

SEEDBED

Practitioners in Conversation

April 2009, Volume XXIII No 1

Discipling Believers from Muslim Backgrounds & Countering Spiritual Attacks

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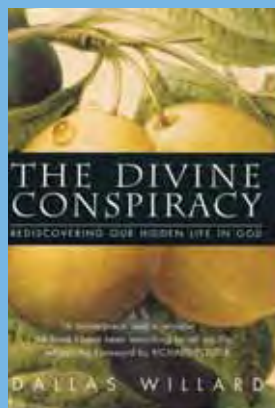
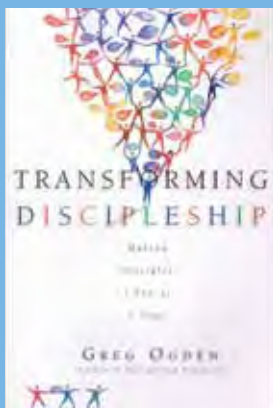
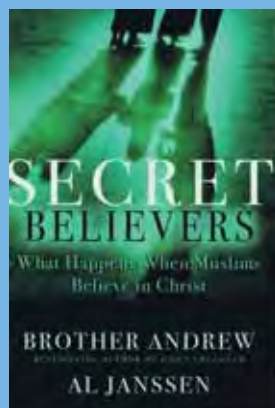
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Discipleship, spiritual warfare, spiritual discipline, Bible study, inner healing, spiritual transformation, true friendship...

The articles and book reviews in this Seedbed wrestle with some of the issues that are at the heart of our calling to bring God's love in Christ to our Muslim friends.

SEEDBED

Practitioners in Conversation

Editor: Don Little

Copy Editor: Faith Knoll, Beverly Laugesen & Darlene Koop

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Letters to the Editor are welcomed and the best will be published.

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EDITORIAL

The Agony And The Ecstasy Of Discipling

This morning friends in the States re-connected me with an older Moroccan gentleman (I'll call him 'Larry') whom I spent a number of years seeking to encourage and disciple 15 years ago. Today I learned that Larry has recently come to the States and is in a serious domestic crisis. They thought that it might help him if I were to talk with him. I had looked at my relationship with Larry as one of my discipling failures. That dear brother could not, would not (?), come out of his isolation and join with the brothers and sisters in our city for regular fellowship and teaching. Admittedly, Larry was of a different generation and from a very different background, but until today I had looked back on that relationship as having ended in failure.

Today I learned that now, some 15 years later, Larry speaks very highly of me and expresses a deep love and respect for me. He says how much he appreciated my stopping by his humble apartment to visit him and eat meals with him. Larry comes from a well-educated upper class family and the tragic loss of his young wife in a car accident devastated him (when he was himself quite young). God used this tragedy through a long and tortured pilgrimage, to eventually lead him to Christ. He held such potential to be a contributing leader, teacher and father within the church! After a few years, I eventually gave up on Larry and gradually stopped visiting him. Now, so many years later, we are reconnecting. *Such is the strange and often confusing reality of discipling believers from Muslim backgrounds (BMBs).*

From the outset of our time in Morocco God led me into relationships with young believers. I sought to walk with them and help them grow into the maturity and wholeness that I knew God wanted for them. Some of these men grew and matured, and some are among the leaders of the church in Morocco today. Others struggled and battled, and eventually drifted out of fellowship. It was my experience with the intense struggle and enormous challenge of discipling men like 'Larry' that drove me to research BMB discipling.

This issue of *Seedbed* is devoted to the always important, often hard, and sometimes joyous and wondrous calling that we have as we walk alongside our brothers and sisters helping them in their journey. It is my hope and prayer that as you read these articles you will be encouraged to greater faith. You will laugh and cry, but also be called forward into renewed fervour to continue to help disciple our precious brothers and sisters, who are walking by faith in obedience to their Lord and ours in often very tough circumstances.

Don Little, Editor editor.seedbed@wornet.org or editor.seedbed@a2bmail.net



Hi Don,

While waiting for our visa to a neighbouring country we have been reading Seedbed. We love the practical focus you are giving it. The last issue stirred me up about the Sharif, so I hope this is in time for the next issue.

At risk of sounding like a cheerleader, I'm responding to the two articles in the Vol. II – 2008 Seedbed about Arabic Bible translations. From my learner-of-Arabic perspective I want to stir up the crowd for the Sharif Bible translation and help even newer Arabic learners to choose a practical Arabic Bible.

Based on the chosen wording of key passages establishing the divine nature of Christ, Basheer Abdulfadi ranks the Sharif LAST of four translations (Smith van Dyck, New Arabic Version/Book of Life, Today's Arabic Version and the Sharif) in terms of the reliability of the translation in translating key terms. Tim and Sharon Warner evaluate Bible translations based on comprehension and translation philosophy, concluding that the Sharif TOPS all translations in terms of communicativeness. One may be left wondering, is the Sharif the worst or the best choice?

All translations have their place, but for my purpose, the question is to what degree does a translation bring the word near the non-native Arabic speaker, so that we can use it in ministry among Muslim peoples? (Deut. 30:14)

At Kelsey my 4th semester class read Acts in the Sharif instead of the Van Dyck. Our Jordanian Christian teacher said the language would benefit us more, and it did. Continued reading in the Sharif has helped my wife and I to share truth with Muslim people, while advancing our Arabic reading to the point where we can now slowly read more in Arabic generally. Additionally, the Sharif helps you to speak and understand Muslim expressions (AlQuds "Jerusalem", alMawla "Lord", yahya "John"). Without knowing these you waste time explaining (or being explained to!) Christian terms and names.

The Warner's have demonstrated that for educated Yemenis, the Sharif is the most intelligible. Can anyone prove that any Arabic Bible (unless written in a local Arabic dialect!) is more intelligible than the Sharif for all but the most educated Muslim – especially for a person reading the Bible for the first time?

If you question the ability of any Arabic population group to understand Modern Standard Arabic, I commend to you this 2008 article (a shorter PDF version of a 996 page book written to help Christian radio broadcasters assess the Arabic needed to actually communicate with listeners). Scholar Jos Strengholt concludes that with the exception of some (not even all!) university graduates, even *simplified* Modern Standard Arabic is not *intelligible* to the general Arabic reader or listener unfamiliar with the context. (See <http://www.stfrancismagazine.info/ja/Gospel%20in%20the%20Air%20chapter3.pdf>)

This is the situation of the majority of Muslims reading the Bible for the first time. I would agree from my experience in Jordan, the Arab country said



to have the *highest* level of literacy.

If Arabs struggle with Arabic, should not we the foreign missionary choose the simplest translation as the word we choose to bear? But wait, people say the Sharif clouds the witness to the deity of Christ? Should we cast it aside?

As the author Abdulfadi says, we should be aware of key Sharif verses such as *isa huwa mawlana* (Acts 2:36) and *anta ibni, analyawm tawajituka ibnan li* (Psalm 2:7) relating to the divinity of Christ. He questions the Sharif's use of *sayyid* and *mawla* (lord and master) in translation of the Greek, kurios. Others may prefer different wordings, but as the Warners demonstrate, the Sharif is a far clearer translation and more accessible to the non-literary population of Islam.

The Sharif is a far clearer translation and more accessible to the non-literary population of Islam.

I've noticed that in church Jordanian Christian hymns interchangeably use *mawlana* and *sayyidna* for "our Lord." In Arabic, the words for lord, king, owner, ruler and master are perhaps more fluidly applied to both God and men (and women!) than perhaps Lord in English. So I will not debate the author's conclusions, but merely note that while some may believe *rabb* the best choice for Lord in Bible translation, we learn at Kelsey that housewife in Arabic is "rabbit ilbayt" (lord of the home).

Doug

Doug and his family just completed three years in language study and await a visa for service in the lands of the Nile.



PART I: STORIES, MODELS AND LESSONS ABOUT DISCIPLING BELIEVERS FROM MUSLIM BACKGROUNDS

CAN I CHOOSE MY DISCIPLES?

by Joy Loewen

Joy, along with her husband Ed, have been involved in ministry to Muslims for their entire adult lives – first in Pakistan and then in Canada. Ed now directs AWM Canada's outreach to Muslims.

Desperate love

'Every day of late I get phone calls that some stranger wants to kill me,' explained a battle weary Somali sister God chose to save. Just last week a man, with a cap pulled down covering part of his face, grabbed her dress as she was walking out of a mall and threatened to kill her. We have lost count of how many times police have been at her door.

Only a few months earlier, our sister, euphoric and cheerful, announced to her shocked Muslim settlement officers upon arrival at the airport, that she was a Christian. 'We have a problem, a BIG problem,' the government settlement agency worker declared, emphasizing the word big. A Somali converted to Christianity, a Somali woman? This was unthinkable, intolerable for a Somali Muslim man. Our brave sister, who had survived so much already in Kenya, naively assumed that a free country meant freedom from troubles and danger. She thought she would finally be safe and there would be a sunny future for her and her six children in Canada. Five years earlier she had been widowed.

Some troublemakers within the Somali community have made it difficult for her to feel safe in her newly adopted land of Canada. The challenges of her first year in Canada could fill a book, a suspense story of unbelievable experiences. In just a few short months of arrival her eldest son, confused and lost, joined a gang, was arrested twice and jailed. The family, living on government assistance, was assigned to a housing unit that harbours young gangsters and drug dealers. Conservative Muslim families from Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Somalia surround them on all sides. There is no other Somali Christian in our city. She has no blood family here. The honeymoon stage of euphoria quickly vanished. The reality of escalating new challenges stares her in the face day after day. She pines away for the Somali fellowship group left behind in Nairobi, Kenya. That group of Somali Christians were her lifeline.

How does one disciple this lone Somali believer so unassimilated into

The challenges of her first year in Canada could fill a book, a suspense story of unbelievable experiences.



Western culture and church? It is a joy to sit and read the Bible with her. She cannot read English yet and labours away reading Somali, not completely fluent in her native reading skills. Her urgent crises usually determine what passage of Scripture we will read. I want so badly to build a deeper foundation of knowledge but the crises cry loud for specific verses to address her need of the moment. After reading we discuss the passage in her broken English. Sometimes my mind grows fatigued trying to figure out what she is trying so hard to say. Then we sing Somali worship songs together. They are tucked away in her memory where no one can snatch them away. Her face is fully alive and bright as she sings. We can sing a long time together. We close in prayer. Her prayers disclose a desperate, dependency upon Jesus and an unflinching love for Him. Sometimes we have communion together.

If discipling would mean only Bible teaching times, discipling would leave me flying high. But it is much more. It includes caring for her every-day needs, teaching her children about rules, boundaries, right and wrong, and even tutoring the older ones at a transitional school, and accompanying her to court hearings.

Simple faith

With arms raised and eyes looking heavenward, my Kurdish sister pleaded with God, 'Do something, Lord, with my husband. Discipline him, Lord. 'Dis-ci-pline him,' enunciating each syllable, thinking that somehow, she must not be explaining her request clearly enough. One day, many years ago, her husband-to-be led her to Jesus. She was baptized on their honeymoon. He served the Lord, selling Bibles in their homeland. Danger pursued him forcing them to flee to a neighbouring country for refuge. They were strengthened in their faith worshipping with fellow refugee Kurdish believers. They experienced many miracles.

We were notified about this family shortly after they arrived in Canada. They attended the church closest to them but could not understand why the Christians were always crying rather than celebrating. They decided to try another church. It happened to be mega size and after not being able to get to know anyone they left that fellowship. After some time, my Kurdish sister's husband got a job driving a taxi. But alas, that put him in compromising situations meeting customers, which brought about one temptation after another. It didn't take long for his faith to weaken and finally disappear to the point of renouncing Christ. But our sister has held on to her simple faith.

I directed her to a different church. She has been attending that church for nearly ten years now but still has found few who will speak with her or spend time with her. I meet with her weekly, if possible. How I would love to go through a systematic study of the Bible. She needs to grow in deeper



knowledge of the Word. But her personal crises usually determine where to look in the Word for immediate help. Our time is limited because she is a busy working mother. It is not easy to live with a husband who now mocks all spiritual hunger in her. She lives with daily abuse but is unwilling to separate because she is too afraid to live alone. She is confused about how to implement her freedoms in the West and does not understand or act upon her rights as a Canadian/Kurdish/Christian woman. At times she is all mixed up and confused. She wonders who she is. How do I disciple her in this area? There have been a number of occasions when the husband has marched over to our house accusing his wife of not respecting him. It can sometimes be a never-ending circus of watching control being exerted on both sides. Much of my teaching has revolved around forgiveness and letting go of a stronghold of revenge. She was raised in an abusive home where revenge and cursing were the norm. I want to go beyond this teaching.

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revenge.

Nevertheless, of all the women I have disciplined, this sister brings some of the highest joys to my soul. It is clear that God chose my Kurdish friend to be saved. She is the most transparent person I have ever met. There is no hypocrisy or hiding of her real feelings. She is honest. But that intimate sharing would not be possible if I were not available for her needs, convincing her that I love her. Biblical teaching and daily practical care go hand in hand. I have discovered that discipling women who have come out of Islam to follow Jesus to be labour intensive and even more so in their new land of Canada. Discipling women like her in a weekly program at church is not sufficient when the teaching may not address the overwhelming urgent and complex needs of an uneducated Muslim-background believer who is trying to figure out who she is becoming in the strange new 'Land of Many Churches'.

Jewel

I was overjoyed at a new sister's baptism. God chose a jewel in this sister! She is bright and energetic. We had explored whether the Qur'an is God's Word and the meaning of the Trinity and divinity of Jesus. The Holy Spirit has given her increasing spiritual understanding. She is the 'first fruit' in her family line. Then almost immediately after her baptism she seldom phoned or was willing to meet. It was like she had concluded that she didn't need any more teaching. There have been months of almost no communication between visits. She needs ongoing discipling but how can I help her to see that? Then suddenly the phone will ring and she has questions.

Rose

A few years ago I invested heavily into a new believer's life. The love that bonded us together was sweet. Our Bible reading and prayer times were so



encouraging. She was soaking it all in, growing like a beautiful rose opening up. It was awesome discipling this chosen one. Then, suddenly, one day she unfolded her dark secret of being sexually abused by a relative. We knew the man well. The discipleship was abruptly stopped. Shame overtook her. She ran. No matter how persistently I tried to speak grace into the tragedy, she wouldn't reopen our relationship. I never knew shame could go so deep. I had to be willing to let her go. God redirected her to others to carry on teaching her.

I'm proud of each sister I am privileged to walk along side of. They teach me so much. Sometimes I wonder who is discipling who? However one day, weary from the intensive involvement with them, I felt overwhelmed with the magnitude of challenges and complexities a Christian discipler faces with a woman who comes out of Islam and gives her life to Jesus. Those challenges and complexities grow even larger when she comes to an unfamiliar land where Christians are busy, accountability is not usually in place, independence reigns high in value, and churches can be difficult to fit into. There may be no other believer from her cultural group in her city and her English minimal, sometimes being illiterate in both her language and English. By contrast I look at the average Canadian person who comes to Christ who is often invited to a structured Alpha program once a week. The videos are interesting and the discussion easy to follow. There may be no other form of discipleship necessary in that person's life and she can move forward in amazing ways.

I began despairing because it is so time consuming and complex discipling a woman coming out of Islam in our Western nation. There are no easy answers or formulas or methods. Reflecting on the sisters I have come alongside of from a variety of Islamic nations, I could tell that each sister was chosen and handpicked by the Savior to belong to Him. However, I wanted to choose whom I would disciple; ones whose lives would not require so much of my time, or they could assimilate quickly into our Western culture, be literate, have adequate skills in speaking English, who would not run away or close the door. I wanted to choose those who would turn out to be success stories or bring only joy and deep satisfaction; and most of all those I could teach Scripture to in a foundational way, week after week, getting more systematic knowledge planted. But I realized that my unspoken desire deep in my heart was ultimately self-seeking and selfish. Can I choose my disciples? If He has chosen them for salvation and sent them to me, the discipling process and result belongs to Him. Who am I to question His choice? I am His servant and must be willing to welcome each precious soul He sends my way and do my best to show them the true love of the One who died for them.

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We knew the man well. The discipleship was abruptly stopped. Shame overtook her.

Can I choose my disciples? If He has chosen them for salvation and sent them to me, the discipling process and result belongs to Him.



OFF TO A GOOD START DISCIPLING

By ES

ES is a full time mother living in the Middle East. She is trying to fit part time volunteer and paid work, team life, visiting, discipling, hospitality and church into her life. She squeezes in time to pray while doing the dishes and always wonders if she could do things differently to make her life easier, more spiritual and more organised. She knows God has to be in control of her efforts because she isn't!

I have had some experience in discipling before, both in my home country and here in my host country. Here my efforts have been tiring, frustrating, demoralizing and ended in me pulling away from the believers. I didn't see any growth and noticed the same unredeemed behaviour happening over and over. I came to believe that I wasn't good at discipling and felt totally inadequate for the task.

This year my colleague and I got in contact with a lady who had already professed faith in Christ. She was actively looking (by email) for someone to 'disciple' her, although she might not have used that exact word. However, most of the things we heard about her made us cautious and raised red flags. She described how she had come to faith through someone in another country, who might or might not have been a born again believer, and was now not a Muslim but a Christian. From the beginning she seemed to completely reject Islam and would have officially registered her change of religion if it had been legal. She wants to spend time with foreigners and would like to move out of the country. So we were cautious when we made contact, but when we met her it was obvious that she had experienced a new birth and was now a new creation in Christ, wanting to grow in her faith.

Sasha (not her real name) has been such a joy and an encouragement to us. Up until now, discipling her has been very easy. She absorbs everything like a sponge, but asks relevant and difficult questions as well. She loves reading the Bible with us, and is eager to learn. She suggests things to us and the first time she prayed out loud in front of us was her suggestion. Obviously, she still carries baggage from her old life and some of the decisions she makes, particularly about her future, show she is still depending on herself. Some of this is because she had a difficult childhood and now lives by herself, completely supporting herself, which is very unusual for this country.

We set times to do Bible study with her and while this is important and enjoyable, we knew from the beginning that this should not be the only way of discipling. Instead, we have to model what following Christ is like by our actions and words. We try to just keep in touch regularly, hang out together and phone each other often. Being willing to be available to her is easy, as we get on



well, but it takes planning because of our busy lives. It would be easy to let it slide for a few days, which could turn into weeks, so we need to make an effort. Even during the studies, she sees how we use the Bible to find a relevant verse (we really impressed on her that the Bible is a manual for life), how we pray for specific circumstances, and how we conduct ourselves around her. Once she told me how she saw right from the beginning that we were trustworthy and that we genuinely loved her. This gave me great encouragement that Christ was at work in our lives and had made an impact on her through us!

What surprised me was that discipling her made me look at my own life too. As she is a new believer, and we have been believers for a while, it would be easy to show how good we are and how much she has to learn. Watching her learn and seeing how she is changing and growing has made me think about my own walk with Christ and how my growth as a believer has stagnated. Her openness about the doubts, questions and struggles in her life showed me one of my failings – that I find it difficult to share with other people my struggles and the deep issues within my own life. For example, I would direct her from the Bible that she should forgive her father, but realized that even though I know what the Bible says; in reality I had not even applied it to my own life.

Watching her learn and seeing how she is changing and growing has made me think about my own walk with Christ and how my growth as a believer has stagnated.

