excitedly reports in *Longing to Call Them Sisters* about a sister team who is seeing almost miraculous growth of a home related group:

They are discipling about 50 MBB's, virtually all of whom have come to faith within the last two years. Many of them came to the Lord as a result of the witness of their family members. Almost weekly we hear a report of someone else that has decided to follow Christ because they have been watching their family members or friends and seen their changed lives. The team does not need to seek out contacts with whom to share the gospel. The MBB's are continually bringing friends and family members to their homes so that they, too, can hear the good news! ...Watching the growth of the church among this nearby Muslim people group, I am encouraged to see that the gospel really can spread through whole families!⁴⁶

It is this kind of rapid, spontaneous multiplication that is the goal of discipling Muslims. A natural way that Muslims reach out into their own communities is through the Sufi 'way' or *tarika*. The Sufis often went ahead of the Muslim armies that invaded new areas to soften up the attitude of the people of the area. They taught a contextualized form of Islam that was more acceptable to society. They incorporated local customs into their worship and

⁴⁶ Kay Waters, 'Evangelism through Family Networks', in Love and Eckheart, *Ministry to Muslim Women, Longing to Call Them Sisters*, pp. 186-187.

prayers. Muslim background believers in Jesus can form their own 'way' or *tarika* which will adapt to those who have been chosen for salvation and include them into small groups.

12 Conclusions

The day has come when Muslim background believers are beginning to travel the world proclaiming the Gospel among their own co-religionists, just as they have been doing among their own people. The tremendous power pent up in fundamentalist Islam is being turned to a brave proclaiming of the forgiveness of sins through the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the midst of the turmoil caused by rising fundamentalism God is calling forth his new Sauls to become Pauls or we might say 'new Mohammeds' to the Moslem people. Exciting news is coming out of countries where Sunni Muslim MBBs are winning Shia Muslims to the Lord. Many are paying the ultimate price for sharing the Gospel. The blood of the martyrs, both expatriate and local Muslim background believers, will be the catalyst for a great turning of Muslims from every people and tribe to the One that fills their heart's longings. This great turning, once again, will prove the power of the Gospel to save and sanctify.

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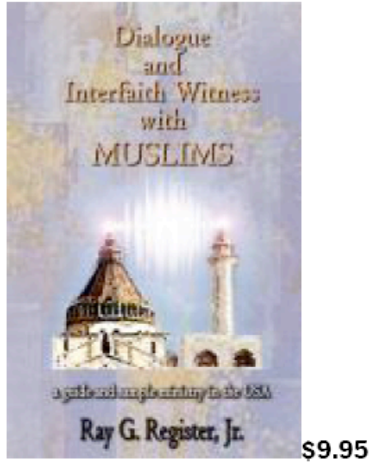
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Dialogue and Interface with Muslims

AUTHOR: Ray Register, MDiv, DMin

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