If Sasha had come to faith through us, we might have done things differently, and also her situation living by herself is a bit different. We have learned, from other's experiences discipling, that it is useful to encourage her to share her faith, particularly with her family, as soon as possible. We have also been taught that it is good for a new believer to spend time with other believers, especially with those from Muslim backgrounds. At the moment she seems closed to both of these ideas and we are trying to work out how we can encourage her without pushing her. I want to be selfish and keep her for myself! But I do know that having relationships only with foreigners is not the best for her, and we are looking into how to introduce her to others, especially to some women believers.

I am so grateful that God has given me this chance to get to know Sasha and to develop a relationship with her. It is not at all like my previous experience and has felt very natural. I still feel inadequate, but that makes me put my trust in God, that as He has called her. He is filling her with His Holy Spirit. Sometimes it feels as though God has put her in my life, not so that I can 'help her to grow,' but so that I can see God at work. After nine years of living here and not seeing people come to faith, having Sasha in my life feels like a gift from God. This experience has even given me more boldness in my witnessing efforts; I have been encouraged and have grown in my walk with God. I see how God has done such a miracle in her life – what can He do in the lives of others?



THE LIVING PYRAMID MODEL FOR RELATIONAL COMMUNAL DISCIPLING

By Don Little

With his family, Don worked as a TEFL instructor in North Africa and served on a church planting team from 1988-1998. He then served as the director of AWM Canada till the end of 2006. Following a sabbatical spent researching BMB discipling in the Arab world, Don began his role as Missiologist-at-Large and editor of Seedbed in Sept 2007. He lives in Canada with his wife Jeanie and three young adult children.

Youcef (pseudonym) was one of the first believers I had the privilege of helping disciple shortly after I arrived in North Africa. Youcef was in his early 30s, had a good job and was well educated and still lived at home with his family. He had been a believer for two or three years when I met him in the weekly Bible studies with young men led by a colleague.

As I got to know Youcef I was initially impressed with his growing knowledge of the Bible and his apparently solid grounding as a new believer. For the first year or so, as our friendship grew, and as he continued to attend the weekly Bible studies, things went okay. As our relationship grew, and we shared more of our lives with each other, I began to challenge him in areas of his life in which he did not appear to have moved forward in obedience.

However, neither I nor anyone else, including the colleague who first contacted him, had ever met any members of his family. He kept his faith a secret from everyone in his family. He never told anyone at work about his faith in Christ, either. He was a 'secret believer.' I gradually became increasingly concerned about the dual life he led, identifying himself as a believer when he was with us, but silent about his faith to anyone that he knew at work or in his family. During one weekend trip, we talked at length about his 'need' (from my perspective) to share his faith with his family, and with his new girl friend. I strongly *exhorted* him that it would not be fair to his girl friend for him to marry her without her knowing that he was a believer. That conversation was a turning point, as after that he came to the weekly studies less often. He married this Muslim girl (whom none of the believers met), never told his family of his love for Christ and soon stopped coming to any meetings.

Looking back on that early experience in a discipling relationship, I can now more clearly see that this failure occurred in large part because my colleagues and I made serious mistakes in the way we approached discipling. We worked on the assumption that discipling in North Africa worked in much the

Looking back on that early experience in a discipling relationship, I can now more clearly see that this failure occurred in large part because my colleagues and I made serious mistakes in the way we approached discipling.

same as we had experienced it in North America. We worked with Youcef *as an individual*, assuming that he was willing and capable of living his life as an 'autonomous' individual and paid almost no attention to who he was in his social and family contexts. Clearly, we need to better understand what it is we are trying to do when we disciple believers belonging to Muslim families who live in the collective cultures and societies of the Islam dominated Arab world.

I am increasingly convinced that much of the reason for our struggle in discipling believers from Muslim backgrounds (BMBs) is due to our use of a discipleship model developed within our individualistic Western experience and understanding. The model presented in this article is a discipling that seeks afresh to be not only Biblically sound, but also culturally and socially adapted for use in the Arab world.

Building a Model for BMB Discipling on Reflection and Research

When I researched the discipleship of BMBs, I attempted to come to a better *understanding* of discipleship and the processes at work in the spiritual growth of BMBs in the Islamic contexts of the Arab world.¹ This article brings together some of the primary lessons learned from my study of discipling and puts them into a *model* for BMB discipleship. In this model, I attempt to integrate the most important insights gained through my research into a simple yet comprehensive discipleship model. Working with a Biblically compelling and culturally appropriate understanding of discipleship may considerably strengthen all of our discipleship efforts and discipling relationships.

In this article, I describe the main components of this discipleship model and explain the meaning and significance of each part. I encourage you to refer to the diagram of the model at the end of the next section (p. 2, below), as I explain the missiological, biblical and methodological components of the model.

This article brings together some of the primary lessons learned from my study of discipling and puts them into a model for BMB discipleship.

1 After studying a broad range of literature on discipleship and spiritual formation, and then reviewing the primary literature that addressed the discipleship of BMBs, I conducted 75 interviews with experienced disciplers during two research trips into the Arab world in the spring of 2007. The outcome of this project was the thesis that was submitted to Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, in Boston, USA, as the final project to complete my Doctor of Ministry degree. The thesis is entitled: 'Effective Insider Discipling: Helping Arab world BMBs Persevere and thrive in Community.' (D.Min Thesis, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 2009). This article is adapted from the first part of the concluding chapter of the thesis (Chapter 5), pp. 221-231. I would be happy to send you the thesis in PDF format upon request.



1. Missiological conclusions from reflections on contextualization

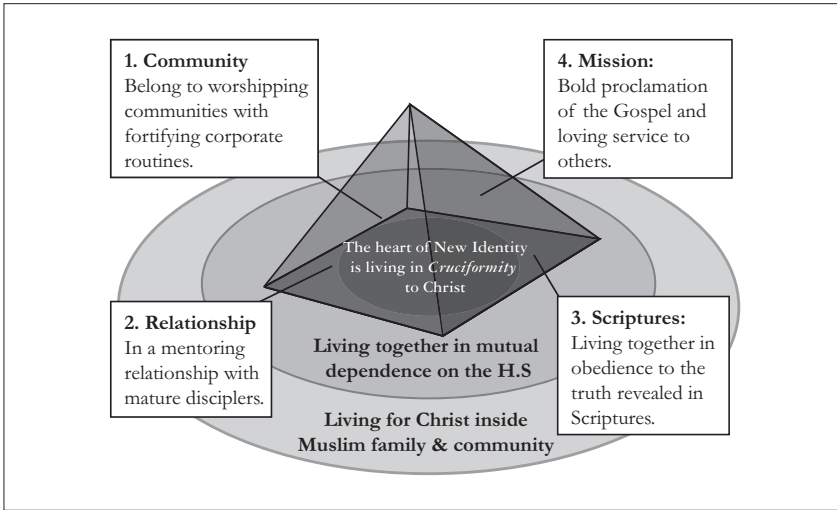
In the first chapter of my thesis, I examined the ongoing debates about contextualization in light of the challenges involved in discipling BMBs in the Islamic contexts of the Arab world (See *Effective Insider Discipling*, Chap 1, Sections 3 & 4). I conclude that the discipling *objective* should be the effective discipling of believers so that they are able to both remain within their Muslim families *and* join local C3 or C4 churches (typically, informal house churches of some kind) that are able to flourish within Muslim communities. However, I do *not* believe that it is appropriate to encourage disciples to remain inside the religious institutions and traditions that exemplify Muslim society. BMBs must have clear identities as Christ's followers that are distinct from the *Muslim religious identity* of those who honour Mohammed and seek to fulfil the religious and legal obligations of the Qur'an, Muslim tradition, Islamic ideology and law. I do not believe we should encourage BMBs to remain *religious* insiders, yet every possible effort must be made to ensure that BMBs continue to live and serve Christ within their families and as ongoing members of their Muslim communities. Extracting followers of Christ from their Muslim context is to be unremittingly avoided.

However, given the often strong self-identification of *Muslim* communities as those who pray the Shahada with conviction, and the shame-motivated often violent rejection of all who 'apostatize', it should not surprise us that followers of Christ are often forcefully *expelled* from their communities. Nevertheless, the research found a number of important ways of speaking and acting that can often considerably defuse the potential and extent of hostile responses. There are effective means of helping believers remain within their communities even after they are identified with Christ. Thus, for disciplers of BMBs to be effective they must consistently strive to practice 'insider discipleship' that integrates new believers successfully into 'insider churches'.

This missiological conclusion is the foundation for the *Living Pyramid Model*. In the diagram, the 'insider discipling' goal is represented by the large circular surface upon which the whole model rests, labelled: 'Living for Christ inside Muslim family and community'. Extraction must be avoided as one practices *insider discipling*. Yet, we must be realistic and understand that far too often the residence and witness of BMBs within their own families and communities is impossible, at least in the short term, and disciplers must not force disciples to carry burdens heavier than they can bear.

It should not surprise us that followers of Christ are often forcefully *expelled* from their communities.

Fig 1: The *Living Pyramid Model* of Relational Communal Discipleship



2. Conclusions from the exegetical reflections on discipleship in the NT

In the second chapter of my thesis I take a fresh look at discipleship and spiritual formation as it is seen *in* the New Testament (NT), because I believe that part of the reason for the frequent failure of our BMB discipling is an inappropriate understanding or false assumptions as to the nature of discipleship as it is seen in the Bible. Examining Galatians and Philippians, and the two volume Luke – Acts, in the order in which they were written, I sought to see afresh how Paul and Luke, two significant and representative NT authors, understood this vital topic. I believe that the conclusions reached provide a valuable biblical underpinning for the vision for discipling articulated in this article.

In Galatians spiritual life is portrayed as a life of *corporate* dependence on the Holy Spirit for everything that is needed for godliness and fruitful living. For Paul, it is only as we learn to walk by the Spirit *together* that we will experience power over the flesh and a flowing of the fruit of the Spirit into our lives, our homes, our churches and our communities. Paul believes that we are to live as believers in Christ *as members of* a Holy Spirit enabled and guided *community*. In Galatians, Paul is alarmed that anyone could think that one becomes more mature or more holy by obeying Torah. In the Muslim contexts of the Arab world where conformity to a religious legal code is the norm, effective discipleship must be grounded in radical *corporate* dependence on the Holy Spirit. This central Pauline

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lesson from Galatians is represented in the *Living Pyramid Model* (see Figure 1 above) by the green circular plane labelled: 'Living together in Mutual dependence on the Holy Spirit.' This *green* circle represents this *life giving* spiritual truth that all discipleship involves radical dependence on the Holy Spirit as disciples live together a transformed supernatural life in step with the Spirit.

Another vital aspect of the Pauline vision of the Christian life is expressed in Philippians. Not only are we to live in conscious dependency on the Holy Spirit, but the Gospel itself is to shape our core identity as people who are redeemed by and devoted to our *crucified* Lord. The supreme example of Christ and his self-sacrifice not only buys us salvation and new life, but it also provides a model for us to emulate as we seek to conform our life to that of the crucified Saviour. Seeking to express clearly how Christ's crucifixion shapes our identity, a NT scholar named Gorman coined the term 'cruciformity' and defines it as 'conformity to the crucified Christ.'² Living one's entire life in conscious imitation of and conformity to Christ, who, in love, sacrificed all and died on the cross for us, is living in 'cruciformity' to Christ. Paul's own life is a powerful model of someone who imitated Christ in his self-sacrifice and suffering. We not only have faith, but we live our lives in radical self denying conformity to Christ who went all the way to the cross for us. In our discipleship, we experience Christ's life of suffering and service, even unto death – we live lives of cruciformity.

This vivid picture of cruciform discipleship is vitally important in the Arab world. When we call Muslims to follow Christ, we are often asking them to lives of hardship and suffering far beyond anything we ourselves will ever experience. Well do I remember the profound struggle one of my believing friends had as his decisions to remain faithful to Christ repeatedly cost him his job, his security and his safety, and as months stretched into years, he lived on the edge of starvation barely surviving. Compromising Christ's call on his life could have opened up the way to a secure job and a stable life. His life was truly lived in cruciformity.

What is more, sustaining such cruciform living is only possible as disciples live as part of a committed believing community. The story of the Gospel, of Christ crucified, was a central shaper of Paul's identity and his spirituality, and of the lives of the early Christians. In the *Living Pyramid Model*, this central Pauline understanding is placed at the heart of the pyramid in an attempt to suggest that the BMBs' *new identity* is found through living in *cruciformity* to their crucified Lord.

My examination of discipleship in the Gospel of Luke and in the book of Acts explored a number of rich discipleship themes. Discipleship to Jesus in Luke is a radical commitment to live life under the loving care of the heavenly

2 Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 4ff.

Father in such a way that every attitude and perspective is turned on its head. Following Christ means a journey of faith in which we learn to live in self-denial, loving others, serving others, forgiving others and trusting God to provide all that we need so that we do not need to be anxious about our security, wealth, health or reputation. Such discipleship is characterized by prayerful trust in the heavenly Father that empowers disciples into lives of self-sacrificing service and self-giving, even unto death.

This picture of disciples living out a radical trust in their heavenly Father seen in the Gospel of Luke is extended into Acts. Here, the radical discipleship that Jesus called his disciples to in Luke, is fleshed out in the lives of the early believers. Their lives are characterized by deep fellowship, profound love, selfless sharing of their resources, care for the needy, the powerful presence and working of the Holy Spirit in healings and proclamation and in zeal to share the truth and reality of the gospel. In Acts, radical discipleship empowered by trust in God as a loving heavenly Father created deep mutual commitment in the new body of Christ, the church. This understanding of discipleship in Luke and Acts is portrayed in the banner at the top of the *Living Pyramid Model* (above) declaring that 'Trust in God as Heavenly Father sustains radical discipleship to Christ.'

Reflection on the NT vision for discipleship yields a perspective that is far richer and more complete than simply that of an individual disciple privately reading a Bible, praying and witnessing. Discipleship, according to Paul and Luke, is a corporate life in which we live together in complete dependence on the Spirit. Applying this to BMBs, we find believers who trust profoundly in the love of their heavenly Father revealed to them in Christ, who live lives of sacrificial love and service to both fellow believers and to those in their Muslim communities, empowered by the Holy Spirit for Christ's sake. This NT vision of discipleship is the central foundation of the *Living Pyramid Model*.

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3. A Research-based Vision Statement for Discipling BMBs

Part of the reason for our poor success in discipling BMBs has been that we have had an inadequate understanding of how discipleship works and what is the objective of discipleship. When our discipleship vision is weak then our practice will also be weak. In an effort to better understand discipleship, I reviewed selective literature on discipleship and spiritual formation across the major Christian traditions,³ as well as the literature on ministering to Muslims

3 Don Little, 'Approaches to Spiritual Formation Reviewed for Insights into Discipling Arab Muslim Background Believers,' Major paper (Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 2003). Electronic copies of this review are available from the author upon request.

(the third chapter of my thesis). Synthesizing what I learned from those two reviews I developed this discipleship vision statement:

We endeavour to see believers from Muslim backgrounds (1) living in loving mutual submission within believing church groups that (2) experience together the transforming grace of God through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. (3) They live their lives together in submission to the scriptures and in obedience to their Lord, (4) developing individual and corporate routines that fortify their faith (5) so that their worldviews are transformed in ways faithful to the reality of the great biblical story of creation, fall and redemption.

(6) Further, they live out their faith in obedience to Christ in ways suitable to their culture and society. (7) Growing increasingly into Christ-like holiness together, (8) they compassionately serve and (9) reach out with the gospel to people in their families, social networks, communities and beyond, bringing Glory to God (10) as they grow and multiply.

The first four points in this statement emphasize that BMBs need to be in *community*. They experience the transforming power of the Holy Spirit in community together, and they corporately submit to the scriptures in obedience to Christ. Point 4 states that BMBs develop ‘individual and corporate routines that fortify their faith.’ I believe that one of the strengths of

As BMBs gather together regularly, it is important that they develop patterns of corporate worship and prayer that strengthen their understanding and practice of their faith.

some of the monastic and liturgical traditions is that they recognize the power of good community habits and understand the role of the classic Spiritual Disciplines in bringing about spiritual transformation of individuals. As BMBs gather together regularly, it is important that they develop patterns of corporate worship and prayer that strengthen their understanding and practice of their faith. The first four points all express the fundamental need BMBs have of being in a supportive local community. In the *Living Pyramid Model* this essential requirement for spiritual growth is the first cornerstone of the pyramid, and is entitled Community (cf. Figure 1, page ? above).

The third through fifth points in this vision statement stress the fundamental importance of BMBs living in mutual submission to the Scriptures, so that a biblical worldview can replace the Islamic worldview of their heritage. This is the third cornerstone of the pyramid – Scriptures: living together in obedience to the Scriptures. The eighth and ninth affirmations in the vision statement, that believers are serving others and sharing the gospel with those in their communities, make up the fourth cornerstone of the *Living Pyramid Model*

– Mission: Bold proclamation of the Gospel and loving service to others.

The only cornerstone in the *Living Pyramid Model* not expressed in this vision statement is the importance of a personal mentoring relationship. However, this point came out strongly in the interviews that I conducted. The strong consensus of those interviewed was that effective discipling of BMBs means the whole life involvement of the discipler with the disciple. Discipling best happens in the contexts of strong intimate personal relationships. Disciplers are people who walk alongside the disciple, caring for, teaching, mentoring and modelling authentic Christian discipleship. They practice life-on-life mentoring that, in Muslim contexts, is often quite intense, especially at the beginning. This personal mentoring is the second cornerstone of the *Living Pyramid Model* – Relationship: In a mentoring relationship with mature disciplers (see Figure 1, page ? above).

These four vital components of discipleship are summed up in the four cornerstones of the living pyramid: Community, Relationship, Scriptures and Mission. My research found that they are the four essential components needed for BMBs to grow to maturity in Christ. With these essential cornerstones the *Living Pyramid Model* of Relational Communal Discipling is now complete.

As the saying goes, 'If you aim at nothing, you will be sure to hit it.' Much of the reason for our failure in BMB discipleship has been, I am convinced, due to an inadequate understanding of what we are trying to accomplish and of the means necessary to achieve the discipleship objective. If one aims at discipling only individuals on their own, then that very objective undermines eventual success. In his recent doctoral dissertation that studied convert groups in France, Leonard argues that individualized approaches to ministry are ineffectual, whether one is talking about evangelism, or about discipleship. Both need to be done communally, not individualistically. Leonard affirms:

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You cannot reach a communal people using individual methods of evangelism. We must demonstrate that becoming a Christian is to become a member of a community that is closer than the family... To have a group you need to start with a group. This does not mean that there is not a lot of individual attention given to each person in the group-that is a necessity. It means, for communal people, you do things together.⁴

⁴ John S. Leonard, 'Oasis: An Ethnography of a Muslim Convert Group in France' (PhD diss., Trinity International University, 2006), 300. This dissertation makes many observations that confirm the need to work in groups and stress relationships in reaching and discipling people from such cultures.

Having a full-orbed, biblically, spiritually, socially and psychologically valid discipleship objective that fits within the host culture goes a long way towards us finding the processes and approaches that lead to fruitful discipling. The *Living Pyramid Model* visually portrays the essential aspects of discipleship and suggests the essential cornerstones upon which to carry out effective discipling.

4. The Value of the *Living Pyramid* Figure

The *Living Pyramid Model of Relational Communal Discipleship* figure given above (page ?) is my attempt to give the reader an image of discipleship, a way of visualizing how the key elements in BMB discipleship all fit together. This image of a *living pyramid* draws on the Apostle Peter's image of believers being *living* stones joined together into a spiritual living house (I Pet 2:4-10). The pyramid is also a familiar Middle Eastern iconic structure that resists the pressures and stresses of its environment in order to endure and stand strong for generations. Fitting in socially and culturally, the mature BMBs and BMB fellowships, these *living pyramids*, become accepted parts of their surroundings that rise above the limitations of their cultural and religious environment so as to, through the power of the Spirit, transcend and transform their Muslim communities.

This image of a sacred and living pyramid⁵ effectively captures some of the central dynamics involved in fruitful discipling of believers as they follow Christ in Muslim communities. Though no drawing can depict the living spiritual dynamics of BMB discipleship, my hope is that this image of a *living pyramid set solidly at the heart of Muslim society* will inspire us all to strive continuously towards effective discipleship that adapts to the Islamic contexts of the Arab world. Building on this model can help us to do a much better job of discipling BMBs who grow and endure amidst all of the pressures and opposition encountered *inside* their families and communities.

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5 Part of the inspiration for this diagram comes from Willard's 'Golden Triangle of Spiritual Growth.' See Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering our Hidden Life in God* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 347.

FRUIT THAT WILL LAST

By Oum Mark

Following many years of service in the Marseille Media Centre, Oum Mark and her husband moved to North Africa more than ten years ago. From Syrian background, she worked for several years at an Arabic language school, and continues to work with many women and BMBs.

'I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit-fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: Love each other.' John 15:15 & 16

Why did Jesus not stop at the words 'bear fruit'? Why did he continue by saying 'fruit that will *last*'? And what is my role in that?

Last week one of my friends accepted Christ. She is someone I have been meeting with regularly for a few months and I saw her change from someone who used to say, 'Christians are idol worshipers' to someone who now says, '*my religious education teachers used to lie to me. They used to say all sorts of things about Christians that aren't true. When I read the Bible I found out that Christians worship One God.*'

Of course I rejoice with the angels in heaven because she is saved. Until meeting Christ in a personal way, she had been battling with confusion, guilt and fear. The Holy Spirit convicted her and drew her to Christ. Yet I believe that her journey has only just begun. Although I have been very involved in her life, now my involvement has to go even deeper.

One might ask, 'Who are we to do this work? After all, isn't this the work of the Holy Spirit?' While it is true that we are invited to watch and marvel at the Work of God in the lives of people, his work also happens through us, because our Lord chose to use us to accomplish his work.

The verses quoted at the beginning of this article (John 15:15-16) are the ones that fuel my vision while living in this country (and on the earth). In this passage our Lord Jesus is calling us friends, not because we will share his glory, but because he shared with us what he had learned from the Father. We are partners in his business of bearing fruit.

But it has to be *fruit that will last*! Through the years I have noticed that some of us are satisfied and think that the job is done when someone accepts Christ. That is when we breathe a sigh of relief. Although I strongly believe

that it is the Holy Spirit who changes lives, Jesus spent hours and hours – years – teaching those who believed in him. He also asked us to go and disciple people. If our responsibility stops when someone comes to Christ, it would be like planting a field but then neglecting it. If it is not watered and looked after, if the insects are not dealt with, and the weeds are not pulled out, then the field will not produce healthy lasting fruit! If we want to see *lasting fruit* then we must give greater importance to *discipleship*.

Some of us were brought up in Christian homes, went to Sunday School from infancy, socialised within a church context, attended Christian Union at university and then had Christian weddings. Even growing up in the West today where Christian values are diminishing in influence, the background and thinking is still a lot closer to Christianity in some ways. How many of us read novels based on Christian principles, even if they were not necessarily Christian? At university, most of the classics I read were based on biblical truth. All these elements of our Christian and Western upbringing play an important part in making us who we are, and in shaping our beliefs, values and world view. When we compare those who grew up in Christian contexts with those who grew up in Muslim contexts, we begin to appreciate the importance of intentionally discipling BMBs.

That is why when discipling a new BMB we need to think about all aspects of life. Theology is important, but in some cases theology is not understood as being a way of living. And with some it ends up being head knowledge only. Sound theology is very important for discipleship. In fact it *must* be the background for everything we teach people and it must be linked and applied in the real life of the person. It must be an equipping tool for life otherwise a BMB might have knowledge but not know how to live as a Christian. BMBs who have not talked and thought through all of their beliefs, principles and values from new biblical perspectives can easily fall into traps. They often find it hard to be active members of church groups.

I once met a couple that had been BMBs for more than ten years. I am not sure how they came to faith, but it was evident that they had not sorted out quite a few things. They had a surprisingly strong fear of people knowing that they were believers. They celebrated every Muslim holiday. They never witnessed, not even to their families. Their view of church was unhealthy and even distorted. Their attitude to money and their dependency on outsiders was the thing that finally caused them to drop out of fellowship and have a negative attitude about the believers around them. Several people tried to help them but sadly, they were no longer open to listening! This was really hard for us to watch. Yet, in a sense it was almost too late because these things had not been dealt with earlier on when they were more receptive to becoming the new creatures in Christ God had intended.

Many BMBs tend to grow fast at the beginning when they are on fire with their first love for the Lord. It is in this early stage when the old man starts dying and the newness of life starts springing up and producing the fruit of righteousness in them. It is in this critical early stage that *thorough* discipling is invaluable in the building up of believers into strong members of the body of Christ. This is what Proverbs 4:1-5 (NIV) says:

Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction; pay attention and gain understanding. I give you sound learning, so do not forsake my teaching. *When I was a boy* in my father's house, *still tender*, and an only child of my mother, he taught me and said, "Lay hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands and you will live. Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or swerve from them" (emphasis added).

A young tree can be shaped easily by the wind but once a few years have passed by it is extremely hard to reshape it.

In the country where I live there are few opportunities for an individual to learn the depth of their new faith. It is a culture that does not like books. BMBs cannot learn Christian principles at home (unless they are second generation believers), at school or at work. The churches are led by people who, though they are sometimes able to, most of the time they do not go over basic Christian beliefs and values with each new person that joins. Most leaders or pastors are not trained to disciple. There is no follow-up plan for new believers and so many things fall through the cracks.

What are the things we need to cover when we disciple BMBs? What I found to be necessary are mostly basic things like life versus death, God's will instead of the fatalistic 'maktoub' (it is written), who God is, lies and 'white lies' compared to telling the truth, honesty with time and money work, money, relationships, time and priorities in life, persecution, forgiveness, sin, repentance, giving and taking, superstitions, folk Islam, magic, curses and anger, marriage, children's upbringing and discipline and the acceptance of others. In short, all the basic values and beliefs need to be revisited and reinstalled in the light of the Gospel.

There are many materials for discipleship available. But to teach people all these things, the book I always find myself using is the Bible and all the biblical stories. The truth they hear keeps working in their hearts like yeast in dough. It is thrilling to see the power of the Word of God – the stories of the men and women of old, the teachings and parables of Jesus and the letters to the churches. Every single story is applicable and is there for us to use to teach, correct and build up BMBs.

It is in this critical early stage that thorough discipling is invaluable in the building up of believers into strong members of the body of Christ.

I really believe that almost before we start witnessing to someone, we need to have a discipleship plan already in place.

If we do not disciple people who is going to do it? I really believe that almost before we start witnessing to someone, we need to have a discipleship plan already in place. If we cannot do it ourselves, then we must ask the Lord to lead us to people who can. It is often hard to give up 'our' contacts for someone else to disciple. We need to accept that we do not necessarily have to disciple them ourselves if they can be discipled better by someone else. This may be hard, but we should make every possible effort to make sure that they are being discipled in a healthy way. As Paul says:

So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labour. For we are God's fellow-workers, (and the BMBs) are God's field, God's building. (1 Cor. 3:7-9, NIV)

Finally, what brings balance to all of the above? From all the years that I have worked with BMBs I have found out that an early introduction and incorporation into a local church is the best environment a new BMB can have in which to grow. When Muslims come to faith everything changes for them. They might lose a lot to gain Jesus and might also feel confused, lost, fearful and alone. But when we who are discipling them love, respect and have faith in the local church, the new believers will see that and will love and trust it too. It will be for them a new family that feels the same way, walks the same road, talks the same heart language and has the same cultural experiences. There they will start feeling a sense of belonging again and will start growing in strength. The link with other BMBs provides an amazing help. They can help and understand each other and often have a strong bond together that we can never offer ourselves.

In conclusion, when we disciple people, one of the major things we need to model and teach is what it means to be a part of the body of Christ. We need to help them understand brotherly love, unity and commitment, and help them find their role in the church group. This is a VERY important part of the lives of new believers. It is the new healthy ground where they can send down roots, grow and continue to be discipled so that the precious new fruit will last.

DISCIPLESHIP: GETTING BELOW THE SURFACE FOR LASTING CHANGE

By PR

PR and her husband have been involved in evangelism, discipleship and CP in Europe and North Africa for 19 years.

Have you ever noticed that people will pull out diplomas or workbooks from trainings and schools they've been to as a sort of proof that they know a subject? We often see people go through trainings, be it in business, development or spiritual subjects, and perhaps they can even repeat back what was taught, but does it mean that anything has really changed in their lives?

I call this 'putting a veneer' on. We put a veneer of knowledge over deep-seated beliefs and functional theology, but if we do not address these deeper areas we do not see real lasting change. This is frustrating to us, and it is frustrating to our disciples who are new creatures in Christ and want to change.

Ideas have Consequences

We can see this dynamic by borrowing an illustration called 'Ideas Have Consequences' from the book *Discipling Nations* by Darrow Miller. You have a tree. The roots represent beliefs, the trunk values, the branches behaviour and the fruit consequences. The branches and fruit, meaning behaviour and consequences, grow out of our deep-seated beliefs and values. Much secular training, development and unfortunately also Christian discipleship, often address issues at the branch or behavioural level. An illustration of this in development work is public health campaigns to combat AIDS. The programs target behaviour by giving out condoms to address the consequences. However, they never address the beliefs that spawn the behaviour that creates the consequences. Addressing the top part of the tree is like trying to paste apples on an orange tree. You are not going to see lasting change.

Much secular training, development and unfortunately also Christian discipleship, often address issues at the branch or behavioural level.

Let's look at an example from business. An American came to Morocco to start a school. She partnered with a Moroccan director who had much experience in starting and managing schools. You can imagine her shock when the Moroccan director began to gossip and slander the Moroccan secretary. The American could not understand why. Well, the Moroccan director has her beliefs: get her before she gets me; only one can win and that will be me; you cannot trust others. The Westerner has her beliefs: trust until someone shows

they are untrustworthy; if we all work together, we all win. So, imagine a Western business management seminar comes teaching these Western beliefs and assumptions. Is the Moroccan director going to adopt them? She may be able to repeat back what she was taught to do (and she will have her workbook and diploma to prove that she knows it), but when she feels threatened, she will revert to her old behaviours because her underlying beliefs have not changed. Let's take an example now from Christian discipleship. I was in France working in a group of women believers from Muslim backgrounds. We were discussing childrearing. We started by looking at what they had learned from their Muslim upbringing, what they had learned from French society and finally what the Bible says. We looked at what we could keep from the past and what needed to be discarded. They needed to understand what beliefs they were bringing with them from their past in order to truly apply the Bible and see real change. One of the women said: 'We grew up in Muslim homes, in a French secular society, but you are teaching us a new way, a North African Christian way to live and think.'

Here is another example from Christian discipleship. I was present at a Moroccan ladies' study in the city where I live. The woman leading the study had been horrified to learn that one of the ladies had lied to get out of a difficult situation. So, we did a study looking at all of the verses that talk about honesty and not lying. Frankly, the lady who lied knew all of these verses and in fact, she did not want to lie, but when things got tough, she reverted to old behaviours. Why is this? Why do Christians who know they should not lie, and do not want to lie, lie anyway? What are the beliefs that spawn this behaviour? Well, you have the desire to avoid consequences and also the need to save face, both of which are strong beliefs that drive this behaviour. What does lying say about what we believe about God? It says: He is not near, he does not want to help or he cannot help.

If we look deep enough, we see that sinful behaviour finds its roots in deep idolatry – wrong views and beliefs about God which play themselves out in our behaviour. David Powlison points out the connection between this idolatry and exterior behaviour: 'Exterior behaviour is motivated from the inside by complex life-driving patterns of thoughts, desires and fears... of which a person may be almost wholly unaware. Motivation is always God – relational either of faith or of idolatry.'¹

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1 Powlison, David. "Basic Biblical Concepts of Human Motivation," in Resources for Changing Lives, Glenside, PA: Publisher, date, pp.

So we need to help people look beyond the behaviour to the beliefs and even deeper to the idolatrous beliefs about God that are behind the behaviour and we need to address those. With the issue of lying, I think it would have been more helpful to use a story from the Bible; perhaps Abraham's saying Sarah was his sister. Stories provide a good way to look at the issue and ask questions about motivation and faith.

Discipling for Change using the Case of Marriage

In order to see how this works itself out, let's think through the issue of marriage. What beliefs do people in your country bring with them into marriage? In Morocco, there are two principle beliefs that cause problems. (1) You cannot trust someone else. So, it's my family and I against him and his family. Lying and manipulation are the norm. (2) Marriage is basically a business transaction built on what each one gets out of it. The wife gets the status of being a wife, a mother and of being provided for. The husband gets children, sex and someone to take care of his home.

Many books and approaches about marriage just address changing behaviours, which is again like trying to paste oranges onto an apple tree. However, we have to begin with beliefs. We always take people back to Genesis to address wrong beliefs and build new ones. Have you ever noticed in the story of Genesis 1 that after God created just about everything, he said it was good, but when he created man and he was alone, it was 'not good', and when the woman is given to him, it was 'very good'? *The marriage relationship is meant for good.* It is also meant for relationship, not just a business transaction. How that works itself out in each culture will look different, but I believe it has a biblical basis. We teach this and then we teach people to do spiritual warfare, that is, to resist the lies of Satan about marriage, with the shield of faith, the sword of the Spirit, and to preach to themselves these truths of God's word. In order to do this, we need to discuss with them the lies that are believed in the culture about marriage.

In the rest of the Genesis story, we address the issues of leaving your father and mother. A local believer was telling me that her husband was feeling quite neglected because every time they planned to do something together (they really did love each other, having grown up together and having chosen to marry each other), her family arrived and their plans were put on hold. He felt he always took a back seat to her family, often having to give up his bed as the family stayed over and had to divide up men in the living room and women in the bedroom. Anyway, they ended up telling her family that they were welcome any time, but if the couple had planned to do something, the family

was welcome to stay at their house, but they would proceed with their plans. They also said the family was welcome to stay over in function of who fit in the living room because they would not be giving up their bedroom any longer. The family accused them of being selfish.

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by what they had
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seem very culturally
appropriate.

I was rather shocked by what they had decided – it did not seem very culturally appropriate – but then I remembered something I had read, again in Darrow Miller's book. He was talking about individualistic cultures, which he calls the One, and community-based cultures, which he calls the Many. Miller proposed that as Christians we pursue a Many/One model based on the Trinity. One element of this is what he calls sanctified self-interest. It's true that in the Many culture, the many impose their will. In the One culture, the one pursues his will. In the Many/One culture, there will be a balance. I wondered if this believing family had exercised this sanctified self-interest in trying to negotiate this idea of leaving your father and mother. This story also illustrates that it's often easier to identify the wrong beliefs than to figure out what to do about them and that cultures are not neutral but have their own sinful patterns and applications.

Lastly, we look at the fall in Genesis and the tendency for men to dominate and women to manipulate. At the heart of this there is a lack of trust, a need to protect oneself by any means one has. What does this say about what people think about God? Is he able to protect them? Can He give power to trust? Can He give grace to forgive when hurt has been given? Can they use their spiritual weapons against the fear and mistrust that Satan will tempt them with? We need to look at the one-flesh aspect of marriage, which has no place for the belief it's my family and I against him and his family, or that only one person can win and it will be me.

We just looked at marriage as an example of how to begin to think more deeply about addressing discipleship issues. We need to approach all of life from this perspective. Now, sometimes we do not see change in the people we disciple because they are not really converted. In my observation, there are often two stages in Muslims' conversions (I cannot explain this biblically, it is just an observation). There is an initial intellectual acceptance of the beliefs of Christianity. They will agree that Jesus is the Son of God; He died on the cross, etc. They often will begin to refer to themselves as Christians. However, there needs to be the next step of true conversion. Sometimes we are a bit too quick to pronounce people Christians based on the fact that they accept certain Christian doctrine. They have changed their creed but not necessarily experienced new life in Christ. This is a problem because then you have people

going around saying they are Christians but living like the world, and this is a very bad testimony especially to their families.

A colleague uses an exercise to help determine where people are spiritually. He draws out a soccer (football!) pitch. He puts one guy outside the stadium walking in, others in the stands, one on the sideline and others in the heat of the game. He then asks people to say which person they are regarding their relationship to Christ. Often, I think that we tolerate behaviours in our disciples that we should not. Sometimes our standards are not high enough. It's like we are desperate for converts. Sometime we need to tell people straight out that Christians do not act in certain ways, and if they continue acting like that maybe they are not really converted.²

So in conclusion, we need to help people examine their deep-seated beliefs, the baggage they've brought with them into their new lives in Christ, in order for them to effectively apply biblical truth and see deep lasting change.

Often, I think that we tolerate behaviours in our disciples that we should not. Sometimes our standards are not high enough. It's like we are desperate for converts.

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2 Some tools to help you think further about this are the book I mentioned by Darrow Miller, *Discipling Nations*, as well as material published by the Christian Counselling and Education Foundation, www.ccef.org. The CCEF has published books such as *Shepherding a Child's Heart*, *Age of Opportunity and Sacred Marriage*. All of their material is geared to addressing behaviour at the level of belief and idolatry or faith.

LOOKING BACK AND AHEAD

Discipleship Lessons Learned by a Believer from a Muslim Background

by Kaneez (with help from Kinza)

Kaneez is an Indian pastor's wife who has been living and working in the Arab World for 20 years. Kinza is a tentmaker who has worked alongside Kaneez and learnt a lot from her.

Advice to a New Believer

If I was to give a few words of advice to a Muslim who had newly believed in Jesus, this is what I would say: 'The way forward is to get into a Bible-believing church (if there is one), get yourself a good mentor, study the Word of God and self-feed. I have written down the important stages of my own personal journey. If you glean through it you will have an idea how it could be for a Muslim moving into the true faith of believing in Jesus. Though each person's journey is different, it will give you some idea what to expect. May you be blessed and live to tell a great story of your own.'

Muslim Roots

As one who has come from a Muslim background, I have lived within the Muslim system and tasted its fruit. Having lived on both sides of the fence, I can tell you on which side the grass is greener.

My father was a Burmese Muslim and my mother an Anglo Indian from an Anglican background. Living in India, my siblings and I were raised by my grandmother who was a staunch Muslim. She was very prayerful, very committed to social work and helping the helpless, and had a huge heart for giving. Above all, she committed her grandchildren to daily reciting the words of her book. I would come to her every day at 7 p.m. to recite to her all the prayers she taught us right from the time we were toddlers. Other teachers would also come in to teach us the language and study the book.

Oppression and Dysfunction at Home

Our home was not a happy one. I hardly saw my father, an ex-pilot, who had a compulsion for social life and gambling. He spent days in the clubs. My mother was hushed to silence, not allowed to go to church or tell us anything about her God. In fact, she knew very little herself, and to make matters worse, she committed to my father's beliefs when she married him. Money was scarce due to my father's habit of gambling and unfaithfulness. The atmosphere was grim, with much strife in the house. I went to an Anglican school, and whenever the Morning Prayer was said, at the mention of the name

of Jesus, anger rose in my spirit. I was as little as five or six-years old at the time. The spirit of antichrist comes for free when you belong to Islam. I was proud to be a Muslim.

Banners of Truth

One good thing about our home was that our compound wall was shared by a church, a strong Bible-believing church. I often used to stand on a balcony at the back of my house, watching the banner march or listening to the worship and singing. It was one of my pastimes, wiling the hours away, watching people come and go from this church. They would have retreats and many foreigners came to camp there. This would end in a banner march throughout the city. I watched this purely as entertainment, but every time they took out the banners the Word of God was being communicated, bold and black: *'Jesus Is The Saviour, Healer And Coming King'* or *'Behold The Lamb Of God Who Takes Away The Sins Of The World'*, or the names of God such as *'Jehovah Shalom – God Is My Peace'*, *'Immanuel – God Is With Us.'* Many more such banners shouted out the Word of God to me. Being about twelve-years of age, it made sense to me. One day I said out loud, 'I believe in Jesus. He is real!'

I also was strongly influenced by a teacher at school, who would announce that if anyone wanted to come during the break she would share picture stories from the Bible. I often went in my free time to hear her sharing. I enjoyed the flannel stories presented by this tiny old teacher with a great, joyful spirit.

So in these two ways, I was presented with the Word of God and made my initial response.

A Significant Dream

At fourteen-years of age I had a dramatic spiritual dream in which Jesus was passing over my house in a cloud and he was surrounded by angels. He looked into my eyes with a steady gaze and pointed to a church in the dream. He never said a word, just looked steadfastly into my eyes and pointed with his hand. It would be several years before I responded to his implicit instruction.

Meanwhile, when I was sixteen, my grandmother passed away and that was the end of my Muslim prayers and counsel. I grew up with no boundaries thereafter, in every sense. I read stuff I shouldn't, had friends who were influencing me in the wrong way, looked for love in the wrong places... in short, I was in a mess. Unhappiness, oppression and bad choices clouded my life. At the age of seventeen I got a job to cope with my needs.

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At fourteen-years of age I had a dramatic spiritual dream in which Jesus was passing over my house in a cloud and he was surrounded by angels.

By the time I turned twenty-four, I was coming home late from the clubs and get-togethers and was very frustrated and unhappy. I was involved in dangerous things at work, having to handle illegal paperwork and finances for a boss who broke every law that ever existed. I would visit the religious shrines of every religion to try to find peace of mind. But it got worse. I started to see demons. I could barely cope with the chaos at home and within myself. My siblings were using alcohol and drugs as a life style.

The Battle is On

A group of Christian youngsters started visiting my home and were praying for my father. It soon caught my attention that they had real peace. On one occasion I prayed with them and invited Jesus into my life. Confusion gripped me almost immediately. In my confusion about God, I just added Jesus to my Muslim beliefs. After all, I told myself, Muslims did not deny Jesus, they just believed in a different way.

On one occasion I prayed with them and invited Jesus into my life. Confusion gripped me almost immediately. In my confusion about God, I just added Jesus to my Muslim beliefs.

During this time I had a visitation from a demonic realm asking me to give up Jesus and become famous and get a name for myself with great wealth. Following my refusal, the air was filled with great oppression.

In my next spiritual dream, I was given a passage from the Bible to read, *'Repent For the Kingdom Of Heaven Is At Hand'*. This started my journey through the Bible, a journey I will never regret. I had this burning desire to read and read the Word of God. I found a church close to my house. Fortunately the first church I tried was a born-again church. I was given instruction in the Word of God and was taken under the wings of the Pastor and his wife. For five years, I read and studied the Word, fasted and prayed, went visiting homes and hospitals and did a lot of reading of books.

Persecution

Persecution at home drove me to the Word of God and prayer. Threats on the work front drove me all the more to the Word of God and prayer. I had death treats at work. Oppression in its fullest form broke out as soon as my father found out that I had become a Christian. My brother, an alcoholic, became violent. Strangely, throughout all this I grew closer to Jesus and clung to him even more, finding true peace and joy in his presence. This lasted five full years... just me, the Word, church fellowship and Jesus.

Godly Mentors

Baptism followed in the early years of this period and there was no turning back for me. Godly mentors came along who would spend time with me, as

long as I went looking to spend that time with them. One lady from New Zealand who was a missionary led me in prayers to renounce 'the Muslim way'. She came along at the initial stage of my crossing over. I had the curses of previous generations broken off my life through prayer. I have no doubt my mentors prayed regularly for me, praying me through the difficult transition.

Mentorship can also happen through books. I dived into a number of good Christian books by authors like Watchman Nee, Derek Prince, Kenneth Hagin, Billy Graham and many others.

Yet still I emphasize 'self-feeding', because one's own initiative is vital in getting up to read the Word diligently and in getting up to find and spend time with a mentor. One needs to make this new life a priority, not fitting God in where convenient, but giving God first place.

Yet still I emphasize 'self-feeding', because one's own initiative is vital in getting up to read the Word diligently and in getting up to find and spend time with a mentor.

Confidence to face the future

So I found that sense of inner peace and security I had been looking for. It gripped me on the inside and gave me confidence to face tomorrow. I realized I had had imaginary fears, false beliefs, sin and selfishness in my life. I needed a *new mindset*. I could trust the Holy Spirit to guide me into the truth of God's Word and give me understanding.

It was therefore with confidence that I stepped out on a new journey, as I left India to go to the Middle East with my husband to start a new wedded life and to serve God.

Looking Back

It has been twenty-four years since the day I received and believed in Jesus. I have been delivered from sin and spared from death. I have had physical healings. God has been there to guide me whenever I needed it. I don't feel like an orphan any longer. I belong to a God who is unchangeable and a kingdom that is unshakable. I have served God with delight in the Middle East for twenty years now. He is all I have and all I need. He has blessed me way beyond what I deserve. I have a great husband, a real man of God and two beautiful children. He has proved to be my father, friend and faithful God.

From Seed to Fruit

So what were the factors which worked together to bring me out from my Muslim roots to the point of becoming a mature believer, well-established in the faith, rooted in God's love, and serving others?

1. Exposure to the Word of God

God initially used an unusual means, words on banners, to sow His words of truth into my life. Later he gave me such a hunger for his Word that I spent hours devouring it. There must be exposure to God's Word and subsequently a commitment to feed on it for oneself.

2. Dreams

God seems to use dreams fairly often in bringing people out of Islam to Christ. Satan can also use the same medium, so discernment is necessary.

3. The Presence of Christians

Watching the lives of Christians around me and seeing the quality of life they had drew me to want that same peace for myself. After coming to Christ, joining in fellowship with others encouraged my growth. I had mature Christian mentors who were willing to spend time with me and encouraged me to join them in various types of service.

4. The Prayers of Christians

The prayers of Christians for me and with me significantly contributed to my spiritual growth. In order to move forward as a Christian, especially when coming out of a non-Christian family background, it is important to renounce all the falsehoods that come with one's family heritage and declare one's personal choice of the truth. Prayers for the breaking of generational curses are important. In recent years I have also come to understand the importance of prayers for healing and restoration from the various abuses and traumatic experiences of the past.

5. A Willing Heart

The key thing I see in the whole process is God's drawing and my response.

God took the initiative to call me out to know him and live a life of service for him. At each stage I chose to respond to his invitation. May many others do the same and say 'yes' to God's invitation.

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LIVING WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED AND TEACHING BY THE WAY WE LIVE

By EW

EW is a Middle Eastern Christian who has been ministering in the Arabian Peninsula for many years. He is actively involved in sharing Christ with Muslims and discipling those who believe.

Discipleship is living out what we have learned, and teaching by the way we live. The ultimate goal of discipleship is that we reflect the image and character of Jesus. When our Muslim friends receive Jesus as their personal Saviour, they have many confusing ideas in their minds about God, the Christian community, their new faith, and many other related things. These central issues needed to be handled with care.

Their Understanding of God

What your friend believes or thinks about God varies according to his circumstances and an understanding of this will determine the appropriate response. For example, if he thinks that 'God loves me when I am a good person and He punishes me when I am a sinner', then you need to speak to him about the love of God which doesn't change with time because He is a God who does not change and has no shadow of turning (James 1:17). Proclaiming the love of an unchanging God is a brilliant truth for our Muslim friend because this is the first time he has heard this teaching. It is a truth which dazzles him, secures him in his faith, and opens his mind to receive the holy word with joy.

It is a truth which dazzles him, secures him in his faith, and opens his mind to receive the holy word with joy.

Their Understanding of the Christian Community or the Community of Believers

Muslims often think that the Christian community 'is a dirty community that drinks alcohol and eats unclean pork and is openly permissive in its relationships.' Inviting your friend to your home, introducing him to your wife and children, and sharing with him a meal in your house is a language that speaks stronger than words. He accepts it easily and this will leave with him a testimony about the truth of our faith and may even change his mind towards believers. This is advice has been around from the time of Henry Martin.

Their Understanding of their New Faith

Your Muslim friend has lived all of his life under rituals and laws for worship and prayer. He fasts one month each year and prays 5 times a day because it is

expected of him. When he becomes a Christian, he will begin to hate that lifestyle and faith practice. Why? Two of the chief reasons are the abundance of laws and special systems of the Muslim faith, and because he doesn't see any change in his life or actions as a result of following them.

You will find difficulty in explaining the importance of fasting, so any instruction or explanation that you give should also be reinforced by how you fast and live.

During discipleship, the majority of questions will be practical questions such as: How do you pray? Do we pray towards Jerusalem? What is the method of worship, standing or sitting? The answers to these questions are very important to him because these are foundational points of the Muslim faith which he has learned from childhood. Here it is necessary to teach him what the Word of God says regarding these questions and the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 and 6 is the strongest teaching on this topic. This passage will show him from the Word of God what Jesus personally said about prayer and fasting.

The main question here is: 'Are you among the believers who don't fast?' You will find difficulty in explaining the importance of fasting, so any instruction or explanation that you give should also be reinforced by how you fast and live. And pray that this new believer will see and understand the truths of God's Word through your example.

Discipleship is living out what we have learned and teaching by the way we live.

PART 2: SPIRITUAL WARFARE AND PERSECUTION

THE UNSEEN BATTLE: REFLECTIONS ON SPIRITUAL WARFARE

by Clyde Hiestand

Clyde & Naomi Hiestand retired in 2008 following a lifetime of service with AWM. Their service has been characterized by sacrificial loving perseverance in the face of difficulties and huge challenges. Their final 15 years of service in Morocco followed earlier ministry in Algeria, Tunisia and France.

Visible versus Invisible Realities

In the natural world, scientists inform us that we can only see about 2 % of the electromagnetic field with the human eye. The rest, although unseen by the human eye is indeed very real – whether I am aware of it, or not. Even more so with the spiritual world where the unseen is also part of the real world!

‘For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark work and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.’ (Eph 6:12)

Early Indications & A Story of Spiritual Conflict

After we first arrived as new workers in Algeria, in a conference in Dar Naama, some of us were surprised to hear an elderly German missionary warn us about curses that came down via family lines. What kind of ‘strange doctrine’ is this, we wondered? Is it biblical?

Later, while we were having a teaching conference with new believers in Constantine, Algeria, the police swooped in on us and took the young men away. We then went to where the parallel meeting for girls was being held and shared the news. One young woman, a sister of one of the young men whom the police had taken, panicked and went into a trance-like state with eyes rolling. Wendell Evans,¹ our speaker, suspecting something more than physical

¹ Wendell Evans was a life-long colleague of Clyde Hiestand. Wendell and Lillian served in Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco for many years, and then was North Africa Director and AWM's second Missiologist. Wendell passed away shortly after retiring after a prolonged battle with cancer. Lillian is very active in her retirement and is making her first trip as a Mature Mobile Mentor into the Arabian Peninsula in the spring of 2009.

or psychological, prayed over her using the blood of the Lord Jesus and she revived.

The next day Helen Wilson and I went to a neighbouring city to tell some of the parents what had happened. Rather than being grateful they panicked, turned on us and took us to the police. We spent the day being grilled by the police of that city. Finally released, we were making our way home over the mountains late at night in the dark when a cow ran out of the darkness into the path of our car and was struck to the ground. Fearing a violent reaction of the villagers if they rushed out and found the cow dead or injured, we prayed earnestly that the cow would get up quickly. After a few long minutes, the cow staggered to her feet and we quickly drove off.

The next day, Wendell, who had visited us from Tunisia for the weekend conference, made his way home by train. A rock crashed through the train window by his seat and a piece of shattered glass lodged in his eye. The conductor called ahead for an ambulance which rushed him directly to the hospital when he arrived.

We later found out that the girl who went into a trance was heavily involved in sorcery, along with her family. We felt like we'd just had a 3-day Eph 6:12 experience!

The Bible's Stance on Occult Practices

The Bible, while exhorting us to focus on God, gives lots of references to occult practices, but with very little detail as to how they actually work. All these references are negative, but they contain negligible detailed information.

The Bible simply condemns and forbids them, calling them 'abominable practices' (Lev 18 Deut 18:9-13), and warns of dire consequences for those who engage in them. (II Chron. 36:8-21).

The Bible, while exhorting us to focus on God, gives lots of references to occult practices, but with very little detail as to how they actually work

Why does the Bible not give more detail? Probably for a couple of reasons: (1) The danger of over fascination with them, and (2) like weeds on a manure pile, there are an infinite variety of them, and while having traits in common, their variations vary from family to family and country to country.

Nevertheless, even though the Bible does not provide much detailed information on occult practices, the North African worker is urged to find a copy of *Occultism in North Africa* by Mr. Bernard Collinson, former director of North Africa Mission (now Arab World Ministries). This is an excellent in-house mimeographed booklet, written at the request of the NAM Field Council, detailing many of the occult practices prevalent in North Africa. I believe it needs to be

reprinted.² A more recent book, *The Unseen Face of Islam* by Bill Musk³, details the extensive mixture of the occult at the very heart of Islam.

One Consequence of Sin is Demonization

Sinful actions do have consequences – even on believers. If we open the door, by sin – whatever the form – the devil will come in. Some common door-openers include: disobedience, anger, unforgiveness, drugs, yoga, passivity, promiscuity, occult practices (including using the Ouija board) and the transfer of sins of the fathers. Some of us believe that the very act of submission in saying the Shahada can be in itself a door-opener.

The first time I heard a demon speaking out of the mouth of a dear believer, it shook my theology, since I knew all the reasons why a Christian could not have a demon and yet here I was witnessing the contrary. It was like believing that the electrical outlet was dead, yet when I put my finger on the wire, I got shocked. If my theology teaches me that the 'outlet is dead' but I repeatedly get shocked, then maybe I need to reconsider.

Here, the advice of Evangelist Ron Sussek is helpful: 'Don't build your theology on your experience! But don't build your theology on your lack of experience, either!'⁴

Interestingly, the Bible doesn't declare either way whether Christians *can* or *cannot* be demonized! That's the conclusion of a lengthy book written on the subject: *Demon Possession and the Christian* by C Fred Dickason and Mark I Bubeck in 1989.⁵ Both, They both came to the conviction that believers can come under demonic influence. Mark Bubeck's initial work, *The Adversary*⁶ tells how he discovered the role of demons even in believers. This discovery proved helpful. A correct diagnosis aids in treating the problem more efficiently.

Note the testimony of Gary Hixon: 'I have cast out a lot of demons. But I have never cast a demon out of an unbeliever. I lead the person to the Lord, and

'I have cast out a lot of demons. But I have never cast a demon out of an unbeliever. I lead the person to the Lord, and then deal with the demons.'

2 Copies of the French version, *Occultisme en Afrique du Nord*, Marseille: Ecole Radio Biblique, 1992, can be ordered from MENA. Contact editions@mena-france.org. The English version of this book is out of print. For a PDF copy of the English original, contact Malcolm in Worthing: malcolm@wornet.org.

3 *The Unseen Face of Islam*, Bill Musk, Kregel Publications, 2004.

4 Evangelist Ron Sussek, speaking at Community Bible Church, Marietta, PA, on May 29, 2005 where he knew many in the audience questioned whether a believer could be demonized.

5 *Demon Possession and the Christian: A New Perspective* by C. Fred Dickason and Mark I. Bubeck, Chicago: Moody Press, 1987.

6 *The Adversary*, by Mark I. Bubeck, Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1975.

then deal with the demons.’⁷

When trying to make sense of a demon speaking through a Christian’s mouth, I was helped by reflecting on Jesus’ rebuking Peter in Matthew 16. After having received strong praise from Jesus in Matt 16:17-19, Jesus went on to say to Peter: ‘Get behind me, Satan!’ (Matt. 16:23) Note that Jesus did not say that a mere demon was speaking through Peter’s mouth, but Satan himself. Peter, at that moment was unknowingly being guided by Satan! (I’ve observed that some Christians ignore Satan, but get all ‘bent out of shape’ at the mention of demons.) The Bible speaks a lot about Satan. Why? Because Satan is the real enemy. Demons are just his flunkies. Furthermore, the demons know – even if the Christian does not – that if sin is confessed and renounced, the Christian has authority over them.

My Apartment helps me Understand Demonization vs. Possession

I live in an apartment. This apartment does not belong to me, but to the owner, the landlord. However, as a tenant, I have a lease giving me the legal right to live here. So far, so good. But if I invite a sub-renter to live here or worse yet, if I open the door to a squatter, he will come in and may run to a back room and ensconce himself there. Note again that the ‘squatter’ being there behind bolted doors does not make him the owner! No, he is a squatter! We get confused because we speak of ‘demon possession’ rather than the Scriptural term ‘demonization.’

When I realize the horrible thing I have done, in welcoming a squatter into my life, I must do the following: (1) *Submit* to the owner. (2) *Confess* my wrongdoing. (3) *Renounce* rights given to Satan – read the riot act to the squatter, and tell him to get out! ‘Satan, I now take back the rights and promises I made to you.’ Here my thinking must be clear. Satan will say, ‘But you promised me.’ If so, I must say, ‘But I had no right to give to you what only belongs to the owner. (4) If he refuses, call in the Sheriff – *exorcism*, by the person, and/or with the help of another servant of God. Neil Anderson’s books are very helpful here for more specifics.⁸ But should we study Satan and his tactics at all? Yes! Soldiers and generals had better study their enemy and his tactics! But what is the correct balance?

Back to the basics – the shortest verse on Spiritual Warfare

‘*Submit, then, to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you!*’ (James 4:7). This verse is a corrective to two commonly practiced errors. (1) Some argue that we

7 Gary Hixon is an American whom God called to move to Southern Europe in order to serve the worker community in North Africa and beyond by doing deliverance ministries and training others in such ministry. He is known to many colleagues in North Africa, and has been called in to help and to train on a number of occasions.

8 See, for example: *The Bondage Breaker* and *Who I am in Christ*.

should just focus on the Lord, ignore the devil and God will take care of Satan. However Paul declared, '*We are not ignorant of his devices.*' (II Cor. 2:11). I fear many would-be soldiers who go out to battle cannot say as much. He who would go to war had better know some of the enemy's tactics. 'What you don't know can cost you a lot.' from an insurance advertisement. (2) The opposite error is to focus on the devil and become devil-centred, rather than God-centred, a danger some believers fall into. James 4:7 gives us the Biblical balance: First submit to God! Then rebuke the devil! But don't ignore him.

How to Apply James 4:7 – A Major Discovery – the 'If' Prayer

When hit by a new adverse circumstance, I can immediately pray, 'Lord if this situation – whether a flat tire, sickness or a headache – is from you, I accept it. Maybe you are trying to get my attention. But if it *is* from the devil, I refuse it and command it to leave.' Note that in Job 1-2 God and Satan knew exactly what was going on, even if Job, like us, did not. But even in our uncertainty, we must avoid passivity. If it's raining, and we have a God-given umbrella in our hand, but don't put it up, we will get wet!

Sometimes, but not always, as we raise this spiritual umbrella of the 'If Prayer' the results are dramatic. For example, when sickness strikes, especially before a ministry opportunity, pray first, then take an aspirin or consult a doctor, not the inverse order! (II Chron. 16:12). Once when we were praying, the colleague beside me exhibited suspicious behaviour with his hands, which I had observed previously. So I watched, and this time I prayed silently, with no audible voice. 'Lord, if this is from the devil, in the name of the Lord Jesus, I bind it up to powerlessness.' The motion stopped immediately – it was like an angel grabbed his hand!⁹ Afterwards I was able to share with him what had happened and suggested that he didn't have to put up with that in his life any longer.

Helpful practical lessons learned along the way about:

- **Satan:** Satan is the great counterfeiter. He doesn't invent anything. He steals and corrupts turning God's gifts into temptations.
- **Words:** We give permission to God, the devil, angels, demons and our spirit and to other people by what we say. So be careful of your words! And what you think! Once in a moment of discouragement my wife, Naomi, said, 'I have no authority.' Many months later the person we were working with said, 'You know, you lost your authority that day (over the demons) when you said that.' So Naomi had to confess and renounce that statement in order to regain her authority.

9 *Binding and Loosing: How to Exercise Authority over the Dark Powers.* K. Neill Foster, L. Neill Foster and Paul L. King, Christian Publications, 1998, is very helpful on the subject of taking spiritual authority over situations where in the church the enemy desires to cause havoc. His stories are fascinating. He is also careful to give Biblical qualifiers.

- **Humility:** In the area of spiritual warfare, you never become an expert. I've noted that gifted servants of God in this field always work humbly with moment by moment dependence on the Holy Spirit, which in turn gives them authority.
- **Learn:** Study, observe, learn. Listen to the nationals when they speak.
- Beware of asking the wrong question, and getting the wrong answer: For example, to ask 'Is the problem psychological or spiritual?' (Or) 'Is the problem physical or spiritual?' (Or) 'Is it the devil or the flesh?' may be like asking, 'Do you walk with your right leg or your left?' The answer is 'Both Legs' Not 'either/or', but 'both/and' often apply. Often the psychological and spiritual overlap.
- **Destroy Occult Objects:** Have the person do it. (See Acts 19:19). The experience of many is that this helps break the demonic attachment.
- **Break curses!** Neal Anderson is very helpful on the subject. When people curse you, bless them. It's powerful! Demons hate blessings. Curses from people are to be sent back as blessings for repentance. Curses from demons are to be sent back as added punishment.
- **The believer's authority in Christ.** I saved the best for last – See what follows!

This authority is found in living and teaching the complete Gospel

I observe that (1) Catholics tend to leave Christ on the cross – the crucifix. (2) Evangelicals tend to leave him in the grave; 'Jesus died for my sin.' (3) But the New Testament presents Jesus Christ, using his full titles, the God man – dead, buried, resurrected and ascended into Heaven!

Many pastors and missionaries, however, when asked to state the Gospel, reply with 'Jesus died for our sins.' True, but not complete! Look again at Paul's definition of the Gospel in I Cor. 15:3-4. 'Christ died... was buried... and rose again for our sins.' Why do we so often stop with Christ's death? In the New

Testament – whether in the Gospels or Acts or the Epistles – they all declare the death and resurrection in the same breath! (*Jesus*: Matt 16: 21 and parallel references; *Peter*: Acts 2:22-36; Acts 4:10,10: 34-43; and Paul: Acts 13:29,33; Rom. 1:1-6; I Cor. 15:3-4; Eph 1:20-22; Eph 2:5-6.)

Why, then, do we often miss the resurrection in our declaration of the Good News? Especially since in our western culture where even secular historians believe that Jesus died, but they question his resurrection, why do we not declare loudest that

which they most contest? For the East it is the death of Christ. For the West it is the resurrection of Christ. I often say to my Muslim friend: We have lots in

Why, then, do we often miss the resurrection in our declaration of the Good News?

common. We're both sinners. We both need a Saviour. Christ died for both of us, but Satan hates us, and in my culture he hides the resurrection and in yours he hides Christ's death.

Here is the Rub – What you Believe here has Practical Consequences

If you only focus on the death of Christ, you will be taken up with forgiveness from sins and reconciliation with God and going to Heaven. And possibly you will be seeking to live a 'cross-centred life.'¹⁰

I agree that when it comes to dealing with our ego, we must live the cross-centred life. 'I am crucified with Christ.' But don't miss this: the result of the resurrection and ascension is that we are seated with Christ at the right hand of God! (Phil 2:6-11; Col 2:20 and Col 3:1)! When dealing with demonic powers, we had better know our position of being seated with Christ in the heavens, 'waiting till every knee bow.'

But, how can I be seated with Christ in the heavens, when geographically, I am on the earth, and Christ is in Heaven? How can I get my mental fingers around that one? One day it dawned. The union is real, but spiritual, not physical. And it's like marriage. Everybody knows about the physical part of marriage. Then I thought of my bank. Would you believe it, *even my bank recognizes the spiritual nature of union in our marriage!* My wife and I have a joint checking account and a joint credit card account. And the bank honours them both. No matter where we are in the world physically, the bank honours our mystical union!

Likewise we are united to Christ – in his death, burial, resurrection, and ascension and we are seated with Him in the Heavenlies, and that entails authority and power – to be exercised in humility to be sure – but to be exercised. Now *that* is exciting news! And news that Satan really doesn't want you to know about! Because it will re-vitalize the way you think, act and talk!

But, how can I be seated with Christ in the heavens, when geographically, I am on the earth, and Christ is in Heaven? How can I get my mental fingers around that one?

A Policeman has Authority

It's like the diminutive rookie policemen sent out to direct traffic in the middle of a busy Algerian intersection with cars coming at him from all sides. Overwhelmed by their size and power, he might be tempted to radio headquarters (prayers) asking for reinforcements.

10 *The Cross Centered Life, Keeping the Gospel the Main Thing*, C.J. Mahaney, Multnomah Publishers, Inc, 2002

But back comes the answer, 'You are in uniform and you have a whistle. Have you raised your arms to direct traffic? And have you have blown your whistle? 'But,' he protests, 'the cars are so many, so big, so powerful and they are coming at me from all directions. I need help.'

Back comes the answer: 'Yes, but you are in uniform and you have authority. Use it! Raise your arm! Blow your whistle.' So, hesitantly at first, he raises his arm, and blows the whistle and – wonder of wonders – those big powerful engines obey him! Not because of whom he is, or how big he is, but because of the authority he has and is learning to exercise.

Concluding Summary

The battle is real. Focus on God, but also study the enemy's tactics. Be humble and careful of your words. Live and preach the complete Gospel. Understand who you are in Christ and confidently exercise your authority!

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WEAPONS TO USE FOR VICTORY IN REAL SPIRITUAL WARFARE

by Abu Ahad

Abu Ahad, originally from Nigeria, now lives and ministers in the Arabian Peninsula with his family.

Introduction:

Thinking about the two words ‘spiritual’ and ‘warfare’, what comes to mind is ‘spirit’ and ‘war’. We can simply define spiritual warfare as “warring or fighting in the spirit realm”. It is a battle fought not in the physical, but in the spirit realm.

Our world today is at war with itself. Nations are at war with other nations. Tribes are against tribes. Of deep concern is the threat of impending nuclear war as nations secretly develop weapons of mass destruction. All these wars are in the physical realm and involve physical weapons. However, we must not be oblivious to the fact that there is a continuous war going on in the spirit realm twenty-four hours a day. The spirit realm we do not see is far larger than the physical realm we can see. What we see in the physical realm is a manifestation of what has been settled in the spirit realm. War is occurring in the spiritual realm and is affecting our physical world. There is no demilitarized zone.

1. The Reality of Spiritual Warfare

‘Know your enemy.’ There is a saying in Africa, ‘When God has revealed your enemy to you, he can no longer harm you.’ In order to be victorious in the spiritual realm, we must recognize and know how to battle our enemy. The Apostle Paul, a foremost missionary, admonished us not to fall prey to the enemy or be ignorant of his devices.

Not only do we face an enemy, but the reality is that there will be evil days. In encouraging us to put on the whole armour, the Apostle Paul alerted us to the fact that evil days will surely come. It is not a matter of ‘if’, but ‘when’. For a missionary or any believer at all, warfare does not end, so it is imperative that we learn how to fight.

Furthermore, we need to recognize that the satanic realm is well organized and ready for battle. The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians highlighted the ranks of demonic forces. He said that ‘our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms’ (Eph. 6:12 NIV). The Apostle Peter also warned that we have an arch-enemy who, like a roaring lion, is looking for people to devour (1 Pet. 5:8).

2. The Certainty of Spiritual Warfare

‘You will be opposed.’ ‘The devil is out to get you.’ ‘You are on the hit list.’ Do such statements scare you? They are the reports and cries from where we serve. We are on a rescue mission. *‘We are commissioned to plunder hell to populate heaven.’* We are anointed to co-labour with our Lord as He transfers men from the kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of light.

This is not a picnic. Our Commanding Officer said no one can enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man; then he robs his house (Matt. 12:29). What are the possessions? Are they wealth or influence or power? No, they are the precious souls of men. There is a saying in Africa: ‘The one who owns the slave owns the slave’s property.’ This means you don’t need to struggle to rob a man of what he owns, just enslave him and then you can help yourself to whatever he has. That explains the reason why Satan goes for souls. If he can enslave the youth of any nation, he can take charge of the nation’s future. The souls of men are precious to both God and Satan.

Satan will not fold his arms and passively allow anyone to break into his ancient prison and plunder it. He will attempt to fight back on all fronts – personal, marital, business or ministry. He does not open doors to let his prisoners go free and there is great danger involved in rescuing souls from the hold of the enemy. He will attempt to prey on us and will not let go easily. Therefore, we must be ready to fight back so that we don’t become a casualty as we try to rescue others.

Stories of unsuccessful rescue attempts:

In 1999 I was a pastor at a church in South West Nigeria. We employed a girl to help with house chores since my wife was then nursing our second child. Things were upside down from the moment she came into our home, and as we kept praying God revealed to us that she was demon possessed. We resolved to help her by sharing the gospel with her and ministering deliverance. My wife on several occasions took her to deliverance services, all with the aim of helping her to receive Christ. We had an option of letting her go, but we held on to God for her deliverance from the powers of darkness. The warfare was complicated by the fact that the rented house we were living in had a demonic foundation (as we later discovered). Our investigation revealed that all who ever lived there before us came in wealthy and healthy and left poor and in poor health.

Our little daughter then (our eldest) became sick; my wife also was rushed to the hospital one day. It was a difficult time. Why? We were determined to rescue this soul from the power of darkness. We kept fighting the battle. One night a man appeared to me in a dream with two sharp knives. He threatened

to kill me if I did not let her go. This revealed to me the reason for my family's affliction. The enemy 'rose against me.' Having fought the battle a long time, coupled with the fact that she was not willing to be delivered, we let her go. Deliverance from the powers of darkness never occurs against the will of the person in bondage. The point I'm making here is that the enemy may turn to attack us as we try to rescue someone. We must be on guard and protect our family.

Another example is from a co-worker serving in another part of the Middle East who wrote me recently asking us to join in prayer as they engaged in spiritual warfare to free a local family they have been witnessing to for a long time. They prayed and fasted and visited this family twice. The last mail I received was that recently there was a tense situation within my friend's family which he discerned as a backlash of their incursion into Satan's territory.

We must put on the whole armour at all times. The certainty of spiritual warfare cannot be over-emphasized. Even when the enemy knows that he has lost a territory, he will not give up easily. The story of Jericho illustrates this. The people of Jericho knew they had lost the battle, but they still closed Jericho tightly. No one went out and no one came in (Josh. 6:1).

If anyone is involved in kingdom business, be sure that there will be opposition from the enemy. He opposes everything that is of God. I believe that one of the ways to know if you are moving in the direction of God's will for your life is the opposition you face from the pit of hell. There will not be any opposition if you and Satan are moving in the same direction. Even Paul was hindered by Satan (1Thess. 2:18).

Our Story of God opening a door to minister

As we pray for workers to join the harvest force in the Arab world, we must engage the enemy in battle and break through his opposition. This may include the immigration policies of many countries, which are influenced by spiritual wickedness resisting the coming of light. There may even be things in the worker's home country that may be tying him or her down. The donkey Jesus rode to Jerusalem was initially tied down. It was not useful to the Master until it was loosened from the stake. We need to declare 'the Lord has need of it...' (Matt. 21:2, 3). Men must be released for Christ to ride them triumphantly into many nations in the Arab world.

A story from our lives illustrates this reality. We were to start language study in one Arab country but all effort was resisted and opposed by the enemy. We attempted another country. We were assured by our contact person that all was in place for us to move. We packed and moved to a transit place. At the last moment we were refused a visa. We became confused about where to go next. The weapons we used at that time were prayer and worship with

thanksgiving. God rose up to fight for us. He moved in our favour and miraculously when we thought it was impossible, the gate of another Arab country was opened to us to begin language study. The embassy which refused to give visas to a couple, gave visas to our family of four. Also, I was the only one that appeared at the embassy with a simple unsigned email letter of invitation. It took time for me to believe what had happened. Our Lord of Hosts fought for us.

3. The Weapons of our Warfare

In our experience among Muslims for the past eighteen years, both in my home country and our present location, the following weapons of spiritual warfare have proven vital.

3.1 The name of Jesus

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The name of Jesus is
a name above all
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powers. We have
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The name of Jesus is a name above all names and all powers. We have been given the Power of Attorney by our Lord to use His exalted and victorious name to cast out demons and perform miraculous signs that will accompany us if we believe. We are protected and covered by the power in His name as we serve wherever he sends us (Mk. 16:17). No power of darkness can resist His name. This is because God elevated him to the place of highest honour and gave him the name above all other names (Phil. 2:9-11). As we labour against our enemy, Satan, we can take courage remembering that David brought down Goliath in the name of the Lord (1 Sam. 17:45). In ministering deliverance to those under demonic oppression, I have cast out demons using the name of Jesus. It is very efficacious.

3.2 The blood of Jesus.

The blood that redeemed our soul is precious and powerful. Demons cannot withstand the power in the blood that redeemed us. In Africa, when we plead the blood during deliverance or when we plead for God's mercies by the blood of the Lamb, we see tremendous results. I have read a book that argues against this understanding, but I cannot deny the efficacy of the blood of the Lamb when engaged in spiritual warfare. You can cover yourself by the blood of Jesus when in the enemy's territory. Revelation 12:10-11 says that we overcome the enemy by the blood of the lamb and by our testimony.

Our second daughter's experience when we first came to this region is a good example. She would wake up in the middle of the night crying and when offered a drink, she would simply say, 'Pray daddy. I don't want water.' This happened several times, so we pled the blood of Jesus, prayed and sang.

In a few minutes she would be fast asleep. We knew we were in the enemy's territory, but His blood protected our daughter.

The blood of the Passover Lamb is a shadow of the blood of Jesus that was shed for us. If the blood of a physical lamb is efficacious, how much more the blood of Jesus, that speaks better thing than the blood of Abel (Heb. 12:24)! During deliverance or when engaged in spiritual warfare, the enemy may remind us of our sins, or accuse us. In turn, we can remind him of the blood that was shed for the remission of our sin (Acts 2:38).

3.3 The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit

The word of God is living and active. It cannot be compared with simply a two-edged sword (Heb. 4:12). His word is like fire, and indeed like a mighty hammer that is able to crush to pieces a rock (Jer. 23:29).

Our prayer must be fuelled by the word of God. God will always fulfil His promises.

When the early disciples were faced with great opposition from the rulers of the Jews, they resorted to prayer. They prayed using scriptures (Acts 4:23-31) and they prayed asking for great boldness in preaching God's word. 'Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus' (Acts 4:30). God responded and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they preached the word of God with boldness. In fact, this has happened here in this very city! There is power in the word of God as we use it to confront the enemy in spiritual battle.

3.4 Praise and worship

All spiritual warfare should begin with praises and worship. By so doing, we are inviting God into our situation. He is the one that is mighty in battle. When we lift him up, he will draw all men to himself.

This was the cry of King David in Psalm 149. 'Let the praises of God be in their mouths, and a sharp sword in their hands.' I would consider the sword here as the word, to be used to execute vengeance on the nations. The combination of these two weapons – praise and the word of God – is effective and powerful. A well known incident in the Bible where praise and worship was used was the battle of Judah against three nations during the reign of King Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 20:21-22). They sought the Lord through prayer and fasting about what to do. They resorted to singing praises to God. At the very moment that they began to sing and give praise to God, the LORD caused the armies of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir to fight each other.

The combination of these two weapons – praise and the word of God – is effective and powerful.

3.5 Prayer

Paul exhorts us to pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit (Eph. 6:18). We are limited in our knowledge, but the Spirit is not and he wants to help us. Pray always, sometimes in an unknown tongue, if you are gifted by the Holy Spirit to do so (Rom. 8:26-27). I will never forget one dark night in 1990 when I was serving my nation for one year in the Muslim populated area of northern Nigeria. I was alone at home as my roommate was away. I felt a strong presence of demonic forces in my room that I could not explain. I prayed, but it was like a heavy darkness enveloped me. Then I began to pray in an unknown tongue as the Holy Spirit gave me utterance and a release. The darkness just lifted up and a great peace and relief flooded my heart and the room.

3.6. Submission and Obedience.

The walls of Jericho came down because the Israelites followed God's strategy. Every step of obedience is a step of victory. God's heart cry is for His people to follow His path and obey Him. Then their victory will be guaranteed (Ps. 81:13-14). 'Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you' (James 4:7). Humility will neutralize pride – the spirit of Lucifer. We must be submissive to God to exercise authority. Only a man under authority can exercise authority. Likewise, we must be submissive to our leaders.

4. Victory in Spiritual Warfare

What has been highlighted above is not meant to frighten, but to alert us, as

One very important truth
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and powers.

Paul did, to the reality of the battle we are engaged in. It is always best to avoid two extremes: the first extreme is to think that there is a demon behind every issue, and the second extreme is to believe that there is no such thing as Satanic or demonic influence. Both extremes are dangerous and we must strive to strike a good balance.

One very important truth we must know is that *Satan is a defeated foe*. His fate was sealed on the cross at Calvary where Jesus shamed principalities and powers (Col. 2:15). Before Jesus' ascension to heaven, He made a declaration: 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me' and we were commissioned to go with full knowledge of this (Matt. 28:18-19).

If it is true that all (not some) power belongs to Jesus, where does the enemy derive his power? What the devil has is 'wiles', 'devices' and 'cunning craftiness.' He is *like* a roaring lion, but he is not a real lion. There is only one

real Lion – The Lion of the Tribe of Judah – Jesus Christ Our Lord. We belong to Him and He commissioned us (Jn. 15:16). What should our attitude be to spiritual warfare? It should be like the lion mentioned in Proverbs 30:30, the lion which is the strongest among beasts that does not retreat before anyone.

We must know our authority in Christ and use it. Satan is aware that he is a defeated foe, but he has not given up. We have battles to fight, but we must know that we are fighting in victory. The land has been given, but we need to conquer and occupy it. We must engage the enemy in battle to enforce the Lordship of Our Lord. With the help of Our Lord we are more than conquerors.

We must know our authority in Christ and use it. Satan is aware that he is a defeated foe, but he has not given up.

5. Conclusion

When we look at the familiar Pauline passage in Ephesians on spiritual warfare we notice that every part of the body is protected apart from the back. Could this mean that there is no protection for the back because we are not expected to turn our back to the enemy? We are encouraged to put on every piece of God's armour so we will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil.

As we engage in spiritual battle, our eyes must be fixed on Jesus, our Commander-in-chief. Victory is sure in Christ. It is my prayer that as we engage the enemy in battle, we will eventually echo the words of Paul the apostle in the following verses:

But thanks be to God, who always lead us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of Him (2 Cor. 2:14, NIV).

We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body (2 Cor. 8-10, NIV).

THOUGHTS OF DISCIPLESHIP, MARTYRDOM AND GOD'S WORK IN THE ARABIAN PENINSULA

Abu Dawood

Abu Dawood, along with his wife and children, has lived and ministered among Gulf Arab Muslims for over sixteen years. He teaches at a higher education institution and serves on a team that seeks to befriend Muslims, minister to those seeking God, disciple believers, and, by God's grace, establish indigenous churches.

To be a good son or daughter, to be a good citizen, and to be a good Muslim are one and the same for most people of the Arabian Peninsula (AP). To lack in one aspect of these is to fail in all and bring shame upon the family and tribe of the individual. As missionaries here, we endorse the importance of honouring the family and nation by way of Christ and the Gospel. But as many seekers here claim, it is difficult to follow Jesus and be an AP citizen alone, without any support of the family and nation.

In the late 1990s, we felt God moving us to place the *Jesus Film* in local video stores as many Gulf nationals did not believe that God would allow one of his prophets to die. We thought it was a big project for the region until God brought the *Passion of the Christ* film in 2004. This film was shown in many of the theatres of the AP and those countries that forbade the film experienced wide-spread distribution of bootleg DVD copies. Since that film, I rarely hear Muslims of the AP say that Jesus did not die on the cross. We heard the call of God and worked to impact our city for Christ, but *God is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think* (Eph 3:20), and he impacted the entire Arabian Peninsula.

In more recent years, we have seen an increasing number of seekers in the AP but many are afraid to follow Jesus as they feel there are no other AP national believers. Of course, there are believers but community aspects of the Arab culture are strong and the thought of being alone brings fears. Thus, many of us felt God's call to initiate the writing, filming, and production of a film entitled, *Flowers in the Desert*, which dramatically portrays the testimonies of three actual AP believers. The project is soon to be filmed for eventual satellite and Internet release so those viewing it will know that there are believers among the citizens of the AP. However, again God has gone far beyond our expectations in the person of Fatima Al-Mutayri, who was martyred in August 2008.

Christian martyrdom in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) has happened before, but the situation is different with Fatima who was an active blogger and

However, again God has gone far beyond our expectations in the person of Fatima Al-Mutayri, who was martyred in August 2008.

poet. She was above reproach, from a distinguished tribe, and well respected among her friends. In the past, martyrdom was dismissed and denied, like any other shameful family event. However, with Fatima, the martyrdom has not been hidden or denied and many are discussing on the blogs the 'dangers' of the Internet and whether her family followed Islamic judicial protocol in her execution. In other words, no one is questioning whether or not Fatima was a Christian. In fact, as one AP missionary was discussing the martyrdom with Gulf friends, the response was, "That's not that strange. I know others like her."

Fatima writes, 'Oh history record and witness (that) we are Christians walking on the path of the Messiah'. She may have veiled the truth of her new faith from her family but the Internet gave her an outlet for the expression of her faith and nationalistic pride. Being from a renowned Bedouin tribe, she desired for all the people of KSA to see the truth and understand the nation's pitiful condition due to the influence of religious zealots.

Since Fatima's departure, others continue to discuss her martyrdom on various Internet blogs. Some write prayers for KSA and another blog posts poetry under the name 'In the way of Fatima'. Some Muslims discuss the family's involvement, honour, and the necessary time to elapse before executing an apostate. Other Muslims are repulsed by her death and discuss the need for improved human rights. However, whatever the blog topic, *Fatima's witness as a follower of the Lord Jesus is not questioned* and it is upon the blood of the martyrs that the church is established. In other words, through Fatima's martyrdom, the thought that there are AP followers of Christ is out among the people, and seekers now know that they are not alone. And in the Arab World the fear of being alone is a far greater fear than martyrdom. As Fatima wrote in the end of her last email message describing a religious debate with her brother, "If I am away for a while, don't worry as *The Lord is with me. He is my light and salvation so from whom do I fear?*"

In other words, no one is questioning whether or not Fatima was a Christian.

For further reading, check out the following websites and search for additional news on Fatima.

In English: <http://archive.gulfnews.com/articles/08/08/12/10236558.html>
<http://newsletter.persecution.com/>

In Arabic: <http://gch1.org/ar/>
<http://www.fouadzadieke.de/>

PART 3: REACHING MUSLIM WOMEN AND 'DISCIPLINING' ONESELF**A SUNNI WOMAN'S HEART****Part 3 – An Obsession with Correct Behaviour****by Tahira**

Tahira is a North American who has lived in a variety of neighbourhoods in the Middle East for nearly 20 years and engaged in a variety of ministries. She holds a D. Min. with a focus in Missions and Cross – Cultural Studies from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

Sunni Arab women are preoccupied with doing the right thing. This is the most dramatic difference I have observed between them and Western Christian or secular women. This preoccupation is reflected in the questions they ask one another: "Am I allowed to wear shoes with open toes?" "Should I pray when I travel if I am unsure of the direction of Mecca?" "What should I do with an old newspaper that has the word "Allah" in it?" "What if I am entertaining a guest at prayer time?" "What is the correct order for washing body parts before prayer?" The questions are endless.

Barriers

Many Sunni women are fearful of not doing the right thing. They are taught that the only hope they have for pleasing God is by correct behaviour, and that if they do not please God, torture awaits them. To deny this belief seems an invitation to social and moral chaos. Although the official theology of Islam denies it, the *de facto* theology of many Sunni women is that people determine God's attitudes toward them, and his choices about them, based on their conformity to Islamic standards. In a religion which emphasizes submission, there is considerable appeal in subtly being able to control God through submission to him.

There are advantages to a worldview in which every behaviour is prescribed.

The repetition of Islamic ritual and the detailed code of *shari'ah* relieve people who lack self-confidence from the burden of making hard moral choices. Ritual and *shari'ah* also provide a sense of rootedness in the widely accepted and authoritative traditions of the Qur'an, Hadith, and the consensus of the community (*ijmaa'*). Religion is, by definition, a code of behaviour for these women. That leaves little room for a gospel of grace, especially when that gospel is proclaimed by people whose failure to live up to Islamic standards marks them as irreligious or

Religion is, by definition, a code of behaviour for these women. That leaves little room for a gospel of grace.

heterodox.

Conformity is rewarded with social reinforcement by the community. The honour – shame culture means that, for many, social expectations replace conscience and spiritual sensitivity. Failure to keep certain standards may result in serious censure by the Muslim community. This is particularly true for women, who tend to respond to a sense of shame by increased submissiveness.¹ Because of the emphasis in traditional Sunni Islam on submission to the received tradition, thinking for oneself about ethical issues is portrayed as dangerous and rebellious, and the women are not socialized to do so. The women do not want to risk losing the merits which they imagine they have accumulated by doing what Islam required of them. The evangelist among this subculture may find women socially, intellectually, and morally incapable of considering any alternative to what they have always been taught is God's will.

The principle-based, Spirit-guided ethics of the New Testament are seen by the women I studied as vague and idealistic at best, and antinomian or heretical at worst. Islamic rejection of the Christian doctrine of substitutionary atonement leaves no viable religious alternative except attempting to achieve one's own righteousness. The women are constantly told in a variety of ways that Islamic law is superior to any other, and the ongoing litany of disparaging comparisons, whether fair or otherwise, ensures that women who encounter Christian ethical principles view them initially through jaundiced eyes. The doctrine of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is absent in this variety of Islam, and without it what alternative guidance is there other than detailed law? Furthermore, Muslims expect religious law to encompass civil law, and find the church wanting in presenting a truly Christian practical civil law code. If biblical ethics are not suitable for running a society, of what real good are they? The church has an uphill battle in making the gospel of grace understood in this context.

Bridges

One of the aspects of Islamic devotion which Christians find easiest to admire is the sincere desire of many Muslims to please God in every aspect of life. This we can affirm and identify with. Likewise, we can verify that human beings are dependent upon revelation to know what God wants, and that He makes His will known. There is a strong strand of biblical teaching which affirms the Islamic notion that God appreciates those who seek to please him, and that he rewards them

There is a strong strand of biblical teaching which affirms the Islamic notion that God appreciates those who seek to please him, and that he rewards them with guidance in this life and with benefits in the hereafter.

1 Shiraeve and Levy, *Cross-Cultural Psychology: Critical Thinking and Contemporary Applications* (Boston: Pearson), 176, citing Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments*, and A. Blok, "Rams and Billy-goats," 427-440.

with guidance in this life and with benefits in the hereafter. Both communities believe in theory and practice that God hates evil, ingratitude, pride and rebellion. There is some overlap in what each community considers acceptable or unacceptable to God. These shared beliefs and attitudes might reassure Muslims obsessed with keeping rules that Christians also desire to please God and have a theological basis for seeking to do so. Some Muslims assume that Christians are satisfied with the moral standards of Western, “Christian” countries, and may be relieved to find that their Christian neighbour is equally appalled at the decadence.

Both communities recognize that human beings frequently fail to meet God’s standards, and that some form of atonement is needed, although the two understandings of atonement differ markedly. Our common human plight and its solution are topics for which Islam’s answers are less than impressive.

Fault Lines

Many Muslims know in their hearts that Islamic law is not always the solution, although they are reluctant to admit it. Islam may seem to have a rule for everything, but Muslims are regularly faced with situations for which they do not yet know the rule. This can be frustrating and confusing. A situation may call for an immediate decision which allows insufficient time to consult an appropriate authority, and the decision-maker is left in a moral dilemma. Furthermore, Islamic schools (traditional) and muftis (contemporary) vary considerably in their rulings, and a Muslim faced with apparently contradictory rulings finds herself in a quandary. Certain laws of unquestioned historical validity seem inadequate, cruel or just plain wrong to most Muslims today, such as needing four eyewitnesses for a rape conviction, or lashing a

married adulteress to death. Critical studies, ridiculous fatwas of some muftis, and the backward and rigid image of Islamic scholars are all eroding the traditional authority of the consensus of Muslim scholarship. Some Muslims may feel disillusioned by the hypocrisy of those who stick to the letter of the law, but whose character is unbecoming. If a Muslim realizes that the *shari’ah* is not the perfect solution, she may start looking for an alternate authority, either within Islam or beyond.

A conscientious Muslim could easily feel overwhelmed and condemned by the thousands of stipulations of Islamic law, both mandatory and recommended. A major misdeed could leave her feeling that she has more sin than she can atone for. It may be that the distance between Islamic standards and one’s own behaviour could become so great that the person begins to recognize the need for a Saviour. One woman I know began the search that led her to Christ when she

A conscientious Muslim could easily feel overwhelmed and condemned by the thousands of stipulations of Islamic law, both mandatory and recommended.

saw an atheistic communist behave with greater integrity than her own.

The story of Adam in the Islamic tradition suggests that human sin stems from ignorance or weakness. It seems ironic that women who have witnessed their country torn apart by extremes of wilful human sinfulness would still cling to such a view. Even at a personal level, anyone who is honest with herself will recognize that she has a deeper problem than forgetfulness, and such honesty should lead to a healthy sense of shame.

Worthy of Observation

What signs might we look for when deciding where to focus our attention? It is worth taking note of those who find the guidance of Islam wanting. Muslims who are seeking to know the will of God may be open to consider what the Bible and the Holy Spirit have to say to them. Those who turn to folk Islam or occult practices for guidance in decision-making tacitly declare that they have found conventional Islam inadequate to their needs. There may be some openness on the part of devout people who keep all the rules without being satisfied spiritually and emotionally. When people feel that religion is being used for behavioural manipulation, they may resent it and look for alternatives.

There are also people who find *themselves* wanting. Muslims who feel that they can never meet God's standards may be looking for another basis of righteousness, an intercessor,² or some reassurance of God's forgiveness.

Missional Strategies

'Contextualized' approaches have the advantage of removing unnecessary stumbling blocks by adapting Muslim standards. Care should be taken, however, not to reinforce the notion that pious behaviour makes one acceptable to God.³ Regardless of the degree to which workers choose to conform to Islamic standards, at the very least, they should be aware of and sensitive to how Muslims evaluate their behaviours and attitudes. While we cherish the freedom we have in Christ, there is a place for "living as one under the law in order to win those under the law."⁴

There is a desperate need for the church in the Muslim world to articulate a positive, biblical theology of God's law. We need credible answers for Muslims who question the adequacy of Christ's standards as a rule for society. We also need to explain convincingly and with confidence the relationship between grace and holiness. Believers from any background should be taught how to explain to Muslims why living by biblical standards pleases God, and how grace

2 Admittedly, the first place the Muslim goes for intercession is to Muhammad, not Jesus.

3 Care should also be taken to ensure that believers from a Christian background are not maligned because they enjoy legitimate freedom in Christ.

4 1 Corinthians 9:20.

promotes, rather than discourages, true holiness. Evangelists would do well to bear in mind that most Sunni Muslims have no concept of living by the guidance and empowering of the Holy Spirit. They need both an explanation of God's work in nurturing the individual⁵ and a demonstration in real life of the Spirit's ability to produce profound holiness in individuals and societies.

New believers who join the church from a Sunni background may try to replace a new, "Christian" set of rules for Muslim ones, or may completely reject the conformist orientation of their background. It is imperative that churches distinguish between biblical teachings and some Christian rules and customs which are not necessarily biblical. All believers need mentoring or discipling in daily holiness in order to develop wisdom, confidence in God's grace, a love for true righteousness, and an ability to relate in a godly way to those inside and outside the fellowship of believers in Jesus. This discipleship would include appropriate spiritual exercises with accountability.

For Muslims, both seekers and new believers, there is value in learning the ethical teachings of the New Testament, especially as expressed in the parables and pithy sayings of Jesus. Some believers of this background may find it helpful to practice ritual, symbolic expressions of their faith in Jesus, whether by adapting the rituals with which they have grown up, adopting those of the Christian community, or by developing their own.

Conclusion

By far the most important preparation for sharing the gospel with Sunni women is to be sure that one's own attitude is right.

By far the most important preparation for sharing the gospel with Sunni women is to be sure that one's own attitude is right. If we frequently judge and compare people's actions, we reinforce the notion that what really matters is correct behaviour, and so nullify the gospel of grace. When we fail to heed the quiet promptings of the Holy Spirit, we also fail to give Muslim acquaintances an example of true godliness based on a relationship rather than rules.

If we consider the ethical teachings of Jesus impractical for our daily choices, we cannot expect our Muslim friends to want Jesus as their leader. However, if Muslims see in us Jesus' righteousness, "a righteousness exceeding that of the scribes and Pharisees,"⁶ the Spirit may nurture in some an attraction to the source of that righteousness.

*Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works
And give glory to your Father in heaven.*

Matthew 5:16

5 This is not an easy task. "The Holy Spirit" is understood by Muslims as the angel Gabriel, and the doctrine of the Trinity is notoriously treacherous water across which to transport Muslims to faith in Jesus. An acquaintance with Sufi thought might be a source of helpful vocabulary in this regard.

6 Matthew 5:20.

THE JOURNEY TOWARD SPIRITUAL FORMATION

by **Anthony Baxter**

Anthony is a graduate of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, in the USA. He, along with his family, has lived and ministered in the Middle East for more than ten years as a pastor, teacher, evangelist and discipler.

Human beings were created in God's image for an intimate relationship with him. Sin broke our intimacy with God but at the cross Jesus made it possible for us to be reconciled to God and for the intimate relationship to be restored. This process of restoration – of being formed, conformed, and ultimately transformed into the likeness of Jesus – is what we call spiritual formation. It is the process of Christ being formed in us. According to Gerald G. May, 'Spiritual formation is a rather general term referring to all attempts, means, instruction, and disciplines intended towards deepening of faith and furtherance of spiritual growth. It includes educational endeavours as well as the more intimate and in-depth process of spiritual direction.'¹

There is an expectation in Christianity generally that true faith in Jesus will produce a transformed life. Yet for many of us, years after our salvation experience we are still fighting the same issues we struggled with when we first came to faith. If we who have walked with Jesus a long time have not experienced much transformation, how can we expect to teach others – especially believers from Muslim backgrounds – how to walk with Jesus?

Part of the problem stems from our tendency to think discipleship is about changing external behaviour rather than true inner transformation. The goal of spiritual formation is not to produce people who act differently. The goal is transformed disciples who are different. Right hearts produce right actions. Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, '*Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit*' (Matt. 7:16-18).

In this article, I want to suggest some basic tools we can use to help ourselves and others be transformed inwardly. But first, let me make three observations:

1. Spiritual formation is done in community.

It was Jesus' intention that we would walk together in the journey of faith. Through Christ we are brought into the *kingdom* of God, are members of the *body*

1 May, Gerald G. *Care of Mind, Care of Spirit: A Psychiatrist Explores Spiritual Direction*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992, p. 6

of Christ and are part of the *church*. We are brought into a community of faith. When Jesus sent his disciples out to minister, he sent them in pairs. Jesus knew the value and necessity of partners in our journey of faith. As an African proverb says, 'If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.'²

The reality of our faith, the transforming power of Jesus, is ultimately seen by how we live like Christ in our interaction with others.

The reality of our faith, the transforming power of Jesus, is ultimately seen by how we live like Christ in our interaction with others. It is in relationship to others that our faith is grown, refined and tested. In relationships we learn to forgive, to bear another's burdens and to simply love one another. In relationship we learn that the proverb is true, '*As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another*' (Prov. 27:7). In the community of faith we find acceptance and encouragement to press on in living out our faith even when it is difficult or we have failed. We learn: '*Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!*' (Eccl. 4:9-10).

2. Spiritual formation is Christ-centred.

The purpose of spiritual formation is not to make new and improved versions of ourselves. It is that Christ be formed in us (Gal. 4:19). Dallas Willard suggests its purpose is the 'forming of the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being of Christ himself.'³

Spiritual formation is not simply about sinning less. In Christ we are new creations and have been crucified to the old life. Our lives should increasingly take on the character of Christ. We will sin less as we surrender ourselves more and more to him. Our focus should increasingly be on Jesus – loving and knowing him. We want to be so intimate with Jesus that when we are insulted or cut off in traffic or lied about or put in a compromising situation, our natural response is not to sin but to do what Jesus would have done.

Spiritual formation is a work of the Holy Spirit because we cannot be made into the image of Jesus apart from God. Paul wrote, '*Work out your salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who is at work within you to will and to work according to his good purpose,*' (Phil. 2:13). We must actively seek to grow and experience more of the life God has for us. However, it is the Holy Spirit who makes it happen.

2 Quoted by Tippens, Darryl, *Pilgrim Heart: The Way of Jesus in Everyday Life*, Abilene, TX: Leafwood Publishers, 2006, p.27.

3 Willard, Dallas, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ*, Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002, p. 22.

3. Spiritual formation is intentional.

Some people are naturally disciplined. They can easily set up and follow a detailed program to guide their spiritual growth and formation. But others, like me, have difficulty following a regimented program for spiritual growth. I used to think there was something wrong with me until God reminded me of something crucial; The Christian life is not a list of activities to check off, it's a relationship. It is an intimate friendship and like any friendship there are things I can do to help it grow but there is no magical formula for spiritual growth.

In spiritual formation we need to be like a good golfer.⁴ He comes into a round of golf with a plan, an intention, for how he will approach the course. He assesses the weather and the conditions of the course: Is it long or short? Are the greens soft or firm? Are there many hazards to avoid? Does it play to his strengths or weaknesses? Though he approaches his round with a plan, he cannot program each shot ahead of time. He has no way of knowing how a particular shot will land, how it will roll or how long it will be. And so, he has a bag full of clubs designed to enable him to hit a variety of shots. In any situation, he can pull out the right club and (hopefully!) hit the right shot.

As we approach spiritual formation, we need to have a plan. We need to have a vision of where we want to go and how we intend to get there. We need to approach our spiritual formation with a bag full of disciplines we can use in the variety of life situations we encounter which will help us to move forward in our journey of faith. The following is a list of several activities I have found helpful in the journey toward spiritual formation. It is not exhaustive and it is not a program.

We have no idea what challenges life will bring. We cannot know when one discipline will be needed in exchange for another, but we can approach each situation, each season of life with a plan to prayerfully use the disciplines in our bag to keep moving forward toward the goal of Christ being formed in us. These tools, when used prayerfully and purposefully, will enable us to go deeper in our relationship with Christ.

As we approach spiritual formation, we need to have a plan. We need to have a vision of where we want to go and how we intend to get there.

⁴ I am in debt to Scot McKnight for planting this image of a good golfer and his variety of clubs in my brain. He uses this illustration in discussing various theories of the atonement in his excellent work, *A Community Called Atonement*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007. One could use the example of a craftsman with a toolbox full of tools to make the same point. You do not use a hammer to sand or a screwdriver to drive a nail. You need the right tool for each situation.

3.1 The Word

Paul wrote to the Romans that they should no longer *'be conformed to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of (their minds)...'* (Rom. 12:2). The primary way we are formed spiritually into the image of Jesus is through God's Word. This is the main way God reveals himself to us. As the author of Hebrews reminds us, *'in these last days (God) has spoken to us by his Son...'* (Heb. 1:2). There are a variety of ways to approach time in the Word. Some people find reading large portions of biblical passages helpful to really fill their minds with truth. Others prefer to read smaller portions and dig in more deeply.

Whichever approach one chooses there are two things that are especially helpful; *meditation and memorization*. I've gone through seasons when I've read the Bible through twice in a year and others where I've taken smaller portions and tried to focus more deeply.

In either case, I have found it essential to invite God to draw my attention to a specific phrase or verse. I write it down, read it several times and pray through it. I carry it with me through the day and meditate on it. As I sit in traffic, wait in line and brush my teeth, I ponder this verse. I think about what it means and consider how to live it. I ask what needs to change in me to make the truth of this verse a reality in my life. I ask God to use his resurrection power in my heart to bring needed change. *Meditation* allows God's Word to sink deeply into our hearts, into our souls. It makes the difference between a Word of information and a Word of transformation.

Invite the BMB you're working with to read through a book of the Bible. Encourage him to read a chapter each day and to pick one verse that strikes him as significant. Give him a small notebook so that he can write each day's verse in it and why he found it important. Work along with him so when you meet, you can compare the things that impressed you too. Try to call or see him between formal discipleship times to share something you're meditating on or to ask him how his reading went. Try to be specific in thinking about how the verse or verses he's seeing as important relate to his life. How can he live them out? Is there a pattern? If so, what might it mean?

The psalmist wrote, *'How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word...I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.'* (Ps. 119:9, 11). When the lies of the evil one tempt me to sin, having God's Word in my heart provides truth and perspective that give strength and help to resist it. There really is no substitute. We need our minds full of God's Word and that comes through *memorization*. Sometimes my meditation becomes memorization. As I think on a verse for a long time, I learn

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it. But usually I need to be more intentional than that. I need to purposefully memorize a verse or a passage.

Many discipleship programs have verses related to the lessons that you can memorize with the BMB. Memorizing an entire book may seem daunting but it is incredibly useful. When we spend time studying God's Word – meditating on it, memorizing it, letting it sink into our souls – the process of spiritual formation takes place. Our minds are renewed. Memorizing God's Word is a key element of transformation. Very likely our BMB disciple will find it natural and be able to memorise God's Word easily due to their traditional learning methods in which they are required to memorize large portions of the Qur'an.

3.2 Worship

Worship is our response to who God is and what he does. Studying about God is not enough. It should lead us to worship. As we look upon God's greatness, reflect on his character and remember all his deeds, we can only respond with adoration, praise, awe and exaltation. Dallas Willard suggests, 'Worship... imprints on our whole being the reality that we study. The effect is a radical disruption of the powers of evil in us and around us. Often an enduring and substantial change is brought about.'⁵ Through worship the Holy Spirit cements in us deeper faith, greater hunger for God and determined obedience.

We often think of worship as what we do weekly when we meet with a local body of believers. But worship takes many forms. We can praise God in prayer or with the written word. We can worship in songs that declare the greatness of God. With the advent of iPods and mp3 players, listening to worship music is easier than ever. We worship God when we make our lives the living sacrifices Paul talks about in Romans 12. By surrendering all we are to God, we show him that he is worthy of our time, our energy, our minds, and our hearts.

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3.3 Solitude, Silence and Sabbath

Perhaps of all the things available to us for spiritual formation, these three are the most neglected. In solitude, silence and Sabbath we consciously choose to withdraw from the world (or our activity in it) in a meaningful way for a period of time. These disciplines are not natural to us. We are accustomed to being around people, having music or noise around us and being active. The power

5 Willard, Dallas, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God*, San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998, p. 362.

of these tools is that we break from our normal routine and give God greater access to our hearts and lives.

Solitude and *silence* can be just a few minutes each day or an extended period of retreat. We need both. We need time each day to get away from people and noise and be alone in God's presence. In Scripture we see Jesus getting away from the crowds and his disciples for times with God. He understood the need to quiet himself before God. In Luke 6, for example, we see Jesus spend the night in prayer before choosing the twelve disciples. The night before his betrayal, he takes time to pray knowing the trials that lie before him. Drawing apart to be with God brings clarity, wisdom and strength.

I have taken time for long retreats of solitude and silence – alone and with disciples – and found them immensely helpful. Alone and silent for a long period, I realized how very close God really is. I learned afresh that I'm never really alone. And shortly after one retreat I found myself in a situation where I was being falsely accused and attacked. My natural reaction would have been to lash out verbally but miraculously I was able to hold my tongue.

I also try to practice regular times of silence and solitude. I love early mornings before my family is awake and the home is bursting with life. I find a quiet place to sit. Once comfortable, I close my eyes and try to quiet my heart and my mind. Now is not the time to remember all the things I need to accomplish that day! I just wait. There is no agenda – at least not on my part. I am open to whatever God might bring to mind. It is the Lord's time and I wait on him.⁶

The spiritual life is a physical life – we cannot escape that truth. We need to care for our bodies and in so doing, for our souls.

Sabbath is a meaningful break from the normal routine of life for a time of rest and/or recreation at regular intervals. The spiritual life is a physical life – we cannot escape that truth. We need to care for our bodies and in so doing, for our souls. Darryl Tippens describes Sabbath as 'a wonderful benefit and blessing to humanity that our culture greatly needs. Sabbath... rest, 'down time', quiet, renewal, recreation, getting away... can occur any day of the week.'⁷

Sabbath is not some legalistic splitting of hairs over what can or cannot be done. It is God's gracious permission to rest, to refresh, to slow down and be renewed. It is vitally important to our

6 I recommend Ruth Haley Barton's book *Invitation to Solitude and Silence: Experiencing God's Transforming Presence*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004 and Siang-Yang Tan and Douglas H. Gregg's book *Disciplines of the Holy Spirit: How to Connect to the Spirit's Power and Presence*, Grand Rapids, MI, Zondervan, 1997 for help with cultivating a time of solitude and silence. Dallas Willard also has helpful thoughts on solitude in several of his books and articles.

7 Tippens, Darryl, *Pilgrim Heart: The Way of Jesus in Everyday Life*, Abilene, TX: Leafwood Publishers, 2006, p 67.

spiritual development. Too often we see spirituality as doing, doing, doing. We think that if we are not serving we are not pleasing God. We are driven to do more. We have a hard time saying 'no'. But we need to realize that 'no' is a spiritual word. It is okay not to do a good thing because we have scheduled time for family or rest.

Taking a day each week for rest and rejuvenation will help us to be more productive, more focused and more ready to serve throughout the week. Jesus himself took time regularly for solitude, silence and Sabbath. Blessing comes when we learn from his example and we seek to walk in it. Jesus found time alone with God in solitude and silence valuable. Jesus found Sabbath rest important. How much more should we?

In a culture where community and family are so important, it might be difficult for our BMB friends to find time alone. It may be that we need to build times of silence and solitude into our discipleship meetings with them. As BMBs become more accustomed to it, they will see the benefit. Stopping to hear God's voice, learning to quiet our hearts, resting in God's presence, these things are vital to our spiritual health.

3.4 Conversation with God

In any relationship, talking to one another is essential. It's how we get to know and understand each other. Prayer is the way we talk to God. Julian of Norwich wrote, 'Prayer unites the soul to God.'⁸ We all know it's something we should do, but few of us would say we do it enough.

One of the most liberating experiences of my Christian life was realizing that prayer really is conversation with God. It's something I can do at any time, in any place. Certainly having a set time to pray and even a list of people or concerns to pray for is legitimate and important. But having an ongoing conversation with God throughout the day is even better. As I might send a friend an SMS or an e-mail or just call up, I can talk with God all day long. The biggest benefit in my life has been that it makes me more conscious of God's presence throughout the day. It keeps me mindful that He is right there with me and that helps to shape my thinking and my actions.

Like all of these tools, this one is best modelled. We need to spend time with the BMB outside our formal meeting time and allow him to see us stop and pray for a specific need when it arises. Even just saying a one-sentence prayer like 'Lord, we love you', can model this kind of

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8 Norwich, Julian of, *Revelations of Divine Love*, translated into modern English by Wolters, Clifton, London: Penguin, 1966, p. 128.

awareness that God is always with us and we can always talk to him. Let the BMB see what it means to have an ongoing conversation with God.

3.5 Fasting

Fasting is an area where our BMB will need our input and guidance to see what a biblical fast is like. In Scripture fasting refers to abstaining from food for a spiritual purpose. There are many types of fasts and many reasons to fast. In my spiritual journey, I have fasted regularly for seasons. Often my desire to fast rose from a time when I felt more distant from God. I felt that the hunger and the thirst I once had for knowing God had waned. Fasting for me was a way of saying to God, 'You are more important to me than anything – even food. I believe that I cannot live by bread alone. I depend on you.' During my fast, when I would have the pangs of hunger, I would pray, 'Lord, as I am hungry for food, make me hunger more for you.' John Piper writes about fasting:

Similarly, fasting is peculiarly suited to glorify God in this way. It is fundamentally an offering of emptiness to God in hope. It is a sacrifice of need and hunger. It says, by its very nature, "Father, I am empty, but you are full. I am hungry, but you are the Bread of Heaven. I am thirsty, but you are the Fountain of Life. I am weak, but you are strong. I am poor, but you are rich. I am foolish, but you are wise. I am broken, but you are whole. I am dying, but your steadfast love is better than life (Psalm 63:3)."⁹

Such a prayer, such a desire, is something God delights to answer, to bless. When I have fasted in this manner, God has reawakened my heart to hunger and thirst more and more for him. As we model and teach this type of fasting to our BMB friends, we invite them to worship God from their heart. We invite their fasting to become a fast pleasing to God.

3.6 Spiritual friendship

One of the biggest obstacles to spiritual formation is our friends, or more accurately our lack of true friends. Many of us have acquaintances, people we spend time with, colleagues and neighbours, but rarely do we let them know who we really are. We show them a face, a mask, that reveals the person we want to be but not who we really are. If we want to make progress in our faith, we need people around us who push us, encourage us and challenge us. We need people who accept us for who we are, who love and accept us even when we blow it, and who will not let us settle for mediocrity but will spur us on to more. David Benner writes, 'If you are making significant progress on the

9 Piper, John, *A Hunger for God*, Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1997, pp180-181.

transformational journey of Christian spirituality, you have one or more friendships that support that journey. If you do not, you are not. It is that simple.’¹⁰

At key points in my spiritual journey God has blessed me with men who have been **spiritual friends**. ‘*Spiritual friendship* is the most basic ministry of spiritual guidance in which two or more friends – on a relatively equal basis – support, encourage, and pray for one another on their journeys... A spiritual friend is one who makes time for you, cares when you have nothing to offer in return, rejoices in your successes, and weeps over your failures.’¹¹ Such friendship is costly. It requires us to be willing to be transparent. It calls for us to be honest. And it necessitates that we live 1 Corinthians 13 in loving patience, kindness, humility, selflessness, forgiveness and perseverance.

Spiritual friendship is not easy, especially in Muslim contexts. But the rewards of such friendship far outweigh the risks. As I think about my spiritual journey there were two or three godly men, true spiritual friends, God used to point me in the direction I needed to go. They were people willing to speak truth into my life when I needed to hear it. They were friends who listened to me and prayed with me and even wept with me when I needed that. They inspired me by their own desire and passion to know God. They humbled me when they would open their hearts and share honestly things they would never tell someone else. Really, this is what true discipleship is all about. It has to be modelled, expected and fostered.

Conclusion

Spiritual formation is a lifelong journey toward Christ-likeness. What are the clubs in your spiritual formation golf bag? What are the tools in your spiritual formation toolbox? How are you using them with your BMB friend? Ask the Holy Spirit to show you where you are and which ones will help you move forward. Ask a godly friend for his advice or direction. But do not settle for status quo. We must take the mindset of the Apostle Paul, ‘*I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus*’ (Phil. 3:12b-13).

10 Benner, David G., *Sacred Companions: The Gift of Spiritual Friendship and Direction*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002, p. 16.

11 Demarest, Bruce A., *Soul Guide: Following Jesus as Spiritual Director*, Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2003, p. 39.

‘Spiritual friendship is the most basic ministry of spiritual guidance in which two or more friends – on a relatively equal basis – support, encourage, and pray for one another on their journeys...’

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PART 4: BOOK REVIEWS**DISCIPLINING NATIONS: THE POWER OF TRUTH TO
TRANSFORM CULTURES****by Darrow Miller****YWAM Publishing, 2001**

The thesis of this book is that God's truth not only breaks the spiritual bonds of sin and death but also frees whole societies from deception and poverty. It is ideas, Miller says, that have the most powerful consequences. When we have the right ideas driving our actions, everything else will come in its time. It is not more money, greater manpower, programs or systems that we need in order to help the needy but rather a biblical worldview. This is the most effective and powerful tool we have for our work. The author states that both development professionals and missionaries report that this book has given them the holistic framework they have been seeking for their work. I have personally found it helpful, both as a framework for development work and in my ministry of personal discipleship.

The book begins with a section called 'The Story'. In this section, Miller explains that each culture has its worldview or its 'story' that is used to explain and understand the world. He addresses three main worldviews in the book: biblical theism, secularism and animism. The author points out that each worldview has certain elements of truth as well as elements of lies and idolatry. Cultures aren't neutral. He then goes on to show how each worldview explains the existence of poverty and how that explanation determines the way they deal with it or address it. Miller states,

Everybody has a world view... It is essential that you examine your worldview because it affects everything you do, even how you obey Christ. Our values and behaviour (and their consequences) all flow from our assumptions about reality. Those of us who want to work effectively with the poor need to learn three distinct worldviews: our own, that of the culture we're trying to disciple (our host culture) and biblical theism. (p. 74)

Miller then takes us systematically through a look at biblical truth about God as King, His kingdom and our part as stewards of the King. He addresses how various worldviews interact with these truths. Concerning God as King, he discusses the facts that God is a person, he is rational and he is good. Miller then applies these truths to how we understand the universe. He then addresses God's kingdom, which is an open system where God can and does step in and work,

as well as being governed by certain laws that God himself created and respects. Again, Millar applies these truths to worldview and helps us see how each worldview accepts or distorts these truths. The nature of man and the nature of community are the main points he discusses concerning our being stewards. He then addresses several tasks; specifically stewardship, economics, work and time/history, and God's purpose in light of Biblical truth and other worldviews.

I found this book helpful because it gave me tools to understand and analyse what is going on in a situation or culture. It helped me understand the influence of my western, secular worldview on my thinking. I was also challenged to see that cultures aren't just neutral. Biblical truth will always transform a culture and needs to transform it.

I found the charts comparing the three worldviews very helpful. Millar uses many illustrations and I appreciated two in particular. In the illustration 'Ideas Have Consequences,' you have a tree. The roots represent beliefs, the trunk values, the branches behaviour and the fruit consequences. The branches and fruit, meaning behaviour and consequences, grow out of our deep-seated beliefs and values. Much secular training, development, and unfortunately also Christian discipleship, often address issues at the branch or behavioural level.

As lies are replaced
by truth in
discipleship, the tree
grows stronger and
healthier.

An illustration of this in development work is public health campaigns to combat AIDS. The programs target behaviour – giving out condoms, to address the consequences of the 'problem' of unprotected sex. However, they never address the beliefs that spawn the behaviour that creates the consequences. Addressing the top part of the tree is like trying to paste apples on an orange tree. You aren't going to see lasting change. 'Growing Healthy Cultures' is another illustration from Miller's book that uses the image of a tree. The roots of a tree (beliefs) are mainly composed of lies for those outside of Christ, with some roots of truth in here and there. The resulting tree is rather weak and scrawny. As lies are replaced by truth in discipleship, the tree grows stronger and healthier. He gives the example of Rwanda as a place where this did not happen. He says,

In part, what happened in Rwanda was that the nation was 'converted' but not discipled at the profound level of culture. The tribal mindset that sees one tribe as superior to another was not challenged. The blood of Christ was not applied to the breaking down of the dividing wall of hostility between Hutu and Tutsi. The ancient hostilities of tribalism were not broken by the powerful truth that Tutsis and Hutus are of 'one blood,' having one set of first parents – Adam and Eve. It was tribalism, the mindset of poverty that led to the genocide... If the church

does not disciple the nation, the nation will disciple the church.

Rwanda is an extreme example of this principle.

Thus, in a country where well-dressed neighbours greeted each other on the way to church on Sundays, a year later these same neighbours were slaughtering each other.

The book can be dense at times and some parts are a bit hard to get through. However, the abundance of charts, illustrations and stories are very effective at summarizing and clarifying the author's points. I would highly recommend this book to anyone who wants to be more effective and deeper in their discipleship, both on an individual level and on a community and cultural level.

Reviewed by PR

PR and her husband (Americans) have been involved in evangelism, discipleship and CP in Europe and North Africa for 19 years.

TRANSFORMING DISCIPLESHIP: MAKING DISCIPLES A FEW AT A TIME

by **Greg Ogden**

Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003

This is essentially a book length treatment of *one great idea*! Ogden lays out an approach to fruitful discipling in the context of a local church in America in which one-on-one individual discipleship is substantially transformed when a discipler works with two disciples rather than one. Working with people in a *discipleship triad* (group of three people) revolutionizes the impact of the discipling process compared to one-on-one discipling in twos.

Ogden has developed a model that envisions a discipler invite two people into a short-term covenanted discipleship relationship in which they work through a basic discipleship curriculum in the course of one to one and a half years. An explicit goal of the process is that each member of the triad be equipped to in turn find two others to disciple, once the discipleship period is completed. Ogden has seen this process of small group discipling reproduce throughout a church and substantially transform a church, as more and more people in the church are turned into engaged disciples of Christ rather than merely church goers (the multiplication principle is once again invoked – one disciples two, two disciple four, four disciple eight, with a new multiplying set being started in turn by the discipler each time as well...)

The reason I am reviewing this book here in *Seedbed* is because I think that Ogden's conviction that discipleship works better in small groups (3 to 4, maximum) is a *very helpful insight* that we can apply in discipling in our very different contexts. In the discipling that I was involved with in North Africa I 'stumbled' upon this principle and had perhaps three or four times when I was intimately involved discipling groups of two or three young men. As Ogden has observed, the impact of having two or three people being disciplined together greatly enhances the effectiveness of the discipleship process.

The impact of having two or three people being disciplined together greatly enhances the effectiveness of the discipleship process.

Transforming Discipleship is a helpful treatment of discipleship and he does a good job of arguing that small group discipling is far more fruitful in seeing people's lives transformed than is any other form of church nurturing or teaching ministry. In an insightful little chart, Ogden illustrates the transformative power

of discipleship triads. He suggests that three vital ingredients that are needed to see people transformed into increasing Christ-likeness are a context of intimacy, the transmission of truth, and a relationship of accountability.

	INTIMACY	TRUTH	ACCOUNTABILITY
Small Groups	X		
Teaching		X	
Preaching		X	
Discipling	X	X	X

Ogden’s discussion of the key elements needed for life transformation is quite helpful. The main elements in *intimacy* are (1) transparent trust (2) encouraging affirmation (3) walking together through difficult times (4) true listening to each other and (5) confessing sin and addressing the addictions of the heart. The transmission of *truth* occurs through (1) immersion in the Scripture (2) teaching (3) reproof (4) correction and (5) training in righteousness. The sought for *life transformation* happens best in a context of mutual *accountability* in which the members of the discipleship group (triad) are covenanted to care for each other and keep each other honest and accountable to grow in Christ together.

My research into discipling BMBs affirms that these core principles are indeed vital. Though Ogden is speaking entirely in and to the American cultural and religious context, I believe that the central insights that he communicates in this book (which I have just given you in this review) can be applied in our discipling relationships with BMBs and with each other. If you need further fleshing out of these core ideas, then get and read the book. But, now that you understand Ogden’s insights I encourage you to go ahead and put them to use in your current discipling relationships.

Reviewed by Don Little

THE MISSION OF GOD: UNLOCKING THE BIBLE'S GRAND NARRATIVE

Christopher J H Wright

Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2006. ISBN: 1844741524

Chris Wright's magisterial exposition of the Bible's grand narrative is a must-read volume for every missionary and (in my view) every church pastor and mission leader. But I warn you now; it will take you a while to work through its 535 pages, beautifully written though they are. And it will challenge – graciously, carefully but firmly – some of the most cherished convictions about the Bible and mission that one encounters in the evangelical missionary fraternity. So, you have been warned. Don't read this book unless you are willing to have your ideas shaken up.

If you have argued
endlessly over
whether evangelism
has primacy over
social action –
prepare to have the
flaws in your
argument exposed.

If you think mission starts with Matthew 28:18-20 – this book will make you think again. If you think mission is primarily something we do for God – you're in for a shock. If you think tentmaking merely provides a platform for the 'real' missionary work of evangelism and church planting – be prepared to think again. If you think all non-Christian religion is simply demonic – prepare to be challenged to justify that conviction from Scripture. If you have argued endlessly over whether evangelism has primacy over social action – prepare to have the flaws in your argument exposed. And if you are someone who thinks that Jonah is the only book in the Old Testament that speaks of mission – well...

Lastly, if you are someone whose furlough preaching is limited to a few well-known missionary proof texts – prepare to be amazed and delighted, for Wright unpacks with careful exegesis, erudition and eloquence a missional reading of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. You need never be stumped for a sermon text again! Have I whetted your appetite to read this book? I hope so!

This is not the work of an armchair theologian. Chris Wright, currently the International Director of Langham Partnership International (known in the USA as John Stott Ministries) is the former Principal of All Nations Bible College in the United Kingdom, and before that served with his wife and family in Pune, South India as a mission partner with Crosslinks, the Anglican mission agency. He comes from a missionary family himself, and has sent generations of college students on their way into mission with their eyes opened wide to see that the Bible is 'not just a book that contains a number of texts which provide a rationale for missionary endeavour, but that *the whole*

Bible is itself a “missional” phenomenon... the product of and witness to the ultimate mission of God’ (author’s italics, p.22).

There is no shortage of books on the biblical basis of mission, but in my – admittedly limited – reading, many of them pay scant attention to the Old Testament. Not so this book: major attention is given to the Old Testament, as one might expect from someone who understands the Bible as being one ‘grand narrative’, but at the same time makes clear that ‘all mission flows from the Cross’. Wright finds foundations in Genesis 1-11 for the comprehensive view of mission understood first and foremost as the mission of God in the world, a mission in which Israel and the church play a crucial part, and which extends to the whole earth and embraces all nations.

The author takes the reader on a long journey, but clear way-marking makes it easy to follow, with introductions helpfully mapping out each leg and summaries which allow you to pause, catch your breath and reflect on the terrain just covered, before setting out on the next leg. Indeed, Wright claims that ‘the God who walks the paths of history through the pages of the Bible pins a mission statement to every signpost on the way’ (p.23). So, in a sense, the reader is on a double journey – travelling through Scripture while following the author’s route. *Part I: The Bible and Mission* argues the case for a missional reading of the Bible and outlines a hermeneutical framework. Part II focuses on the God of mission. *Part III* considers the people of mission, while the final section explores the arena of mission.

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Part I: The Bible and Mission

Wright begins, after defining terms, with a biblical journey – no, not Abram’s, but the shorter journey of the two disciples on the Emmaus Road (Luke 24). Then, referring to Jesus’ conversation with all the disciples at the end of the chapter (vv 45-47), Wright comments ‘He (Jesus) seems to be saying that the whole of the Scripture (which we now know as the Old Testament) finds its focus and fulfilment both in the life and death and resurrection of Israel’s Messiah, and in the mission to all nations, which flows out from that event... He was setting their hermeneutical orientation and agenda. The proper way for disciples of the crucified and risen Jesus to read their Scriptures is *messianically* and *missiologically*’ (p.30).

Applying this key unlocks the Bible’s grand narrative and takes us beyond some current missiological hermeneutical approaches: beyond biblical foundations for mission and multicultural hermeneutical perspectives, beyond contextual theologies and advocacy readings, and finally beyond postmodern hermeneutics.

Following his critique of these various hermeneutical perspectives, Wright attempts to shape his own missional hermeneutic with a careful discussion of biblical authority which sets the biblical imperatives within the context of their foundational indicatives, 'namely, all that the Bible affirms about God, creation, human life in its paradox of dignity and depravity, redemption in all its comprehensive glory, and the new creation in which God will dwell with his people' (p.61). Thus, the primary question in defining mission is not 'what is our part in it?', but '*whose mission is it anyway?*' Answer: God's mission is the prior reality – mission is not ours but God's in the first instance (p.62). Quoting Andrew Kirk, Wright says, 'it is not so much the case that God has a mission for his church in the world, but that God has a church for his mission in the world.' The biblical trajectory, then, moves from God with a mission to humanity with a mission, on to Israel with a mission, Jesus with a mission and finally the church with a mission. The mission is God's from start to finish; but God invites us to be co-labourers in his mission. Here is a coherent biblical framework for mission which every missionary – if not every Christian – needs to understand. We are in Wright's debt for this indispensable contribution to shaping our missional worldview.

Part II: The God of Mission

God's great desire and purpose is to be known throughout creation for who he truly is. It is part of our priestly and kingly role and is also a prophetic opportunity for the church to speak out against destructive global capitalism and New Age spiritualities, both of which misunderstand and misuse creation.

Chapters 3 and 4 establish the basis for Wright's claim that Christian monotheism is missionary by nature. God's great desire and purpose is to be known throughout creation for who he truly is. The one true and living God, who made himself known in Israel and in Jesus Christ, is the God whose love for the world led to the election of Israel and the sending of the church.

But what about all the gods, the gods of the nations surrounding Israel and surrounding us today? Chapter 5, 'The Living God confronts Idolatry' repays careful reading. Are the gods 'something or nothing'? Wright's careful answer is twofold: in relation to YHWH, they are nothing; in relation to those who worship them, they clearly are something (p.139), but what sort of something? The author sees the same paradox in Paul's treatment of the theme of meat offered to idols in 1 Corinthians 8-9. He concludes that idols and gods may be either objects within creation (e.g. the sun or moon), or demons (part of the spirit world) or human constructs, but he notes as theologically significant 'the relative scarcity of texts connecting gods and idols to *demons* and the abundance of texts describing them as *human constructs*' (p.163). How does this bear on the plurality of religions today? Discernment is needed. 'At the very least', concludes Wright, 'it is clear that we cannot adopt simplistic

categorisations, such as the view that all non-Christian religion is entirely demonic or that it is all purely cultural' (p.163).

The strength of this long and detailed chapter is its grappling with the biblical text which leads Wright to offer significant biblical perspectives to inform our thinking about spiritual warfare. It will be up to missionary practitioners to relate and apply those perspectives to the context in which they operate.

Part III. The People of Mission

Moving from the God of mission to the people whom God calls into mission, this section of the book traces the covenant trajectory from God's call of Abraham to the very end of Revelation, exploring its universality (for the blessing of all nations) and its particularity (Israel's election). God is committed to bless all nations of the world through his people. Along the way, attention is paid to two models of God's mission: Wright demonstrates the holistic nature of redemption from the Exodus and the holistic model of restoration from the Jubilee, a redemption and a restoration which are at once political, economic, social and spiritual.

He then addresses the question of whether such holistic concepts are found in the New Testament, answering such beliefs as: Jesus did not get involved in politics; Paul did not campaign for the liberation of slaves; and mission in the New Testament is primarily to be understood as the task of evangelism. He responds to these convictions on the ground of hermeneutics (the whole Old Testament finds fulfilment in Christ), history (what is the proclamation of Jesus as Lord and the rule of God if not politically charged?) and theology (every dimension of God's mission through Scripture leads inexorably to the Cross), concluding that 'there is more in the biblical theology of the cross than individual salvation, and... more to biblical mission than evangelism' (p.314).

Chapter 11 is devoted to the place of ethics in the mission of God. 'The ethical challenge to God's people is, first, to recognise the mission of God that provides the heartbeat of their very existence and, then, to respond in ways that express and facilitate it rather than deny and hinder it' (p.356). He seeks to demonstrate, through the study of three core theme texts (Genesis 18; Exodus 19 and Deuteronomy 4) and their echoes in the New Testament, that there can be no biblical mission without biblical ethics.

Part IV: The Arena of Mission

In the final major section of the book, the author widens the angle from the people of mission to include the grand arena in which the mission of God is played out, namely, the whole earth and its peoples. He zooms in on two particular current issues as he develops his theme: care for creation and the

matter of HIV/AIDS.

God's intention is for the earth to be redeemed and restored (Rom. 8:18-25), which means that care of creation is part of mission, flowing from our love and obedience to God. Further, it is part of our priestly and kingly role and is also a prophetic opportunity for the church to speak out against destructive global capitalism and New Age spiritualities, both of which misunderstand and misuse creation.

In relation to humanity in general, Wright argues that God's mission is to see his image restored in people who have been made for relationship with him. He considers HIV/AIDS as a phenomenon in a fallen world which attacks every dimension of life and so can be seen as a paradigm of evil and its effects. As such, it can only be addressed in a holistic way.

The final two chapters focus on the nations in relation to mission. Wright follows the biblical trajectory once more, from the scattering of the nations in Genesis 11 to the healing of the nations in Revelation 22, arguing that it is God's mission in relation to the nations that provides the key that unlocks the Bible's grand narrative and leads us to the wonderful climax when people of every nation, tribe and tongue will sing his praise in the new creation.

Having made his case, Wright ends by asking: what happens when we read the Bible in this missional way? When we give the mission of God pride of place in our thinking, we find our own place in mission is relativised, and that is 'a healthy corrective to the egocentric obsession of much Western culture – including, sadly, even Western Christian culture' (p533). So, instead of asking 'what can legitimately be included in the mission God expects from the church?' we should be asking 'what kind of church does God expect for his mission in all its comprehensive fullness? I may wonder what kind of mission God has for *me*, when I should ask what kind of *me* God wants for his mission' (p.534).

This splendid book should be required reading. As they say in book reviews, you may want to question some of the author's conclusions, but to do that you will have to engage in thorough Bible study. So, not only will this deepen your understanding of Scripture and refresh your outlook on mission, but it will lead you deeper into the praise of God who has a positive purpose for the whole world and who is pleased to co-opt us as co-labourers in his 'family business'.

Reviewed by Sue Brown

Sue serves in the AWM UK office in personnel support. Prior to serving with AWM she was a Bible college lecturer in the UK.

THE YACoubIAN BUILDING

by Alaa Al Aswany Translated by Humphrey Davies.

Harper Collins Publishers 2007.

1st Published in Arabic 2002. (Available through Amazon.com)

CHICAGO.

by Alaa Al Aswany

Translated by Farouk Abdel Wahab. Harper Collins Publishers 2008.

1st Published in Arabic 2007. (Available through Amazon.com)

I was reading a back-dated copy of *TIME* in the Baptist Guest House in Lagos. In the literary section there was an article on an Egyptian author I had never heard of before, Alaa Al Aswany. The reviewer was heralding him as the new Naguib Mahfouz though he names Earnest Hemingway as his main inspiration. I learned that he is the biggest-selling novelist in Arabic today. This was too much for a Cairene like myself who 'had drunk deeply from the waters of the Nile' so upon returning home I ordered his two novels that are in translation, *The Yacoubian Building* and *Chicago*.

They are two very different books. *The Yacoubian Building* is set in Cairo and all the events happen around this European-style art deco 1930's apartment block on Suleiman Basha Street. He even refers to the Schindler lift that brings back my memories of taking such a creaking cage to the upper floor of a similar building where my language helper lived. But setting 1970s nostalgia apart, the book is set in contemporary 21st Century Egypt and focuses on the lives of a wide social range of cosmopolitan characters: from the son of the *bawab* (door keeper) to a millionaire businessman with political aspirations; from those living in the plush but fading apartments to those living on the roof in converted store rooms.

In both books love and sexual lust (heterosexual and homosexual) vie for the lives of many of the characters. Issues of shame and honour, corruption and deception are played out in the collective jungle of Egyptian society, both social and political. In *The Yacoubian Building* I found the most interesting story to be that of Taha el Shazli. He epitomizes the aspirations of disadvantaged marginalized youth to improve themselves but who hit the glass ceiling of class-protected jobs and, disillusioned, become prey to charismatic Islamist recruiters. In *Chicago*, one of the characters explains that extremism has come into Egypt via migrant Egyptian workers labouring in



Saudi Arabia. (Alaa Al Aswany confirms this opinion in a National Geographic article in 2006¹.)

Born in 1957, Al Aswany studied dentistry at Cairo University and by the early 1980s he held a secure position as a resident in the oral surgery department. In 1984 he travelled to the USA for a master's degree in dentistry at the

University of Illinois, Chicago, this accounting for his familiarity with the city and his credentials for setting the novel within US society. In *Chicago*, through the interweaving stories of professors and students in the histology department of the University of Illinois, the author addresses cross-cultural issues, immigration, and the Egyptian abroad. Cross-culturally married Egyptian husbands who have embraced the American dream struggle with crises returning to familiar cultural mores and the past, sometimes with disastrous results.

Anyone with a heart
for contemporary
Egypt, interested in
understanding the
relentless rise of
Islamic revivalism, or
seeking to
understand cross-
cultural issues,
should read these
books.

In both books, Al Aswany is critical of contemporary Egypt. One of his characters describes the country in these terms, 'We don't have democracy; we have not been liberated from backwardness, ignorance, and corruption.'² One closing narrative in *Chicago* hints that Egyptians may have exported this corruption to a post-9/11 US society which itself may be being corrupted by fear. However, his books do have an optimism that things can change. In his public interviews he has expressed the view that secular nationalism in Egypt will prevail over Islamic fundamentalism³.

One such moment of hope, when light overcomes the darkness and where compassion triumphs over manipulation, is in *Chicago*. A Coptic Orthodox surgeon, Karam Doss (*the 'noble conspirator'*), dramatically forgives his Ayn Shams Medical School professor for failing him and obliging him to emigrate to the US to complete his medical studies.

Islamic prayer times and Qur'anic quotes punctuate the books and remind us of the inseparableness of religion from life, including the arts, in the Muslim mind-set and life-style. Incidents in both books illustrate that a pervasive religiosity can endorse hypocrisy and violence as well as maintaining family honour and morality.

The *Yacoubian Building* inspired a screen adaptation by Wahid and Marwan Hamed and, in an article by Vivan Salama printed in the Egyptian Daily News, Marwan Hamed is quoted as saying, '*The book is very, very bold. It addresses some of the issues people don't even dare to talk about. The amount of realism in the book and*

1 Alaa Al Aswany, 'Voice of Reason', National Geographic (September, 2006).

2 Alaa Al Aswany, *Chicago*, (Harper Collins Publishers, 2008), page 288.

3 Pankaj Mishra, 'Where Alaa Al Aswany is Writing From', *The New York Times*, April 27, 2008.

*the amount of honesty Alaa Al Aswany had for the characters is something I admire very much.*⁴

During Pankaj Mishra's interview with Alaa Al Aswany he presses him to make connections between his novel (*The Yacoubian Building*) and contemporary Egypt. The author says, 'My fiction doesn't represent all of Egypt. I am not a sociologist'. Nevertheless, writes Mishra, few Egyptians reading the book would fail to recognize their world in it.⁵

Though protected by international fame, I hope that he does not suffer the same fate as Naguib Mahfouz who was stabbed by a fanatic one evening in 1994.

Anyone with a heart for contemporary Egypt, interested in understanding the relentless rise of Islamic revivalism, or seeking to understand cross-cultural issues, should read these books but beware, the sexual explicitness may shock you.

Reviewed by Keith Fraser-Smith

4 Vivian Salama, 'A tale of some Egyptians: As Yacoubian Building sets to head West, the author discusses the story's message, *Daily News, Egypt*, August 12, 2005.

5 Pankaj Mishra, 'Where Alaa Al Aswany is Writing From', *The New York Times*, April 27, 2008.